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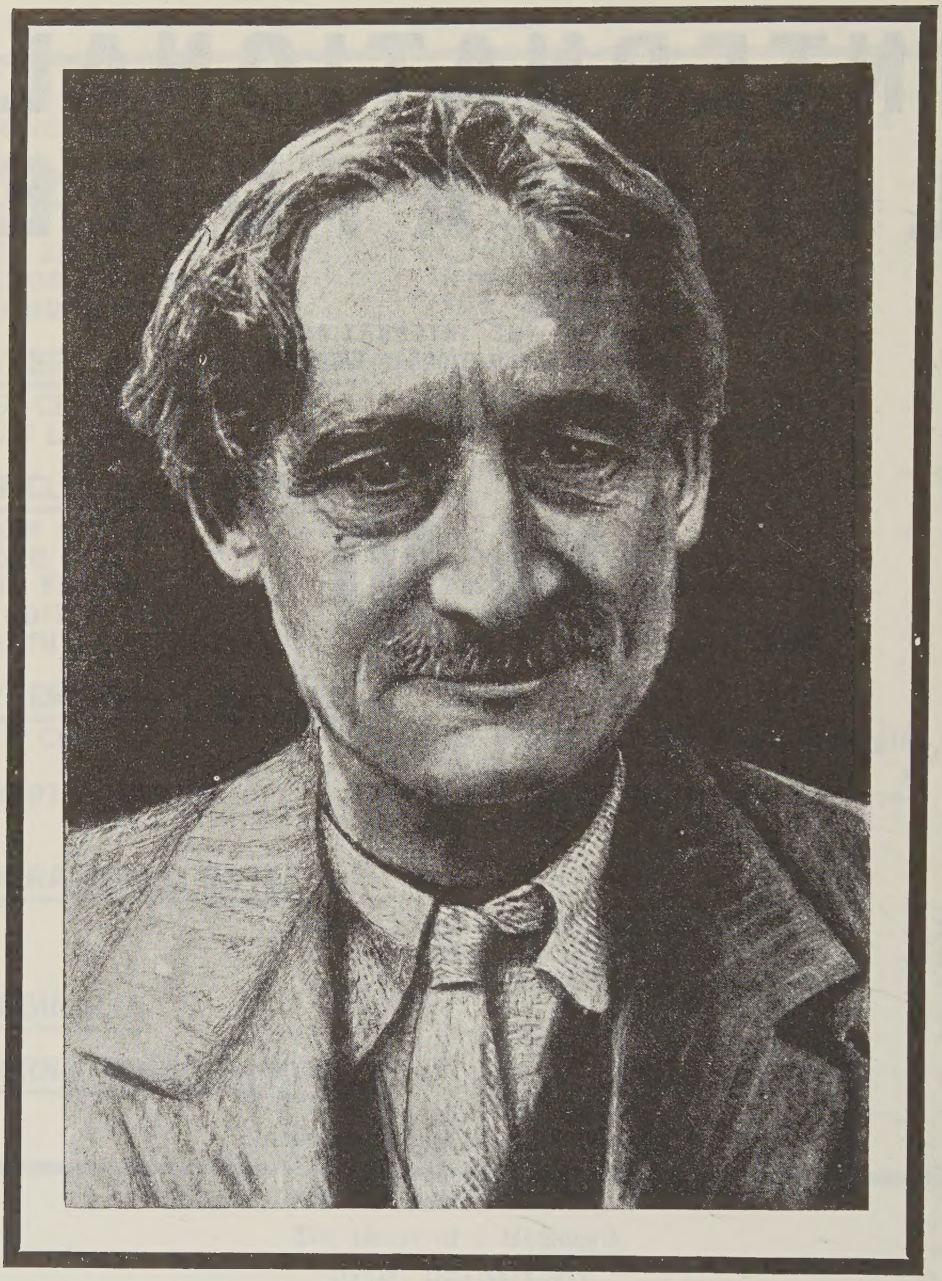


*Henri Barbusse (1873—1935)*

**Sergei Dinamov**

# Henri Barbusse

*Tribute to a Great Writer*

Hegel once asked himself the question why Shakespeare was only interested in kings and his answer was because they were the only people in whom he saw the hero. Barbusse is not interested in kings for he does not see the hero in them. On the contrary, in his novel *Clarté* he ridicules them unmercifully.

Barbusse's heroes are the very simplest people, the rank and file in war and everyday life. He raised up their needs, their sufferings and their protest like a gigantic banner over all the earth.

> This soldier boy, Oliver Bonnoron, was of no more importance than all the other soldier boys that swarmed like ants on the transport. But as our eyes have singled him out from the rest, our sympathy is with him, and we like him most of all.

These lines from *Two Accounts* show very clearly the sort of people Barbusse the artist sought and found, and the sort of people to whom his books were addressed. In this connection I remember a conversation I had with him in the summer of 1934. I drew his attention to an over simplification of terms in one of his manuscripts. "It is unavoidable," he answered. "Sometimes I have to use the word realism instead of Marxism, as the rank and file Frenchman will understand it better, but afterwards I lead him on to the understanding of more difficult words. He is already accustomed to the word realism."

It was characteristic of Barbusse that he should write a book called *I Saw It Myself*. He only talks about what he himself knows, what he has experienced, what he has studied in the original documents. He writes in the preface of *I Saw It Myself*:

> Here the reader will find only what has actually happened. Invention takes no part in these stories; their substance, and even their form, I have taken from scenes that I have witnessed myself or else gathered from a trustworthy source.
>
> I have done little or no "romancing" to use a current expression. Sometimes I have given the crude facts quite plainly; in other cases, I have discreetly covered over details in a thin veil of fiction. I have scarcely ever changed men's names into actor's names.

This artist, indeed, tells nothing but the truth, he uses his pen in the service of the truth and the truth only. For he looks upon his art as an accusation, as a pitched battle against his enemy in which he must use a well tried weapon.

He calls the twentieth century an "age of blood" and wants to check the advancing stream of blood and bind the arms of the butchers. He sees only one way of doing this, and that is to tell the truth and make people rise up in revolt against the capitalist "age of blood." In the same preface he writes:

> Further I trust that these casual jottings will kindle some spark of angry hatred against those who are answerable (their truly proper names, if one may so speak, are familiar enough) and above all against the regime which deliberately grinds men under foot and gives rise to so many horrors in the sight of heaven.

In *The Beyond* Barbusse gives us a terrible picture of the world suddenly annihilated by poison gas. Everyone remains where they were standing when death came to them. They had had no time to prepare and had been unable

to receive their visitor with fitting ceremony. Death robs the members of the ruling class of all the sham behind which they had hidden from the public, and they are left bare and ghastly. Barbusse robs the bourgeois world of its disguise, he shatters to atoms these glass walls of bourgeois "properties," he tells the truth fearlessly.

Sometimes Barbusse's manner reminds one of Bernard Shaw. Shaw writes an introduction to nearly all his plays to make his idea quite plain to the reader. Barbusse prefers to give a short introduction to the book as a whole and includes it in the actual text of his work as a kind of theoretical illucidation. For example, in his story "Wholesale Murder" he begins with the following introductory words:

> And yet as long as the old law, which wills that same causes be followed by same effects, holds good, our interest in war must be, not a thing of the past but of the present and future. Unless, of course, we turn round and begin attacking the causes themselves.

Then he plunges into the story. Here Barbusse writes with gall, he levels against his opponents all his contempt and virulence and irony, for art is for him a weapon and not entertainment. Thus in "Two Accounts" he describes the loathsome sergeant in the following terms:

> This sergeant was one of that breed of swine which our staff officers and civil servants have the modesty to describe by the words "smart N.C.O." He was a brute and a drunkard who always kept the tanks well filled. We all know that colonial infantry regiments are chiefly run by shaky-handed lunatics of this class.

His book entitled *Facts* (1928) is a brilliant example of that close, austere yet passionate type of prose here founded on actual documents and fraught with bitterness against a capitalist system that breeds only hatred, fanaticism, and cruelty.

It is concise, passionate, contemptuous, powerful.

For Barbusse the world is an integral whole, consequently he always presents individual events as part of this world unity. He takes typical instances with always the same purpose in view, that of making one more thrust at the old order, which though doomed, still blights humanity.

But the stories he tells are by no means a kind of appendix to his theses. They are vigorous, fullblooded stories of real life.

What could be worse mockery than to give a prisoner who has been subjected to the last refinements of torture a few days freedom so as to let him feel his imprisonment still more? ("The Worst Torture of All") After recounting his story, Barbusse rouses our indignation and through the lips of one of the characters addresses his readers in the capitalist countries:

> When will the workers understand that they are like a gang of prisoners whom their governors fool now and then with occasional feast days and shows, only the better to deceive them and spite them—punish them for being what they are?

Barbusse seeks in life, in people and in events every manifestation that can help him to disclose the truth of things to humanity, to show reality as it is.

He writes in "Dead Alive" about a conversation in a military hospital:

> Our talk was of misery, wrongs and crimes. Every survivor, floating on the surface there had his own true story to tell. During these evenings I collected the stories of many eye witnesses which I afterwards used in my books. And if those pages have sometimes moved the reader, it was because they woke to life some vibration of the living truth, like those violins which, old fables say, stirred the heart-strings of all listeners, not because an artist had made them, but because somebody's soul was imprisoned within them.

"Some vibration of the living truth" that was what Barbusse was constantly seeking, for his was a passionate and militant spirit and he could not shut his eyes to facts.

When you read Barbusse his story frequently so enthralls you with its extraordinary power that you forget that you are not being told about an isolated instance, but about something that is part and parcel of the barbaric capitalist system. For instance, what could be more telling than his description in "Two Accounts" of the murder of a totally innocent man by a drunken sergeant. You are inflamed by the story, but Barbusse turns your indignation into the proper channel. He tells of the utterly false and hypocritical letter which the war minister writes to the mother of the murdered man and he draws his conclusion: "The truth is that the war minister's declarations are nothing but a tissue of lies."

Then he tells of the mockery of the sergeant's trial and concludes indignantly:

When will the working classes, those tragic purveyors to the slaughterhouse, who provide such splendid food for powder in time of war—when will they spit forth what is left in them of the traditional worship of national armies, of courtsmartial and of those upperlings called War Ministers.

This is a militant and challenging piece ot writing—the relation of a fact, fired with indignation. It challenges the reader to take up arms gainst this hideous world. The artist robs it of its disguise and follows up the particular incident with general conclusions. Barbusse has always been like that ever since he threw in his lot with the revolution.

Sometimes in order to lend greater realism to his story, the author stands aside and lets someone else tell the tale from his own point of view and with his own peculiarities of language.

He interrupts the story and shows the way the hearers take it, in order to intensify its actuality. In "Dead Alive," when he comes to where seven innocent soldiers are shot by a crazy old general he stops for a moment.

At this point someone interrupted Peter, the teller of the story, and said or rather moaned out, as in a dream. "How is it that men can always be found ready to kill their comrades?" Peter merely answered, "They're found all right. They lined them up, asked for their handkerchiefs and bandaged their eyes. The detachment lined up, rifles and all. The command was given 'Fire.' "

The stories called "The Lion" and "Vengeance from on High" are built alike.

Barbusse always succeeds in finding a scene that brings out the whole essence of the story. In his volume of short stories there is one story entitled "Laughing Jack and Weeping Jack" in which Barbusse tells the story of two soldiers, Martin and Joel, the first of whom keeps the soldiers amused with his jokes and sallies and who is approved of even by the officers as he makes the men forget the horrors of war. One day Martin is wounded and he becomes deranged in his mind, but remains the same jester that he was before. He goes into the attack, but taking fright for the first time, hides in a shell hole and is reported missing.

But next night, a patrol found him in his shell hole; he was making faces at the stars. The patrol sergeant led him in by the ear. On his way back to quarters he hopped and skipped and played Tom Fool.

These words about Martin making faces at the stars bring a vivid picture before one's eyes: night, battle, death, darkness, the silent stars and the gesticulating soldier who has lost his wits, entertaining the heavenly bodies. This picture is the symbol of the futile cruelty of war. Thus a small particular is given universality and becomes pregnant with meaning.

Barbusse himself emphasizes the great significance of the story of Martin the jester:

His head was in a jelly. But he was laughing all the same. Aye, one saw that laugh, shivered to bits. Laughter was stamped for ever on the shapeless and beastly remains of that face, where life and fate had set it. He was the abiding, ghastly image of the merriment of his race.

Take another of these stories, "Son of a Soldier." This is about how a soldier, who has never had any luck, experiences a woman's affection for the first time and is moved to sing on and on until he and his song are silenced for ever by the sergeant major.

At dawn the N.C.O. brought the fatigue party back to the trench and on confronting the captain said, "There's one missing."

"That's annoying," said the captain, who was keen on his men. He noticed there was blood on the N.C.O.'s stripe.

"Wounded?" he asked.

"No sir, it's only my knife."

"Ah, that's good," said the captain, guessing at gallantry.

"No, sir, it's only my knife." This phrase has a sharp metallic quality about it. It cuts through all our apathy and brings the horror of the situation home to us. A murder has been committed and the artist rouses up the sympathy, grief and hatred of the reader.

Here again is his vigorous and telling description of the sadistic sergeant referred to earlier.

He was glaringly drunk, his cap was bashed down over one eye, his features were twisted up and his eyes were watery.

"His eyes were watery." One's disgust is immediately awakened and disgust is just the emotion that Barbusse wanted us to feel.

The artist enhances our vision for he adds bright new colours to the world, and he sharpens our perception because he helps us to see better and to see more. It was in human beings that Barbusse was most interested, but he was able to observe the most delicate outlines of nature, the gentle contour of an evening landscape, the soft tones of dawn and the brightness of day. Take this picture of the earth with its masterly detail taken from his novel *Under Fire:*

The pale sad light of dawn begins to disclose a vast inundated waste, swamps and shell holes, a smooth expanse of water which the light breeze preceding sunset whips and ripples; roads which have been made by troops and nocturnal transport wagons through these barren fields, with ruts shining in the pale dawn like glittering railway lines; heaps of mud from which here and there broken signposts, pieces of board and tangles of wire jut out. These muddy reefs and pools of water give the impression of a huge piece of grey canvas floating on the surface of the sea and partially submerged. The rain has ceased but everything is wet and dripping as though it had just been washed, and even the light seems watery.

A vivid picture of this joyless world is brought before us. This is a masterly description of nature which shows the artist's sensitive perception of the outside world. Barbusse is able to show each of his heroes in his full stature. They seem to rise up beside us and we become deeply interested in their fate. He stresses details which bring the living characters of his stories closer to us. Take the following detail about a soldier's canister. What an intimate knowledge of life it reveals.

The canister was a beauty. It held two litres and in those days cans like that were rare on the front. It had belonged to a Moroccan; struck by a brain-wave he had let off a blank cartridge in the neck-head and distended it until it could take two litres and a half. The other chaps knew all about it, but the shop hands didn't, so that when wine was served out from the canteen tap in rest billets, Butoire was always robbed of a bit less than the rest.

This description helps to bring out the character of the roguish Butoire, and there are many such light touches to be found scattered through Barbusse's novels and short stories.

Barbusse not only knows about such canisters, but he knows that the chains on the arms of the inmates of prisons in Roumania weigh 15 kilos, "the black-linked monster" as he calls it

which shares in your life, coils round your bones and underneath the flesh, grips you at ankles and wrists with fourfold jaws.

Barbusse was not one of those pure-souled dreamers who hide their faces in their hands when confronted with raw life or with crime. He was a passionate opponent of people who deny what is human in man and yield to force. But he knew how heavily the weak pay for their weakness, the impotent for their impotence. It was he, Barbusse, one of the most humane men on earth who said in his book *Brute Force*:

Force is only a working tool. It is only an implement. It brings good or evil according to who uses it.

Communists do not reject force for there is no other way of overthrowing the power of the old world. Force is essential for the preservation of what has been gained by the revolution. Force must be used against those who are the enemy of the people, and who strive to undermine the power of the toiling millions. Such force is the height of humanitarianism, for mad dogs are a danger to all alike.

*Brute Force* is one of those books of Barbusse's in which he turns to the past and searches among the events of other centuries for the illustrations he requires. The main idea of the book is expressed by its title. He looks back through the centuries and everywhere he sees the triumph of brute force and the enslavement of man by man. But he understood something else as well and he declared to the whole world:

The use of force must be taught to those who must not die. What of the future? As long as the parasites are in power all that is good and beautiful will serve evil. Just as genius virtue and love have hitherto been used to produce evil.... Man, lord over the forces of nature commands fire and energy and scorns space like a bird, but all this is only used to crush life. Only when the thinking, oppressed masses, seize power from the oppressors will evil be turned to good. The day will come when scattered minds will see light and will join together and stars will shine in the darkness.

It would be impossible to describe shortly all the plots and ideas contained in even one of Barbusse's collections of short stories. In *I Saw It Myself* there are 24 stories, all true from beginning to end, and they are all so moving and so full of ideas that each of them are worth analysing separately. Their title are "Laughing Jack and Weeping Jack," about the shooting of two innocent soldiers ."Son of a Soldier," about the murder of an innocent soldier. "Butoire," about the feelings of a soldier who takes the German he has killed for a Frenchman. "Wholesale Murder," about the brutal murder of 180 German prisoners with bayonets and rifle butts ."Two Accounts," about the murder of an innocent soldier by a drunkard. "The Dastard Train," about the terrible death of soldiers on leave in a train sent to its destruction by an officer, in spite of the engine driver's protest. "The Lion," about the treacherous murder of Panitza, leader of a group of rebel peasants in Bulgaria. (Reader, you must read this terrible list of subjects to the end for here the darker side of life is depicted in all its horror and we, in a happier country, must know about it. Listen further) "The Worst Torture of All," about the frightful torture in Roumanian prisons. "The Embrace," about suffering in a Hungarian prison: two lovers are bound together for months on end until their love is turned into mutual hatred. "The Pit Horse," about the sufferings of a horse in a mine. "Contamination," about how Bulgarian children, copying their elders, begin playing at trials and hanging the condemned ("the true story hap-

pened several times over. It's more than true then. And what is no less true is the contamination spread by savagery and mad and criminal acts.") "John Grecea's Conversation," the death of a prisoner from savage tortures in a Roumanian prison. "The Untamable," about a Roumanian advocate, Boujor, who, because he has expressed sympathy with the Soviet Union is thrown into a dark cell, but in spite of all does not lose faith in the revolution ("And this faith is the most terrible of all explosives"). "The Naked Man," about the savage treatment an official receives at the hands of a Commissioner of the Police. "Ferdinand," about Prince Ferdinand, later king of Roumania, who takes his cigar and thrusts it into the face of a working man when the latter finds him in his wife's bedroom. "Blood in the Oil Cans," about the amazingly cold-blooded way in which Red Indians are persuaded to give their land to an Oil Mining Company on condition that they receive a share in the profits and are then one by one got out of the way. "Civilisation's Onward Tread," about an old Negro couple, corrupted by Colonial "civilisation" who rob and murder a young man who turns out to be their son. "The Red Maid," about Louise Michel, heroine of the Paris Commune, defamed and dishonored by bourgeois "public opinion." "The Schoolmaster." about the suicide of a Spanish schoolmaster who is villified by the Church. "Homecoming," about a prisoner's return to prison after a day's absence, to serve his term of 75 years imprisonment. "Jesus Exploited," about how the Church exploits Christ to keep the people in subjection.

*Under Fire* (1916) is Barbusse's best work. It is a moving human document. The artist here portrays war as it is seen by the common soldier, doomed, tormented, persecuted and roused to battle. Page after page, chapter after chapter, a picture of war, that bloody machine for mangling human flesh, is unfolded.

Here is a description of a soldier on the battlefield:

His backbone was shattered. When they dragged him out and set him on the ground he said "I am dying . . ." dropped his head on one side and died.

And here is another:

His body was untouched, but his head had been flattened out. He lay there on the ground, black and huge, and it seemed to me that it was not him I was looking at but his enormous shadow, cast on the ground at night by the light of a torch.

And another:

With such a corpse it was impossible to tell which was the top and which the bottom of the body. In the formless heap all that could be distinguished was a pocket of his breeches in and out of which some insect was creeping.

And yet another:

The dead man was quite young and appeared to be sleeping. Only his eyes were dimmed, his cheeks had become yellow and a pinkish liquid moistened his nostrils, eyes and mouth.

The whole book is about death and destruction. A tremendous hatred inspires it. It teaches revolution, for a system that turns millions of young people into fragments of rotting flesh, bloody shreds and carrion, is a system that must be destroyed. Barbusse follows the example of Karl Liebknecht and calls upon people to spring at the bloodthirsty adder of war and throttle it.

In 1918 Barbusse published his *Clarté,* about the intelligentsia coming to the side of the revolution. This book was very highly praised by Lenin, who described it as a daring and original work.

Maxim Gorki said of *Under Fire:*

It is one of the first books to tell about the war in a simple, quiet, unadorned way and with the invincible force of truth. In it there are no scenes glorifying war or painting over its filthy, bloody horror with all the colours of the rainbow.

It is only when you read this book, when the figures of the murdered, shot, hanged, tortured, maimed and imprisoned human beings rise before your eyes, that you begin to realise in what dangerous places Barbusse gathered these true stories of his.

He shouted these stories out to the whole world, but his voice never wavered, torn by these cries of anger and pain. His art did not die, paralysed by the awful truth. He did his task like a hero. His words have fallen like a thunderbolt on the doomed and rotten system he attacked. The whole bourgeois regime is a lie, one enormous lie, said this revolutionary artist. This was his merciless condemnation. Barbusse was an artist with a tremendous capacity for pity and a tremendous capacity for anger. He worked up hatred against oppression and determination to fight against it.

He said in one of his stories, "The Crier":

> To speak the truth is to be always creating the world. Something always remains sown in the collective consciousness of human beings in this wide earth-mother whose family is the people. That is why in the course of time all that is to come to pass will come to pass through the natural order of things, but nevertheless with the help of humanity.

This can certainly be applied to Barbusse. He showed truth and his truth helped to build the world, as he fought for happiness, for joy and communism, as one of the devoted sons and loyal soldiers of the Communist Party. And now he is dead. The man who said through the lips of the aviator in *Beyond:*

> Immobility is a terrible thing. It is something that continues to grow and spreads to the spectator. Immobility drives me out of my mind, and not only at this moment; a statue, even a caricature drawing frightens me if I look at it for long.

And now Barbusse will move no more. But one cannot forget his animated eyes, his soft appealing voice, his head like that of a Roman tribune, his open, modest gestures, his delicate, beautiful hands. He is dead, but yet alive, for his immortality is his work, his loyalty to the revolution, his love for the Party that nurtures the highest and purest of human feelings.

*Translated from the Russian by N. Goold-Verschoyle*

**Simone Tery**

# How "Under Fire" Was Published

*About Henri Barbusse*

I do not doubt that the day in 1916 when I first saw Henri Barbusse marks an important date in the life of Barbusse and in the history of mankind.

My father, Gustave Tery, one of the great French polemicists, had founded *L'Oeuvre*, a daily newspaper. He had been maddened to see every day in the academic newspapers "the old gentlemen" gayly encouraging young people to go and kill for Civilization and What is Right. He thought that Civilization and What is Right was not where these official journalists, these comfortable old men, feigned to see it; and that it was time that the feelings of the soldiers in the trenches and all the poor people of France whose sons, husbands and brothers the war was slaughtering, who could bear no more of misery and sadness, should be expressed. It was in order to tell the truth—at least as far as the terrible censorship would allow—that he had established *L'Oeuvre*.

I was not very big at the time. I was a boarding student at a Lycee at Versailles, where I studied; and I had a holiday every fifteen days to go to see my father in Paris. But he was terrifically busy, and most often, after having embraced me, he told me to wait in a corner of his office and I remained there, making myself insignificant, as wise as a mouse. But there was nothing to stop me from watching the goings and comings or from listening to what the people, my father's collaborators and visitors, said.

One day I saw a soldier enter who appeared immense to me. He was so thin that his skyblue soldier's coat, discolored by the rain and dirt, twice too big for him, floated on his large body and beat against the calves of his legs. On his face, pale and wasted away, with its long thin nose, one could read sweetness, sorrow, resolution. He had above all a striking appearance. In his clear eyes, full of dreams, there surged suddenly an anguished look, which would be extinguished and would burst forth anew, like the beacon of a light house.

Barbusse went across the room in three long steps, his body a bit bent over, and threw on my father's desk a large manuscript, like a longshoreman dropping his load.

"There," he said. "I have brought you *Under Fire*."

"What is it?" my father asked.

"It is a book on the war," replied Barbusse. "It has been refused by all the newspapers in Paris. They have treated me as a 'defeatist.' I have used the few days of my leave in fruitlessly walking the streets. In an hour I return to the front. You are my last hope. They tell me that you have founded a newspaper to tell the truth. Do you wish my *Under Fire* then?"

Barbusse was at that time a little known journalist. My father looked at him for a long time. He was a discoverer of men. He saw that he had before him a real man.

"So you have spoken the truth?" he said. "We will listen."

"I tell of the life of the soldiers in the trenches and of their death. The others speak of their 'glory,' of the pleasure which young men have in dying for Civilization and What is Right. I speak of what I have seen, of that which I have come up against, of the dirt, the lice, the blood and the filth, of young-

sters who call for their mothers during hours of agony caught in barbed wire, I speak of the brutal savagery of the war."

"I see," said my father.

He opened the book at random and read two or three pages. For a long time there was a great silence. Barbusse was seated all doubled up, his elbows cutting his knees, his head leaning forward. I scarcely dared move. You could hear a fly buzzing. Suddenly my father gave a long whistle and raised his head.

"Barbusse," he said in a deep voice, "I think that you have written the book I am waiting for, that all France is waiting for. Without reading further, I can say immediately that *Under Fire* will appear in *L'Oeuvre.*"

Barbusse got up with a bound. Without a word he clasped my father's hand violently. He was too moved to speak. Neither was father able to say anything further. The two men, with hands clasped, stood looking at each other. Then Barbusse turned and without a word went out of the room.

The reception of *Under Fire* was amazing. Never had a newspaper known such a success. In the trenches the soldiers fought over copies of *L'Oeuvre* in which the story was running. For the first time their feelings were at last expressed, by one of themselves, with a powerful realism and a dramatic restraint. It was written in a language raw and full of taste—their language.

But this was certain to be opposed by the censor and the authorities. The officers forbade the reading of *L'Oeuvre*. The police seized certain numbers of it in the kiosks, and the censors canvassed the army. In the middle of the large white spaces in each number, set aside by the scissors of Anastasia (which was what the censor was called), my father printed a large picture of the beard of M. Gautier, the chief of censorship. It was in the end a small war where cleverness, intelligence and talent fought for peace.

In several days Barbusse became famous. His novel, which soon appeared in book form, went through enormous editions. And I at the Versailles Lycee, hid under my mattress a copy of *Under Fire* with a book by Romain Rolland, and these I read in secret. It was with these two books that I entered into life, that I commenced to have a conscious understanding of things. And like me how many young girls, how many young boys of France!

Alas, I arrived in Moscow too late to see Barbusse alive for the last time. As I got off the train I learned that he had died.

The first day of my first visit to the USSR the first thing that I saw was the face of Henri Barbusse. In 1916 he opened the doors of life to me; in 1935 I found him on the threshold of the Soviet Union. For the second time he opened to me the doors of a new life. Dead? No, not dead, but living in us.

And while I looked with sadness on his prophet's burning face, now cold, while there rages outside, like a human storm, the tide of International Young Communists, it seems to me in truth that we, the young people, have come to receive the word of command from the great one who has passed on.

We are taking up his work.

*Translated from the French by R. M. MacGregor*

# F I C T I O N

**Bruno Jasienski**

## The Man Who Changes His Skin

*Excerpts from a Popular Soviet Novel*

Slowly the train drew into the station. Suddenly, from all its pores, issued a flood of people; they rushed precipitately towards the exit, one overtaking the other. Clark waited for a little till the first wave had died down; then, taking a suitcase in either hand, he stepped out onto the platform.

The big clock showed that it was 10 a.m.

Having reached the steps outside the station, he put down the suitcase, glanced disapprovingly at a fellow in ragged clothes who was hanging around in the offiing as though bewitched by the dazzling yellowness of the suitcase leather (on the train he had been warned that credulous foreigners were unmercifully robbed at railway stations) and, unbuttoning his overcoat, took out a pocket book. On a slip of paper the address of a hotel was written in Russian letters. Without budging an inch from his suitcases, Clark signalled to a porter to come, handed him the slip of paper, and pointed to the only taxi.

However, before the porter could fulfil his mission, more fortunate persons had already taken possession of the taxi, and when the porter returned, only a minute later, it was on the step of a *drozhky,* drawn by an lean sorrel horse resembling a fiddle. The driver hoisted the suitcase onto the box. The fiddle emitted a queer bass note, wagged its bony neck, and ambled off across the square.

Seated in this unusually narrow conveyance, Clark took off his cap and let the warm wind play on his sandy hair, smoothly plastered down over his skull. His recent feeling of irritation vanished without leaving a trace, and he began to look around him with gay curiosity at his fantastic conveyance, at the square, at the bridgelike perspective and shadow of a triumphal arch—a gigantic bow pierced by the long arrow of a street speeding away into the distance. On top of the arch, a team of six prancing horses, harnessed to a chariot, seemed to be tearing away at breakneck speed from the city, ready at any moment to go bounding along over the smooth resounding surface of the street.

As the *drozhky* unhurriedly traversed the shade of the arch, Clark, casting an amused glance at his trotting steed and at the solemn protuberance of his charioteer's hindquarters, thought to himself that this *drozhky* of his, drawn by a fiddle, did not bear much resemblance to that triumphant chariot, soaring off into space. He burst into a loud laugh, much to the astonishment of the driver, who sat in frozen silence with fiddlestick raised on high.

They were driving at a trot towards the centre of the city.

The street was flanked on both sides by rows of houses. Hunchbacked and stunted by nature, they raised themselves stubbornly aloft on rough-hewn

stilts of scaffolding. This was not a street like all other streets in the world—an immovable defile of houses. Rather it resembled a gay parade of athletes—for the houses were all in motion, new stories were scrambling acrobatically onto their flat shoulders. The sidewalks were cluttered up with building material, and on the sidewalks and the scaffolding human figures were hurrying to and fro, sprayed with sunshine as if with lime.

Along the tram-lines that ran down the street, trolley-cars passed with a clanging of bells, and from the platforms of the cars, as though from a burst basket, hung cumbrous clusters of passengers.

At the crossroads, before a booth, a long line of people was standing—men in white blouses, women in calico spring dresses. The calico dresses of the women fluttered in the wind, and it seemed as though the whole line were flapping and wriggling, while the rectangular booth with its fluttering tail-like queue looked, when seen from a distance, like a great paper snake ready to fly away at the first gust of wind.

Clark turned his head. A fat gleaming motor-bus went buzzing past and drew up ponderously a hundred paces off on the edge of a great square.

In the middle of the square people could be seen crowding around two great boards, one black and one red, covered with incomprehensible inscriptions and figures. The black board reminded one of those huge blackboards outside the exchanges where they chalk up the latest rates of the shares. But the people in workers' clothes crowding around it bore no resemblance whatever to plump and excited exchange agents.

Even before leaving New York, Clark had heard and read much about socialist competition, about the red and black board, about the factories that belong to the workers. But not until this moment, as he was driving past these huge boards and saw the people crowding around them, did the thought occur to him that this whole immense country across which he had been travelling since yesterday evening was in reality one huge joint-stock company of the people inhabiting it. In order not to be crushed, it must at all costs outstrip all other states—joint-stock companies of a few big magnates who had divided up the world among themselves and would brook no competition. The shares of an enterprise such as had never been seen in the world before were being quoted on these black and red boards. Every inscription made on the black board meant that the shares of this country had fallen one point. And if the black board were all filled up to the very edges, that would mean death to the country; it would be an obituary notice. Whereas, if the red board were filled up, that would mean victory. Clark understood with what tense interest these boards must be regarded by the reckless country which had roused all the joint-stock companies of the world against itself. His heart beat faster at the thought of the hazards involved in this mighty contest. He wanted to stop the *drozhky,* to take a look at today's quotations of shares, but the driver whipped up the horse and they passed the square.

Once more they were driving down the main street. High above their heads stretched a broad red banner, converting the street into a triumphal arch. From the opposite direction, marching smartly in step, came a detachment of Red Army men without rifles, wearing bright green caps. The green facings on the caps, seen from a distance, made them look like a marching lawn of grass. The Red Army men were singing a dashing song with an oft-repeated refrain. In the refrain the accent fell on a short one-syllable word that came several times in succession, like a bouncing tennis ball tossed up in the air by the neat strokes of a racket.

The driver, seated imperturbably on his box, suddenly turned around, pointed with his whip to the Red Army men, winked to Clark and said in international language:

"Gay—pay—oo!"

Clark glanced with curiosity at the detachment, which was now just level with them.

A pace away from him, ranks of young blue-eyed fellows were marching by. They sang in unison and with zest. When snouting out the syllable "O!" they opened their mouths wide, and then their mouths turned into a chain of surprised red "O's." The detachment reminded one of some harmonious team of athletes returning from a successful match.

The sidewalks were thronged with civilians—men with jackets unbuttoned carrying reddish-colored brief-cases, their moustaches the same color as the brief-cases, and girls in short skirts and white standard blouses. Without noticing it themselves, they braced up, threw out their chests and, gaily swinging their brief-cases, fell into step with the tune of the dashing Red Army song.

Clark turned round to watch the detachment once again as it passed under the red arch. The shiver down his spine when he heard the international word "Gay-pay-oo," the lawn of green caps, the jovial "O" of the Red Army song—all this suddenly made him feel irrepressibly gay, just as he had felt before at the station when he had been struck by the comparison between the chariot and horses on the stone arch and the *drozhky* in which he was driving.

They drove out onto a square intersected by a boulevard. From the boulevard, as though from an open window, a soft spring wind was blowing. The boulevard lay there like a dollar at your feet—green and rustling. On a bronze pedestal stood a bronze curly-haired man in an old-fashioned coat and looked in perplexity at the strawberries-and-cream colored church that rose aloft on the opposite side of the square. Over the cornice of the church, two stories from the ground, a little two-seater automobile was driving. Evidently this was the advertisement of some Soviet automobile firm. The wheels of the automobile kept turning as it hung there, fixed to the facade of the church. Clark liked the advertisement. Mentally he began to calculate how much cheaper it would be for Citroën if, instead of writing his name with electric lamps over the whole height of the Eiffel Tower, he were simply to put his automobile on the front of Notre Dame. That would get him much better publicity! And for the third time on his brief drive from the railway station Clark burst out laughing.

At the street corner beyond the square stood another church—a smaller one, with a low facade, ill-adapted for automobiles. It put you in mind of an old market woman with her hair twisted into a bun on the top of her head.

Once again the *drozhky* was driving down the main street, intersected here and there with wide red strips of bunting. From the opposite direction came the strains of a brass band, playing in a minor key, slowly and mournfully; it did not seem to harmonize either with the spring gaiety of the sunny day or with the business-like bustle of the passers-by. A red bier, drawn by two horses, was coming up the street. On the bier a coffin, but its color was bright red. Undoubtedly this must be a funeral, although this red box on the bier looked more like a big box of toys from which the lid would suddenly open and a bearded old man on springs pop out. The red box was surprisingly inconsistent with Clark's idea of a coffin, inevitably associated in

his mind with mourning, black crêpe, tin wreaths covered with thick green paint, and ribbons dangling like dishevelled hair.

Behind the coffin came the band of fifteen players—workers, by the look of them. The players set their mouths to the great gold trumpets, and the trumpets droned out a march in a minor key. The players kept their eyes glued to the music sheets which were pinned to the backs of those in front. Somehow it seemed as though, were the wind to come in a sudden gust and carry away the tiny music sheets from these marching music stands, the players would lose the tune and immediately start playing something gay and lively.

Behind the band came the workers marching in serried ranks, as if at a demonstration. There were many of them; they made a long procession. One of the workers marching in the front ranks was carrying a large-sized model of an electric bulb. Another carried a little board with some figures written on it. From these signs it might be guessed that this was the funeral of a worker, evidently from an electrical appliance factory, one of those who are here called shock-brigaders.

As they came abreast of the worker carrying the model of the electric bulb, Clark remembered that in this country there were no crosses on the graves, and probably this worker, who had given the country a record number of electric bulbs, was to have, in place of a monument, a model of what he had produced. To Clark this idea seemed quite right. After all, when an airman was killed, they put on his grave the propellor of the plane that had crashed with him. In this country the cemeteries ought to look like workshops after the day's work is over, with the results of competition chalked up on the board.

The workers passed by in a long column. It was surprising that a plain working man should be buried with such honor, like some famous general behind whose bier the adjutants carry on a cushion his sword and the decorations he has won in battle. But Clark instantly corrected himself: this country, for which the words "not to conquer" were synonymous with the words "to perish," was nothing more nor less than one boundless battlefield. Everyone who contributed even one small mark to the red board of victory, it rightly reckoned as its hero.

Clark did not believe in socialism. He considered that wealth was the only stimulus to human inventiveness and energy. But he was a sportsman. He liked this country which had undertaken an unprecedented experiment and defended it in the teeth of the entire world. That was why he had come to work here, to take part in the carrying out of an experiment in which he did not believe. He was attracted by the grandeur of this unheard-of contest of one against all; and in this contest he did not want to be left on the side of the "all."

(This was what he, Clark, thought. He liked to feel himself independent, free of all prejudices. It seemed to him that he was acting very boldly and nobly, and this flattered his sense of personal dignity. He overlooked certain biographical details which, in proportion as he got further away from America, began to appear of secondary importance to him. One of these details was the fact that it was now four months since he had lost his job. Since then he had been vainly offering his services to numerous firms, for crisis prevailed in America. They wrote about this in the newspapers. Learned scientists and philosophers wrote about it. They did not write about Jim Clark who could not find a job; they wrote in scientific language, and in the language of science this is called overproduction of skilled technical work-

ers. They wrote whole treatises about how to avoid this and other forms of overproduction, for there were other forms too—overproduction of manual workers, overproduction of commodities. Commodities were burned or dumped into the sea—this was, of course, a very simple solution. But the workers could not be burned or drowned—there were too many of them. They could not even be exported. And the scientists could see no way out of the difficulty. Nor could Jim Clark. He knew it was possible to drown yourself. That, of course, would have been a very simple solution. But Jim Clark did not want to put himself on a par with a commodity. His sense of dignity revolted at the idea. And so, at the first opportunity that offered, he chose rather to export himself to another hemisphere, to a country where there was no overproduction of workers or of commodities, and with which American scientists, philosophers and newspapers were very angry on this account.)

The *drozhky* was driving past a square—an exact rectangle resembling a smooth polished lid from which, like a single nail, a stone obelisk protruded. Clark did not like the obelisk. He particularly disliked the stone maiden at its foot. She reminded one of all the stone Muses and Freedoms scattered over the various squares of the globe. Her Greek tunic was obviously unsuitable for the local climatic conditions. In winter time the maiden would be doomed to a chronic cold in the head.

Over a biggish red building, thrusting forward, like an armoured cruiser, the black muzzles of its radio amplifiers, a large red flag was waving. On the further side of the square Clark saw a dark-grey, three-storey, cube-shaped building, on the facade of which, in Russian letters, stood the word "Lenin," the only Russian word which Clark was able to spell out. This gigantic cube made him forget about the maiden pinned by her tunic to the base of the stone obelisk. This geometrical pile of stone with the one word hewn upon it, a word which sounds alike in all languages of the world (there is no human mouth in either hemisphere which has not at one time or another pronounced this word) this was better and more majestic than all statues and monuments of marble or of metal.

The street sloped steeply downward, and for the first time the *drozhky* was able to roll downhill without the assistance of the bony horse. A grey building with a great geographical globe over the entrance impressed itself upon Clark's memory as they drove by. The thought suddenly flashed through his mind that for the majority of the world's inhabitants this sixth part of the earth's surface—the Soviet Union—remains just such a *terra incognita* as the left hemisphere of the moon: more fantastic fables could hardly have been written about the other side of the moon than about this country. For a moment he pictured himself as the hero of a Jules Verne romance who had landed on an unknown planet, and this notion pleasantly tickled his self-conceit.

The *drozhky* was now driving across a broad street. Before Clark's eyes rose the crenellated wall of the Kremlin and a steep slope leading up to an endless square, which can be rivalled only by the Place de la Concorde. The square fell away abruptly beyond the horizon with only the five-pointed candelabra of the St. Basil Cathedral rising at the other extremity. Clark recognized it from pictures he had seen.

And, whether it was weariness from the journey or an optical illusion, it suddenly seemed to Clark, despite the correct geography he had learned at school, as if his entire journey here from New York had led him up the steadily rising curve of a semi-circle until he arrived at this culminating point. Over there, beyond the perspective of this boundless square, began the downward curve. Clark had the feeling that he had come out onto the roof of the

world. For a second he caught his breath and it seemed as though the air had become rarefied.

The *drozhky* turned sharply around a corner and came to a standstill. They had reached the hotel.

"Who was that man with the shaven head wearing a Russian blouse who came up to us when we were leaving the barracks?" asked Clark unexpectedly.

He asked with seeming reluctance, but Polozova caught his intent gaze fixed upon her from under the eyelashes.

"That's Comrade Sinitsyn, secretary of the Party committee on our construction job."

"He has good, clever eyes."

"He's a splendid worker. If only we had a few more like him! Knows the local conditions like a born Tajik. He's even learned to speak Tajik himself."

"Has he been long in central Asia?"

"Over four years, I believe. He's longing to go to Moscow and study, but they won't let him."

"Now that's a thing that surprises me in your country. You meet it at every step. Grown men, mature people with lots of practical experience, go back to the school desk at the age of thirty or forty to finish their education or overhaul their knowledge. This would be unthinkable in any other country. With us, a person gets into a fixed groove by the time he's thirty. If by that age he hasn't been able to enter upon the career of his dreams, he resigns himself to that fact and doesn't try to jump out of his own skin. With you, the whole system of education is designed to do away with this 'age limit'."

"Don't you think that's a good thing?"

"To tell you the truth, I don't. Of course, I'm not talking about Comrade Sinitsyn, who probably simply wants to extend his knowledge so that in time he may be given a wider sphere of leadership in your Party organization. That is quite understandable. I am speaking of those sudden—I might say, rather hysterical leaps from one profession to another, from manual labor to brain work, which people here seem to be taking at every step. One man, let us suppose, is a good machinist in a metal plant, and then, at the age of thirty, he suddenly becomes attracted by the mysteries of chemistry and sits down at a desk to study this subject so as to turn into a chemical engineer by the age of forty. Another, let us say, has spent half of his life making the wheels of clocks, has learned to turn out a record quantity of them; then, suddenly, he gets interested in the problem of utilizing solar energy, quits his work-bench and starts delving into books, so as to become a thermal engineer in a few years' time. You can think of hundreds of other examples yourself, from among your own acquaintances."

"But why do you think that is bad?"

"Listen, I understand that this is a case of unutilized human energy looking for an outlet. But it seems to me that by switching this energy to another circuit in such an irrational way, neither society nor the person concerned has anything to gain. Your country loses its best skilled workers with all their years of experience, to gain only poor and inexperienced engineers, who will be old men before they can accumulate equal experience in a new sphere. This must have a very bad effect on your construction work. If you really want to catch up and surpass the advanced capitalist countries, you should take over the principle of narrow specialization from them, and not ignore the centuries-old distinction between manual labor and brain work. You should at any rate maintain this distinction for another ten years, until you

have caught up and surpassed, and you should distribute your skilled workers with the utmost care and economy. This continual shifting around of people from one rung of the industrial ladder to the other is bound to bring chaos into your industry. I have heard more than once that socialism means planning. But how can you expect to plan your economic system, to produce and distribute goods according to plan, unless you first distribute the producers in a planned manner?"

Clark was about to add something, when his gaze fell on a long shadow which had suddenly sprung up at his feet. He raised his eyes and saw a small olive-skinned boy, about fifteen years old by the look of him, wearing a plush skull-cap and a green Komsomol shirt with a Young Communist International badge. The boy had dazzling white, even teeth; when he smiled, it was as if an electric bulb flashed in the shadows of his dusky face.

"Please get acquainted," said Polozova, rising. "This is my chief, Comrade Nasreddinov, secretary of the Komsomol committee."

"Engineer from America?" smiled the boy, showing his even teeth. "I know America, I've seen America."

"Where on earth have you seen America, Kerim?" asked Polozova in surprise. "Maybe in some book?"

"No, not in a book. At Stalinabad, in the bazaar."

"In the bazaar?"

"There was a peepshow in the bazaar, a fine peepshow. Look in the little window, and you'd see America. Fine place, America!"

"You see, he likes your country," Polozova translated to Clark. "He saw a peepshow at Stalinabad."

"And what did he like most?"

"Fine houses. Tall—oh! like mountains! Good to live in such houses. High up! Plenty of air! Bad down below—much dust. I also lived high up. Tell the American: there!" And he pointed to the far-off, snow-capped peaks.

"You see, he's from the Pamirs," explained Polozova. "He loves the mountains! In the peepshow he saw American skyscrapers. He says it would be good to live in them. High up, like in the mountains. When you were in New York, what floor did you live on?"

"On the forty-seventh."

"You see, Kerim, it seems you're both mountaineers," laughed Polozova.

"Tell the American we'll have houses like that in our country too. We'll have lots and lots of cotton—then we'll build."

"That's not true, Kerim, we won't build such houses. Those are capitalist cities. Socialist cities will be full of gardens."

"No, mountains aren't capitalist. Mountains are proletarian. Workers must live well, live high up. Living low down is bad." He showed his white teeth in a smile. "Beg the American's pardon, I must run off. Tell the American—America very interesting. Good if he would tell the Komsomoltsi about America some time. Ask the American. I must be off now. The Komsomol will lose the competition—that would be bad!"

His teeth flashing once more, he waved his hand and quickly ran off past the excavator along the crumbling edge of the embankment.

"What a charming youngster!" exclaimed Clark, following the small, well-knit figure with his eyes, as it nimbly picked its way among the stones.

"Yes, he is! And what a comrade! Clever, intelligent, earnest. Try and ask him to tell you his life-story some time. How he came on foot from the Pamirs to study at Stalinabad, how a *mullah* stole his father's land, carried away his only field. Yes, yes, literally carried it away on the backs of don-

keys—it's not a metaphor. How he escaped from the Bassmachis. It sounds like a regular novel. But it's not just an adventure story. It's the history of the best part of our Komsomol youth."

Clark stopped talking and began to eat.

"It seems to me you didn't finish what you wanted to say." Polozova's voice tore him away from this pastime.

"I only wanted to say one thing: there are many contradictions in what is taking place here. You want to create a new society here, founded on the abolition of private property. Well and good. It seems to you that you can enlarge every individual's potentialities to infinity. Isn't that so? The age-old conflict between the individual and society is decided by you, the enemies of individualism and upholders of the interests of the collective, in favour of the individual and to the detriment of society. It's paradoxical, but that's how it is. One encounters this contradiction at every turn here."

"But where does this contradiction lie, in your opinion?"

"Let us go back to where we started: your state system permits its citizens to change their place in society halfway through their lives. I have already said that this retards the development of your industry. Man, in changing his skin, in jumping from one social rung to another, is naturally put out of action for a certain, quite lengthy period of time. He has to get accustomed to the new demands which his new environment makes on him, he has to get used to a new scale of potentialities, has to grow a new skin. The amount of energy expended on this is quite out of proportion to the benefit which he may afterwards confer on society. The coefficient of friction in this case is so high that it immeasurably lowers his former efficiency. . . . But I see you don't agree with me?"

After a little time, Clark, who was pacing distractedly up and down on the edge of the slope, heard the distant sound of a motor and snatches of a song sung in chorus. The song reminded him of the one he had heard in Moscow, when the detachment of Red Army men passed singing along the street.

A few minutes later a car drew up down below at the foot of the bank. A dozen young fellows, little older than boys, tumbled out of the car together with one girl—Clark recognized Polozova. The young people, still singing, scrambled up the bank as though they wanted to take it by assault. For a minute it seemed to Clark as if he were watching some troops at night manoeuvres. Having climbed up to the top, the Komsomoltsi drew up in ranks before Sinitsyn.

"Where's Nasreddinov?"

"He's just coming. We overtook him on the way."

Nasreddinov with his Komsomoltsi was coming up from the other side. They were marching two deep. Their dusky faces seemed to be silvered over in the glare of the searchlight. The singing burst forth again, and the Komsomoltsi began running in single file down the steep path to the bottom of the canal bed.

"Nasreddinov!"

"Yes, Comrade Sinitsyn?"

"You'll never make an organizer at this rate. It's no good taking a wheelbarrow and working yourself—anyone can do that. The secretary of the Komsomol committee must be able to organize. What's this—couldn't you collect more than twenty-five of them?"

"It's night time, Comrade Sinitsyn, and I couldn't hunt up everyone within

half an hour. Tomorrow I'll organize things properly, but I couldn't collect any more of them tonight—so I'll have to work myself."

Nasreddinov smiled, his teeth gleaming like a white slit in his dark face.

"Comrade Clark!"

Polozova was standing on the jutting edge of the path.

"Go home now. I'll stay here and work with the boys. Come for the morning shift. I'll wait for you here."

Down below, the first wheelbarrows were beginning to rumble and the first blows of the pick-axes resounded.

"Andrey Savelich, Andrey Savelich!" Climenty was tugging at the foreman's arm. I've measured everything. It can be built. Tomorrow we must get ready the timber. I'll choose it myself. They've brought the right sort of wood. The day after tomorrow we'll start in. Only you were saying that rock has to be taken away. You mean to say those fellows are going to do it?" He pointed to the Komsomoltsi.

The foreman nodded.

"Yes, they are. Who else?"

"Do you think they're strong enough? They won't do it!"

"They'll do as much as they can."

"They'll take a long time. You want good husky *muzhiks* for a job like that—those children won't be through with it within a month. Can't it be done without?"

"No, it can't I told you so once already. If you're so worried about it, go and shift the rock yourself. Anyone can criticise, but when it comes to helping, you get cold feet."

The foreman went off towards the excavator.

The shovels flew up and down, back and forth. Down below, the planks creaked complainingly under the weight of the wheelbarrows. The boys, holding the handles of the wheelbarrows as peasants hold a plough, leaned on them with the whole weight of their bodies, and the wheelbarrows tripped and jibbed like a plough in stony soil.

"The boys haven't got the knack," Clark thought to himself. "They can't do the work of two brigades."

He still remained standing on the crest of the escarpment, gazing down undecidedly. Polozova and a fellow in a green skull-cap were loading the stone that had been tipped out of the wheelbarrows into the shovel of the excavator. Clark lingered on. To tell the truth, there was nothing for him to do, but for some reason or other he felt it would be awkward to go away. He hung around, trying to look as if he were supervising the work, and at the same time feeling how foolish it was to be an idle spectator. He raised his eyes in search of the foreman, as if hoping to find some hint for action in what the latter was doing.

Not far off stood a bearded *muzhik* in a cloth cap, looking down into the canal bed. It was the carpenter. He was lingering on here just as undecidedly as Clark, as if he did not know what to do with himself either. Clark found something irritating in this analogy. He was already turning to go to the car, when he suddenly saw that the bearded fellow was climbing down the path to the canal bed. Clark paused out of curiosity. Reaching the bottom, the bearded fellow thrust his way in among the Komsomoltsi, and picked up a pick-axe from the ground. For a minute he stood undecided, then turned round and, going up to the skinniest of the boys, who had upset his wheelbarrow half-way, he gently pushed him aside with his arm, handed him the pick-axe—as one puts a toy into the hand of a child to prevent it from

being offended—and, reloading the wheelbarrow, wheeled it smoothly along the plank towards the shovel. A buzz of approval arose from below.

Clark remained standing where he was. He began to feel more and more awkward. It seemed to him that if he were to turn around now and start going to the car, everyone would look in his direction.

Then something quite unexpected happened. The shovel of one of the excavators, loaded to the brim, did not rise. The workers down below raised a cry and tugged at the chain. The shovel continued to lie there motionless.

Clark quickly strode over to the excavator and collided with the foreman, who was dragging the motionless body of the operator from his cabin. Clark helped him to lay out the operator on the stones.

"What happened?" he shouted in English into the foreman's ear, and the latter, though he did not know English, understood and answered:

"Malaria."

Clark also understood. The operator had fainted. Clark unbuttoned his coat; steam rose from beneath the leather jerkin. The foreman ran to fetch water. Clark laid his hand on the sick man's forehead. It was burning hot—the man's temperature must have been at least one hundred and two degrees. The foreman came running back with the water and began restoring him to consciousness. The man opened his eyes. His eyes were burning, and the pupils in them were leaping up and down like drops of quicksilver.

Clark raised the man by the shoulders and motioned to the foreman to pick him up by the legs. Together they carried him down the bank to the waiting car. Clark signalled to the driver with his hand in the direction of the settlement, and himself began clambering back up the embankment. The foreman followed him in silence. They halted beside the motionless excavator. The foreman made a gesture with his hand. Translated into words, it meant: *Kaput!*

Clark glanced down the slope, where a crowd of people were clustered around the motionless shovel; then, looking ruefully at his snow-white trousers, he turned around and quickly climbed into the operator's cabin.

The foreman gaped with astonishment.

The shovel trembled and flew upward. A joyful noise arose from down below, and on the other side of the coffer dam the waters of the river seemed to be boiling with rage.

There was a thick smell of oil in the cabin. Clark seated himself as comfortably as possible, tucked up his sleeves, and, using the drag-line like a pair of compasses, began carefully measuring out the distance from the canal bed to the river—at first slowly, then faster and faster.

Down below the wheelbarrows rumbled ponderously, their unoiled wheels squeaking. The pick-axes split the stone, and from their collision, as if from the clash of the words "pick" and "rock" burst forth a monosyllabic sound, like the word "rock" pronounced hard with the accent on the "k."

She opened the copy-book at the last written page and began to read aloud:

"A certain foreigner. . ."

"No, no, please read it to yourself." Clark turned away towards the window.

Polozova shrugged her shoulders:

"How funny you are today! Since when have you started being shy with me?"

She picked up the red pencil from the table, moved the copy-book nearer, and began to read to herself. Clark's "composition," written in the most awful broken Russian, read more or less as follows:

*A certain foreigner once had an accident and lost his memory for a long time. When he came to his senses, he had forgotten everything—all his previous life—and could not remember.*

*He was very frightened, and began trying hard to remember. At last, bit by bit, he remembered. And when he had remembered, he thought it was not worth remembering. Then he began to get well, and often thought it would have been better if he had not remembered at all, but had begun to live afresh, without any past, from the day when he woke up. He said to himself: "Let's suppose I have forgotten everything. I'm going to live as if nothing had gone before."*

*He was sick a long time, and had plenty of time to think. A certain girl taught him a strange language and a strange life. She pretended to be teaching him the strange language, but she was really teaching him the strange life. When he had half learned it, the doctor said to him: "You are well now. Go and work."*

*Then the foreigner thought that his new life was inseparably linked with the girl who taught him the strange language. It was easy to forget everything that had gone before, but he would never be able to forget her. He wanted to tell the girl: "I love you, don't leave me." But he thought this would be very commonplace, because in all bad novels the hero was always sick and then fell in love with his nurse and asked her to marry him. He was afraid that the girl, who had known him before, would think he was the same strange man as before, and would not want to link her young life with the old life of a strange man. Many times he wanted to explain to her and tell her, but did not know how. Then he sat down and wrote this "composition" . . .*

"*I-yi-yi!*" Polozova shook her head. "How long have I been teaching you—and all to no purpose! Never before have you made such a number of mistakes in one composition!"

Clark smiled ruefully:

"You see, I was terribly excited when I wrote. I forgot all the rules. I told you not to read this composition."

"Do you make grammatical mistakes in English, too, when you're excited?"

"Maybe I do. I never was so excited before," answered Clark.

"Well, remember once and for all that *zhizn* (life) is feminine and is written with a 'soft sign' at the end. So it's not *novyi zhizn,* but *novoya zhizn.* And then 'I love' isn't *'ya lyubyu,'* but *'ya lyublyu'* . . ."

Clark seized the copy-book and tore out the page with the composition.

Polozova took it from him:

"Don't tear it. How can you behave so disrespectfully towards your teacher? A composition is a composition. Here are all the mistakes marked. You honestly deserve one mark for the handwriting."

"And for the contents?"

"As regards the contents, we'll talk it over when you've re-written the whole thing afresh, without a single mistake. And as for the phrase *'ya lyublyu,'* so as not to forget it however excited you may be, write it out for me thirty-two times on a separate page."

He seized her by the elbows, drew her to him and kissed her.

Three hours later a group of workers appeared in the office to see Clark.

"What do you want?" Andrey Savelevich bristled up at once when he saw them on the threshold. "If Tarelkin and Kusnetsov are here, that means there's bound to be trouble. What's the idea?"

"We want to see the comrade manager." Tarelkin, coming forward, pointed to Clark. "A delegation."

"What, another delegation? You have your own trade union committee, so what do you want with delegations? Starting trouble today of all days—ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"Wait a bit, Andrey Savelevich." Clark rose; he had just been explaining the plan of the canal head construction to the foreign writer. "They may have some proposal to make. We mustn't discourage the workers' initiative."

"Proposal!" The irritated general foreman muttered discontentedly. "They've only one proposal—work less and earn more."

"I'm listening, comrades."

"See here, they told us that work on the rock was being stopped, that the banks are going to be widened or something, to make them less steep, because of today's accident. And they say the job will be finished a month late on that account. Is that right?"

"Yes, that is so," replied Clark.

"Well, so we came to declare that we're willing to work as volunteers—just as it is, without making it any wider. And this won't make any trouble for the management. Since we're volunteers, that means we're doing it of our own consent."

"The management will hardly accept your proposal," said Clark sternly. He was stirred by the unexpected declaration of the workers, and was afraid lest his voice might tremble and betray his excitement.

"Why won't it?" asked Tareklin in surprise. "Those who don't want to needn't work. We'll choose five or six brigades of volunteers only. That's all that's needed. If you like, they can sign their names to say they're doing it of their own accord."

"Very well, I will inform the construction chief of your proposal. But I repeat—the administration will hardly consent to risk your lives."

"The administration needn't get so scared about us," said Kuznetsov, stepping forward. "Every man's got to die once, hasn't he? They themselves are always saying in the papers and at the meetings that the construction job is a front. Well, if it's a front, that means we've got to act as if we were at the front, doesn't it? If there's a dangerous job to be done at the front, a raid or a reconnaissance, only volunteers go. And those who don't want to can stay behind—no one will force them. It's just the same here. If the boys want to work as volunteers, that's their look-out, and the administration has nothing to do with it."

"Very well, I will inform the chief of your declaration today."

The workers began to file out.

Clark went off to look for Morozov. He found him at the canal head, examining the concrete to test its quality. Not wanting to speak to him in the presence of the concrete mixers, Clark asked him to step aside with him for a moment. They climbed down the bank and seated themselves on the stone barrier beside a lamp-post. Clark, in his best Russian, briefly related the proposal made by the workers' delegation. Morozov heard him out in silence.

"Have you finished?"

"Yes."

"Well then look here—all this is nothing but unnecessary rant. We are not going to allow any volunteers to work in conditions which are dangerous for their lives. And let them drop this agitation stuff. These Persians of yours have already come to me and declared that since the Russians are going to

work as volunteers, they want to do so too. Tell the delegates that if they want to display their heroism, they can do so without any of this swagger, under normal conditions, by raising the assignment of work."

Clark blushed.

"Comrade Morozov, you're the chief here, and the decision rests with you. But permit me to have my own opinion about this. I think that what you are doing is not right. The workers want to speed up the construction job, and you won't let them. That's pouring cold water on the workers' enthusiasm. It's discouraging the workers' initiative. It's opportunism."

Morozov regarded him through half-closed eyes.

"And to stand aside and watch how the workers are killed—what is that, would you say?"

"I don't want to stand aside." Clark blushed still deeper. "I came to say that the engineers ought not to be behind the workers, and that I personally will work the whole time with the workers in the canal bed."

Morozov rose:

"Excuse me, Comrade Clark, I have undeservedly insulted you. I never had any doubts about your honesty or your bravery or your profound devotion to the cause of our construction. What you propose is very touching and very generous. It is especially touching to hear it from the lips of a foreign engineer. Only, despite all my respect for you and your action, I, as chief of construction and as your immediate chief, will not permit you to put it into effect. A moment ago you called me an opportunist, and I was not offended with you. I think you will not be offended with me either. I am glad that you have so quickly learned our political terminology, but it seems to me that you have not yet quite mastered its meaning. Workers' initiative is a splendid thing, but just the reason why we have the vanguard of the working class—the Party, and the reason why the Party has set us to lead the country and its construction work, is that we may guide this initiative into the right channels. Opportunism, my dear Comrade Clark, is the line of least resistance. Often the opportunist is not he who refuses to head the wrongly directed initiative of the workers and tries to turn it in the right direction, but rather he who lets himself be guided by this initiative, because at the given moment it is easier and more profitable to submit to it than to direct it."

"You have not convinced me. Your Party says quite rightly that a construction job is a front. A commander at the front never hesitates to sacrifice one or two men in order to hasten the victory. You Communists scoff at humanitarian sentiments, but you yourself are acting in this case like a humanitarian."

"Your parallel is not a happy one. It is a bad commander who throws away the lives of his Red Army men if he can achieve his aim without losses. The blood of workers and peasants, Comrade Clark, is precious blood. When the need for it arises—and the day is not far off—each one of us will know how to lay down his life simply and without superfluous words. To throw away workers' lives at a time when this is not a cruel necessity is a crime. Please let us consider this matter closed."

"That is your right. I still keep to my own opinion. . . ."

"But who put them up to this?" asked Morozov.

"Tarelkin's the ring-leader, and of course all the other riff-raff and shindy-kickers from the main section have joined in. Those who shout loudest of all are the ones who never dreamed of becoming volunteers themselves. They want him"—he pointed to Clark—"to take over the job of manager."

"Well, and what was the outcome of all this shindy?"

"Nothing's come out of it yet. I managed to drive some sense into them. He'll have to go tomorrow"—Galtsev again pointed to Clark—"and speak to them himself. Otherwise it'll look as if our section management and the triangle are at loggerheads, and dragging out their quarrels in front of the workers into the bargain. A nice state of things, if you like!"

Clark was sitting there drumming his fingers nervously on the table; his face was pale.

"Comrade Morozov," he said, when an unpleasant silence had settled over the room. "I ask you to believe me. I did not inform any of the workers about the subject of our conversation, and did not say anything like what this comrade here says."

"What do you mean—you didn't say? These fellows came to me in the trade union committee and told me themselves."

"They couldn't have told you! You're lying!"

"That's a good one! I suppose I can't believe my own ears, eh? He says all the administration are opportunists, and the manager in particular. Wants to become manager himself, that's what it is."

"Comrade Morozov, order this comrade to get to hell out of here at once, otherwise I shall leave!"

"Comrade Galtsev, I forbid you to speak. No one shall speak again without my permission. Keep calm, comrades!"

Clark rose and, picking up his cap from the table, left the room.

"A pretty kettle of fish!" growled Morozov discontentedly. "Comrade Polozova, please go out and bring him to reason."

Polozova overtook Clark at the foot of the terrace.

"Clark!"

"Yes?"

"It's me. Can I speak to you a minute?"

"Sure."

"Come this way, let's walk along this path for a bit."

"I'm listening, Mary. . . ." He regarded her closely: she had grown much thinner, was changed greatly. She no longer resembled the girl she had once been—somewhat dry and imperious. She looked now like a woman who had suffered much; she was excited, and had lost every trace of her former self-assurance.

At the sound of her name Polozova grew confused. She began to speak rapidly, avoiding Clark's eyes:

"I wanted to tell you first of all that you are not in the right. . . ."

"That's not true either. Don't let's drag up the past. I want to tell you that neither I nor Morozov nor any of those present, except perhaps Galtsev, thinks for a minute that you really did say that to the workers."

"Then why does Comrade Morozov let me be insulted?"

"He isn't doing anything of the kind; he forbade Galtsev to speak."

"He ought to have ordered him out."

"Excuse me, but you have no right to dictate to the construction chief how he is to conduct a meeting. And it's not a good way of defending yourself to answer one insult with another. If you needed satisfaction, you've got it. Maybe not according to your customs, but according to the customs prevailing in our country. I suppose you don't want the whole code of bourgeois ethics to be introduced here for your satisfaction."

"When dealing with a petty bourgeois, you have to observe the bourgeois rules of ethics."

"Don't try to be funny. Nobody here considers you a petty bourgeois."

"Nobody?"

Polozova pretended not to hear the question.

Morozov told me today, when speaking about your dispute this morning, that you're becoming bolshevized every day and every hour. Only he correctly observed that you haven't got it all straight in your head yet. To risk your own life in order to finish the construction job as quickly as possible is a very fine thing, but it isn't quite the Bolshevik way, because there's no immediate need of it. Chivalrous generosity isn't the same as Bolshevism. Bolshevism is . . ."

"Listen, Mary, don't you think this Russian mania for reading people a lecture at every step can drive a man half-crazy, even if he's sincerely anxious to learn a lot from you? I assure you that during my whole childhood, when I was still running around in short pants, I never had to listen to so many lectures as I've heard during the one year of my stay here."

Polozova burst out laughing.

"Well, what are we to do when you have to be taught and taught the whole time? The main trouble is that no one can rid you of your obstinacy and false pride. You understand perfectly well that you acted wrongly, but your pride won't permit you to acknowledge this before other people. In our country. . . . But you'll be saying that's another lecture."

"That's simply not true. I'm quite willing to admit I'm in the wrong if I'm convinced of it."

"Now don't tell fibs. Tell me frankly—have you ever once admitted you were in the wrong?"

"Yes."

"For instance?"

"In regard to you I was in the wrong."

"Jim!"

"If you can forgive me this simply and without any lectures, then don't let's talk about it any more. Here's my car—let's go right off to my room. Tomorrow morning I'll drive you back to work."

"And not talk about it any more?"

"And not talk about it any more."

"All right then. And you'll apologize to Morozov for today's incident?"

"I'll apologize. Only tomorrow. It can wait till tomorrow, can't it?"

He put his arm round her shoulder and led her off to the car.

The forgotten radio was whining mournfully in Clark's empty apartment. Clark turned off the receiver and began tidying up the table. Polozova noticed how he quickly slipped something into the drawer and covered it up with a newspaper.

"Take off your things, I'll get tea right away."

He retired into the shadow. She could hear the primus stove groaning complainingly in his clumsy hands. Polozova hesitated for a moment. Then, blushing, she noiselessly opened the drawer and pushed aside the newspaper. Under the paper lay an English edition of Stalin's *Problems of Leninism* and a Russian text-book on dialectical materialism for beginners. She softly closed the drawer, and, catching sight of her flushed face in the mirror, burst out laughing.

"But how did all this happen?" stammered Morozov, turning pale.

"The Bassmachis wanted to open the sluice-gates and let in the water so as to flood the whole plain here. There were locks on the control wheels. The commandant had run off. At first they tried to break the locks, but couldn't. Then they seized Nasreddinov and Galtsev, and began torturing them to make them say where the keys were. Tortured them to death."

"So they didn't let in the water?"

"At the last moment they succeeded in breaking three of the locks. But the volunteer detachment from Kurgan took them by surprise. Do you know who brought it? Clark. Slipped off in a car under the very noses of the Bassmachis and warned Komarenko. The detachment rushed up just in time and took them all alive. They'd only had time to raise the first gate and began to open the second."

*Translated from the Russian by H. Scott*

**Paul Zech**

# A Village Without Men

*A German Short Story of the Tropics*

The village of Chacobobo consists of only seven mud huts. The black skeleton of a cactus stands like some strange idol before the door of each. The thorns of the wild pineapple grow over the narrow pathways. From time to time, as though this baneful weed wished to vaunt a flower of its own of scintillating hue, a morpho settles on it and stretching out of its dazzling blue wings forgets for hours on end to fly on its way.

The fields behind the village are bare and desolate, scorched by the burning rays of the sun. They retain not the faintest memory of the maize that used to be planted here and used to stretch out over the undulating ground like a bright green sea under the ancient *quebracho* trees. The whole country round has become a desert again during the last three years just as it was for hundreds of years before the missionaries came and turned the Indians who were accustomed to roaming through the immense forests, to Christ and the Virgin Mary, and made them settle here so that they themselves could live on the imposts they levied on them. And so it came about that they prepared the fields for wheat and maize, put down tobacco and *batati* and planted trees yielding fruit that were honey to the taste and gleamed like balls of pure gold through the dark foliage. But now for fifty years the ruins of the church have lain on the rising ground under the giant eucalyptus trees, for the padres were not able in the end to hold out against the creole Caudillos who regarded the people as their natural slaves and granted them their God but refused to pay tribute to the priests.

Year by year the blocks of marble have been gradually crumbling under the influence of weeds and the swarms of red ants and have been swallowed up by the encroachments of mother earth. The Indians say that the breath of Tupa blew and blew until he was alone again with his trees and could play upon his leafy organ and lure the souls of his red skinned children. For they had only clothed themselves loosely with Christianity as with a dress of bright cotton print. Inside they were just the same, their customs were those that had been handed down to them from their distant forefathers and their doings were adapted to the occurrences of surrounding nature.

But now in the seven mud huts of Chacobobo there is no one left with strength enough to drive a plough through the hard brown crusted earth so as to sow corn and reap what must be reaped when the forests no longer yield game to still the peoples' hunger. There has been war in the land and this war has consumed men, as the caterpillar consumes the foliage of the trees leaf by leaf, leaving only bare stalks and twigs. And the women flit to and fro, mere shadows of themselves, and the children look out hungrily from the dark shadows of the cactuses, awaiting the time when they must sow maize or be swallowed up by the war.

The village of Chacobobo lies in a narrow valley as though several thousand years ago there had been a river there that had suddenly gone dry between the higher land on either side. It would seem that on the mud and silt that was left behind every weed has grown up that only requires the rain and wind, a little sunlight and the animal kingdom above and below

ground in order to prosper through the seasons. But even of these animals there is not even a sign now. There is only the little dark grey lizard whose ancestors were probably alligators.

And this valley is so distant from the outside world that the authorities had almost forgotten to bring the village of Chacobobo under the provincial administration. Probably the only person who knew of its existence was Senor Areyu, who had planted maize there three years ago when there was no war on and every man between sixteen and sixty was not a soldier. But as Senor Areyu was an officer in the present war and he could not get as many soldiers as he needed to fill the gaps left by those who fell before his eyes under rifle and shell fire, this village belonging to his maize fields must have come to mind. At first he fetched out the three strongest men from the seven mud huts. The boys who were left had to look after the maize fields. Six weeks later he took the last four men from the seven mud huts of Chacobobo so that the boys had to look after the maize fields alone with their mothers and sisters. After another six weeks he brought from the seven mud huts everything that looked like a man and could carry a gun. And he took all the beasts of burden, and did not want to see or hear of his maize fields any more for the war took up all his attention. "War is greater than all cultivation of wheat and maize," said Senor Areyu; "through war the breath of God's glory is felt upon earth." The women with their children would have to look out for themselves and eke out a living as best they could. Besides, women and girls were as numerous as the grains of sand on the sea shore, while men were as rare in the forests as the puma and the grey ant-eater.

It was now that the women and children in the seven mud huts of Chacobobo learnt what it meant for one country to be at war with another when there are not as many men as are required by the war leaders. But they could not see that a war like this was the glory of God upon earth. And how did Senor Areyu know anyway that God was also a soldier on the battlefields, and how was it that he did not have to die in the midst of the cannon and rifle fire like all the rest of the men?

The women never heard anything more of their menfolk or of the sons of their menfolk. But they often heard in the silence of the night when there was no wind how the valley echoed to the dull roar of a distant thunder, although there were no clouds in heaven that showed any signs of a storm. In the trees in the forest not a black vulture remained. The forest had become emptied of its birds of prey for they had flown away to the fields where there was no trouble about finding food.

The women of Chacobobo began to realize that maize would not sow itself on the cornfields. And they saw how the weeds began to grow and the soil became harder and stonier until even the most wretched plants could find no sustenance on the sunbaked plain. The few last scraps of green that could still be espied here and there were immediately devoured by the swarms of locusts.

The women had nothing left but the fruit that fell from the trees. They fed themselves and their children on this. Occasionally some wild game was added to it, a *guasuncho* or a young *venado* that had been caught in the snare that had been set for it.

When Senor Areyu came again to get more soldiers, the boy Sanchez Ocantos seemed to him the only one who was strong enough to carry a gun in his company. But the women made a circle round Senor Areyu and cried that

they would not yield the boy up. For without him who would set the snare for them and hurl the *boleadora*. And how would they be able to feed themselves when the fields were bare and no maize would fall from heaven for their *tortillas*.

Then Senor Areyu, who had no war to make against women, said, "You will be given maize for your *tortillas* and salt too and dried meat. But Sanchez can carry a gun and I cannot find a single man more to fill up the great gap that has been made in my company. And it is a blessing from heaven for the whole village if it is granted to one of its men to die for his country."

He wrote out a slip of paper to Commissar Cervino who looked after the distribution of maize and dried meat in the district to poor women whose men and sons were under arms, instead of working on the maize fields or picking *yerba*.

And he brought Sanchez Ocantos with him, although he was still too weak to carry a gun. He was hardly able with his thin legs to keep his seat on his horse.

And four of the women rose up and went to Commissar Cervino. It was a journey of three days and three nights, up a steep hill and down again into a valley. And this valley too was desolate and bare and in the mud huts there were only women and children.

Commissioner Cervino was a most amiable person and his fat belly swayed to and fro as he read the note that Senor Areyu had written to him. He told the women that he probably would not get a consignment of maize and dried meat until the week after the following, though they might if they liked come back in fourteen days time. All the same they would do well to remember that the soldiers who were fighting for their country and the glory of God upon earth had still less dried meat and maize.

And the four women made the long difficult journey three times more, there and back, before they got their maize and in place of dried meat some dried fish that was riddled with worms. They still heard nothing of their menfolk and nothing also of their sons. Every six weeks however Senor Areyu came and searched in the seven mud huts of Chacobobo to see if no boy had grown strong enough in the meanwhile to carry a gun in his company. But there was in fact no one left who would have suited this death distinguished company of Senor Areyu's. And even if there had been, the women would have hidden him away from Senor Areyu. They knew now what the glory of God upon earth meant. For the trees were giving little fruit this year and the wild animals in the woods were becoming wary and would no longer walk into the snare now that there was no strong youth to lay it correctly

One morning after Senor Areyu had had to leave the village again because he had been unable to find a boy who seemed strong enough to carry even half a gun, Sanchez Ocantos came limping home. But he had only one arm left. The other had been shot away by a piece of shrapnel in a battle that had been fought many miles away under half burnt *quebracho* trees. He had a bandage of lint and cotton wool on the stump. Under the bandage the wound was foul and purulent. It would not heal. He only just succeeded in dragging himself to the door of his mother's hut and there he collapsed. He had been nine days and nine nights under foot and a dangerous fever was in him.

His mother ran into the next hut and called the ancient Zuema Tuyu. She came and tore the foul bandage from the fever-stricken Sanchez and laid a poultice of *turiku* bark on the frightful festering wound. On top of this she

laid strips of wild banana leaves and bound the whole with bast. By the fifth day a new skin had formed, the swelling subsided and the fever began to pass.

Sanchez could move about again in front of his hut and when the sun was at its height kept under the shadow of the tall cactus. The women crowded round him and wanted to know what it was like in Senor Areyu's company. And why not one came home of the many men that the senor had brought away from Chacobobo to carry a gun in his company.

Then Sanchez turned his head a little and said: "It is a terribly long way to the mountains where the cannons roar and the rifle bullets hum and sing like mosquitoes and the earth bursts up as though it wished to turn inside out. And a man only comes back if death leaves him a couple of feet to run on.

"And Senor Areyu is a very sensible person. He always stands where there are no bullets falling. And when he brought me to where his company was lying in the high bush there were none of our people left. There were altogether only twenty to thirty soldiers in his company. And the soldier that had to show me how to load my rifle and how to aim and shoot told me how there had often been fifty soldiers in the company and at other times only seven. And if one were to count together all those who had been there but would never come back, because once a man has fallen he can't stand up again alone, one would get an absolutely mad figure because no man could count as far as that. But of your father I know nothing, my boy, and of the other men from Chacobobo still less. I was only there three weeks before I was the oldest in the company.

"The soldier talked to me. And I very soon learnt to shoot with a rifle. But Senor Areyu wanted me at first only to carry ammunition from the camp. And after ammunition water. And after water tinned food for the mess pot. Each night when the singing of bullets in the bush died down and the earth which seemed always ready to burst its skin was a little quieter we made our meal and Senor Areyu ate with us. He told exciting stories of battles in the bush in which he had taken part in the three years at the head of his company.

"We each had a pallet to sleep on under the trees, but we could not sleep for here the real mosquitoes hummed around us worse than the bullets during the day-time. I have never seen so many mosquitoes on my body. They stuck to the skin like black dust and when one wiped the dust off one's hand became covered with blood. I looked up at the moon and it was often as red as the blood on my hand and it was a wonder that I could see the moon at all, my eyes were so swollen. And another time the moon was as white as the piece of linen with which Senor Areyu bound up his hand when a bullet whizzed passed like a great dragon fly and took a piece of skin with it. And in the bright light when the moon was white the nuts that fell from the trees and that one couldn't eat, looked like men's heads that had been cut off. And one had to hold one's head in one's hands for a time from sheer terror. And once I saw the moon rise up out of the valley. It rose up onto a tree that had been under fire and looked like a skeleton. The moon stayed up there on top of the tree for quite a while, grinning at me. At last I couldn't help crying out, for the tree with the yellow grinning head on top of it was moving towards our camp.

"I woke up Senor Areyu with my shouting. As a punishment I had to run to and from between our position and the neighbouring company carrying ammunition. Hundreds of cartridges, thousands of cartridges, I really don't know how many cartridges I carried. And then after I had made the journey

for the fourth time and they wanted to load me with another ammunition bag the bullets began to whizz again. They did not make a thin sharp hum any more like the mosquitoes, but they buzzed like wasps round the head and there was a scraping in the trees like the sound a locust makes when it grinds the leaves to powder. And I lay there by the next company for quite a while. The sun had risen in the meanwhile and the wood looked as though it were going to burst into flame all round. Above us the vultures circled and higher than the vultures, but not much higher, the aeroplanes. I did not know at first that they were flying machines with men inside them. It was the soldiers of the foreign company that told me about them first. These soldiers were not very much older than I. And before they came from Gespados and Uriquiza; their fathers from these villages had also lain here with their guns. And they sang the same song that their fathers had sung before them, in the night time when they lay on their pallets under the moon:—

*It is a long way to Uriquiza*
*where a yellow moon*
*a yellow moon*
*Swims through the fields of maize.*
*And only forests dark and thick*
*will lie before us*
*forests without end*
*when we our loved ones seek again*
*in the fields of maize*
*beneath the yellow moon.*

"And when the aeroplanes were straight above us the guns began to fire from up above as well. At first the shots fell quite a distance behind us and tore the old *quebrachos* and the mango trees and *saumaubas*. And beside me the soldiers lifted up their guns and shot up into the blue sky. The humming began again up in the air as though the cikaden were singing and the frogs and toads were gurgling after the rain. The woods might have been full of apes and frogs but it was only the fearful warp and weft of bullets. And everywhere in front of me and behind me and on all sides of me the great trees fell and the air rained earth and leaves and fragments of wood. I saw no more soldiers of the neighbouring company beside me. They had all run away somewhere. Forwards or backwards or to the right or the left, I cannot say. Then I got frightened and wanted to get back to my company. I forgot that I had to take a bag of ammunition with me, I just ran and ran I didn't know where. In running I struck my head against a tree and fell down. A whole avalanche of leaves and fruit and branches fell on top of me. It was probably an *assay* palm as my face was covered with hard berries that felt as though they were made of iron. And when I tried to get up again I could not move my right arm. And when I looked closer at my arm I saw that it was covered with blood. I lay where I was for a while and thought only of my arm which was hanging loose and was full of blood. I do not know how long I lay thus. For when I woke up I was lying in a tent on a heap of straw. And when I looked for my arm I found this stump here that is no longer of any use. It was a long time before I could get up from the straw. We must have travelled a long way behind the lines to where the guns could no longer reach. We were lying on a wagon and were being carried slowly through the bush and up and down hill. Once the wagon overturned in the middle of a wood and when I looked round the trees and everything round seemed familiar. And I thought to myself: you won't get in again. And I hid behind

a big cactus and then crawled away into the bush until I couldn't hear the rest of the soldiers any more. I had a long way to go still, day and night, until at last I saw the old orange trees and the field where maize used to grow and where we had to sweat in the sun when our fathers had gone away and had to carry guns in Senor Areyu's company. May the evil Anna carry away this cutthroat, for he alone is to blame that his company is like a big sieve through which everything falls that is shaken into it. And I am glad that only my arm went through the sieve into the Devil's clutches. And I found our seven huts again and knew I was at home in Chacobobo."

Soon the shot arm trembled no more and after a while Sanchez was able to move the stump a little. But he could never lay a snare again. And he sat many more days under the cactus and told the children about the bullets that sing their way through the leaves like cikaden and draw steel threads with which they make a net so that anyone who gets caught in it may learn the glory of God on earth. And he went on with his story until he was again seized with a fever that made his skin raw as though red fungi were growing on it. And Zuema Tuyu was no longer able to do anything for him. She knew only one cure for this terrible fever. But there was no one in Chaocobo who could have fetched it for her. For it grew in the swampy delta of the great river. And so Sanchez had to die, and anyway he was no use any more. And the women of Chacobobo buried him under the cactus where he had told the children about the battle and the yellow moon that had stuck up on top of the bullet-swept tree like a dead man's head. None of the other men or their sons returned to the village of Chacobobo. And every four weeks the women make their way to Commissioner Cervino to fetch the maize and dried meat which is due to them by government orders. And Senor Areyu would like to have taken another two youths for his company from the mud huts. But the oldest boy is only thirteen. He has to lay the snare for wild animals and hurl the *boleadora* to catch the *nandu* that often ventures onto the stony scorched maize field following a rat or a toad. He can do it better even perhaps than his father could have done it. He is nimble upon his two straight legs and the girls and womenfolk feed him well with *tortillas* and Indian meal. And he lives almost like a king's son among the women and girls, who will have to wait for ever for their husbands.

In the seven mud huts of Chacobobo the walls very often tremble from the thunder that in the night time rolls down from the wooded hills. But there is no sign of thunder rain in the air round. The moon shines brightly, brighter even than the sun is in the day time, over the wilderness where the maize fields once undulated. And one day perhaps a river will spring up out of the earth and make the scorched land fruitful again for maize and batati and yerba, when the guns have ceased at last to roar and it is recognised by men not only in Chacobobo that it is the greatest lie that was ever pronounced on earth this story of the Glory of God on the battlefields. Then Senor Areyu will either be in heaven or will have become a decrepit old man and will no longer need men for his company.

*Translated from the German by N. Goold-Verschoyle*

**Sandor Gergely**

# Simple Story

*A Hungarian Short Story*

Johann Kisch, disabled war veteran—both his hands had been torn off by a hand grenade in the Carpathian Mountains in December 1914—sat in the corridor of the military prison.

He had been waiting there for hours although he knew they would not let him visit his son before four o'clock.

When the prison guard marched before him carrying a bayonet, he stood up and followed the signal silently. In the cell he walked up to his son, peered into his pale face and murmured something, perhaps a greeting. His son leaned against the table and smiled.

He carried no chains. That was good. To see his son in chains. . . . A whole day Johann Kisch had wandered from his village until he reached the city and all the way he had thought of the clinking of the chains. He had lain down in the grass and fell asleep in weariness. Yet immediately he had jumped up again. There were chains clinking again. . . . And now his son stood before him leaning against the table. White bread lay on the table with wurst and wine and cigarettes.

"Eat, father," Jantschi said and drew his father down to the chair. He broke the bread in small pieces and forced them into his father's mouth with the cold cuts. He gave him some wine to drink too. And while he was putting the cigarette between his lips and holding the match, he asked him: "Have you had enough, father?"

Johann Kisch said nothing. He really couldn't. He puffed greedily at his cigarette.

"I told myself that for once in your life you ought to be full," his son began again.

The ash of the cigarette grew. It glowed and the smoke swelled through his nose and mouth.

"You went so often without being satisfied, father. I longed for nothing more than to help feed all who have gone hungry until now."

Johann Kisch let the tortured cigarette stump fall on the plate.

"My boy," he said softly and two heavy tears fell on his gray moustache.

It was quiet in the cell. The two armed men stood motionless in the door. The boy lit a new cigarette and put it in his father's mouth. Then he brushed the remaining wurst into the old man's clean kerchief, put the bread with it and placed it in his pocket.

"It will taste good on the road," Johann Kisch heard his son saying again. "I . . . we only tried . . . to fight so that there might be no more poor people who . . ."

He got no further. Two officers entered. One had a sword. The other, the army chaplain, drew out a silver crucifix and began to pray. But the condemned man turned away.

"Repent your sinful life before its last journey," the officer in the stole preached to him.

"I only wanted—" the boy spoke, turning again to his father "—we only tried to change things so that no poor devil would have to sacrifice both his

hands for the bosses . . ." He embraced his father's head and kissed him on the mouth.

The officer stepped ahead. Behind him came the boy in a shirt and soldier's pants. Near him the priest prayed incessantly. The two armed men walked behind them with Johann Kisch.

They marched over long corridors, countless stairs. Many soldiers stood in the courtroom. In the corner a number of officers sat around a little table. The one with the gold collar held a paper in his hand. While they were leading the condemned man before him, he began to read the verdict in a loud voice. And at the conclusion he added that the highest officer in the land did not choose to exercise the right of pardon.

"Such a man can expect no grace," the officer shrieked and let the paper fall on the table. "A soldier who forgets his oath and who recruits followers in the army for those communist scoundrels without a country deserves death. The death sentence of the other fallen men who were led to break their oath by this traitor to God and his country, has been changed by our chief war commander into ten years in the work house."

The officer gave the signal.

They led the condemned man to the rear of the court. Many stood now in front of Johann Kisch and he could see his son no longer. Yet suddenly Jantschi's voice rang out:

"In the war the notary public sent my mother to graze when she wanted her war relief. All the other mothers too. Soldiers . . . brothers . . . don't shed your blood for the slave-holders." Here his voice choked.

Johann Kisch raised himself. He could see over the shoulders how the armed men handled his son. They shoved him to the wall and ran away from him.

Johann Kisch once more saw nothing but shoulders. A trumpet roared. Directly after it Jantschi's voice rang out:

"Long live the communi . . ."

The salute swallowed his voice.

Johann Kisch stood in the door for a long time. The troops were already stamping past him and the officers were slowly lost. Then he went to his son's corpse. He kneeled down and pressed his mouth upon the forehead bored through by the bullet.

Later he stood up and turned to go.

They called after him. One of the armed men ran behind him and called him back. But Johann Kisch went on as though he were deaf.

The leaves of the trees hung indolently in the May sun. He walked. At the end of the city he turned around and sobbed loudly. That was possible now. No one saw him. No one should see his pain. Not laments but fury must grow out of suffering.

For a long time the city's thousand lamps had been lost in darkness. The moon trembled over the quiet of the villages. Past midnight he reached the road which led into his village. Poplars ranged themselves on both sides. The trembling of the leaves was like the soft quivering of distant flowing water.

Johann Kisch sank at the edge of the ditch. He huddled up to rest. Once he lifted his head heavy with sleep and turned over on his left side. On the right, in his pocket, was the bread and wurst. His son's gift, Jantschi's gift . . . He sobbed, his hoarse voice rose to the tops of the poplars, more like a great inarticulate bellow than weeping. Then he fell asleep.

The sun was already shining when he awoke. The sky was a huge blue silk table cloth, the sun a gold plate at the border. On the poplars were innumerable dew drops; like millions of sparkling little nails.

Johann Kisch stretched. He was hungry. He had eaten nothing since noon yesterday. During his nocturnal journey he had often thought of the bread and wurst. Still he could not touch them. There were enough people on the road who pull things out of their pockets and who could have laid something before him. Still he asked no one to do it. How could he? It was a long time since he had had white bread and wurst to eat. His monthly disability compensation of eight pengo didn't include anything like that. And now his son in his hour of death had treated him to it. Mother should have some too . . . Jantschi had said that the notary public had sent the women to graze . . . That was why he did it. . . . And the officers had taken his twenty-three year old life.

Even if it hadn't been exactly he who had done it . . . You're right. The communists are right. A poor man should not die for the bosses' sake. He shouldn't die at all if it isn't necessary. And even then only for his own interests. But why just you? Let someone else do it. Let others go with them. . . . For many years Johann Kisch had repeated this to his son.

If he had only listened to my words—he sighed now on the grass. Saliva stopped up his throat and he groaned the words heavily: "My boy . . . my boy . . ."

He looked at the road trying to make up his mind to get up. He was tired and hungry. A clover field stretched out broad and fat behind him. Sparrow hawks perched on the top of the poplars. He watched their croaking activity and then forced himself laboriously upon his knees. His eyes fell on the edge of the ditch. There between clover and ditch he saw sorrel. Much sorrel, glistening with dew drops. His armless torso fell down forwards and he began to chew the discovered treasure greedily. He bit the green leaves off until the roots. The food stilled hunger and thirst. There was wild spinach and bird salad too. Ceremoniously he sank his mouth slowly into the little delicious grass. With his lips he pushed aside the harmful cattle food unfit for human stomachs and chewed simply on the selection of different kinds of wild salad. A little salt and vinegar wouldn't be bad. But even at home there wasn't anything like that. It cost too much.

Somewhere a wagon rattled. He didn't bother about it. The horses were trotting quite near already but Johann Kisch went on eating his breakfast camly. His head slid entirely in the clover, his torso rolled flat on the edge of the billowy green wilderness. The horses stopped. Someone called over to Johann Kisch from the poplars:

"What are you doing here?"

On the wagon sat a wealthy farmer from his village. He was gray, his full face wasn't angry. Johann Kisch noticed this at once. His voice too wasn't cross and so Johann Kisch addressed him too without resentment:

"I am grazing," he said. "I am hungry, so I am grazing."

They looked at each other. Lying on his stomach, Johann Kisch looked up at the farmer who had come perhaps from his farm and was now riding to the village. The farmer stared ahead reflectively. It was possible that he didn't see the armless man at all. His eyes swept across the surface of the luscious waving clover, his hands rested on his belly.

Between his black cloth vest and his pants stuck into his boots, swelled his stomach, the breadth of a hand beneath the linen shirt.

The horses became restless and the farmer spoke:

"Come and climb up."

He watched how the cripple climbed up with painful difficulty.

He clicked his tongue. The horses trotted on lively.

Johann Kisch licked his lips. Grass hung from his moustache. He was happy because he could travel in the farmer's wagon across the path which would have taken him two hours by foot. The farmer turned around constantly to squint at his guest. He searched for the grief in his face. Only yesterday he had been witness to his son's death. But he saw nothing, only dust, grass and the deep wrinkles of old age. Then he looked at the fields. He halted before a field of clover.

"Well, climb down," he turned back to Johann Kisch.

"Why?"

"One, two. Hurry up."

Johann Kisch made no further reply. He climbed down from his wagon.

"Here you can graze. This isn't my field. Here you can do it," the farmer said without anger and whipped the horses.

*Translated by Anne Bromberger*

**Bob Brown**

# Okay, America—Let's Go!

*1776—chests of tax-bitter tea*
*dumped hissing into Boston Bay*
*by rebel youths disguised as Indian braves.*

*1776—came lisping Freedom and the first*
*warning hiss of labor-scalding steam:*
*William Blake's emanation ruffled*
*White-crested across the sea*
*from Mother-bitch England:*

Why should I care for the men of Thames,
Or the cheating waves of charter'd streams,
Or shrink at the little blasts of fear
That the hireling blows into my ear?
Tho' born on the cheating banks of Thames,
Tho' his waters bathed my infant limbs,
The *Ohio* shall wash his stains from me.
I was born a slave, but I go to be free.

*Oh yeah! Wass you dere, Sharlie?*
*Engines and injuns*
*Slave coffles and*
*Furry Astorbilt fortunes.*

*The Ohio of high promise*
*Never washed one stain away.*
*McKinley, Harding, Mark Hanna*
*White-washers all.*

*1935—Go without meals for a coupla days*
*Save up a whole dollar for a copy of gilded* Fortune
*The white-collar clerk's boon! Learn how the other*
*5 % are living in luxury at your expense.*
*It's well worth a proud pinch of self-denial*
*To see those silver-guilt ritzy ads aglitter with*
*Christmasy aluminum ink conceived without sin*
*for Santa Andy Mellon's benefit.*
*Read about your betters, those Mammons Magnanimous*
*What they are doing with their gouty billions*
*To ease the ache of the empty-bellied this sixth winter*
*Hushed and holy belches they give in lieu of bread.*
Let 'em eat cake! *they burp.*
*A dribble of apple sauce charity from on high.*
*Sharlie Schwab, hiding out in his marble Palisade*
*Pouring banana oil on troubled waters*
*Pumping his pipe organ dry as wrung eyes*
*Feeding his steel puddlers hosanna bananas*
*Himself peering down through Venetian blinds*
*to glimpse the gratitude of steel birds*

*scratching for N. R. A. chicken feed of employment*
*selling pencils now beneath his proud porticos*
*Out in their BVDs on greed-whipped corners*
*Pan-handling one another right merrily*
*The flapping-bellied poor jigging to his jovial tunes.*
*Oh, Great Heart! Cast not thy musical manna*
*before such ungrateful swine.*

*1835—Just a century ago the Governor of South Carolina*
*proclaimed:*
The laboring population of any country,
*black or white,*
is a dangerous element unless reduced to slavery.
*Says you? No, no! Says History—*
*Man's endless plea for equality.*

*Time marches on! Okay—America!*
*John Brown came along*
*Blazed up——blared out*
*Showed us the light of him*
*Gave us a taste of his salt:*
To get a little property together to leave,
is really a low mark to be firing at through life.
*So Pottowattami John fired instead*
*At Kansas Border Ruffians*
*Who wore hemp in their hats—*
*A frowning threat of rope*
*To all emancipators.*

*Today, coast-to-coast hook-ups of Radio Rangers*
*Sit glass-jawed behind a thousand muttering mikes*
*Stuffed high-hats hired to throw their voices*
*To hurl the fear of God and Mammon through*
*Frothy tubes of toiletry into the teeth*
*Of fifty million ventriloquist dummies*
*Listening in—grinning from elbow to elbow*
*Athirst for news poisoned at the source.*
*Taking tear gas of false words and entertainment*
*Manfully on the ear, in the eye, all over the chin*
*In great slobbers.*

*1836: From* Scenes on the Mississippi:
I don't choose to live like a bear
and an alligator any longer.
I may buy a gal or two,
and in time, if we progress,
we may breed some young ones—
*nothing pays better.*
*(Cal Coolidge, always the gent,*
*said* I *do not* choose . . . . . .)

*Along in the 1930s came that little lady Mary Pickford*
*America's Sweetheart*
*Stretched out her eloquent voice to uplift 600 suffering sisters*
*At Welfare Island prison, with this hearty throat-throb:*

I consider it a great privilege to be poor.
It brings out the finer things in you.
You're getting spiritual exercise for your muscles.
Salaries of moving picture stars
are not what they used to be.
If Charlie Chaplin had invented
some kind of soap he would be worth
a hundred million dollars . . . .
while now he is comparatively poor!

*Oh, yeah! You make me wanta cry!*
*Bronx cheers sliced the air thin*
*Ribboned the golden halo above Mary's head*
*Fell dead and black as alley cats*
*At her cunning little feet.*
*Iss you busted, Sharlie?*
*Aw, take it on de chin!*

*The old gray times ain't what they usta be,*
*Ain't what they usta be!*

*England, 1840: This faded tin-type*
*of the mill-period. That baby hiss*
*of 1776 is live steam now, shrieking*
*through a scalded land enslaved by*
*engine power.*
We are left in rags, without any wages at all.
Crowded into cellars without bread.
*A visiting slave-owner said:*
I have always thought myself disgraced
by being the owner of slaves, but we
in the West Indies never thought it
possible for human beings to be so cruel
to any slaves, *white or black.*

*This was the period when a man came to be*
*Called "Master" not because he had*
*Mastered his craft, but because he had*
*Craftily mastered the labor of others.*

*1935—Echoing History, a visiting delegate from*
*The English Labour Party investigates the*
*State of Slavery called "share-cropping"*
*In Arkansas today, and reports:*

We in England would not let animals
live like these people are forced to live.
*And Englishmen, be it known, are kind only to animals—*
*During the coal mine strike at Tonypandy*
*King George despatched a royal telegram*
*Asking if the dear little mine ponies were*
*Still alive and getting the best of care—*
*Yet not one civil question about the welfare of the*
*Miners, their lives and wives, their kids and kind.*

*1935—Today there are no slaves in Russia, black, white or even pink*
*While here in the land of the unfree 95% of us dance*

*To the whip of smoke-hazy politicians huddling half-pickled*
*In hotel conference rooms, marking the smudgy cards in The New Deal*
*Fixing a cold deck to rob us; feeding us the cold potato of over-production.*

*Technology points to new national hope*
*In the elimination of routine slavery*
*While the mob mouths red-throated razzberries*
*Hurls tin tomahawks and hollers:*
For faulty elimination take Exlax!
*English coal mine scene in 1840:*
She had to slave like a brute beast,
in nothing but her body linen,
with a coarse pair of trousers,
a thick leathern belt around her waist,
a heavy iron chain fastened to it,
passing between her legs
and hooked on to the iron carriage,
and she dragging it, almost on all fours,
through these passages; ten, twelve, fourteen,
or sixteen hours—I was going to say every
day—but there was no day for her.
It was dark night always in that frightful mine,
and dark nights above ground
before she could leave it . . . .
But we are blind creatures,
and can't tell what is best.
It was a great lord owned all these mines;
his agent gave good wages,
and got the worth of them out of the miners too.
*So now we know why last year in benighted Bohemia*
*Those brave-to-death strikers stayed down the shaft*
*Til' they won a living wage*
*Preferring oblivion in the exploited*
*Bowels of the earth to the desperate drag*
*of living death on its profit-soiled surface.*

*1935—Today in Detroit operators are paid to serve NRA speed-up*
*They tend lightning hand-chopping machines with loving care;*
*Handcuffed to them, to prevent damage suits against*
*Benevolent bosses, weary with dodging loose flying fingers.*
*But only Eddie Guest, in cap and bells, troubadors their Saga*
*While a century ago, by singing his "Song of a Shirt"*
*Tom Hood relieved the stitch in the sides of a*
*Million sweated sewing women.*

*Time marches on! Okay . . . . America!*
*You can't turn the hands back by*
*Ploughing under, by stuffing CCC boys on*
*Synthetic breakfast foods and Hearst*
*Headlines to make good soldier sausage.*

*1848—Karl Marx issues the* Communist Manifesto *that shall*
*Free the Human Race!*
And here it becomes evident that the bourgeoisie
is unfit longer to be the ruling class in society,
and to impose its condition of existence
upon society as an over-riding law.
It is unfit to rule, because it is incompetent
to insure an existence to its slave within his slavery,
because it cannot help letting him sink
into such a state that it has to feed him,
instead of being fed by him.

*1935—Roosevelt, sinking, with that brave Pepsodent smile*
*Frozen on his false face*
*Going down for the third time in the*
*Greed-weedy Sargossa Sea of Stagnation*
*Ordering billions for public works at starvation wages*
*While the bourgeoisie fold their trading tents and*
*Flee to Florida, Bermuda and Hot Springs*
*Leaving their Church and State to stable and feed*
*On the breadline soup of the Lord's 10% Charity Supper,*
*Or better still, kill off, 15,000,000 unemployables.*

*1852—Came* Uncle Tom's Cabin
*And the spirit of Harriet Stowe*
*Echoing down to us today:*
*I know full well that slavery stops the ears of the soul*
*And you moderns have no time for listening-in to truths,*
*But I would like to repeat just the gist of*
*St. Clare's stark picture of the slavery*
*That brought on our First civil war:*
Why, because my brother is ignorant and weak,
And I am intelligent and strong,—
because I know how, and can do it,—
therefore I may steal all he has,
keep it, and give him only
such and so much as suits my fancy!
Whatever is too hard, too dirty,
too disagreeable for me,
I may set my brother doing.
Because I don't like to work, he shall work.
Because the sun burns me,
He shall stay in the sun.
He shall earn the money,
And I will spend it.
He shall lie down in every puddle,
that I may walk over him dry-shod.
He shall do my will, and not his,
all the days of his mortal life.
*And this, I take to be the motif that still underlies*
*Your wage-slavery of 1935,* both black and white.

*Shine on, shine on, silver dollar moon!*
*While into the Valley of Death charge the 400*

*(Sure t'ing! Dey got de charge accounts.)*
*Nose-diving off their Uncle Tom's Pent-houses.*
*In mink coats drastically reduced to*
*Eight thousand dollars (only a few left.)*
*Flour-sack lingerie for folks even more drastically reduced.*
*(Give amazing amount of wear and service at slight cost.)*
*See our Spring styles in empty Cuban and*
*Filipino slenderizing sugar barrels*
*We bought up whole island-loads for you*
*(Just the thing to clothe the nakedness of Over-production!)*
*While We the Privileged kill cotton with one hand and*
*Silk strikers with the other.*
*Time marches on—isn't it whimsical! Okay, O'keefe!*

*1861*—Uncle Tom's Cabin *began to bear fruit—*
*They hung Jeff Davis to a sour apple tree.*
*John Brown's body lay a-mouldering in the grave*
*But his soul went marching on—*
*On through Honest Abe, who said in passing:*
But it has happened at all times that
some have labored, and others,
without labor, have enjoyed a
large proportion of the fruits.
This is wrong and should not continue.
To secure to each laborer the whole product
of his labor as nearly as possible
is a worthy object of any government.
*And thus Susan B. Anthony:*
A bad time to talk about slavery.
The merchants and bankers and brokers
are trembling over it.
The priests, like faithless nurses,
are on all sides giving their people
anodynes, that they may sleep over it.
The rowdies stand ready to bluster
and swear by it.
Why, in the name of common sense,
should we be forbidden to open our lips?
If we had any self-respect,
any true love of liberty,
any just appreciation of the blood-bought rights
left by our forefathers we should
blot out these hunters whose game is men.
*John Brown's soul goes marching on! Okay . . . . ! Walt Whitman!*
*Your* Leaves of Grass *show which way the wind is blowing.*
*Snap into it! Chant your Universal Brotherhood of Man!*
*(That's Old Walt Himself, roaring like Homer in the pines.)*
*1870—French Commune—the* Internationale
The International Soviet shall be the human race.

*1886—Red bombs of blasting protest in the Haymarket*
(Work and pray, live on hay, you'll get pie in the sky,
by-and-by.)

*Those bombs bursting on high killed some cops*
*And gave the bosses at Washington the jitters*
*They started then, in self-defense, the Dept. of Labor*
*Over which* La Belle *Perkins presides today*
*Concealing the Bosses' Baby, the A. F. of L., under her skirts.*
*Squinting down in a ladylike manner at all other organized*
*"Labah," fingering a lorgnette, talking through her Easter bonnet.*

*1886—Albert Parsons, labor martyr, spoke up at the Haymarket trial:*

I am one of those, although myself a wage-slave,
Who hold that it is wrong, wrong to myself,
wrong to my neighbor, and unjust to my fellow-man,
for me, wage-slave that I am, to make my escape
from wage-slavery by becoming a master and an
owners of slaves myself.

*Then silence fell like a pall over America*
*Not another peep on the subject—except from Haywood and Debs.*
*Our greediest of Wars came in the nick of time to stop all mouths*
*With juicy, bloody bones or dungeon cells.*
*Soldier kill soldier!*
*Dog eat dog!*
*Okay, Big Business! Down with them Wobblies!*
*Down with them Reds!*
*Belly-bulged with warmth, food and shelter of war profits*
*Slavery snored till yesterday—then gaped awake*
*Surprised to find itself still flat on its back*
*With a crick in its neck and a heavier foot planted there.*
*Foodless, homeless, with a sufficient few of the people*
*Holding it down—trampling on it—noses in air*
*Tripping over the corpse in twenty-dollar shoes*
*Carrying their cultured souls in close-clutched reticules*
*Bible in hand, wishing the poor well*
*Their shoes not pinching them in the least*
*In passing shabby Fifth Avenue shop girls*
*Smart in their oxfords at a dollar-eighty*
*The pair—with neat butcher-paper soles.*
*By our sport-writers ye shall know us.*
*Racketeers Win All-American Games!*
*Thrilling Third Degree Murder!*
*Rape, Lynching and Kidnapping Going Strong.*
*Handcuffed Together in the Slave Shuffle*
*Dance Marathoners Drop in Great Knock-out Grind!*
*Hurrah for freedom, fraternity and the equality of opportunity—*
*to buy all advertised products at NRA prices in this*
*our rah-rah-rah-dio age!*
*Hurrah for independence, free speech, our great Free Press*
*(Yeah, I know. You send the whole suit*
*An' they press the extra pants free.)*
*Hurrah for the Fourth of July and the latest unAmerican teaching and*

*anti-sedition bill! Hip-hip-hooray for Herbie and his*
*BATTLE OF ANACOSTIA*
*To arms! Bugle out my Marines! The poor and heavy-laden*
*Creep endlessly past my white, white house*
*in their squeaking shoes. Snarling with hunger*
*beneath my Blue Room bay-window,*
*intoning them Bonus Blu-u-u-e-s.*
*And so-O-O-O! 10,000 patriots, convicted of seditious poverty*
*Turned out to tramp the street all night, unselfishly staying up*
*To let one quaking Quaker tell himself bed-time stories*
*Rolling his Easter egg eyes around,*
*crooning his conscience to sleep.*

*1932: Nov. 8: Hurrah for Roosevelt the Second!*
Happy Days are Here Again
Beer and Free Lunch are in Again!
*Thanksgiving:*
Don't mind if food is high
You'll get by with a twinkle in your eye!

*1933: Sappy New Year!*
If I only had a five cent piece!

*1934: Lincoln's Birthday:*
I haven't got a cent
And I cannot pay my rent.
*Valentine's Day:*
I wonder how I'll feel again
If I ever get a square meal again.
*Christmas:* Oh, Big Town, you've got the best of me,
There's no rest for me.
Nearer my God to Thee!

*1935: Washington's Cherry-tree Day:*
Say, Buddy, can you spare another dime?
*By their song-writers ye shall know them too.*
*Radio moaners drag down almost as much as kidnappers*
*and it's a safer racket—keeping up our morale,*
*Telling up to Buy Til' It Hurts*
*'Cause Prices May Never Be This High Again!*

*Read today's head-lines—join tonight's bread-lines!*
*Proud as cats, we arch our glossy backs, purr snug in our hooverville hide-outs*
*Lookit all the wheat we're burning, see the sewers run red with blood of the wrong hogs*
*we've killed—look what a low price our dollar's at!*

*While whipped coyotes that once were men,*
*Stagger through greed-stripped slums, weaving in bread-lines*
*Whining for a cup of coffee—squatting on work-scarred haunches,*
*Howling for hot dogs*
*Baying at the black moon of this blanketless midnight land.*

*And so History, repeating itself, stutters on.*
*Yet back in the beginning men shouted Freedom and*
*Hailed the power of steam to loose them from Adam's curse*
*Little thinking that the machine would but enslave them more.*

*1776—chests of tax-bitter tea were dumped*
*hissing into Boston Bay by rebel youths*
*at least disguised as Indian braves.*

*1935—today our drug-store cowboys dawdle dazed*
*nodding over tabloids like fish poles getting bites*
*catching pink patches of talkie stars*
*glimpses over the onyx edges of pompeian pools*
*at floozies taking their daily bath in beautifying babies' milk*
*dangling befogged, fishing in a tub.*
*Ear-waxed with glut of radio*
*In this peppy-pepsodenty pimp-stick age*
*Their sole inheritance from Dollar-Dippy Daddys.*

*Oh, Youth, your problem has widened with the Light and Power of today*
*No more does it concern itself with the scarlet sister and the black brother*
*You must deal increasingly with over-production of slaves of all shades*
*As well as with the great hollow surplusses of gold, puffed wheat and pride*
*You have inherited from your Sugar Daddies, now soured and suiciding*
*For what has it profited the privileged few*
*Who in scrambling to selfish freedom*
*Up over humble, human stepping stones*
*Have broken the broad backs that lifted them.*

*Snap out of it, Young America, you have nothing to lose but your soda-straws!*
*The road to your future has been flung wide by the USSR.*
*You have the weapon ready in your hand*
*Grasp the calloused palm of your fellow worker*
*Raise hands clenched together as one clubbed fist*
*Make of these millions, upstretched bayonets,*
*One mass arm of full fraternity.*
*Strike with this against all slavery.*
*For the future is yours and the way to creative rebirth*
*Is as plainly writ in* The Manifesto
*As the killing greed on your Master's face.*

# LETTERS and DOCUMENTS

**N. G. Chernishevski**

## Life and Esthetics

*On the Question of Poetry—Concluding a Russian Classic* [1]

Let us now consider poetry, the highest and fullest of all the arts. Its problems include all the theory of art. Poetry stands high above all other arts in its content. All the other arts cannot tell us even a small fraction of what poetry does. But this relation changes completely when we turn our attention to the force and liveliness of the subjective impression produced by poetry and the arts. All other arts, like live reality, act directly on our senses; poetry acts on the imagination. In some people the imagination is more impressionable and alive than in others—but generally speaking in the normal person the images of the imagination are pale and weak in comparison with impressions of the senses. It therefore follows that in power and clearness of subjective impression poetry is much inferior not only to reality, but even to the other arts. But let us investigate the degree of objective perfection of the form and content of poetry and whether it can compete with nature in this respect.

There is much talk of the "fullness," "individuality," "live definiteness of the persons and characters depicted" by great poets. We are told at the same time that "these are not individual persons but general types"—upon which it would be futile to argue that the most definite, best drawn person in a poetic work remains only a general, indefinitely outlined sketch to which only the imagination (really, the memory) of the reader lends definite individuality. The image in poetry bears the same relation to the real, live image that the word bears to the object it denotes—it is a pale, general, indefinite hint at reality. In this "generality" of the poetic image many see a superiority over the persons presented to us by real life. Such an opinion is based on a supposed conflict between the general significance of a creature and its live individuality, on an assumption that "in becoming individualized, the general loses its generality" in reality and "is raised again to the general only by the power of art divesting the individual of his individuality." Without entering into a metaphysical discussion as to what the real relation is between the general and the particular (which would only lead to the conclusion that the general is only a pale, dead extract of the individual and the relation between them is therefore that of the word and reality), we shall only add that in actuality individual details do not in the least detract from the general sig-

[1] In *International Literature* No. 6, 1935, we began the publication of this well known Russian pioneer classic on esthetics. In the same number, we printed comments of both Marx and Lenin on Chernishevski. While the book was first published in 1853, the author's own introduction to his work, due to strict Tsarist censorship, appeared only 35 years later. Publication of the book itself, printed for the first time in English, began in *International Literature*. No. 7, 1935 and continued in Nos 8 and 9. We print the final installment in this number.—*Editor.*

nificance of an object but, on the contrary, animate and amplify its general significance; that in any event, poetry admits the great superiority of the individual by its attempts to lend live individuality to its images, that it can nevertheless, by no means attain individuality, but succeeds only in approaching somewhat closer to it and that the merit of a poetic image is determined by how close it approaches it. And so poetry tries to but never can attain what is always to be found in typical persons of real life. It is evident, therefore, that the images of poetry are weak, anemic, indefinite, as compared with the corresponding images in life.

"But can one find genuinely typical characters in life?" It is enough to put such a question to find it needs no answer, just as the questions whether one can really find in life good and bad people, spendthrifts, misers, etc., is ice really cold, bread really nutritious, etc. There are people to whom everything has to be shown and proved. But such people cannot be convinced by general arguments in a general work. To them everything has to be proved separately, they can only be convinced by individual examples drawn from among people they know personally and among which, no matter how close the circle, there will always be a few genuinely typical characters. It will hardly help to point out typical characters from among historical personages. Some will say: "Historical characters have been glorified by tradition, by admiration of their contemporaries, the genius of historians or extraordinary circumstances."

Somewhat later we shall investigate the origin of the opinion that typical characters are depicted much better and more clean-cut in poetry than they occur in real life. At this point let us turn our attention to the process by means of which characters in poetry are "created" as this is what usually is considered the guarantee of greater typicalness of these characters than of natural ones. It is customarily said: "The poet observes a multitude of living individual people; not one of them can serve as a complete type, but he notes that there is something general, typical in each one of them. Casting aside everything individual, he unites all the scattered features of various persons into one artistic whole and this can be called the quintessence of the real characters." Suppose this is all perfectly just, and that it is really so always. But the quintessence is usually entirely unlike the thing itself. Alcohol is not wine. If they follow the rule quoted, "composers" give us the quintessence of heroism or wickedness in the form of wooden characters instead of living people. All, or almost all, young people fall in love—that is their general trait, in all other things they differ—and we should read about youths and maidens that think and talk only about love and do nothing else throughout the novel than suffer or enjoy happiness through love. All older folks like to philosophize—otherwise there is nothing in common among them, all grandmothers dote on their grandchildren, etc.—and so we should have all stories and novels filled with old men who do nothing but philosophize, with grandmothers who do nothing but fondle their grandchildren and so on. Only the recipe is not always adhered to. Before the imagination of the poet "creating" a character there usually stands the image of some real person, and consciously or unconsciously he "reproduces" this person in his typical character. As proof of this we may point to an endless number of works, the principal hero of which is the more or less true portrait of the author himself (for instance, Faust, Don Carlos, Byron's heroes, the heroes and heroines of George Sand, Lenski, Onyegin, Pechorin). We should also recall the frequent accusations of novelists in showing "portraits of their acquaintances in their novels." These accusations are usually ridiculed and indignantly denied, but they are only

somewhat exaggerated and crudely expressed and not at all essentially unjust.

Conventions on the one hand, and ordinary tendencies of people to independence, to "create and not copy," on the other, compel the author to alter the characters he takes from life and depict them somewhat inexactly. Besides, the character taken from life has to act in the novel in circumstances entirely different from those that surrounded him in reality and this alters the external semblance. All these alterations, however, do not prevent the character from remaining essentially a copied and not a created portrait, not an original. It may be argued, that though it is true that a real person serves as the prototype for a poetic character, the poet "raises the character to general significance." This is usually superfluous, as the original is already of general significance in its individuality. One should only be able to understand, and this is one of the features of poetic genius, the essence of the character of the real person, see him with penetrating eyes. It is also necessary to understand and feel how the person would act and feel in the situation in which he will be placed by the author—and this is another phase of poetic genius. In the third place, the ability is required to depict the character just as the author conceives him—which is perhaps the most characteristic trait of poetic genius. To understand, be able to intuitively comprehend and convey—this is the poet's problem when he attempts to depict most characters. The question as to what "raising to ideal significance" and "poetic idealisation of the prose and discrepancies of life" represents will be discussed later. We do not in the least doubt the fact that there are many characters in works of fiction which cannot be called portraits but have been entirely "created" by the poet. But this is not at all due to the fact that there are no corresponding models in life but to an entirely different reason—most frequently simply lack of remembrance or insufficient acquaintance. If the live particulars have vanished from the poet's memory, only a general, abstract idea of the character remains there or, it may happen, that the poet knows too little about the typical character for it to appear as a live individual in his imagination, and he is compelled to fill in the general outline, put shading on the sketch. But such entirely fictitious characters almost never strike us as living persons.

In general, the more we know about the poet's life and the people he came in contact with, the more we find portraits of living people in his works. It can hardly be disputed that there has always been less of the "created" in the characters depicted by authors than of the copied from nature. It is hard not to reach the conclusion that with respect to his characters, the poet is almost always only the historian or the author of their biographies. It is, of course, self evident, that we do not mean to say by this that every word spoken by Mephistopheles was actually heard by Goethe. Not only a poet of genius, even an ordinary story-teller is able to add similar expressions, an appropriate introduction and transitions.

### *From Life?*

There is much more "independent invention" or "fiction"—as we prefer to call what is usually termed more proudly "creation"—in the events discribed by the poet, in the plot, its development and denoument—although it is easily demonstrated that the plots of novels, stories, etc., are usually borrowed from life or anecdotes and various sorts of stories (take, for instance, all Pushkin's prose tales: *The Captain's Daughter* is based on an anecdote, so is *Dubrovski, Queen of Spades, The Shot,* etc.). But the plot alone is not sufficient to lend a novel or story high poetic value—one must know how to

utilize a plot. Hence, disregarding the question of "independence" of the plot, we shall turn our attention to the question as to whether the "poetry" of poetic works with regard to the plot as it appears upon full development, is of a higher order than the real occurrence. As an aid in arriving at a final decision we shall put a number of questions, though most of them answer themselves. 1) Are there any poetic occurrences in life, are there any dramas, novels, comedies, tragedies, farces, in real life? —Every minute. 2) Are these occurrences truly poetic in their development and denoument? —Do they possess artistic fullness and completeness in real life? —This depends—sometimes yes, but often not. There are many occurrences in which a strictly poetic viewpoint can find nothing to carp at with respect to art. This point can be settled by the first reading of a well written book on history or an evening spent in the company of a man who had seen much in his lifetime. It can finally be settled by a random number of an English or French court newspaper. 3) Are there any occurrences among these finished poetic ones that could, without introducing any changes, be repeated under the title of "drama," "tragedy," "novel," and so on? Very many. True, many real occurrences are incredible, are based on very rare and extraordinary situations or concatenations of circumstances, and therefore resemble a fable or labored fiction in their natural form (which only goes to prove that real life may be too dramatic for drama, too poetic for poetry). But there are other occurrences in which, with all their being so remarkable, there is nothing eccentric or incredible, and the entire chain of circumstances, the entire progress and development of what is called the plot, are very simple. 4) Have real occurrences a "general" side to them such as is essential to a poetic work?—Of course, there is such a side to every occurrence that deserves the attention of any thoughtful person; and there are many such occurrences.

One cannot but admit that there are many occurrences in life which one only has to know about, understand and be able to recount and in the pure prosaic story of the historian, biographer or collector of anecdotes these tales differ from "poetic works" only in greater brevity, less development of scenes and fewer descriptions and other such minor points. And this is the essential difference between poetic works and the precise prosaic recounting of actual occurrences. Greater fullness of detail or, what in poorer writing is called "rhetorical expansion"—is really all that can be claimed for the superiority of poetry over the true story. We have as little regard for rhetoric as anyone; but, allowing for all the needs of the human heart, we are ready to admit the importance of such poetic expansion, seeing how general it is, inasmuch as we see a tendency towards it in poetry everywhere. Besides, in life these details always exist, and they are necessary for real development although entirely unessential to the story itself; hence, they should also have their place in poetry. There is only the difference that while in life details are never an empty distension of a matter, such details in poetry are all too often merely rhetoric or mechanical distension of the story. Is not Shakespeare superb just because he dispenses with all such circumlocutions in his best scenes? But how much of it there is even in Shakespeare, Goethe and Schiller! It seems to us (perhaps due to prepossession in favor of one's own) that Russian poetry has in itself the germ of distaste for lengthening a story by mechanical selection of details. The narratives of Pushkin, Lermontov and Gogol have one common trait—briefness and rapid action.

Thus we can say in general that in plot, types and fullness of characterization poetic works are far inferior to life. There are only two things in which poetic works might be superior to life—in decoration of a story by the addi-

tion of effective accessories and in making the characters harmonize more with the events they take part in.

We have stated that painting more frequently gives a group surroundings appropriate to the essence of a scene than nature does. Similarly poetry more frequently than nature makes the moving forces of events appear in people whose characters correspond more nearly to the spirit of the event. In life, petty people by nature are frequently the prime movers of events tragic, dramatic, etc. A miserable rake, sometimes not even really a bad fellow, may cause a chain of terrible events. A person whom one would by no means consider wicked, may shatter the happiness of many and be the cause of more grief than have been caused by a Iago or Mephistopheles. In poetry, on the contrary, wicked deeds are usually committed by wicked people, good deeds by good people. In life one is often at a loss whom to blame and whom to praise. In poetry honor and shame are usually justly and definitely distributed. Only is this a merit or a fault? Sometimes it is one, sometimes the other—generally it is a fault. We shall not touch upon the question at this time that the result of such a procedure is idealization or, more simply, exaggeration both of the good and the bad, because we have not yet discussed the significance of art and it would be premature to say that idealization is either a fault or a virtue. We must say, however, that the result of a constant effort to make the character correspond to the nature of the event in poetry is monotony; characters and even action become standardized. With variety in the nature of the characters events essentially similar would acquire a difference in nuance, as happens in life which is always different, always new—in poetry, however, one often comes across repetitions. It has become customary nowadays to ridicule embellishments not essential to the subject matter or to the final purpose—nevertheless, an apt phrase, a brilliant metaphor, thousands of embellishments introduced to lend outward brilliance to a book, are still an important factor in evoking favorable opinion. With respect to embellishments, outward brilliance, intricacy, etc., we have never disputed the superiority of fiction over reality. But one has only to point out such an apparent merit of a story or drama for these to lose favor in the eyes of people of taste and transfer such works from the province of "art" to that of "artificiality."

*Exaggerations About Art*

Our analysis has thus shown that art may have the advantage over reality only in two or three insignificant details while in everything essential it remains far behind life. The only thing that may be held against our analysis is that it limited itself to general points of view without entering into detail or reference to examples. When one considers how strongly entrenched the opinion is that the beauty of a work of art is supposedly greater than beauty in nature, the briefness of our analysis may really be a fault,—this opinion is however, so shaky, the exponents of it so contradict themselves at every step, that it would only seem necessary to call attention to how unjust this opinion is for everyone to see that beauty in real life is superior to any product of the "creative" imagination. But if this is so, what is the basis or rather, what are the subjective reasons for the exaggerated opinion of the high merit of works of art?

The prime source of this opinion is the natural human inclination to prize difficult accomplishments and rare things. No one prizes the pure pronunciation of a Frenchman speaking French or of a German speaking German—"it

came to him easily and is no rarity." But when a Frenchman speaks German tolerably well, or a German French it is considered an accomplishment and gives the person the right to some respect for it. Why? In the first place because it is something rare, in the second place, because it is the result of years of effort.

As a matter of fact, every Frenchman who has had the benefit of a decent literary or worldly education speaks an excellent French—but how strict are our requirements in such a case? The least noticeable trace of provincial accent, the least inelegant phrase—and we conclude that "the gentleman has a poor command of his native tongue." A Russian speaking French betrays in every sound that a completely pure French pronunciation is beyond him, always discloses that it is a tongue foreign to him—by his choice of words, construction of phrase, in the entire structure of his speech—but we forgive him all that, do not notice it and sometimes even declare that "this Russian speaks French better than a Frenchman does" without even the least intention of comparing his speech to a native Frenchman's, but only with that of other Russians also endeavoring to speak French. And he probably does speak the language much better than the others but much worse than any Frenchman—that is quite evident to anyone that understands such matters. Many people however, are actually misled by the hyperbolic expression.

The same thing happens in the esthetic judgment of the products of nature and of art. The least actual or even imagined deficiency in a product of nature gives a shock to esthetics, makes it a subject of much talk and the estheticians are ready to forget all the good features and beauty. What is there to prize in these—they cost no effort! In a work of art this same deficiency may be a hundredfold more crude and surrounded by many other deficiencies to boot—but we do not notice it or, if we do, we forgive it all and exclaim: "The sun also has its spots."

As a matter of fact works of art should only be compared with one another in determining their relative merits. Some will prove better than others and in admiration of their beauty (relative—to be sure) we exclaim: "They are more beautiful than nature and life themselves! The beauties of nature pale before the beauties of art!" Only this admiration is biased—it grants more than justice warrants: we prize difficult accomplishment—which is fine; but we should not forget the essential inherent merits which do not depend upon the degree of difficulty encountered. We are positively unjust when we give difficulty of accomplishment preference over inherent merit. Life and nature produce beauty without design and such beauty really comes without effort and hence without merit in our eyes, without any rights to our sympathy or to condescension. And why condescend when there is so much beauty in reality? "Everything not completely beautiful in reality—is bad; everything in the least tolerable in art—is excellent"—there is the rule that governs our judgment.

To prove how highly we prize difficulty of accomplishment and how much that which comes by itself, without any effort on our part, loses in our eyes, we shall consider photography. Among camera portraits there may be many not only perfectly true ones, but even such as transmit perfectly the expression of the face—but do we prize them? It would even sound strange to hear any apologies for camera portraits. Another example: what high regard calligraphy was once held in! Nevertheless, even a moderately well printed book is much more beautiful than any manuscript. But who ever stopped to admire the art of typography and who will not spend a thousandfold more praise on a beautiful manuscript than on a really well printed book which may be

much more beautiful than the manuscript? What is easy, interests us very little, even though its inherent beauty may far exceed the product of hard endeavor. It is understood of course, that even from this point of view we are only subjectively right: "reality produces beauty without effort" only means that no effort is made in this case on the part of the human will. In fact however, the beautiful and the unbeautiful, the great and the small, are the result of the greatest possible application of energy, knowing no rest and no fatigue. But we have no interest in efforts made and struggles taking place without our participation and outside our consciousness. We should know nothing of them—we only value human energy, only value man.

And this is the second source of our bias for works of art: they are human products. That is why we are all proud of them, considering them something near to our own selves. They are evidence of the human mind, of human power and so, dear to us. All, except the French, can see that there is a great difference between Shakespeare and Corneille or Racine. Only the French still draw comparisons between them. It is hard to realize that "ours is not the height of perfection." There will be many Russians ready to maintain that Pushkin is a universal poet—some would even maintain that Pushkin is superior to Byron—thus man always values most highly one's own things. Just as a people exaggerates the merit of its own poet so man as a whole exaggerates the value of poetry generally.

The reasons for partiality to art discussed so far, deserves all respect because they are natural ones. How is man not to respect human labor, not to love man and not to prize the products which bear witness to human intellect and power? The third reason for human partiality to art, however, hardly deserves such respect. The thing is, art flatters our artificial tastes. We are thoroughly aware of the artificiality of the life and manners, the customs and the entire mode of thinking of the period of Louis XIV. We have come closer to nature. We understand and value nature more than society of the seventeenth century did. Nevertheless, we are still at odds with nature. Our habits, manners, our entire mode of life and consequently also our entire mode of thought are still very artificial. It is hard to see the failings of one's age, particularly if they have become smaller than previously. Instead of noting how much refined artificiality there is in us, we only note that the nineteenth century has, in this respect, grown better than the seventeenth, that there is more understanding of nature. We forget that an illness abated is not yet perfect health.

Our artificiality is noticeable in everything, beginning with our clothes which everyone laughs at and everyone nevertheless wears and ending with our food spiced to mask and make utterly unrecognizable the natural taste; in the refinements of our oral language and the subtleties of our literary language which continues to decorate itself with antitheses, witticisms, with profound reflections on trite themes and learned remarks on the human heart in the manner of Corneille and Racine in fiction and in the manner of Johannes Müller in historical works. Works of art flatter all our petty requirements which originate in our love of artificiality. And then how we still love to "wash" nature—just as the seventeenth century liked to dress it—but to go into this would lead us far astray in discussion of what is "filthy" and to what extent it is permissible in art. Minute dressing of details still prevails in works of art and the object of such a procedure is not to make the details harmonize with the spirit of the whole but only to make each one of them more interesting or beautiful by itself, almost always at the expense of the work as a whole, its credibility and naturalness. There prevails a petty

chasing for effect in individual words, phrases and episodes, coloring of characters and action, not in natural but rather in sharp colors. Works of art are both more petty than anything we meet in life or nature and at the same time more effective—is it to be wondered at that the opinion prevails that art is more beautiful than life or nature in which there is so little artificiality and to which the effort to awaken interest is foreign?

*Art Is Not Life*

Life and nature are superior to art—but art endeavors to suit our bents while reality cannot be subjected to our desires to see everything in the light that suits us best or to answer to our often biased conceptions. Of the many cases of such catering to prevailing ideas we shall point out one: many require a satirical work to contain characters "on which the heart could rest with love"—which is a very natural desire; but reality very frequently presents a contrary spectacle, with many occurrences in which there is not a single positive character. Art almost always complies to this requirement and, in Russian literature at least, we know no writer, except Gogol, who does not. And in Gogol the lack of "positive" characters is compensated for by "elevated, lyrical" digressions. Another example—Man is inclined to be sentimental. Life and nature do not share this inclination. Works of art, however, almost universally cater to this inclination in a greater or lesser degree. Both requirements mentioned are due to human limitations. Real life and nature are above these limitations. Works of art, submitting to these limitations and thus descending below reality and often becoming banal and commonplace, come closer to common human needs and thus gain in man's eyes. "But, in such a case, you yourself admit that works of art are better and fuller than objective reality, that they correspond to human nature; hence to man they are better than the product of nature." This conclusion suffers from a lack of precision in the formulation of it. The thing is—artificially developed man has many artificial needs, needs distorted to the point of falseness, to the point of being fantastic. Such needs cannot be fully satisfied because they are not, essentially, natural needs but the dreamings of a distorted imagination. They cannot be catered to without becoming ridiculous and contemptible to the very man that is being catered to because, instinctively, he feels that these requirements should not be satisfied. Thus the public, and the esthetics following it, demands "positive" characters and sentimentality and then—the same public laughs in scorn at works of art which cater to these wishes. To cater to man's caprices is not yet to satisfy his needs. The first and foremost of these needs is—truth. But thus far we have spoken only of the sources of origin and content. But the impression produced upon us by art and reality are also of great importance—the merits of things are also judged by the strength of such impressions.

We have seen that the impressions produced by works of art are much weaker than impressions produced by life. This does not require any further proof. The work of art, however, is in a much more favorable position in this respect, which might influence one not used to analyse the causes of his sensations to conclude that art in itself, produces a greater effect than living reality. Against our will, reality seems to us most of the time, inapt, inappropriate. We go visiting, for instance, not in order to enjoy human beauty, or observe human nature, watch the drama of life—we often start out with a mind full of cares and a heart closed to all impressions. But who ever goes to a picture gallery for any reason but to enjoy beautiful paintings? Who

turns to a novel for aught but to immerse himself in the plot and the characters depicted there? Our attention to the beauties and majesty of nature is usually almost forced. Nature must itself, if it can, attract our eyes directed towards some entirely different object, must penetrate our hearts occupied with other matters, by force. Towards reality our attitude is like that towards a boring guest who persists in demanding our attention—we try to shut ourselves away from it. But there are times when our hearts begin to feel empty due to this very inattention to reality—then we turn to art, seeking solace there—we turn into solicitous persons ourselves.

Life's way is strewn with golden coins, only we do not notice them because we are absorbed in our aims and do not look at the road under our feet. And when we do notice them we cannot stop to pick them up because the vehicle of life carries us relentlessly on. Such is our attitude to reality. But here we have come to a station and walk about waiting impatiently for our conveyance—and here we examine every nail attentively, though it may not even be worth any attention. Such is our attitude to art. Not to speak of the fact that everyone must evaluate life for himself because life presents to each individual sides invisible to others, and the opinion of society as a whole is not known —while works of art are judged by all of society. The beauties and majesty of nature are seldom patent and things that are not talked about generally few value. The beauties of life are like bars of gold without a proof stamp—many refuse to handle it because they cannot distinguish it from a bar of brass. Works of art are like a currency bill—it has very little inherent value but all society vouches for its conventional value and consequently everyone holds it precious and very few have a clear idea that all its value is lent to it by the fact that it represents a quantity of gold.

When we observe nature it captivates us by itself, as something independent of anything else, and seldom lets us wander in thought into our subjective world, into our past. But when we observe a work of art there is complete freedom for subjective recollections and it usually serves only as a pretext for conscious or unconscious dreamings and associations. When we witness a tragic scene in reality we forget all about ourselves, while when we read about the tragic end of someone in a novel our memory evokes, clearly or vaguely, all dangerous situations we have been in ourselves and that we know about our friends. The power of art, particularly poetry, is usually the power of recollection. A work of art is particularly suited to evoke our recollections by virtue of its unfinished, indefinite nature, because it is usually "something general" and not a live individual image or event. If we are shown a finished portrait of a person that does not resemble anyone we know, we coldly turn away with perhaps the remark "rather clever." But when we are shown a barely sketched indefinite figure in which no one will positively recognize anyone—this poor weak sketch will call to our minds some dear features. And while we turn coldly away from a face full of beauty and expression, we are enchanted with an insignificant sketch because it recalls someone close to me and, by association, recalls ourselves to us. The strength of art is in generalities.

There is another side to works of art which to inexperienced and nearsighted people makes art seem superior to life and nature—it is that in them everything is put out for show, explained by the author himself. In life and art one has to uncover things oneself. The strength of art here is the strength of commentary, but of this we shall speak later.

We have thus found many reasons why art is preferred to reality—but they all only explain why this is so without justifying such preference. Since

we cannot agree that art is superior, nay, even the equal of reality in either merit of content or execution, we cannot, of course, acquiesce to the generally prevailing view on the needs which give rise to art and its ultimate aim. The prevalent opinion on the origin of art can be stated as follows: "Man is governed by an invincible desire for beauty but cannot find any true beauty in objective reality. He is thus compelled to himself create objects or works that satisfy his requirements or that are truly beautiful." Or, to use the special terminology of the ruling school: "The idea of beauty not being realized by reality is realized in works of art." This must be analysed for the real meaning of the incomplete and onesided hints intended here. "Man desires beauty"—but if we are to understand by beauty what is here defined—the full correspondence of form and idea—then, not art alone but all human activity is to be inferred as resulting from this desire for beauty as the basic principle of this activity, and, according to this school of thought, the tendency to unity of image and idea. This is the formal basis of all technical development, all labor applied to the creation and perfection of all things necessary to us. In making art the result of the desire for beauty we confuse two distinct meanings of the word art: 1) fine arts (poetry, music, etc.) and 2) the ability or effort to do anything well. Only the latter is a result of the tendency towards unity of form and idea. If, however, we understand by beauty (as we see it) that in which man sees life, it is evident that the desire for beauty will result in a joyous love of everything living and is most fully satisfied by live reality. "Man does not find anything truly and fully beautiful in reality." We have tried to show how unjust this statement is, that the activity of our imagination is awakened, not by the defects of beauty in life but by its absence, that beauty in life is truly and fully beautiful but that it, alas, is not always patent to our eyes. If works of art were the result of our desire for perfection and disdain of everything imperfect, man should long ago have given up all attempts at art as futile because works of art are always lacking in perfection. Anyone dissatisfied with beauty in life and nature will even be less satisfied with beauty created by art. It is thus impossible to agree with the customary explanation of the meaning of art. There are hints there, however, that might be considered just, if properly interpreted. This is the statement that "man is not satisfied by beauty in reality because such beauty is not enough"—and this is just, only misconstrued ,and requires explanation.

The sea is beautiful. As we look at it, it does not occur to us that it is unsatisfactory in an esthetic sense. But not everyone lives near the sea. Many live through their lifetime without an opportunity to glimpse the sea. They should also like to enjoy the sight of the sea, and to them paintings of the sea are interesting. It is of course better to look at the sea itself rather than at a picture of it—but when the best is not to be had the next best will do—when one cannot get the original one must needs be satisfied with a substitute. Even those that have the possibility of enjoying the sea itself cannot always see it when they should like—then they recall it to their imagination. But the imagination is feeble, it needs support, needs a spur—and in order to revive their recollections of the sea, to see it more clearly in their imagination, they look at pictures of the sea. This is the only aim and value of very many (in fact most) works of art: to make it possible to get even some idea of the beautiful in reality for those people that have no opportunity of enjoying it directly; to serve as a spur to the memory, revive and strengthen recollections of real beauties seen and which one loves to recollect. (For the present we shall not discuss the statement that "beauty is the essential content of art";

below, we shall substitute another term for the word "beauty" in this expression, a term which defines the content of art much more precisely and fully, in our opinion.)

To sum up, therefore, the first function of art, a function of all works of art without exception, is the reproduction of life and nature. The relation of such works to reality is the same as that of the engraving to the picture from which it is taken, the relation of the portrait to the face it represents. An engraving is made of a picture not because the picture is a bad one and the engraving is to improve it, but, on the contrary, just because the picture is a good one. Similarly reality is reproduced by art not to improve it and round off its imperfections, not because the reality itself is not beautiful, but on the contrary, precisely because it is beautiful. The engraving is not an improvement on the picture from which it was made—similarly the work of art does not approach the beauty or majesty of reality. But there is only one picture and it can be enjoyed only by those fortunate enough to visit the gallery where it is hung—the engraving is broadcast in hundreds of copies all over the world and many can enjoy it whenever and wherever they please. without leaving their chamber or rising from their chair. Similarly a thing of beauty in reality is not always available to everyone's enjoyment and cannot be enjoyed at all times, the reproduction (feeble, crude, it is true, but nevertheless a reproduction) by art is always and everywhere available. Say a portrait is made of one dear to us—it is not for the purpose of improving the features (the face is dear to us with all its imperfections)—but to make it possible for us to enjoy looking at this face even when the original is not near us. Such then is the purpose of art—it does not improve reality, does not beautify it, it reproduces it, serves as its substitute.

### *Art Is a Copy of Nature*

So, the first purpose of art is to reproduce reality. Without the least pretensions of having, by this, added anything new to the history of esthetics, we nevertheless think that the formula "art is the reproduction of reality" means something entirely different than the pseudo-classic "theory of imitation of nature" of the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries. So that this distinction between our view on art and the theory of imitation of nature may not rest upon our bare statement, we shall quote an analysis of the latter theory from one of the best books on the now ruling system of esthetics. This analysis will in the first place serve to show the difference between the idea it refutes and those propounded by us, and in the second place, it will reveal what is lacking in our first definition of art as a reproducing activity, and thus lead us to a more precise development of the conception of art.

"In defining art as the imitation of nature only its formal purpose is touched upon. According to this definition art should endeavor to copy as closely as possible what already exists in the external world. Such repetition must be acknowledged futile as life and nature already give us that which art is supposed to. But more than this—to imitate nature is a vain endeavor which must fall far short of its aim as in imitating nature, art, with the limited means at its disposal, can only give an illusion instead of truth, and instead of something really alive, only a dead mask."

Here we note first of all that the phrases: "art is the reproduction of reality" and "art is imitation of nature" define only the formal principle of art. In order to define the content of art our first conclusion, regarding the purpose of art, must be amplified—and this we shall proceed to do below. The second objection raised does not apply to our views. It is evident from our previous analysis that the reproduction or "repetition" by art of things and phenomena

in nature is by no means useless—on the contrary, it is a necessary activity. As to the statement that such repetition is a futile effort which falls far short of achieving its purpose, it must be remarked that this objection has force only if it is assumed that art would compete with reality and not merely serve as a substitute. But this is precisely what we have been arguing—art cannot stand up in comparison with reality and hasn't the lively interest of reality. We may consider this indisputable.

But the statement "art is the reproduction of reality" requires amplification before it can be termed a rounded definition of art. However, though this statement does not exhaustively define the conception of art, it is true as far as it goes and objections to it can only be raised issuing from the unspoken requirements that art must be more perfect than reality. We have tried to show the objective untenability of this view and we believe we have succeeded in revealing its subjective origin. Let us now see whether the further objections to the theory of imitation are applicable to our views.

"Complete success in imitating nature being impassible, there only remains the self satisfied enjoyment of the relative success of this trick. But this pleasure cools off in proportion as the imitation begins to resemble the original, even turning to satiation or disdain. There are portraits which, as is sad, resemble the original to a disgusting degree. An imitation of the nightingale's song most excellently rendered turns into a disgusting bore as soon as we grow aware that this is not the song of a nightingale but an imitation produced by some human imitator—because we are entitled to expect different music from a human being. Such tricks of skilfull imitation of nature are comparable to the art of the trickster who could throw lentils through an opening no larger than the lentil without missing once and whom Alexander the Great awarded."

These remarks are perfectly just, but they refer to the useless and senseless copying of what is not worthy of attention or, to the depiction of empty externalities void of all content. (Alas, how many famed works of art deserve such bitter but merited ridicule!) Only subject matter worthy of the attention of thoughtful man can save art from the reproach that it is the empty amusement which it only all too frequently is. An artistic form will not save a work from contempt or a smile of commiseration at best, if its underlying idea does not give a positive answer to the question, "Was it worth bothering about?" The useless has no claims on our respect. "Man is his own purpose"—but man's activities must have their purpose in human needs and not in themselves. That is why a useless imitation evokes all the greater disdain the more successful it is: "Why spend so much time and energy?"—is our reaction, and we feel, "What a pity to spend such perfection of technique on such comparatively useless subject matter." The boredom and disgust brought on by the trickster who so successfully imitates a nightingale's song is explained by the very remarks about it contained in the quotation. It is a pitiful thing for a man not to understand that he is to sing human songs and not exercise himself in cascades and trills which have any sense only in the song of a nightingale and lose all value when repeated by human beings. As regards portraits resembling the original to the point of disgust—this should be understood as follows: any copy, to be true, must convey the essential features of the original. A portrait which does not reproduce the main and most expressive features of a face is not a good portrait. But when all the petty details of a face are drawn in sharply the face on the portrait appears deformed, dead—is it any wonder it awakens disdain? One frequently hears objections to photographic copies of reality—but would it not be better to say only that copying, like all human activities, requires talent, the ability to distinguish between the essential and the unessential? "Dead copying" is the usual phrase. But one cannot copy well if the dead mechanism is not directed by

live thought. A correct fac-simile cannot be made of an ordinary manuscript without understanding the copied letters.

Before going into the essential subject matter of art in order to complete our definition we must stop a moment on the relations between the theory of "reproduction" and the theory of "imitation." The conception of art we advocate issues from the point of view of later German esthetics which is a result of the dialectic process whose direction is determined by the ideas of modern science generally. It is thus most intimately connected with two systems of ideas—those of the beginning of the present (19th—*Tr.*) century and the last decades. Any other relation is merely accidental and has no genetic influence upon it. But while the ideas of ancient thinkers can not affect modern thought due to the development of science, one cannot but see that in many cases modern conceptions prove similar to those of previous ages. There is a particular resemblance to Greek thought. There is a similar situation with respect to esthetics. Our definition of the formal principle of art is akin to that which was prevalent with the Greeks and can be found in Plato, Aristotle, and most certainly in the expressions of Democritus. Pseudo-classic theory actually did understand art as imitation of reality for the purpose of fooling our senses. But this is an abuse belonging only to periods of spoiled tastes.

### *Form and Content*

We shall now attempt to amplify the definition of art proposed by us and go over to the discussion of the subject matter of art rather than its form.

It is usually maintained that the subject matter of art is beauty. But this confined the sphere of art to too close limits. Even if we should agree to include the sublime and the comic as elements of beauty, very many works of art would still fall outside the pale of this definition including—the beautiful, the sublime, the comic. In painting, pictures of domestic life in which there may be no beautiful or comic figure, pictures of old folks that cannot be said to excel in beauty, etc., etc. In music such a division would be even more difficult. Suppose we consider marches and pathetic compositions, sublime, compositions breathing love and gaiety—beauty, and many songs comic, there will still remain a vast number of compositions that cannot be labelled one or the other or the third without great tension. What are sad songs?—are they sublime because they express grief? Or beauty—because they express tenderness? But less than any other art, poetry lends itself to such a classification. Its sphere is that of all life and nature. The points of view of the poet are as varied as those of the thinker contemplating phenomena of the most diverse nature—and the thinker finds much in reality besides the beautiful, the sublime and the comic. Not every grief reaches the point of the tragic, not every joy that of grace or of the comic. The mere fact that works of poetry no longer can fit into the old subdivisions is proof of the fact that the subject of poetry is not exhausted by the three elements enumerated. Dramatic poetry does not depict only the tragic or the comic as can be seen from the fact that, in addition to the comedy and the tragedy, the drama came into existence. Instead of the primarily sublime epic came the novel with all its numerous ramifications. For most of our modern lyric plays no classification could be found in the older forms which would cover their subject matter adequately. Hundreds of labels are inadequate—so they cannot evidently embrace all works of art (according to subject matter, not form, which must always be beautiful).

The simplest way to untangle this knot is to realize that the sphere of art is not limited to beauty and its so called elements and that reality (life and nature) interests man not as a scientist but simply as a human being. What is generally interesting in reality is the subject matter of art. Beauty, tragedy, comedy—these are only three more definite elements out of thousands to enumerate which would be to enumerate all emotions. More detailed proof of the correctness of our conception of the subject matter of art is hardly necessary as, though esthetics usually includes a more restricted definition of the subject matter of art, the conception we propose prevails in fact i.e., with artists and poets themselves who constantly express this both in life and literature. If it is sometimes considered necessary to define beauty as the preponderating or, to be more exact, as the only essential subject matter of art, the true reason for this is to be found in the lack of distinction between the conception of beauty as the object of art, and beautiful form, which is a necessary attribute of all works of art.

This formal beauty or unity of idea and image, subject matter and form, is not however, any special property that distinguishes art from other branches of human endeavor. The activities of man always have a purpose and this constitutes the essence of the activity. The degree to which our activity corresponds to the purpose we wish to achieve by it is a measure of the value of the activity. Every human work is valued according to the degree of perfection of achievement. This is a law which holds for all—trades, business, scientific research, etc. It also applies to works of art. The artist (whether consciously or unconsciously does not matter) tries to reproduce for us some phase of life. It is quite self evident that the merit of his work will depend upon how successful he is in accomplishing his purpose, "A work of art endeavors to achieve harmony of idea and image" no more and no less than the product of the shoemaker, the jeweller, the engineer or the product of moral determination. "Everything done must be done well" is what the phrase "harmony of idea and image" means.

To sum up then, beauty as unity of idea and image is not at all a characteristic peculiarity of art in the esthetic sense. "Unity of idea and image" defines only one, formal side of art, and has nothing to do with its subject matter. It speaks of *how* and not of what is shown. But we have already noted that what is important in this phrase is the word "image"—it tells us that art expresses ideas not in the abstract but in live individual facts. When we say "art is the reproduction of life and nature," we say the same thing—because there is nothing abstract in life and nature. Everything is concrete there. The reproduction must convey as nearly as possible the essence of the thing reproduced. Hence the creations of art should be least abstract and expressed concretely in live pictures and individual images whenever possible. (Whether art can achieve this completely is quite another question. Painting, sculpture and music do.) Poetry neither can nor should always bother too much about plastic details—it is quite sufficient when the poetic work as a whole is plastic. Too great attention to plastic details may be harmful to the unity of the whole, as when details are given too bold a relief, but what is even more important, such attention to details distracts the artist's attention from the essentials. Beauty of form, which is unity of idea and image, is something common to all human endeavor and not a peculiarity of art (in the esthetic sense) and is entirely distinct from the idea of beauty as an object of art, as a thing of joy in the world of reality. Confusion of beauty of form, which is a necessary property of works of art, and beauty, which is one of many things art aims at, has been one of the main reasons for the unfortunate

abuses we find in art. "The object of art is—beauty at all cost, art has no other object. But what is most beautiful? In human life—beauty and love; in nature—it is hard to say just what, there is so much beauty there. Hence, aptly or not, every poetic work must be filled with descriptions of nature—the more descriptions, the more beauty in the given work. But love and beauty are still lovelier, so (mostly irrelevantly) love is put in the foreground of every play, novel, story, etc. Irrelevant descriptions of nature are not so bad yet—they can be simply omitted, as they are just pinned on. But what is one to do with a love plot? It cannot be omitted because to it, as a base, everything is tied with Gordian knots; without it everything loses all connection and sense. Not to mention the fact that the string of lovelorn, ever suffering or triumphing, makes thousands of stories intolerably monotonous; nor the fact that these love adventures and descriptions of beauty take away space that should be devoted to more essential things. More than that—the custom of depicting love and always love, makes poets forget that life has also other sides that interest man much more, generally. All poetry and the life it depicts asume a sort of rose colored tone. Instead of a serious depiction of human life, very many works represent an extremely young (to refrain from more exact adjectives) view on life and the poet a young, very young person, whose stories are of interest to people of a similar spiritual or physiological age. To people who have outgrown the golden age of early youth, such art begins to lose prestige; it seems to them an amusement somewhat mawkish to mature folks and not altogether harmless to the young. We have not the least intention of barring love from poetry—only esthetics should require poet to talk of love only when that is what he wants to talk about—why must it occupy the foreground when something altogether different, other sides of life entirely are in question? Why, for instance, must love occupy the foreground in novels which are really devoted to the life and manners of a given people or given classes in a given period? Books on history, psychology, ethnography, also speak of love—only in its proper place, just as about all other matters. Walter Scott's historical novels are all based on love adventures—what for? Was love the main occupation of society or the main moving force of the period dealt with? "But the novels of Walter Scott are antiquated"—well, the more modern novels of Dickens are just as full, aptly and inaptly, with love, while George Sand's novels of village life, where again love is not at all the main subject, are just as full of love. A rule seldom followed by poets is to "write about what you want to write." Love, relevently or irrelevently—this is the first harmful result for art due to the idea that—"the subject matter of art is beauty." The second harmful result, closely tied up with the first, is—artificiality. Racine and Madame Desulier are a laughing stock nowadays—but modern art has not advanced much beyond them with respect to simplicity and naturalness of the springs of action and naturalness of dialogue. To this day the characters are divided into heroes and villains—and how smoothly, elegantly and eloquently they speak! The monologues and dialogues in modern novels are only little inferior to pseudo-classic tragedy. "In works of art everything must be wrapt in beauty," —and one of the conditions of beauty is—that all details must be developed out of the plot. So we are given profoundly conceived plans of action, such as are almost never even thought of by people in real life, and if the character does sometimes act instinctively, unpremeditatively, the author considers it his bounden duty to explain it as an idiosyncracy of character, while the critics remained dissatisfied with this "unmotivated action." As if actions were always motivated by idiosyncracies of character and not by the general

nature of the human heart and circumstances. "Beauty requires rounded characters"—and instead of five people, diverse in their typicalness, the dramatist or novelist gives us motionless statues. "Beauty in a work of art requires elegance of dialogue"—and instead of living speech we are given artificial discussions in which the speakers show their natures by hook and by crook. The result is boresome monotony in poetic works. The characters are stereotype, the action develops according to definite rules, from the very first pages one can surmise what will happen later and not only what but even how it will happen.

*Also—Explanation of Life*

But let us return to the question of the essential significance of art. The first and most important feature of all works of art is, as we have said, the reproduction of things that occur in real life and are of interest to man. By real life we, of course, understand not only man's relation to the objects and creatures of the objective world, but also man's inner life. A person sometimes lives in dreams—those dreams then, to him, acquire (to some extent and for a given time) the semblance of something objective. Oftener yet, a person lives in the world of his emotions. Such emotional states, if they reach a point of becoming interesting, are reproduced by art. This we mention only to show that our definition also embraces the imaginative side of art.

But we have also said that art has another significance, besides the reproduction of life—that of explaining life. To some extent this can be said of all the arts. One only has to call attention to some things (which is what art always does) for them to become understandable or even to make life more comprehensible. In this sense painting does not differ from a story about an object, except perhaps in that art achieves this purpose much better than a simple, particularly a scientific, description of the thing. We get more easily interested, understand a thing better, when it is given a live form than when we are given a dry description of it. Cooper's novels did more to acquaint the world with the life of savages than any ethnographical studies or discussions on the importance of such studies. But while all art points out new and interesting things in life, poetry necessarily emphasizes the essential features of things. Painting reproduces a thing with all particulars, sculpture also—poetry cannot embrace too many details and perforce omitting a great deal, concentrates our attention on the features retained. This is what gives rise to the idea of the superiority of poetic pictures over reality. Every word, however, does the same thing to what it represents. In the word (the concept) also, all irrelevant features of what it represents are omitted and only the essential features are left. To the inexperienced thinker the word may be clearer than the thing it represents—but such clearness is only weakness. We do not wish to deny the usefulness of popularizations—but the *Tappe History of Russia* for children is not an improvement over the *History of Russia* by Koramasin, from which it was adapted. In a poetic work an event or an object may be easier to understand than the same things in life, but we can only grant poetry the merit of a clear and lively picture of life, but not of something independent that can fully rival life itself. It must be added that every prose story does the same thing as poetry. The concentration of attention on the essential features of things is not a characteristic peculiarity of poetry but of human speech generally.

The essential significance of art is—the reproduction of what interests us

in reality. But, interested in life, one cannot, consciously or unconsciously, express one's opinion of it. The poet or artist cannot cease to be human in general and hence to express his opinion of the things he depicts. He expresses it in his work—and this is the new significance of a work of art by virtue of which art becomes a moral activity of man. There are people whose opinions on the phenomena of life are expressed almost solely by exhibiting a predisposition in favor of certain phases of reality, avoiding the others. These are the people whose activity of mind is feeble. When such a person turns out to be a poet or artist, his work has no significance other than that he is reproducing what he likes best. But, when a person whose mental activity is strongly roused by problems arising out of observation of life happens to be gifted with artistic talent, his work, consciously or unconsciously, expresses an endeavor to pass live judgement on things that interest him (and also his contemporaries—because a thoughtful man cannot be interested in things which are of no interest also to others). In his paintings, novels, poems or dramas questions about life that bother thinking men will be put or solved. His works will be composed, so to say, on themes proposed by life.

Such tendencies find vent in all arts (in painting, for instance, one can point out pictures of episodes and many historical pictures), but they develop principally in poetry which represents the best medium for expressing definite thoughts. The artist then becomes a thinker and the work of art, while remaining such, acquires a scientific significance. It is self evident that in this respect there is nothing to correspond to it in real life—except in form. As regards content, the questions themselves that are dealt with, these can be found in real life only as unpremeditated ones. Let us suppose a work of art develops the thought that " a temporary defection is not fatal to a strong nature" or that "one extreme calls out another," or that a person falls out with himself, or, if you please, the struggle of passion and higher aspirations (we are listing the principal ideas that have been attributed to *Faust)*—does not real life present instances in which the same principles are developed? Is not high wisdom obtained by observation of life? Is not science a simple abstraction of life, resolving life into formulas? Everything dealt with by science and art can be found in life, only in a fuller, more perfect form, with all living particulars in which the true meaning of the thing really lies and which frequently is not understood by science and art and even more frequently cannot be embraced by them. The events of real life are all true, do not suffer from carelessness, biased narrowness of view, which haunt every human work. Life is a fuller, truer, is a greater teacher and even more artistic than any work of science or poetry. Only life does not stop to explain its events, does not bother about deducing axioms; this is done by art and science. True the deductions are not complete, the ideas onesided as compared with life—but they were produced by men of genius without whose aid our deductions would be even more onesided, even poorer. Art (poetry) and science are a *Handbuch* for the beginner in the study of life. Their purpose is to teach us to read the original and then serve for reference from time to time. Science does not pretend to do anything else. Nor do poets claim anything more in their cursory remarks on their work. Only esthetics continues to claim that art is superior to life and reality.

Summing up all we have said so far, we get the following view on art: the essential function of art is—to reproduce everything that interests man in life. Frequently, especially in poetry, the attempt to explain life, express an opinion on its phenomena, comes to the foreground. The relation of art to life is that of history, the only differences in content is that history tells of the life of

humanity scrupulously adhering to facts—art tells of the life of humanity with more concern for psychological and moral truth than for facts. The first task of history is to reproduce life; the second—which not all historians accomplish—is to explain life. When he does not concern himself with the second task the historian stays a mere recorder of events and his work only serves as material for the real historian or to be read only out of curiosity. In attacking the second task, the historian becomes a thinker and his work thus acquires scientific merit. The same can be said of art. History has no pretensions to compete with real historical life—acknowledges that its pictures are pale, incomplete, more or less inexact or onesided, at any rate. Esthetics should admit that art likewise, and for the same reasons, cannot pretend to compete with reality, particularly to exceed it in beauty.

But what happens to creative imagination, if we are to adopt such a view of art? What role does it play? We shall not stop to discuss the origin of the artist's license to alter what the poet has seen or heard. This is evident from the purpose of poetic creation of which we require a truthful reproduction of a definite phase of life and not of any individual event. But let us investigate why there is need for the imagination to interfere (by means of association) and alter the perceptions of our senses to create something new in form. Let us assume the poet takes up an occurrence he knows thoroughly out of his own life (this is not frequent—usually many quite important details remain obscure and for coherence the story must be amplified by the imagination). Let us also assume that this occurrence is a perfectly complete one artistically, so that the mere retelling of it will produce a completely artistic product,—in other words we choose a case when the interference of the creative imagination seems unimportant or irrelevant to the matter in hand. But for artistic completeness of the story many such details are nevertheless necessary. So they must be borrowed from other situations which the poet's memory has retained (for instance, conversation, description of the surroundings, etc.). True, the amplification of the story by such details does not change it and the variance of the story from the occurrence itself is limited, for the present, to form. But the interference of the imagination is not limited to this. In reality the occurrence was tangled up with other events which were only externally interwoven with the main story—but when we begin to disentangle the story we are interested in from the irrelevant elements, we find lapses in it marring its living fullness. Again the poet must supply material to cover these lapses. More than that—in disentangling the story, he not only robbed many elements of their fullness, he frequently alters their very nature and the episode looks entirely different than it did before. In order to retain its essential character the poet is compelled to alter many particulars whose real significance depended upon the actual circumstances and is lost in the isolated circumstances of the story. The activity of the creative imagination is thus hampered very little by our conception of art.

But the object of our investigation is—art as an objective product rather than as the subjective activity of the poet. We cannot therefore in this essay enter into the various relations of the poet to his material. We have indicated one such relationship, least favorable to the independence of the poet, and found that adopting our view on art, the poet has not lost the essential characteristic which pertains, not to the poet or artist in particular, but to man and human activity generally— the essential human right and property of considering objective reality as the rightful field of his activity. Under other circumstances, there is even more room for interference on the part of the creative imagination. Say, when not all the details of the story are known

to the poet, as when he knows about the situation (and the characters) only from the tales of others, always rather onesided, inexact, and artistically incomplete, at least as far as the poet personally is concerned. It must, however, be remembered, that the necessity to combine and alter things does not arise because real life did not contain the phenomena which the poet or artist wishes to depict, and contain them in a much fuller form than they can receive in the work of art. The necessity arises from the circumstance that the picture of life does not belong to the same sphere as real life. The difference has its origin in the fact that the poet does not have at his disposal the same means as life possesses. When an opera is transposed for the piano, it loses much and the better part of the detailed effects—there is much in the human voice or the full orchestra which cannot possibly be transferred to the comparatively poor, dead instrument which is supposed to reproduce the opera. In the transposition therefore, much has to be altered, added or changed—.

The essence of our discussion has been—the defence of reality as compared with imagination, the attempt to prove that works of art cannot but lose by a comparison with live reality. Does this mean to humble art? In the sense that art is *inferior* to real life in artistic perfection—yes. But to protest against panegerics does not mean to disparage. Science does not pretend to superiority over nature—and this is not to its shame. Art should not pretend to superiority over life—which would not humiliate it. Science is not ashamed to declare that its aim is to comprehend and explain nature, to then apply its explanations for the good of humanity. Let art also not be ashamed to acknowledge that its aim is to compensate man in cases when he has no opportunity to enjoy the full esthetic pleasure of reality in accordance with its powers and in reproducing it, try to explain it.

Let art be content with its high and beautiful purpose of replacing reality to some extent in its absence and being a text book of life.

Reality is greater than dreams and essential significance more important than fantastic pretensions.

The author's task has been to investigate the esthetic relation between works of art and the phenomena of life, and find whether the prevalent opinion that the truly beautiful, which is supposed to be the essential content of works of art, does not exist in objective reality and is only to be found in art. Intimately connected with this question is that of the definition of beauty and of the content of art. Upon investigating the question as to what beauty is, the author came to the conclusion that beauty is—life. Upon this it became necessary to investigate the conceptions of the sublime and the tragic which, as beauty is usually defined, are supposed to be elements of it. We found that the sublime and the beautiful are objects of art entirely independent of each other. This was an important step towards the solution of the question as to what constitutes art. But if beauty is life, the question of the esthetic relation between beauty in art and beauty in life solves itself. Having reached the conclusion that art cannot have its origin in man's dissatisfaction with beauty in reality we had to discover what needs do give rise to art and investigate its real significance. This investigation brought us to the following conclusion:

1. The definition of beauty as "the complete manifestation of the idea in an individual phenomenon" does not stand up under criticism. It is too broad and defines the formal tendency of every human activity.

2. The true definition of beauty is—"beauty is life." That seems beautiful to man, in which he sees life as he understands it. A beautiful object is one that recalls life.

3. Such objective beauty, or beauty in its essence, should be distinguished from perfection of form which consists of the unity of idea and form or, that the object answers its purpose to perfection.

4. The sublime does not at all affect man in that it evokes in him the idea of the absolute—it never does that.

5. That seems sublime to man which is much greater than anything, or more powerful, than any phenomenon it is compared to.

6. The tragic has nothing essentially in common with the idea of fate or necessity. In real life tragedy is most commonly accidental, does not follow as a necessary consequence of preceding events. The necessity in which art clothes tragedy is a consequence of the usual principle governing works of art— that "the denoument must flow from the plot" or, the irrelevant subjection of the poet to the conceptions of fate.

7. According to the ideas of modern European culture tragedy is "the terrible in man's life."

8. The sublime (and its element—the tragic) is not a variation of beauty. The ideas of the sublime and the beautiful are entirely distinct. They have no inner connection, nor are they innerly contradictory.

9. Reality is not only more alive but also more perfect than imagination. The images of the imagination are only a pale and most generally an unsuccessful subterfuge for reality.

10. Beauty in objective reality is thoroughly beautiful.

11. Beauty in objective reality completely satisfies man.

12. Art does not at all arise out of man's need to improve upon beauty as it is in reality.

13. The creations of art are inferior in beauty to reality not only because the impression created by reality is more lively, they are inferior in beauty (just as in the sublime, tragical, or comical) also from an esthetic viewpoint.

14. The field of art is not limited to beauty in the esthetic sense of the word, beauty in its live essence and not only perfection of form, art reproduces everything in life that is of interest to man.

15. Perfection of form (unity of idea and form) is not a trait characteristic only of art in the esthetic sense of the term (fine art)—beauty as unity of idea and image, or the complete embodiment of the idea is the aim of art in the widest possible sense of the term or of "skill," in fact, the aim of all practical activities of man.

16. The need which gives rise to art in the esthetic sense of the term (fine art) is the same as that which clearly comes to the fore in portrait painting. A portrait is not painted because the features of the original do not satisfy us, but to help our memory recall the living person when we are not in his presence and give people that have never seen the original some idea of him. With its reproductions, art only reminds us of what is interesting in life and endeavors to acquaint us to some extent with those interesting phases of life which we have had no opportunity to experience or observe ourselves in reality.

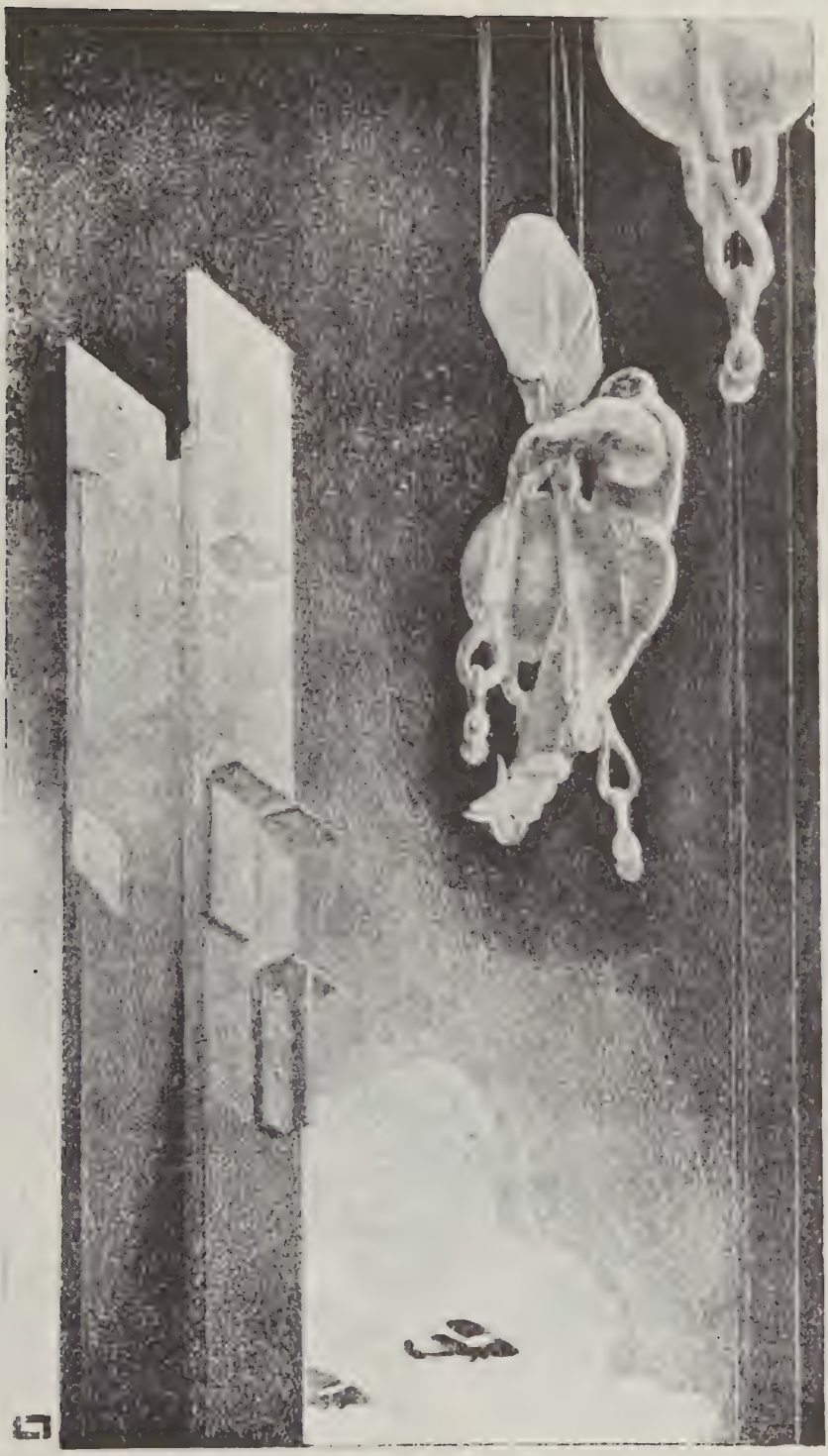
17. The reproduction of life is the general characteristic feature of art, its essence. Works of art often have also another purpose—to explain life. They also often express judgment on the phenomena of life.

*Translated from the Russian by S. D. Kogan*

# FOUR AMERICAN LITHOGRAPHS BY LOUIS LOZOWICK

*Pneumatic Drill*

*Tear Gas Attack*



*Above the City*

*Louis Lozowick — Self-portrait*

# ARTICLES and CRITICISM

**Maxim Gorki**

## On Culture

*The Latest Article of a Great Soviet Writer*

The writers Congress in Paris was organized under the slogan of the defense of culture from the destructive onslaughts of fascism. It was apparently assumed that the real, factual content of the concept: the "culture" of the contemporary bourgeoisie, was defined identically by all the members of the Congress, and that there could be no divergence of opinion as to its interpretation. But was this the case?

Fascism is the offspring of bourgeois culture, its cancerous tumor, now advanced to the stage of putrefaction and dissolution. The theoreticians and practitioners of fascism are adventurers drawn by the bourgeoisie from its own midst. In Italy, Germany the bourgeoisie handed the political, physical power over to the fascists, ruling them with almost the same Machiavellian cunning with which the medieval bourgeoisie of the Italian towns ruled the *condottieri*. Not only does it observe with satisfaction and encourage the most abominable slaughter of proletarians by the fascists, but it permits them to persecute and exile from their fatherland writers and scientists, i.e., the representatives of its own intellectual strength, upon which it but recently prided itself and boasted of.

Satisfying the aspirations of its imperialist masters for a new "repartition of the world" through a new world war, fascism came forth with the theory of the right of the German race to rule throughout the world and over all races. This long-forgotten idea of the sick Friedrich Nietzsche concerning the priority of the "blonde beast" had its origin in the fact of the subjugation of Hindus, Indo-Chinese, Melonesians and Polynesians, Negroes, etc. by the fair haired race. This idea flourished in the years when the German bourgeoisie, having defeated its Austrian and French rivals, wished to participate in the colonial pillage of the English, Dutch and French bourgeoisie. This theory of the right of the white race to sole rule in the world permits each national group of the bourgeoisie to consider not only the colored races, but its white European neighbors, as well as barbarians, to be enslaved or destroyed. This theory which the Italian and German bourgeoisie have already converted into practice, is one of the real facts which enter into the contemporary concept "Culture."

The voices of the bourgeois dignitaries of Europe grow even louder: they cry about the over-production of intellectuals, about the necessity of curtailing education and putting a "brake" on the development of culture; even about the superfluity of technique, about a return to hand labor. The Archbishop of York, speaking at the opening of a school at Bornmouth, declared: "I should like to see a stop put to all invention. If I could destroy the Internal Combustion engine I should certainly do so." His colleague of the same compromised profession, the Archbishop of Canterbury, apparently admits the

necessity of technique, for he preaches a "crusade" against the Soviet Union, and the new war, according to the specialist, will be a "machine war." If the utterances of the London and Roman vicars of Christ on earth, as well as of all the other bourgeois preachers who advocate putting an end to the growth of culture—men who have obviously lost their heads from hate of the proletariat or from fear of the inevitable social catastrophe—if these utterances had been made, say, in the eighties of the 19th century, they would have been regarded by the bourgeoisie as an expression of idiocy, a summons to barbarism.

In our time, when the bourgeoisie has become completely blind to the difference between courage and shamelessness, an appeal to return to the Middle Ages is dubbed "courageous thought."

Thus we see that European bourgeois culture is not the "monolithic whole" that bourgeois historians picture. Its "life force" has fallen apart, and the fragments descend upon shopkeepers and bankers, who, regarding all other men as a cheap and plentiful commodity, wish to hold on at any cost to their elevated, socially comfortable positions, upon men who defend their right to work for the further development of culture, and upon the fascists, who, it may be, are also men, but who, as a result of a prolonged intoxication, spread over a number of generations, have grown anti-social and require strict isolation, or even more decisive measures to put an end to their abominable, bloody crimes.

The journalists of the chief Parisian papers, almost ignoring the question of the fascist menace to bourgeois culture, set forth the fundamental question of the epoch. The newspaper *Vandemiere* asks:

"The French organizers of the Congress for the Defense of Culture are five revolutionary writers: Barbusse, Jean Richard Bloch, Andre Gide, Andre Malraux and Romain Rolland. Do these names not arouse a certain distrust?

"When we see such names as those we have cited, we have the right to ask: What culture do you invite us to defend?"

The question is altogether relevant and is properly put. Five or six such papers as *Figaro, Temps, Echo de Paris,* etc. in differently constructed phrases put the question of the epoch still more sharply. They ask: Can communism be the heir to Western-European culture, which is based on Greek-Roman cultural values?

The question is put with extreme clarity like a challenge to a verbal single combat. In order that a dispute may be productive, it is first necessary to determine what we are disputing about, what we reject and deny, what we defend and affirm. What real, factual content do the defenders of contemporary bourgeois culture attribute to this concept, the meaning of which has long been unclear—"Culture?"

A certain Maurice Bourdot assumes that it is necessary and possible to "define and confine the limits of culture," that its fundamental creative sources are labor, the physical source and technology, the intellectual source. The writer of these lines is inclined to think that any ideology is, essentially, and in the broad sense of the term, a technology—a system of working and logical methods by means of which mankind widens its knowledge of the world in order to change the world. We see that the bourgeoisie of our day is quite content with what it has; that it actually and very successfully "sets limits to the normal growth of culture," creating many millioned armies of unemployed, agitating for a decrease in the use of technique, curtailing funds for the upkeep of higher schools, museums, etc. It is well known that the

only branch of industry which works uninterruptedly and is continually expanding is the war industry, intended for the destruction of millions of workers and peasants on the fields of future battles, where the Western-European bourgeoisie plans to settle its international controversy as to which of its national groups should dominate over the others. The captains of the coming war, organized by the bourgeoisie in order to profit by the blood of their enslaved neighbors, loudly and coldbloodedly declare that this war will be still more destructive and ruinous than that of 1914-18. Here it is proper to recall some facts of the last war, the losses and ruins of which have been already effaced by the toil of the proletariat and the peasantry, i.e., the classes which suffered most from the mad frenzy of the bourgeoisie.

The facts are as follows: By 1915 Germany was experiencing a shortage of lubricating oils. The matter came to the point where the Germans were paying in Copenhagen 1,800 marks for a keg of oil which cost at that time no more than 200 marks. The American ambassador in Berlin wrote in December of that year to his government: "The lack of lubricating oil will soon bring about Germany's defeat." At the same time English freighters were bringing to Copenhagen kegs of the indispensable oils. This trade is confirmed by the statistics of the English Ministry of Trade. Germany would have experienced a shortage of coal at the beginning of 1915 had she not been supplied with English coal through the Scandinavian countries. Thus, for example, in the month of September, 1914, Sweden received 33,000 tons of coal, almost all of which was despatched to the central powers.

Only thanks to this monstrous liberality of England was Ludendorff able, in June 1917, to refuse to withdraw 50,000 men from the army for work in the Ruhr mines.

The export of coal to Sweden soon attained the enormous figure of 100,000 and even 150,000 tons a month, that is, twice the pre-war yearly consumption of coal of these countries. The British ambassador to Copenhagen, Sir Wolf Padget, testified that this coal went "for the slaughter of English soldiers," but his voice went unheard.

It has been ascertained that during the war the French capitalists provided their enemies, the German capitalists, with nickel or zinc and that an English manufacturer of cannons exchanged certain destructive inventions with a German armaments manufacturer. Much more of the same, no less vile and criminal, has not as yet been established, i.e., "made public," published. Thus we see that war does not interfere with trade and that "they that quarrel love each other" over the blood and corpses of millions of proletarians. The proletariat, unfortunately, does not as yet understand that it ought not mutilate its class brothers, that after the war it is obliged to clear up at a miserly wage all the wreckage, repair all the damages sustained by the capitalists.

Simple, clear, truly humanitarian justice tells us that the product of labor should belong to him who made it, and not to him who ordered it to be made. Weapons—any weapons are the product of the workers' labor.

So we now have some idea of the real factual content of the concept: Western-European "culture of the modern bourgeoisie, based upon Greek-Roman values." Here it is proper to add something from the field of "International morals," something effected recently by the English bourgeoisie. This island bourgeoisie long ago won from its neighbors the epithet "treacherous," that is, shameless, hypocritical, jesuitical. As is well known, the English gave the French bourgeoisie certain solemn promises, the gist of which was that they would defend the French capitalists in case of a war with

the German capitalists. It was even said that "the borders of England are on the Rhine," that is, on the French-German border. The phrase about borders proved ambiguous, inasmuch as the English bourgeois came to an understanding with the German, thus violating their promises. Possibly the borders of England will prove to be on the Rhine, but not in order to defend the French but to crush them through an English-German alliance. All is possible among people who possess "neither honor nor conscience."

The French journalists put this question: "Will a culture of such antiquity, a culture which is the heir of the Greek and Roman cultural values, continue its mission, in spite of all obstacles, or must it give way to a new form of culture, which proclaims the dominance of economics over the spirit?"

When messieurs the journalists speak of the "dominance of economics over the spirit," they thoughtlessly and mechanically give expression to their ignorance or—and this is more likely—to their brazenness. Of course, it is possible that some of them have not as yet shed the naive illusion of "spiritual" independence, although they are completely dependent upon their editors, who are body and soul dependent upon the publishers—bankers, lords, manufacturers of armaments. Let the naive journalists—if such exist—honestly and carefully look about them, and they shall see that the "economics" of two-legged spiders, expressed in the coarsest materialist forms, dominates precisely in the capitalist states, while the "new form of culture" sets itself the aim of freeing toiling humanity from the violence of the now meaningless "economics" created by the "spirit" of Sir Basil Zaharoff, Deterding, Vickers, Creusot, Hearst, Schneider, Kreuger, Stavitsky, and the other true leaders of contemporary bourgeois culture. It is ridiculous to dream about, still more to speak about individual independence in a society where people—and among them the journalists—are sold and bought as easily and "freely" as sheep and cucumbers.

To what extent the poison has entered into the rotting spirit of bourgeois culture is revealed with impressive force by the grandiose scale of the swindling and the paltriness of the swindlers themselves. This paltriness clearly testifies to the exhaustion of the specific talents of the European bourgeois, to the "degeneration of the type." John Law was a genius in comparison with Stavitsky or "the match king" Ivan Kreuger.

The vicious, decaying "spirit" of the contemporary bourgeoisie is vividly expressed in the quantitative increase of traitors and the qualitative rise in their loathsomeness. Until the 20's of the twentieth century Europe hardly knew such traitors as Noske, the self designated "blood-hound," as his comrades Ebert and Haase and, in general, the leaders of the Second International. A picture of the life of the bourgeoisie—a cross section of it as it is phlegmatically drawn from day to day by the journalists of Europe is repellent, terrible. It is altogether understandable that their routine professional work amidst blood and filth deadens all sensitivity of feeling, arouses in the journalists no desire to draw conclusions from their observations. Indifferently "recording facts," they color them still more grandily with blood and filth for the diversion of the bourgeois reader, and he, nourished on descriptions of crime, becomes still more arrogant and stupid. It is well known that the most popular literature of the middle and petty bourgeoisie is the detective story.

I may be asked: Where and in what forms have the "Greek and Latin cultural values" been preserved amidst this filth and decay? As "material" values they are preserved in museums, in the collections of millionaires, inaccessible to the toiling masses and to the petty bourgeoisie. As spiritual values, for example the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides should be produced in

the theatres, but in Europe this is not done. In bourgeois universities, professors lecture on Roman law, on ancient Greek philosophy and other values, including international law and even medieval humanism. We leave it to the journalists of Europe to discover where these values are to be found in the chaos of contemporary life and to indicate their practical, educational significance. It seems to us that if contemporary Europe recalls Ancient Rome, it is the Rome of decline and collapse.

The bourgeois intellectuals play an extremely strange and pathetic role in the process of disintegration of the ruling class of contemporary Europe. They of course know where their bread is buttered, and in defending a "culture" which has outlived its day, the intellectuals defend the power of their own class. This power has always been served technologically as well as ideologically by more or less highly qualified intellectuals. In 1914 the European bourgeoisie sent thousands of such intellectuals to the front as rank and file soldiers and forced them to kill each other. Before they were maimed, gassed, or killed these "masters of culture" actively participated in the destruction of cities, in the devastation of the fertile soil and otherwise aided in the destruction of culture.

Most of these intellectuals were proletarians, and they ended their lives in order to strengthen the power of the property holders. Later many intellectuals wrote books in which they described the madness of war and heaped curses upon it. Now the bourgeoisie is preparing a new international slaughter on a still grander scale. Since in the recent past the iron hand of war did not evidence the slightest respect for the illustrious momentoes and depositories of cultural values, it is exceedingly probable that in the next war the British Museum, the Louvre, and the numerous museums of the ancient capitals will be turned into rubbish and dust. And thousands of bearers of intellectual energy, of "masters of culture," will be destroyed along with millions of the soundest workers and peasants. And to what purpose? To satisfy the desire of some large group of shopkeepers and bankers to subjugate and rob some other group. It has been repeatedly and indisputably proven that the periodical bourgeois slaughters are nothing but armed pillage, that is, a crime punishable by the bourgeois law of all lands.

The idiotic criminality of the bourgeois becames particularly repellent when one reflects on the great amount of skilled, valuable labor, metal, inventions the shopkeepers destroyed yesterday and will destroy tomorrow. How many cities, factories, plants will be turned into dust! How many splendid ships will be sunk ! How much land will be devastated! Large numbers of children will be killed. And finally, the criminal insanity of the surfeited classes results in forcing workers, peasants and intellectuals to destroy the products of their labor and each other.

"The dominance of economics" finds complete expression in the coarse, zoological materialism of the property owners. The poisonous "spirit" of this rapacious materialism of the fat, two-legged spiders no longer troubles to cover itself with the outworn tatters of religion and philosophy. Fascism and the racial theory are a cynical, forthright apologia for armed robbery. Such is the spirit of modern bourgeois "culture,"—a loathsome, abominable spirit. We see that honest intellectuals, suffocating in such a milieu flee from the land where today this spirit finds most arrogant, most thorough expression. But tomorrow—if the proletariat but permit—this spirit will announce itself as cynically, as arrogantly in the lands where they have taken refuge. Quite naturally the question arises: What right to power has the modern bourgeoisie,

which denies the principles of its own culture, which has lost all ability for management, which is creating an ever more frightful unemployment, which shamelessly despoils its workers, peasants, and colonies in order to further its war preparations; what right to exist and to rule has a class which senselessly exhausts the working and creative energy of the whole world, a class quantitatively infinitesmal, qualitatively vicious and criminal? And this class holds in its bloody hands the fate of almost two billion European, Chinese, Indian, African peasants and workers. The sombre grotesqueness of this fact will be made the clearer if we compare it with another fact.

There exists a land where the will and intellect of all the workers and peasants are stimulated and developed by socially necessary labor, equally beneficial to each working unit, and where the whole mass of labor energy is drawn into the varied work of creating new conditions of life, that is, of a new socialist culture.

Where the proletariat, following the teachings of Marx and Lenin, and led by Joseph Stalin, has freed the peasantry from the idiotic "power of the soil," from a tame submission to the caprices of nature, from the pernicious influence of private property, where the proletariat has transformed the property owner into a collectivist.

Where the proletarian, the hewer of wood and drawer of water of bourgeois society, has proven that when equipped with knowledge he is quite capable of becoming a master and creator of culture; where individual cultural work is valued by the whole working population more highly than it has ever been valued anywhere else, and where this esteem continually aids in the growth of the individual and his work.

Where women—half of the country's population—are on a basis of equality with the men, work shoulder to shoulder with them on all posts, and where women's talents, daring and enthusiasm for work grow with fantastic speed.

Where the children are brought up away from the corrupting influence of the church, whose aim is to instill in men patience, meekness, submission to "the powers that be."

Where a multitude of various, numerically insignificant, half-savage peoples, which formerly had no written language, now possess their own literature, have been granted the right to free development and reveal to the world the primitive freshness of their reflections and sensations, their ability to work and the beautiful simplicity of their poetry.

Where ancient tribes, whose culture was formerly suppressed by the colonial policy of the shopkeepers and the tsar, now reveal their splendid talents and the treasures of a liberated spirit.

In this land the artist and the scientist only serve the will of the working masses, a will which strives to assimilate all the cultural values of mankind.

But this land is ringed about by enemies who envy it its riches, who fear its beneficial influence upon the toilers of the whole world and dream of a plundering onslaught upon her. Therefore this ardent desire to know the past, inasmuch as it is indispensable for the creation of the future, is to some extent limited by the necessity of working for the defense of the country, thereby retarding to a certain degree the growth of its material culture and enrichment. This desire to know the past is also to a certain extent restricted by the fact that the heritage of bourgeois culture is in equal measure compounded of honey and poison, and that the "verities" of bourgeois learning about the history of mankind, possess all the wiles of an old experienced coquette pretending to be an innocent girl.

Man is dear to the working class. Even if a man displayed anti-social ten-

dencies and has behaved for some time as a socially dangerous individual, he is not confined in the demoralizing inactivity of a prison, but reeducated into a skilled worker, a useful member of society. This firmly established attitude towards the "criminal" throws light upon the active humanism of the proletariat, a humanism which has never existed and cannot exist in a society where *homo homini lupus est.*

The workers' and peasants' power of the USSR is wisely concerned with the toilers' spiritual health, and especially with the health of the children and the youth. Just as diligently and ably does it look after physical education, after the preservation of physical health. It was for this purpose that the All-Union Institute of Experimental Medicine, the first institute in the world for the all-around study of the human organism was established. One can point out many entirely new undertakings which are rapidly and decisively enriching the land and changing its physical appearance. Industry is continually expanding, agriculture is being reorganized, new crops and fruits are being introduced while grain and root plants are being moved ever farther north, swamps are being drained and arid regions irrigated, rivers are being united by canals, from year to year the country grows richer in electric power, its resources of coal, oil, metal ores, mineral fertilizers steadily increase, the Arctic is being conquered. This, of course, is not all that is being done in the country that feels a shortage of labor power at a time when the shopkeepers of Europe and the United States throw millions out of employment. All that has been done in the USSR has been done in less than two decades, and this speaks most eloquently for the ability of the peoples of the Soviet Union, for their heroic labor, for the fact that in our country labor is becoming an art, for the fact that the proletariat of the USSR, led by the teachings and Party of Lenin, and by the inexhaustible, evergrowing energy of Joseph Stalin, is creating a new culture, a new history of mankind. And what is the real, factual meaning of the concept: the "culture" of the modern bourgeoisie? At the basis of all that has been briefly and incompletely enumerated here, there operates the mighty, creative energy of proletarian humanism—the humanism of Marx and Lenin. This is not the humanism on which the bourgeoisie but recently prided themselves as the basis of their civilization and culture.

Apart from the word "humanism," these two humanisms have nothing in common. The world is the same, but the meaning is utterly different. Appearing 500 years ago, this humanism was a means of self defense for the bourgeoisie against the feudal lords and the church, its "spiritual leader," which was also ruled by the feudal lords. When the rich bourgeois, manufacturer or merchant spoke of the "equality" of men, he understood by this his own personal equality to the feudal parasite in knightly armor or in a bishop's vestment. Bourgeois humanism existed amiably side by side with slavery, slave trading, with the "law of the first night," with the inquisition, with the wholesale extermination of the Albigenses in Toulouse, with the burning at the stake of John Hus, Giordano Bruno and tens of thousands of nameless "heretics," "witches," artisans, peasants who were enthralled by the echoes of primitive communism preserved in the Old and New Testaments.

Did the bourgeoisie ever oppose the ferocity of the Church and the feudal lords? As a class—never. The only protest came from lone individuals in its midst, and the bourgeoisie exterminated them. In the past the bourgeois humanists aided the feudal lords as assiduously in the destruction of Wat Tyler's peasant army, the French "Jacques," the "faborites," as the cultured shopkeepers of the 20th century who coldbloodedly and ferociously slaughter the workers on the streets of Vienna, Antwerp, Berlin, in Spain, in the Phil-

ippine Islands, in the cities of India, in China, everywhere. Is it necessary to speak of the abominable crimes which are well known to all, and which testify to the fact that "humanism as the basis of bourgeois culture" has today lost all meaning? They no longer speak of it; apparently they realize that it is too shameless to mention "humanism" while almost daily shooting down hungry workers in the city streets, packing the prisons with them, and beheading or sentencing to hard labor thousands of the most active of them.

In general the bourgeoisie has never tried to alleviate the life of the workers by any other means than charity, which robs the worker of his dignity. The humanism of the philistines found practical expression in "philanthropy" that is, in giving alms to the people whom they had robbed. They devised and practiced a very stupid, swindling commandment: "Let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth." And then, having plundered billions, these "lords of life," spent miserly pence for schools, hospitals, homes for invalids. The literature of the philistines preached "mercy" to the downfallen, but these downfallen were the same people whom the bourgeoisie had robbed, struck down, trampled into the mire.

If bourgeois humanism were genuine, it sincerely strove to arouse and foster in the men whom it had enslaved the sense of human dignity, a consciousness of their collective strength, a consciousness of the significance of man as the organizer of the world and the forces of nature, it would not advocate the degrading idea of the inevitability of suffering, nor the passive feeling of sympathy, but it would stimulate an active hostility to all suffering, especially the suffering induced by social economic conditions.

Physical pain is a warning by the human organism that some harmful element has entered its normal activity. In this manner the organism cries: man, defend thyself! The humanism of the philistines, in preaching sympathy, teaches reconciliation with that frightful pain caused by the allegedly unavoidable, eternally valid relations of the classes, the humiliating division of men into superior and inferior races and peoples, into white aristocrats and "colored" slaves. This division impedes the growth of the toilers' consciousness, of the unity of their interests—the very purpose for which it was established.

The humanism of the revolutionary proletariat is straight-forward. It does not pronounce grandiloquent and mellifluous phrases of love for mankind. Its aim is to free the proletariat of the whole world from the shameful, bloody, insane yoke of capitalism, to teach men not to consider themselves as commodities which are bought and sold, to serve as the raw material for the manufacture of gold and the luxuries of the philistines. Capitalism violates the world as a senile old man violates a young, healthy woman whom he is impotent to impregnate with anything besides the diseases of senility. The task of proletarian humanism does not demand lyrical declarations of love; it demands from each worker a consciousness of his historic mission, of his right to power, a revolutionary activity which is especially necessary on the eve of a new war, which, in the last analysis, is directed by the capitalists against him.

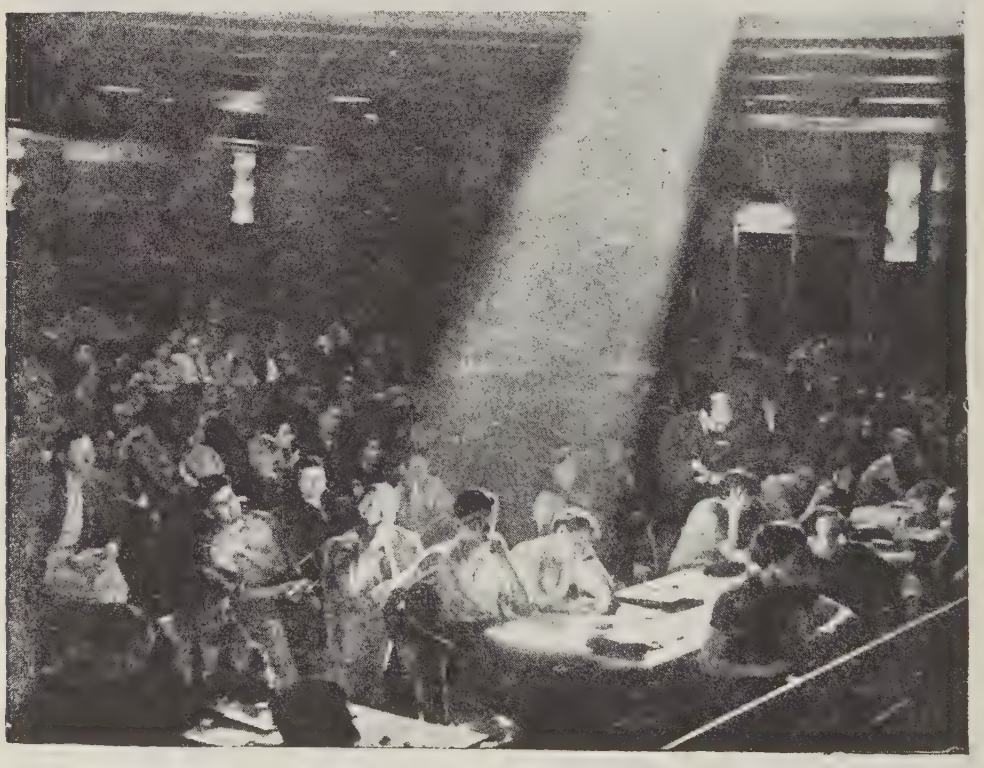
Proletarian humanism demands an undying hate of philistinism, of the capitalists and their lackeys, of the fascists and executioners, of the traitors to the working class, of all that causes suffering and all who live by the sufferings of millions of people. I believe that from this schematic summary of data, the values of bourgeois and proletarian culture will be made sufficiently clear to every honest person.

*Translated from the Russian by B. Keen*

## AT THE PARIS CONGRESS OF WRITERS IN DEFENCE OF CULTURE

*Andre Gide, great French writer, presides at a session of the Congress. In the background, left, (hand on his face) the late Henri Barbusse*

*Delegates from various countries. In the center, third and fourth, Leon Moussinac, (France) novelist and theatrical director, and Michael Gold (USA) novelist and playwright*



*The Paris Congress in Defence of Culture in session*

**Andre Gide**

# In Defence of Culture

*A Noted French Writer Speaks for the Future*[1]

In facing the danger which we all sense, the danger that brings us together today, we shall draw our most profitable and universal lesson from what is most particular in the reaction of each people and its representatives, for this is what is simplest and most profoundly human.

Today I should like to try to clear up certain points of confusion.

The first which I encounter is the confusion which the nationalists seek to establish between internationalism and disaffection for, disavowal of one's country. They have given the word "patriot" so narrow, prejudiced and hostile a meaning that we no longer dare to use it. There are some of us, indeed there are many of us, who cannot agree that love of one's native country primarily consists of hatred for other countries. And as for me, I maintain that I am capable of being profoundly internationalist and of yet remaining profoundly French, just as I claim to remain profoundly individualist, while wholly communist by conviction and while helping communism. For my thesis has always been as follows:

Each being best, serves the community by being most particularized. Added to this today is the other thesis, which depends upon the first of its corrolary. The peculiarity of each individual may best flourish in a communist society, or, as Malraux said in a recent preface which is already famous, "Communism restores to the individual his fertility."

What is true of the individual is equally true of peoples. There is nothing in the USSR that I admire so much as the great pain taken to protect and respect the particularities of each people, of each little state included in the great Soviet Union; respect for the language, the habits, customs and the culture peculiar to each small state. This respect runs directly counter to the current criticism made of communism and the USSR, that they attempt to equalize and make uniform all the men of immense Russia, while waiting to do this over the whole earth.

It is as a man of letters that I am speaking and here I do not wish to speak of anything but culture and literature. It is, however, precisely in literature that this triumph of the general and the particular of the human in the individual is most fully realized. There is nothing that is more specifically Spanish than Cervantes, more English than Shakespeare, more Russian than Gogol, more French than Rabelais or Voltaire, and at the same time there is nothing that is more general and more profoundly human than any of these. I said this thirty years ago or more. It is through particularization that these great authors attain a common profound humanity; likewise speaking as a Frenchman I cannot do better than examine from the French standpoint the great problem which faces all of us today.

And first I shall examine in cursory fashion the general aspects of our literature.

I have mentioned Rabelais. He brings to French belles lettres a boisterous element which is subsequently nowhere to be found. I said that he was extre-

[1] Speech at the International Writers Congress in Paris

mely representative of our country, but he is even more representative of his time. Our literautre almost immediately afterwards calmed down, grew mellow and wise. What seems to me the most marked characteristic of its makeup is an extraordinary propensity to abstract itself and perfect itself by cutting off from contingencies, from the accidents and material difficulties of life. I am speaking of our so-called classic literature, needless to say. Authors, spectators or readers, and actors (I mean the characters of the novels or tragedies) are equally shielded from want. To talk about well-to-do people, to well-to-do people—such was the role of the man of letters. And if he was not himself well-to-do we are not supposed to know it. It is likewise not our business to bother to know on what misery, perhaps, the affluence of these favored people is based. Literature and thought remain shielded from these troubling questions. The admirable tragedies of Racine's, for instance, are flowers which can only bloom under glass. The man they deal with is the leisure being who is allotted all the time necessary to concern himself with his passions, with his soul and his spirit. All the time is provided for these passions freely to develop.

I do not wish to indict this literature, whose master-pieces no one admires more than I. I would even say that never since the time of Greece had art reached such a degree of perfection. We have just been told that those kings and queens of the tragedies of the seventeenth century no longer interest us. One can only pity people who, on the one hand, are not aware of the pure beauty of their gestures and their words and on the other hand, are incapable of recognizing the authenticity of the passions which this purple protects and clothes. But all the actors in these tragedies are privileged beings. Such a literature, by refusing to consider anyone but such beings and even then to consider only their heads, and their hearts, runs the risk of losing its footing. When it loses contact with reality and life, art soon becomes artifice. If I except Latin literature which, in this regard outdoes even classical French literature, no European literature at any rate, seems to me so anemic, so boarding on the fictitious as is the French. It is always through the base, from the soil, from the people, that a literature is reinvigorated, and renewed. It is comparable to the Greek fable which tells us with such a profound object lesson, of one who loses his strength and virtue once his feet no longer touch the ground. What reinjected vigor into our French letters in the eighteenth century and what they badly required, was not Montesque or even Voltaire, in spite of all their genius, but people of the soil, plebeians—Jean Jacques, Diderot.

Through excessive love of form, perhaps, and of appearances and words, French literature is so constantly drawn towards the artificial and the unnatural that the romantic movement combatted the artificiality of classicism only by opposing to classicism works that were even more unnatural. So it is that not one of all the great representatives of the new school, Lamartine, Musset, Vigny, and even Hugo, came from the people and brought, if I may say so, new blood. Hugo indeed was keenly aware of which side health could be found on. Hence his tremendous effort to draw near to the people, to speak in the name of the people, to represent them—an effort that irritates so many people of the Right today; and which they like to regard as proof of the "obtuseness" of Hugo. I see a certain amount of opportunism in this effort, perhaps, but in this very opportunism there is a profound intuition.

Am I exaggerating this tendency towards the artificial, towards the fictitious in our literature? I think not. I again encounter it in the symbolist reaction that followed so closely on the naturalist movement of Zola. And even in Zola, whose value and importance remains shamefully unknown by many

of our critics and literary historians, even in Zola I find the tendency to synthesize, to abstract, a tendency which, despite his desire for realism links him so closely with a certain romanticism of form if not of inspiration.

No, I exaggerate nothing. And I like to hear one of the most authoritative and representative critics from the Right undertaking to defend civilization in an article that is doubtless remarkable, recognize the factitious side of our culture, and at the same time undertake to defend the factitious and artificial. All that is required is a kind of clear sightedness and here is someone who compels us to take a definite stand.

"Civilization," we read in a recent number of *Action Française,* "civilization is falsehood; it is the effort to substitute the factitious man for the natural man, the clothes, the appearance and the mask of man for the nakedness of man."

Our critic continues, "He who cannot admit that this *anti-natural* effort of civilization, this magnificent falsehood of civilization is its own justification, that therein lies its very grandeur and our grandeur, is taking sides against civilization itself."

Indeed not! I cannot believe that civilization is based on falsehood. Such a factitious civilization that wants to be factitious and proclaims itself factitious, worthy image and product of a social state that is itself false, bears in itself the germs of death. The works it still produces are moribund like the society which produces them and if we do not know how to break away from that we are done for. Window dressing culture has outlived its time and if the nationalists defend it, so much the better; that helps me to see clearly and to understand precisely that the real defenders of culture are today on the opposite shore, on the other side. Nonetheless, I repeat, it has produced some admirable works. It is absurd and futile to deny the past, I would go so far as to say that the culture we dream of today doubtless could not have arisen suddenly and that it was doubtless to the good that first there occurred this culture falsehood. However abominable the capitalist regime may appear to us, it undoubtedly had to precede the communist regime which we desire.

I say, however, that it is not by prolonging this literature of the past but in opposing it, that literature, culture, civilization, can develop and flourish. The author of the article I quoted takes issue with me and tries to present me as an enemy of culture because I am an advocate of sincerity. No, our quarrel is not with culture itself but with the artificial and conventional part in this culture, and I say that the enemies of culture are those who become the defenders of falsehood and—for this naturally follows—of the false state we live in.

"One must choose between civilization and sincerity," concludes the author of this article. No, not at all! I refuse to admit that civilization is necessarily insincere, (and it is perfectly clear what is meant by this) or, if you prefer, that man can only become civilized by lying. This notion of sincerity it seems to me is of extreme importance for I refuse to restrict it to the individual. I say that society itself is insincere, when it aspires to stifle the voice of the people, to deprive them of the opportunity of speaking of the very possibility of speaking, when it keeps the people in such a state of servitude, uncultured-ness and ignorance that they no longer even know those things that they tell us, those things that culture would derive so much benefit from hearing from them. From the outset of my career I came out against that declaration of the nationalists of those days. "Man has said all he had to say; all he can do is to repeat himself."

I shall go back a bit. Literature is a form of communion. The question is to know with whom the man of letters is communing. At times a peculiar phenomenon occurs in literature, and especially in French literature: a writer of the first magnitude who in his time goes absolutely unheeded It will be said that what he cannot immediately find in space, he hopes to find in time; his public is scattered through the future. He seems at first sight bizarre and esoteric; his virtues remain unsensed by others, his qualities are not perceived. I am thinking of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, even Stendhal who claimed to be writing for a small number and said that his real readers had yet not been born. This was likewise the case of Nietzsche, William Blake, Melville, I merely mention the greatest.

The works of each of these exhale a powerful strength of communion, a retarded communion. I wish to draw the important inference that it does not follow that one should reproach a writer who at the outset, first, appeals to only a few readers. It worries me, I admit, to hear at the Writers Congress in Moscow, great numbers of workers of every kind who call on the writers to "talk about us, present us, portray us." Literature has not, or at any rate *not only* the role of a mirror. So far the present literature in the USSR has almost been satisfied with this role; and it has thereby given us a number of remarkable works. It should not confine itself to this. There is also the question, it is perhaps the main question, of helping the new man, whom we love, whom we hope for, to free himself from restraints, from struggles and false appearances. The question is to help him to form himself and to define himself. Indeed this is what was admirably expressed at this same Moscow Congress by Bukharin, Gorki himself and a number of others. Literature is not content with imitating. It informs, it proposes, creates.

The unappreciated great whom I spoke of, whose works today reach huge editions, have greatly contributed to that self knowledge which it is essential for man to attain, by themselves attaining a sincerity hitherto unsuspected. They have contributed far more than they would have done by presenting the simple picture of man as he was then, or thought he was. Seek communion, yes undoubtedly, but it sometimes happens that it cannot be achieved right off. As for me (and I excuse myself for giving a personal example), from a bourgeois family, bourgeois by formation, I must have felt from the outset of my career that the part of myself which seemed the most genuine, most valuable and most worthy, was immediately and directly protesting against the conventions, the habits, the falsehoods of my environment. It seemed to me practically impossible today in the capitalist society we still live in, for literature of any value to be anything but a literature of opposition.

To commune with his class is impossible for the bourgeois writer. To commune with the people . . . well, I say that it is likewise impossible, as long as the people have not become what they are capable of being, what they must be, what they will be, if we help them. The only remaining possibility is to address oneself to the unknown reader of the future and to feel certain of appealing to him, when one appeals to what seems most profoundly and irreducibly human within oneself.

The USSR now offers us a spectacle that is without precendence, a spectacle of immense, unhoped-for, and I dare add, exemplary importance. That of a country where the writer can enter into direct communion with his readers. Instead of rowing against the current as we are compelled to do, all he requires is to let himself be carried by it. In the reality that surrounds him, he can find at the same time, an inspiration, in his words an immediate echo. This is likewise not unaccompanied by certain dangers; for a work of art

involves a vanquished resistance. But these dangers of a new order we shall have time to discuss later. I have seen in new Soviet literature admirable works, but as yet no works where the new man whom it fashions and whom we await, attains his growth. They still picture the struggle, the formative period, childhood. I confidently await works of prophecy, of great inspiration, where the writer, walking with reality, precedes reality, beckons to it, blazes the way.

All enduring works of art, that is to say, works that are capable of satisfying appetites, contain something more and something better than simple responses to the transitory needs of a given class of people and a given epoch. It goes without saying that it is good to popularize the reading of such great works, and the USSR with its reprints of Pushkin and of Shakespeare displays its real love of culture far better than by the publication of the profusion of works which are often indeed most remarkable, which glorify its triumph, but which might well be of only passing interest. Where I think there is the possibility of making a mistake is through over anxiety to point out what is worthy of consideration in the works of the past, to overstress the lessons to be derived therefrom. For first of all, a work teaches one by virtue of the sole fact that it is beautiful, and I already feel a certain misgiving, a certain ignorance of beauty in the over anxious quest for a lesson to be drawn, in the one-sided search for *motifs* while ignoring *quietifs*.. But I believe that it is good to leave each free to interpret great texts in his own way. If, in his turn, he derives a teaching slightly different from the current and I was about to say official teaching, I am not so certain that he is therefore mistaken, or that this very mistake cannot at times be more profitable than a blind submission to accepted opinion. Culture works for the emancipation of the spirit and not for its subservience.

Only the adversaries to communism can wish to see in it a desire for uniformity. What we expect from it, and what the USSR begins to show us after a long period of struggle and temporary restraint for the sake of completer freedom, is a social state which allows every man to flourish to the maximum, to bring to light and to utilize all his capacities. In our sad West, as I said, we are far from the goal. For a time social questions tend to come before all other questions, not in the least because they are more interesting to us in themselves, more interesting than all the other questions, but the state of culture closely depends on the state of society; and it is love of culture that prompts us to assert that as long as our society remains what it is, our first concern will be to change it.

Today all our sympathy, all our desire and our need for communion go towards an oppressed humanity that is suffering and deceived.

But I cannot admit that man ceases to interest us once he has stopped being hungry and suffering and oppressed. I refuse to allow myself to admit that he only deserves our sympathy in his misery. And I want to say that suffering often magnifies: that is to say, that when it does not prostrate us, it chisels us in bronze. But all the same I like to imagine and to hope for a social state where joy will be in the reach of everyone, and men whom joy also can make great.

*Translated from the French by Edmund Stevens*

**John Fisher**

# Censorship In Australia

*Stalin, Hemingway, Dos Passos and Others Are Not Permitted*

As a result of the celebration of Melbourne's 100th birthday—utilized for war-mongering purposes much in the same way as the King's Jubilee has been in England—two distinguished writers found themselves face to face in picturesque circumstances in Sydney last year. One was John Masefield, Poet Laureate of England and (believe it or not) one of the least chauvinistic of the official Centenary guests; the other was Egon Erwin Kisch. The results of this encounter, in which Masefield played an entirely passive role, have been of the first importance to Australian literature.

Masefield had been invited by the Fellowship of Australian Writers, an earnest bourgeois body, to attend a dinner at which not only many other writers of various nationalities were present, but also three Cabinet Ministers: William Morris Hughes (debaser of that noble name; he was Prime Minister during the war years and chiefly notable for the fact that he failed in both his attempts to force conscription on the people), the Customs Minister and Chief Book-Banner, Colonel White; and Stevens, the Premier of the State of New South Wales.

Kisch had come to Australia as an anti-war delegate, had been refused permission to land, had landed (with a broken leg) had been "failed" in an Education Test in Gaelic and had been sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labor in consequence, and was destined several months later to win his whole case and force the government to pay 1,524 pounds costs. At the time of the dinner to Masefield, however, he was a convicted criminal, temporarily at large.

The secretary of the Fellowship of Australian Writers, one Clunes, invited Kisch to this dinner.

It came as a bombshell to the president, a respectable bourgeois doctor, who vainly protested. It came as an even more painful shock to the vice-president (Customs Minister Colonel White) and his two political colleagues. While the general public smiled delightedly, the politicians at first tried to put a brave face on it. *They* were not afraid of Kisch. "Let me at him," said the bellicose Hughes, in effect. "The only trouble is, perhaps, this fellow Kisch is going to talk some tripe about war. Only give me the last word and I'll knock the tripe out of him."

The atmosphere was electric. Kisch, the general public remembered, was the author of *Entrance Forbidden* ("not yet translated into English," as Colonel White had satirically told Parliament). Colonel White was the author of *Guest of the Unspeakable* (also not yet translated into English, though the author did his best), and Hughes was the author of *The Price of Peace*.

The price of peace, as it eventuated, was the undignified retirement of the three Cabinet Ministers. At the last moment they oiled out of it, leaving Masefield unsupported and Kisch the virtual guest of honor.

The Fellowship censured Colonel White and the president for their discourteous conduct towards a fellow guest,—political convict or no political convict. The Fellowship divided and disintegrated on this issue. With the assistance of Katherine Susannah Prichard and other leading Austrian left-

wing writers, Kisch founded, in Sydney and Melbourne, Australia's first two branches of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers.

*The Writers Organize*

Vance Palmer, Nettie Palmer, J. M. Harcourt, Jean Devanny and numerous sympathetic writers and journalists who had helped to smash the Kisch ban, have since organized study classes, lectures, debates and competitions to stimulate interest in working class literature among the youth, to ensure that progressive writings shall see the light of day and shall find a market, and to tackle the open and disguised forms of fascist oppression (the militarisation of the country, the book ban, the appalling treatment of the Australian aborigines, etc.) in a popular and militant literary form.

It is a new step the importance of which can scarcely be exaggerated, from the point of view of the anti-fascist fight. For there are many disguised fascist trends in Australian life—notably the book ban—in the fight for which a band of organized, militant writers can hasten progress by decades.

For by the removal of the book ban, fascism in Australia would have no chance.

This island-continent-nation, whose population of less than 7,000,000 people is scattered unevenly over 3,000,000 square miles (larger than capitalist Europe), is every day becoming a more important part of the British Imperialist war machine. Its strategic position in the Pacific, between America, Japan, China, the U.S.S.R., the East Indies and a rebellious India, is making it a "giant Singapore of the South Seas," and to that end the government of Australia is working with the British government to fortify the whole of the continent on a Ten Year Conscription plan conceived by Sir Maurice Hankey.

The spirit of the people, who have a long militant history and who have wrested considerable democratic rights from their "betters," is anything but acquiescent on the question of war. The people fought through a campaign of semi-terror in 1916 and 1917 to reject conscription, though they volunteered for service in large numbers; in the next world war of 193? they will not volunteer so freely. They will not volunteer at all, in fact, if the rising tide of militancy, now largely under Communist leadership, rises much higher.

The Government knows this, and it fears—with good reason as the Kisch-Griffin campaign revealed—to show its fascist hand too openly. It has been leaning heavily on an underground weapon of fascism, the weapon of cultural contraception, the banning of left wing literature.

The Australian masses, of hardy stock and pioneer tradition, are politically militant. Culturally they are comparatively weak, due largely to the huge distance—many thousands of miles—which separates Australia from other continents. And thus in the past the Government has been able to harness much of this militancy for reactionary purposes, somewhat in the same way, perhaps, as Hitler has marshalled some sections of militant youth in Germany to the cause of "national" defence.

This device has begun to fail with the growth of the Communist Party, the Anti-War movement and the International Labor Defence in Australia, and the Government has been forced to intensify its surreptitious banning of books—to an extent where it no longer is even surreptitious, but stands revealed in all its shame.

*"They Shall Not Pass"*

At present there are literally hundreds of books which are banned in Australia though not banned in England (whose rulers' treatment of Hanley's *Boy,* and the infamous Incitement to Disaffection Act, can leave us with no illusions as to England's "democracy" in this respect); and in the last year or so, more than 70 books, on political subjects alone, have been banned.

These include Palme Dutt's *Fascism and Social Revolution,* Allen Hutt's *Condition of the Working Class in Great Britain,* Stalin's *Leninism* and *Results of the First Five-Year Plan,* Ilya Ehrenburg's *Soviet Writer Looks at Vienna,* as typical samples. *Roar China! Barricades in Berlin, Germany, Hitler and Trades Unions* and innumerable other works are banned, though not directed specifically against British capitalism. And banned with them is a whole pile of left wing periodicals, arousing the fury of workers and intellectuals particularly, in the case of *International Press Correspondence, International Literature* and *The Labor Monthly.*

In addition, such books as John Dos Passos' *1919,* Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms,* Aldington's *All Men Are Enemies,* Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Dubliners,* Hanley's *Boy,* the classics, *Golden Asse, Daphnis and Chloe,* and the *Decameron* of Boccaccio (in cheap paper editions only!) also come under the censors' shears, along with the more famous cases of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Norman Lindsay's *Redheap.*[1]

Not all these last named books are progressive politically, though they all have cultural value. The banning of some of them may be put down to the fact that, under Australian laws, the obscurest of obscure Customs officials (and some of them seem barely able to write their own names) are empowered to ban autocratically any book to which they take a dislike. And many of them exercise certain religious, political or sex prejudice, or mania, from which they are apparently acute sufferers.

There is method in the madness of these gentlemen (who ban a few reactionary books of the type indicated as an excuse for banning ten times as many radical books, of the type also indicated) but there is also madness in their method. They are reliably reported to have put their heavy feet down on a book signed by the name of Lindsay, author of the offending *Redheap,* discovering too late that the author was no relation to the famous Lindsay family, and that the book was written on the cold, chaste subject of Greenland exploration. And they have made even graver errors.

The banning of *Brave New World* caused something of a storm in progressive bourgeois circles, backed up as a matter of principle by intellectuals and a section of the working class. This book was banned some years ago, and as a result of the widespread protests the Nationalist Government was forced to appoint a Book Censorship Advisory Board, consisting of Sir Robert Garran, Dr. Allen and Professor J. M. Hayden to inquire into the question of "blasphemy" and "indecency." The net result is merely, however, that instead of having one book censorship (under the notorious aforementioned Colonel White), Australia now has two: one to guard its politics, and the other to care for its immortal soul.

As Tom Fitzgerald remarked on the front page of *The Journalist,* official organ of 1,000 Australian newspaper men, "In Australia cultural homicides

[1] Norman Lindsay is an Australian and, though politically a reactionary, is one of the country's most famous cultural figures. Another Australian author whose work has been banned in Australia is J. M. Harcourt, whose *Uusurge,* a story of strike activity in West Australia, published overseas, has been declared a "prohibited import," first for West Australia, and then for the whole Commonwealth.

*Australian writers among the English speaking delegates to the Paris Congress for the Defence of Culture. Sitting: Nettie Palmer, Australian novelist, Amabel Williams-Ellis, of the British delegation, Christina Stead, Australian novelist. Standing: Ralf Fox, English writer, James Hanley, the banning of whose novel* Boy *caused a storm in England recently, Michael Gold, American novelist, and John Fisher, Australian journalist and author of this article*

are accepted as political leaders. If it happened in Abyssinia it would be a front page joke in our papers. But, instead, it is a front page joke in Abyssinia. . . ."

It is no joke, however, to the book loving public of Australia, not to mention the bookselling public there and abroad, and still less is it a joke to the intellectuals and the workers, who are principally hit by this ban. And it is not being taken lying down.

### *Against Censorship*

A Book Censorship Abolition League was formed early this year, under the presidency of W. McMahon Ball, senior lecturer in political economy at Melbourne University, and tens of thousands of signatures were obtained almost immediately for a petition of protest to be presented to Parliament. Signatures include people of all political opinions, even some influential conservatives adding their names on patriotic grounds, to bring Australia culturally nearer the heart of the Empire!

A debate on book censorship in the Melbourne Town Hall on February 26, was listened to attentively by a packed house of 3,000 people, who gave their verdict emphatically against the censorship, even though two of the team of three purporting to attack the censorship did so on the rather naive assumption that "there is no political censorship in England." Tremendous interest was also aroused by a more progressive series of lectures in the same hall

on May 2, when a clergyman, a professor, a lawyer, a tutor, a merchant and a journalist, each took up the cudgels on behalf of two world-famous but Australian-banned books.

This Abolition League has done good work in publicizing the book ban, and the stiffening influence of the new branches of the Writers International should have a beneficial effect of giving a real mass basis to this campaign. In the meantime it is doing excellent work by exposing the class nature, as well as the seeming stupidity, of the ban on books.

It is doing valuable work in assuring publication locally for high-class work written by young Australians, and encouraging the local publication of "prohibited imports." Before the Writers body was founded, Ehrenburg's banned report on Vienna was reprinted locally, and thus eluded the ban, and since then the railwaymen of Australia have printed Palme Dutt's *Fascism and Social Revolution* as a serial in their trade journal. This can be done unless the Government successfully prosecutes the publisher, and in the present state of tension it is reluctant to come too far into the open.

Nevertheless the internal ban of left-wing literature is not to be ignored.[1] Postal facilities are denied to Australian working class periodicals and heavy penalties imposed for its sale in even such places as the Domain, Sydney's "Hyde Park." And the Queensland Labor Government condones this ban, while unashamedly inserting governmental advertisements in such papers as the official Nazi *Queenslander Herald,* which openly calls for funds for this foreign fascist movement, and gives a list of concentration points in five States!

In publicizing such definitely fascist tendencies, the new branches of the Writers International are performing an important task.

And meanwhile the National Government, determined that Australia shall provide the necessary cannon-fodder for the forthcoming war against the Soviet Republics, is descending even deeper into the mire of deception and downright falsehood.

"Only about two books a month are banned," Colonel White said recently, "and, of these, political books get a particularly good run,"—a grotesque misstatement, as Customs figures show. And this military general's latest remarks in Parliament (Hansard report) cast a further light on the character of this custodian of culture.

". . . In Great Britain are produced some of the worst examples of obscene and indecent literature," Colonel White thundered loyally, referring Hitler-fashion to the "unenviable public duty" of "wading through the foul pages of pornographic and salacious books, often containing the coarsest language and vilest obscenity, or in interpreting the message of weak-eyed and maudlin writers who plead the special case of the victims, the depraved and the criminal."

"Innocent titles," according to the gallant Colonel, "are frequently a disguise for some of the most disgusting writings of modern times. Simple titles such as *The Scene is Changed, Boy,* and *The Partners* would deceive book-

[1] When Katherine Susannah Prichard, Australia's foremost writer, returned from a visit to the Soviet Union, she was commissioned to write a series of articles for a Melbourne newspaper. These were tremendously popular, but after several had been published, the series abruptly terminated without explanation, pressure having been applied by the government. In book form, published overseas, these articles would probably have been refused entry into Australia. Katherine Prichard published them locally, however, in a book entitled *The Real Russia* which has been immensely popular in Australia. They were also published in the Australian cultural magazine *Soviets Today,* which has recently been conducting a militant campagn against a governmental postal ban.

sellers, librarians and public alike, so that these books written for the degenerate and prurient-minded find their way unwittingly into the circulating library and home."

Wittingly or unwittingly, a remarkable number of these banned books find their way into Parliamentarians' homes, incidentally, and stay there an unconscionable time, for the book ban does not apply to the Parliamentary Library at Canberra. Which proves perhaps that these people, whatever their evident defects, are at least conscientious.

In his Hansard remarks, Colonel White also asked: If anyone could defend one particular book he flourished aloft. It was intended for Australian children, and contained an illustrated alphabet: "S for 'our Stalin' " and many such horrible suggestions, and the disloyal line . . . "E is for Empire, built up on blood. F is for Fascists, a murderous brood. . . ."

Colonel White, brooding, felt murderous indeed. For fascists hate hard facts.

# Soviet Humanism

This article appeared in *Pravda*—organ of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) We decided to reprint it in our magazine, as a short exposition of the ideas of Soviet humanism, based on the teachings of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin.—*Editor.*

The epoch of capitalism which flashed with marvels of science and technique at the dawn of its development, but which now is rotting in fascist obscurantism, approaches its end. This is no longer denied by many bourgeois philosophers, sociologists and economists. However, they consider and expound the crash of capitalist culture as the crash of culture in general.

They are not at all original in this historical blindness. In the revolutionary crumbling of their epoch, feudal nobility, the forerunners of the bourgeoisie in the art of ruling the toilers, saw only a universal "deluge" and a crash of every form and manifestation of culture. The Spenglers of our time are simply copying their philosophy of decline from the vile pamphlets of the last knights of feudal nobility.

Accordingly, fascism is intended to save the capitalist bourgeoisie by transferring it back to pre-capitalist barbarism. The "ideologists" of fascism are anathemising the best that was created by the bourgeoisie itself in the period of its struggle against feudalism. Their swastika blots out all culture and humanism, science unfettered by religion, and the rights of critical reason.

Notwithstanding their sympathy for fascism the capitalists are not preparing to destroy their factories in order to gratify the reactionary utopian romanticism. Owners of the Krupp plants are least of all thinking of becoming masters of petty mediaeval workshops; landlords do not express any inclination to have their fields, which are now worked by farmhands, become the site of a dense Teutoburg forest. From the whole arsenal of mediaevalism they take over most willingly only its political ideas and leave for the millions of toilers the pleasures of servitude and slavery.

The bourgeoisie always drew the images of its "heroes" from the past. But never did this masquerade look as pitiable, shabby, stupid and ludicrous as now.

The better representatives of the bourgeois intelligentsia, who are capable of rising to the theoretical understanding of the whole course of the historical process, are beginning to understand that what they see is the actual end of capitalism, but at the same time the beginning of a new great epoch, which is the road of revolutionary reconstruction of the whole of society. The building of socialism in the Soviet land is not an "experiment" to be looked down upon condescendingly while consoling oneself and deceiving others with the stability of capitalism. It is not a "national," but a world-wide phenomenon, which won the recognition and support of the international proletariat and of millions of toilers. It is the victory of the only revolutionary and creative class in its struggle for a society which knows no classes. It is a class struggle under the banner of the triumph of

man and humanity, culture and intellect; it is a class struggle under the banner of the new proletarian humanism.

Aside from its name, Soviet humanism has nothing in common with the historical bourgeois humanism. The humanism of the proletariat is the true humanism. According to Marx, the proletarian revolution draws its poetry not from the past but from the future. It was the task of bourgeois humanism to reconcile classes and to teach the proletariat to see a fictitious "man in general" in a common exploiter, and to cover up the inhuman and bestial conditions of life of the toilers by a false declamation about humaneness. Soviet humanism is built on an actual destruction of the class of plunderers and parasites who force upon men the life of animals. By openly proclaiming the class struggle communism liberates and regenerates man. Therefore, as Engels maintained, the whole movement of the proletariat is essentially humanitarian.

The bourgeoisie has never understood it. The ideologists of the bourgeoisie utilized the directness and sincerity of the proletarian revolution in order to slanderously attribute to it a "narrow-class" character. As a result of their petty-bourgeois narrow mindedness the writers, philosophers and poets of the bourgeoisie subordinated the real class content of life to an empty "all-humanity" phrase. Though they were up to their ears in the mire of the bourgeois class society they still maintained themselves "all-human!" But real man arises in society only with the abolition of classes. This is what its great leaders have been teaching the proletariat. "To prepare a radical upheaval," wrote Marx in his young days, "means to understand the root of the thing. But the root for man is man himself." Hence the law of proletarian revolution: "to subvert all relations by which man is an enslaved, suppressed, burdened and despised being." Only the proletariat can undertake and fulfil to the end this great world historical task, because in bourgeois society the wage slave of capital "is a complete loss as a man and, consequently, can find himself only *through a new full regeneration of man.*"

The world-wide movement of the proletariat confirms these words. Not only does the worker find himself as a man in the revolutionary class struggle and in the Communist Party, but at the same time hundreds of millions of pariahs all over the globe, colonial slaves of capital and hundreds of millions of oppressed, degraded and disgraced human beings see in the proletariat their saviour and leader. The whole activity of the great men of the proletariat is permeated with a vast, warm and true love of mankind, with a burning compassion for the oppressed, degraded and outraged toiling people and with a great pride in the revolutionary—the worker. The teachers of merciless class struggle—Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin—are the great lovers of mankind, the great humanists of the proletariat.

The new humanism begins to unfold itself before the eyes of the whole world not only in the immortal creations of the teachers of Marxism and not only in the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat against its enemies, but also in the living and real practice of our construction. The dawn of a new regeneration is already rising over mankind; it consolidates itself in a new way in the Land of the Soviets where socialism is banishing the somber shadows of nationalist and religious fanaticism; it brings forth heroes and titans and the talents of millions are blossoming forth under its life-giving rays.

This is a wonderful dawn of a new mankind. . . . But it does not come of itself. By means of ceaseless work the proletariat creates for itself upon

the ruins of capitalism the conditions of a new life. The care of man becomes the most important and the prime task of socialist construction; the new stage in the history of the world is opened and indicated by Comrade Stalin in his speeches on the cultivation of man and on the value of new cadres—that most valuable possession of liberated mankind.[1]

Bolshevik work is rising to new heights. It opens up new and boundless horizons. The Bolshevik was always an educator of men. As an educator he assumes special significance. While he is stamping out all alien class weeds with revolutionary irreconcilability and intense vigilance, he must cautiously and lovingly raise the growing new man, and must secure for him the fullness of a free, joyous and intelligent life.

The strength of the Soviet country is manifested in the triumph of man and humanity and in the inexhaustibility of the human riches of the socialist system. The great Union of Soviet Socialist Republics raises high over the world the banner of humanism at a time when capitalist society is sinking deeper and deeper into the bestial mire of existence, at a time when its ruling classes are in reality becoming brutal and savage.

In the process of historical changes that system was always victorious, which possessed a higher culture. And now, at the great turn of epochs the higher culture unquestionably belongs to the victorious proletariat.

*Translated from the Russian by Leon Epstein*

[1] This speech was printed in full in *International Literature*, No. 5, 1935.

**Vladimir Dmitrevski**

# Malraux and His Latest Book

*About the Noted French Author's New Novel* Scornful Years

Discussing the brilliant French writer, André Malraux, a guest at the Congress of Soviet Writers held last year, Karl Radek said: "We warmly shake Malraux's hand and tell him: the artists who join the struggling armies of the proletariat are facing a hard road. No sooner will Malraux write a book about the fight of the French workers, than the entire bourgeois press will declare that he lost his talent."

When Malraux wrote *Man's Fate,* an unusual novel of life and death, of the loneliness and daring of Chinese revolutionaries, the bourgeois critics willingly forgave the young author his "rebelliousness." The Academician, Mauriac, and other "judges of talent" were indulgent with Malraux's theme, and, though its effect was that of thunder in a clear, blue sky,—the bourgeois critics preferred to consider it rather a caprice of an immensely gifted author. The book won high literary honor, the Goncourt Prize. The exalted praise and refined flattery with which Malraux was showered, betrayed the passionate desire of the bourgeoisie to keep the writer on its side of the fence.

Watching Malraux's growth, the bourgeois critics could not fail to recognize that it is dealing here with a writer of rare talent and an overwhelming, devastating force. But against whom will he direct his blows? Will he follow the path of Paul Morand and delight the select few with perfection of style and boundless cynicism of an imperialistic conquistador? Or will he prefer to gain the immortality of an Academician, and, following the example of Pierre Benois, waste his talent on novels, sweet and fragrant as the fruits of paradise, which will lull the masses to sleep.

Or will Malraux choose the futile, aimless battles against windmills, to the tumultous joy of the thinning ranks of literary Don Quixotes?

All this was considered probable and permissible, for Malraux would have not been lost to bourgeois literature. Flattery and praise were woven into a gentle but firm net in which he was to be caught. This is why the air rang with the praises of bourgeois critics who purposely failed to recognize the content set into the brilliant form of *Man's Fate.*

Numerous reviews sought to convince Malraux that by choosing China as the locale for his novel, he only carried his young and daring talent out of the four walls of the prosaic life of bourgeois France.

Yes, it seems that the mysterious East has claimed the attention of many talented writers. Claude Farrer loved the invented, indifferent, yellow mask. Behind indifference he discerned flaming desires and refined, strange, unfathomable emotions which were conceived in his imagination, and had no root in the soil of the East. Farrer spurned the cold practical West, and turned to the East for inspiration, fancying it a magic room full of fantastic, many colored rugs and lanterns, where one's emotions, thoughts and actions become vague and unreal.

Malraux rejected this conception. He opened wide the gates to the East, and bravely entered it, although instead of magic lanterns, cannon fire lit the way; instead of fluffy rugs, blood caressed his feet; instead of the fragrance of incense, the stench of powder and rotting corpses hit his nostrils.

The horror of this did not frighten Malraux, for the clear eye of the artist and his warm heart found in it the flaming desires of a great people, and the unyielding will of fearless fighters.

As a theme, Malraux preferred the hatred of Shanghai workers to the love of the Samurai. Instead of the soul of a Mandarin, he placed on the operation table the mind and heart of a Chinese communist. What interested him was not the timid love of joy house girls for the young men of Europe, but the hatred of the men and women of China for the imperialist enslavers. Still the bourgeois critics were loath to concede that he had already chosen his path, for China is not France, and Malraux had not, as yet, done anything to deserve being placed "outside the law," as far as "polite" society of France was concerned.

And then, Malraux wrote a new novel. No, not about the French proletariat and its struggles. . . . And yet, the novel provoked the sharpest attacks on the part of bourgeois critics. It became, together with the author, the target for foul remarks and slander issued from the lips of certain gentlemen who only yesterday cheered themselves hoarse in honor of the same man.

The title of this novel is *Scornful Years.* It tells of the concentration camps of Germany and of revolutionary fighters condemned to the living grave of solitary confinement.

*Andre Malraux in Moscow, with Sergei Eisenstein, noted Soviet cinema director*

Hans Kassner, an outstanding German communist, returns illegally to Germany in 1932 to head the strike struggles in the Ruhr. He is arrested on the suspicion that he is—Kassner. Only forged documents, a changed appearance and, above all, the utmost grit was to save him from a horrible and meaningless death. The third degree. It is Kassner, beyond doubt! He is given his own photograph. Several pairs of sharp, piercing eyes are watching and comparing. One has to collect one's nerves into a mailed fist, has to shield the face with calmness and unflinching faith in one's own integrity. The calmness is disturbed at times by a perplexed smile, by an incomprehensible look, by an indignant gesture. . . .

Kassner knows that he is not recognized. The "psychological attack" failed. But instead, there commences a physical torture. . . . Three Storm Troopers attack him with a studied cruelty. Blood gushes from his mouth. "Well," triumphs one of the Storm Troopers, "you begin to spit your red flag out of your mouth!"

Tortured so that every cell of his body cries with pain, Kassner is thrown into solitary confinement. Here begins a punishment more horrible than any torture of the body. It seems to Kassner that he is buried alive, that he is on the bottom of an inconceivably deep well—stinking and suffocating—the opening of which is closed by a stone. The sense of endless solitude takes hold of him. He feels as helpless and alone as the last man remaining on the earth can feel.

The gray, hairy spectres of hallucinations fill the cell, and spin around the prone, bloody body. They drive with devilish persistence through Kassner's skull, threatening him with insanity.

Memories flow. The heroism of the red fighters of Soviet Russia. The courage of the tortured and executed Chinese comrades. The life of Kassner's friends and fellow fighters.

Only the rhythmical strides of the guard break the dead silence that reigns over the cell. But these are not sounds of life! On the contrary, they emphasize the doom of the prisoner surrounded by stone and the animal hatred of men. Occasionally, a cry of a tortured man pierces the silence and dies. The last thread that keeps the half-dead man in touch with life is broken. Kassner's thoughts go to his nearest. But already he had crossed into the pale of death. It seems to him that everything outside the cell is doomed and dead. He suspects that his wife and child are not among the living. Suspicion grows into conviction, and presses him with the inevitability of a thing that had taken place. His consciousness is like that of a dying man who is ready to catch hold of a straw. If he succeeds walking so many steps before the guard is relieved, his wife is alive. At first his steps are slow and steady. He wants to be honest. But for a moment he looses hold of his will, and in a stone box, in complete darkness, a man rushes about stealing seconds from time. . . . But it is impossible! He must check up! Kassner counts feverishly, and he sighs with relief, with complete triumphant relief. She is alive!

The tortured feverish mind is cooled by gentle winds of tender melodies. He reinforces his strength and courage with Beethoven's might.

However, all this is from within. It is self aid nurtured by a powerful mind at the expense of terrific strain. It sustains, guards, but it brings no salvation.

A knock on the wall. Kassner is shaken. Is it a provocation, a beastly trick of his enemies, or is it a word from other imprisoned fighters, and then his isolation is gone.

He'll take a chance. First of all, he must decipher the code. It is hard, but he works feverishly. He has it! He understands. The word written in sounds means—comrade! It was as if the stone walls of the cell crumbled. He is lonely no longer, for his un-

known friend reminds him of the courageous men whose will and thoughts are the will and thoughts of the German communist Hans Kassner. Mental liberation is there. But it is still far from physical freedom. Only an accident, or rather an act of endless heroism inherent in all fighters for communism, is what comes to Kassner's aid. One of the prisoners in the concentration camp poses as Kassner, with the result that the fascists are compelled to set the latter free.

To him, who had spent days and nights side by side with death, life becomes inexpressibly beautiful. With complete joy he takes in the blue sky, the sun, the warmth of its rays, and the air intoxicated with sounds.

But the meaning of life for Kassner is not in making the most of it for a personal and selfish joy. It is in the struggle for giving these riches to all mankind, to all who have been defrauded of it.

He finds his wife and child in Prague. After all, they did remain alive. The tense. sentimental scene of their meeting does not break the steel-like firmness of the narrative. It is not unlike a tender lyrical interlude, releasing the tenseness of an heroic symphony.

Kassner, who now loves life more dearly than ever, is preparing to leave Prague for the land of darkness, of scorn and hatred, for the land of concentration camps and solitary confinement. He is a communist, a representative of the force which knows no fatigue or retreat in the struggle for its ideas. He feels surging in him the power which directs millions of people toward a new, liberated life. In Kassner's readiness for struggle, suffering and death is the meaning of his existence, the justification for the sacrifice he accepted from a fellow prisoner.

There is a lot to be said about André Malraux's new novel. One must bow before the author of *Man's Fate,* whose enormous talent reached new heights in *Scornful Years.* Reading the novel, one inevitably thinks of the *Symphony Pathetique,* for every word is saturated wih anger, love and passionate faith in the greatness of man.

In comparison with *Man's Fate,* the new novel is an important step toward a deeper understanding of the problems of proletarian revolution and communist principles. The first book was a remarkable tale of isolated revolutionists, of heroes—courageous but doomed. The philosopher who is seeking the meaning of life in intoxicating blue opium smoke; the Russian communist; an inspired terrorist harrassed by doubts—lonely figures in the armies of revolutionary China. Depicting them, Malraux, consciously or unconsciously forgot those millions who gave birth to these characters and nourished them—he forgot the workers and peasants of China who rose against capitalism, led by communists toward a new life.

In *Scornful Years* Malraux also stresses the manysidedness of the individual. Kassner is an intellectual communist, coming from the intelligentsia, a strong individual who is above the average. Malraux himself states in the introduction that there are only two heroes in his novel: the intellecual communist Kassner and the meaning of life.

However, Kassner's loneliness is not imbued with doom. On the contrary, the loneliness disappears as soon as he remembers that in back of him there is a teeming, invincible army of fighters for communism.

Because Malraux chose to write his new novel about the center of Europe, a "highly civilized" country, instead of the "exotic" East, is sufficient to move many bourgeois critics to aim their poisoned pens at him. This is, of course, the way things should be. Malraux is right when he insists that a work of art is to tell the truth, rather than to aim at proving an argument. Yes, but truth is not absolute. A bourgeois writer, who is completely on the side of the existing system, may give expression to a personal truth which is, objectively speaking, a lie. It ceases to be a truth, for it is based on the lie of a perishing class. Andre Malraux, found his truth in communism. He has given courageously his culture and genius to the truth of a new world. And he yielded to it his flaming heart.

Reading the new novel, one unwittingly visualizes its author in action at the International Writers Congress called for the defense of culture, for the defense of mankind against war and fascism.

On the platform, as well as at his desk, Malraux is not only a first rate artist, he is also an inspired fighter for the system which will afford every man the chance of fulfilling everything that is good in him.

Malraux is understood and appreciated. It was not without reason that a French worker wrote to Paul Nizan, after having read *Scornful Years:* "This book can be trusted."

There is no doubt that by the time the bourgeoisie loses its faith in Malraux's talent, he will be recognized by tens of millions of those who are striving for the same goal as the author, and are ready to fight for it.

*Translated from the Russian by R. Magidov*

# LETTERS FROM WRITERS

## USA

*The Writer and the Class Struggle*

Thank you for your interest and criticism of my *New Masses* article. I try to keep myself free from leftist tendencies, but they seem to crop up when I don't mean them at all.

I certainly did not mean to demand of every writer that he take the naked class struggle as his central theme in whatever he writes. I agree with you entirely that there is need and scope for works such as Waldo Frank's, for studies of the "individual" way to the revolutionary movement. In fact, my own book published last year dealt with such a theme, and I was perhaps unconsciously indulging in some self-criticism of weaknesses now apparent to me.

My main point, however, was that the class struggle in some form or another must be a vital force (at least in the background) of anything vital written today. The writer, intellectual, engineer, professional man, is first of all a man who earns or somehow secures his living in this capitalist world, and I would be a poor Marxist not to know that that fact conditions all his thinking. Here in America we are deluged with "escape" literature, purely subjective accounts of the emotional affairs of classless people, living in an economic vacuum. It is this class of writing that I meant to attack. The class struggle has sharpened and intensified so in this country in recent years that any writing which leaves it out is either intellectually dishonest or out-right capitalist propaganda. The sincere writer knows that there are problems facing the world he lives in, and, whether he understands them fully or not, he has to take them into consideration.

I wish to point out, however, that mere muddled sincerity is not to be encouraged. With a bourgeois background, such sincerity is as likely to lead to fascism. That, as I see it, is the function of radical criticism in this country—to encourage the sincerity and correct the muddle.

We are, of course, in agreement on the point that a man must write about what he knows best. I would not have college professors writing about proletarians or steel workers writing about intellectuals.

Accept my assurance that I have no wish to repeat the errors or RAPP, which unfortunately gave our enemies some ammunition in this country.

Thanking you again for your interest and criticism, I am

Sincerely yours,

*DALE CURRAN*

*New York, N.Y.*

*Novels Should be Written by Novelists*

You were quite justified in writing me and if I attempt a defense of my original article "Down With the Novel" it is with no resentment but with a desire to explain my idea.

The title of the article is unfortunate. It was not my original title and I fear that it gives the article an emphasis which is not carried out by the text itself. What I was saying, in essence, was that novels should only be written by novelists. My theories in that respect grow out of a wide experience with important bourgeois magazines and with proletarian writers. There is a feeling here, sponsored in great part by publishers who find the novel easier to sell than other works, that everyone must attempt the novel regardless of what aptitude he may have for it. The result is that many sound writers in other fields are wasting their talents in a medium for which they have no proper training.

With your central point I agree entirely. Dreiser's novels are superior to his autobiographical works, but on the other hand Vincent Sheehan's *Personal History* is not only superior to his novels but for our present purposes in this country it is almost perfect. I am not competent to deal with the problem of what effect the state of revolutionary progress, politically, has upon revolutionary literature, but, as I stated in my article, much of our revolutionary writing (fiction) is ignored by the broad masses we are trying to reach. Since it is fiction, they feel they have as much right to reject the authenticity of the characters as the author has to create them. This is particularly true of the middle class critics who control literary opinion here. They can discount our fiction as being prejudiced but have a difficult time ignoring vigorous personal experiences.

I do not think that any good novelist will be discouraged by what I have written and I can assure you that the article was taken much less literally in this country. I am much in favor of the novel when it is a good novel and when it is written by a man who is a novelist. My further point of a possible new form for the novel arises out of this conviction. It is entirely possible that

the novel can be extented to encompass many elements which it does not now possess. I mentioned that because of my experience with capable writers who were anxious to break into a larger form but were handicapped by the traditional shell of the novel as to be unable to get launched on their work. What I ask for in revolutionary novels now is that they be effective rather than technically correct. I ask that the artist be given the utmost freedom to create as he sees fit and without restrictions which hamper him.

I am afraid this is only a repetition of what has already been said in my article. I wish you would read it again, without the title in mind, read it simply as a plea that the writing of novels be left to novelists and that important artists in other fields either work out a new form in which they can function or cease sacrificing their own good work for something which can, in their hands, only be second rate.

I am indebted to you for your letter.

With comradely greetings.

*ROBERT FORSYTHE*

*New York, N.Y.*

(American author of *Redder Than the Rose.* A leading American satirical writer, contributor to the *New Masses* and other publications.)

# BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

*GERMANY*

## ALFRED KERR

I was born, much to my regret, way back in 1867, on December 25. I must admit this is a fact, though, personally, I do not believe it. If anyone else does I hope he catches the flu!

By mere chance this event of my birth took place in the German city of Breslau. This was really not at all necessary. I could just as well have been born in some other country. I should then have loved this other country just as much as I did Germany until recently. And if this country had happened to be populated by others than the Nazis—Soviet people, for instance, I should have loved it even more. Because the Soviets pursue a human end, the Nazis an inhuman one.

*II*

I say this now, not because it is a Soviet magazine that has asked me to write my autobiography. I have shown my boundless admiration for Soviet Russia in other published writings. During one heavy spell of illness I thought I was dying. I wrote for the extremely bourgeois *Berliner Tageblatt* about some things very dear to me, among them Beethoven's symphonies and the new, daring human order, the Soviets. . . .

In the German FSU magazine I have written: "The great value on this earth is the existence of Bolshevism."

*III*

But I am supposed to write a biography.

So then, my happening to be born in Breslau was pure chance. I have grown very sceptical about the idea of a "native country." It is an idea arising out of the difficulty of learning a foreign language. Also—out of habit, laziness, fear. At the beginning of the war I was a "patriot"—in the middle of it the reverse.

But happening to be born in a German town, I began to improve the language of that country, shortening those incredibly long periods that weave about like rain worms, putting clarity into its fogginess.

This transformation of the German language soon found favor with many adherents. Later, when my principles were recognized, some dramatists erroneously called it expressionism. But even if I am the father of expressionism I am not responsible for all the expressionists did with it. I wanted to give a concentrated lamp instead of many weak kerosene lamps. The expressionist dramatists gave instead—a telegraphic form void of thought. An unfortunate misunderstanding.

*IV*

It is claimed I am a dramatic critic. In reality I only wrote advertisements for something entirely different. I labored to "speed up development." In the introduction to my five volume *World in Drama* there is the paragraph:

"Working in art—yes. With all one's heart. But this has almost always been a pretext for the struggle for a brave, reasonable order."

I have taught dramatists that there is no glory in dreams and that reason is no disgrace.

*V*

In the province of criticism my reform consisted of the requirement that criticism itself must be a work of art.

Only one that can create art can judge art: the critic is an artist.

The introduction to *World in Drama* says: "In the future it should be said: poetry has four branches—epic poetry, lyric poetry, drama and criticism. The genuine critic is a sane artist. The fundamental thing is sanity."

*VI*

That's my biography.

In conscience I must add that the other part of my biography (which is of no interest to the public) has also been lovely.

I have worked hard all my life, worked to the point of self sacrifice. But beauty made me happy.

Work was for others as well as myself. Beauty was for myself alone.

Is this wrong? Must a man be only an altruist? It is his sacred duty to work for the happiness of all people. But should he therefore forget, deceive and suppress himself?

I think:

To consider only one's own happiness is —base. To also think of one's own happiness is—permissible. Not to think at all about one's own happiness is—heroic. I admit I have only been half a hero (at any rate a frank one).

*VII*

The rest of the biography is formal only.

I have traveled much. Until fifty I was sin-

gle, then I married twice, young women (that's egoism!). My first wife unfortunately died early. My second one, to my great joy, is alive. Our children, a girl of eleven and a boy of thirteen, live with us here in French "exile" which neither they nor I consider such.

The Nazis have taken everything away from me—even the letters of prominent men I had received during my life. I fought against national socialism with verse and prose. At first in Germany, after my escape —abroad. For that they have announced a prize for my head. This situation did not make me sentimental but rather happy— because in the most unexpected manner a second stage of my life began.

*VIII*

The biography ends.

I love to say very serious things very lightly. When the "Main Street" folks, not only in America, hear my name mentioned, they say: "Kerr—that's the one that puts in so many dots and Roman numbers." And because I love to speak lightly of serious things, it has happened here also. But at the end of my autobiography I want to be not only serious—I want to achieve even pathos almost. I aim to achieve this by repeating some lines I have written once:

"Bolshevism is a most gigantic experiment attempting firmly and determinedly to realize what humanity has weakly and fruitlessly been trying to achieve for the past two thousand years."

*IX*

The most important part of my biography is that I have lived to see this.

*Paris, France*

*ENGLAND*

## JOHN LEHMANN

*My background:* I was born in 1907 in the Thames valley near London. It was a literary London: my father was a journalist and writer of light verse, strongly liberal in sympathies, and was a member of Parliament for some years before the war. I was educated in the strongholds of English bourgeois aristocratic tradition, the "public" school of Eton and the University of Cambridge, where I studied classical and modern languages, history and Shakespeare. After the university I studied the history of art for a time in London and abroad, but gave this up to enter a London publishing firm, where I worked for two years. Since then I have lived to a large extent in central Europe, writing and studying cultural and political developments.

*Revolutionary influences:* I remained a liberal and strong pacifist in politics until later in my university career, when socialism and the Russian Revolution began to interest me. In this late development I think I was typical of my generation and class, in the sheltered atmosphere of bourgeois England. By the time the crisis had fully developed, I was strongly reformist in sympathy. My beliefs were, however, badly shaken by the "National Government" election in 1931, but I was above all brought towards the Revolution by the fact that I was living in central Europe and in contact with workers and workers' organizations, just at the time when fascism made its big advance. Russian films, such as *Storm Over Asia* and *Earth* had a great influence on me just as I left Cambridge, also some works of Maurice Dobb, Mirski's *Lenin* and Tretyakov's *Roar China.*

*John Lehmann, British poet*

*Literary efforts:* My first book of poems was published in 1931. At that time my style was very formal, "classical" and objective. I was trying to write about nature without the sentiment and inexactitude of the Georgian poets and without the obscurity of the post-Georgians. Soon afterwards my poetry rapidly changed, became less formal and concerned itself more and more with actual events and the modern world. Some of these poems were published in *New Signatures* and *New Country*—two collections of the works of young writers who were in revolt against the bourgeois and current literary fashions. I tried at the same time to evolve a new type of prose poem, as a medium for my experi-

*Jose Munoz Cota, Mexican poet*

ences in central Europe some of which were published in my second book, *The Noise of History*. I collaborated with *Storm*, and with *Left Review* from its start. Outside England many of my poems including some written after a first short visit to the Soviet Union in 1934 appeared in the *New Republic*. It is my belief now that a poet must also help, as far as he can, in however small way, *actively*, and not merely confine to the role of spectator.

*MEXICO*

## JOSE MUNOZ COTA

Mexican revolutionary poet. Born in Juarez in 1907. Educated in Mexico. In 1926 took part in a national literary competition and won second place.

José M. Cota is the author of a number of articles published by left ying Mexican newspapers and of a pamphlet entitled *Thoughts on Socialism* which appeared with a preface by the revolutionary critic Jerman.

José Muñoz Cota is the author of a collection of lyrical poems, *Romance of Dawn* (1933), and two collections of revolutionary poems: *Barricades* and *Songs of the Hammer and Sickle*. José M. Cota is now working on a book about Mexican nationalism.

# MARGINALIA

It is pleasant, why deny, when the press mentions a magazine one is connected with. That is why we, the collaborators of the magazine *International Literature* were particularly gratified to read Mr. Roderik Random's article "People and Books" in the British journal *Time and Tide* (by the way, I am glad to be able to inform Mr. Random that one of his books has been translated into Russian.)

About our magazine Mr. Random writes: "I know nothing better that costs one shilling." But he immediately continues: "This does not, of course, mean that everything published in that magazine is a masterpiece." In this we cannot disagree—masterpieces are, of course, rare—hard to create and not easy to find—a gem is always a gem.

Upon reading *International Literature* Mr. Random felt a desire for serious discussion, to talk things over. We are happy to hear this—that's just what we wish—that the magazine evoke such emotions, just as pure air makes one breathe deeper and more joyously.

So let's talk it over. We shall begin with the main thing—proletarian culture. Mr. Random thinks we have "grown cold to the question of proletarian culture." How can one grow cold to one's life, one's breathing, one's consciousness, one's heart. Proletarian culture—that's the air we breathe. But only narrow minded fanatics think that one's own is best even if slightly shabby. Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin have taught us writers and critics otherwise—we must master the world's entire culture, know it thoroughly, in order to, critically analysing and digesting the culture of the past, create a new proletarian, Socialist culture. In our country the printing presses cannot keep up with the demand for the books of Goethe, Tolstoi, Pushkin. And the books of contemporary writers come out in editions of hundreds of thousands.

The interests of the Soviet people are unusually wide and it is a mistake to think that either they or those that have been assigned to literary work want to read only proletarian writers without regard to style. That is all poppy-cock. The Soviet reader can very well join a love for Shakespeare with a love for Gorki and Sholokhov.

Is it not significant that only after the revolution did translations appear of Frank Norris (died 1901), Theodore Dreiser and Andre Gide!

There is no use pretending, as some do in Western countries, that with us a love of culture comes with indifference to the revolution. Thus Mr. Random writes that "Soviet writers no longer are busy defending the revolution and advocating the cause of the oppressed proletariat." What about Gorki? Sholokhov? Fedin? Ehrenburg? Panferov? Leonov? Vsevolod Ivanov? Tikhonov? What are they busy with? Singing the beauties of the butterfly?

No, Mr. Random. You know Soviet literature inadequately and draw entirely wrong inferences.

This is the main thing I wanted to talk over with Mr. Random, who evidently expresses an opinion not held by himself alone.

*S. D.*

Some exciting figures were read off by Anatol Glebov (his play *Inga* is known abroad) in a speech at the Union of Soviet Writers: in the cities, villages and the Red Army, there are in the Soviet Union now over 200,000 circles for the study of literature and art and every member of these circles writes, acts or paints.

These are triumphant figures of a cultural revolution!

# CHRONICLE

## AUSTRALIA

*Writers League Reports*

Censorship prevents speedier reports of revolutionary writers activities in Australia. The latest to reach us advises of the Australian Writers Congress held in Sydney presided over by Jean Devanny, noted novelist. The report advises also that "Forty one delegates and interested individuals attended; editors, journalists, writers and representatives of cultural organizations."

Unable to attend, Katherine Susannah Prichard, leading novelist and playwright, elected Provisional National President, sent a message which in addition to warm greetings read: "It seems to me that the objective of the League should be: not only to unite established writers who base their work on reality and a sympathetic understanding of the causes behind the social tyranny of our time, but also to give young writers, or would be writers of the working class, the advantages of any technical knowledge the older writers may possess."

She concluded her message with the plea that "in establishing a name for the organization, I do hope its international character will not be overlooked. As part of an International Union of Writers we are much more significant than any isolated body."

In the discussion on "A Statement of Principles" J. Chapple, editor of *Railroad* said: "The Writers League has a mighty task before it in helping to mould a new form of thought in the minds of the people . . . One of the great tasks of writers was to lead in the fight against war and fascism . . . We must adopt a definite policy of literary leadership, help to form thought that will lead to action. . . ."

Practically all the important writers of Melbourne were connected or sympathetic to the League, advises the Bulletin of the Congress. Mr. Harcourt, author of *Upsurge,* was president. Among the vice-presidents were Vance Palmer, novelist and winner of the Centenary Competition; Louis Esson, Fearley Morris, Gavin Greenlees, Betty Boland, author of the play *A Touch of Silk* and others.

One of the first acts of the newly formed Writers League was the establishment of a Prize Novel Contest. "The novel must be an account of social conditions and activities written from the viewpoint of the working class. The work must be primarily concerned with workers by hand or brain (not excluding the lower middle class and professional workers) a novel of strike, of the unemployed, of workers in any industry, of the poor farmers, or of the aborigines, is suggested as the type required."

The date for the close of the contest was given as February, 1936.

The difficulties which the Australian writer must face, are vividly described in the article "Censorship in Australia," by the Australian journalist John Fisher, in this issue of *International Literature.*

## NORWAY

*A New Anti-War Play*

Nordahl Grieg, the Norwegian playwright, who recently spent two years in Moscow, has just written an anti-war play entitled *Our Honor and Our Power,* which is "without doubt one of the finest achievements in the history of Norwegian poetic and dramatic art," according to a review by Arvid Hansen, recently published. The critic advises:

"The actual production of the play was no easy matter. In fact the producer himself declared that it was as difficult to produce as Ibsen's *Pillars of Society.*

"In Nordahl Grieg's play, as in Ibsen's, there are many episodes in which seamen are callously sent to certain death, so that merchant capitalists might take in the insurance. But, whereas the action in Ibsen's play is historical, Nordahl Grieg's piece illustrates the economic and social problems of today. The subject matter of his play is not concerned with the fact that an old worm-eaten ship is falling to pieces, but that the entire system of the capitalist society is corrupt and decaying. *Our Honor and Our Power* is an attack on war profiteering. The play is based on the real drama of the world war, when even in neutral Norway thousands of seamen were sent to a watery grave —a war which, in 1935, threatens the whole world once again."

That Nordahl Grieg is a playwright of action, the critic tells us:

"In his play *Barrabas,* Nordahl Grieg has already told the story of the philosophy of life, which is so thoroughly worked out


*"Demonstration"—a painting by Leo Wyant, member of the British Artists International*

in his last work. *Our Honor and Our Power* has taken as its theme the sanguinary imperialism of our time and not, as in *Barrabas* the imperialism of the Old Roman Empire. His accusations and scorn are directed not against the governing class in a distant land of antiquity, but against the bourgeoisie of his own country, as is clearly shown by the 'heroic acts' of 1917 and 1935.

"The young and talented Norwegian playwright is a fierce unpholder of the Soviet Union, of the freedom of the people. His outcries at the murder of Kirov and his writings on the occasion of the Anti-War Day of Aug. 1, are well known. He combines in his works some of the best characteristics of such famous men as Jack London and Henri Barbusse. He understands the world and mankind. He demands a new world and a new people. His work witnesses the tremendous inspiration derived from his recent stay in the Soviet Union and eloquently presents to the Nordic races the proof of the creative power of the new world philosophy."

## USA

### *John Reed Memorial*

A portrait of John Reed, American revolutionary writer and political worker, has been hung in Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachussetts, nearby those of George Washington and Samuel Adams, former presidents of the United States.

The portrait was painted by his classmate Robert Hallowell, and was presented to the University as a memorial to Reed's graduation 25 years ago. It was hung in the Adams house, a dormitory on the site of the boarding house where Reed lived.

In offering Harvard the portrait of one of its graduates,—of the "The Storm Boy," as Reed was called—(a name given to him by the noted cartoonist Art Young, who with Reed, was a contributor to the old *Masses)* a committee wrote the president of the University:

"A comittee of Harvard alumni has recently undertaken to have painted a portrait of John Reed of the class of 1910, whose qualities of courage, idealism and independent mind merit, we believe, some recognition on the part of Harvard men. Robert Hallowell, '10, an intimate friend and classmate of John Reed, has just completed the portrait.

"The committee now wishes to make a gift of this painting to Harvard University and plans to raise among Harvard men a fund to cover the necessary expenses. It seems fitting to present the portrait during the year 1935, since this marks the 25th anniversary of John Reed's graduation from Harvard.

"As is clear from the personnel of the committee, its members hold various political opinions. And it is not the object of this committee to endorse the particular political beliefs of John Reed. Our aim is to honor the memory of an outstanding Harvard man of whom all Harvard men may well be proud."

Among the members of the committee were Corliss Lamont (author of *Illusions of Immortality* and other books) who was secretary-treasurer; Roger Baldwin, head of the American Civil Liberties Union; Heywood Broun, noted columnist of the *New York World-Telegram;* Robert Hallowell, painter; Granville Hicks, author of *The Great Tradition,* who is now writing a biography of John Reed; Robert Morss Lovett, critic, professor at Chicago University and an editor of liberal weekly *The New Republic;* Lee Simonson, noted stage designer of the Theatre Guild; and others.

In addition to Broun and Hallowell, Reed's classmates included Representative Hamilton Fish, millionaire and notorious anti-communist; Walter Lippman, of the *New York Herald-Tribune,* liberal now completely gone conservative; and Stuart Chase, author of *Men and Machines* and other books, a reformist economist.

### *The Story of John Reed*

The American press devoted considerable attention to the presentation of this painting to Harvard. Discussing the event, The Associated Press, leading news agency, released this biographical sketch of John Reed's life:

"Not many gained the popularity that was Reed's on the Harvard campus. He was one of the first freshmen to arrive that fall of 1906, an exuberant youth from Portland, Oregon.

"He quickly became a class celebrity, and was ivy orator, on the editorial boards of the *Monthly* (a university literary magazine) and the *Lampoon* (satirical publication) and wrote lyrics . . ." for the University theatrical productions.

"He joined the Harvard Socialist Club and plunged into this new social philosophy with all the vigor he had theretofore put into campus activities. After graduation, there came Greenwich Village and his close friendship with Lincoln Steffens. A newspaper sent him to New Jersey to cover a mill strike. He wasn't in town four hours before he joined the picket lines of the strikers.

"When Pancho Villa and his forces swept over Mexico, the old *Metropolitan Magazine* sent him down. Villa called him "My Johnnie" and made him an officer. At 26 he was becoming a legendary figure.

"Then came the world war and Reed went across as correspondent. But he soon sickened of war. With the Kerenski regime and the overthrow of the Romanovs, Reed went to Russia. . . .

"He wrote a book—*Ten Days That Shook the World*—and Lenin wrote the introduction.

"Reed could not look on for long. He soon joined the forces of communism, made a speech before the First Congress of the Soviets. He came to America, striving to bring the Socialists into Communist ranks. In 1920, he returned to Soviet Russia."

Reed spent six weeks in a Finnish prison where "he lay in a Finnish cell, hunks of raw fish his only food. His health went fast, typhus set in.

"The Bolsheviks buried him with state ceremony. Lenin walked beside the casket to the grave, in Soviet sod in the shadow of the Kremlin's ancient walls."

The Modern Library of New York, has just reissued Reed's classic *Ten Days That Shook the World.* The material in the book first appeared as correspondence to *The Liberator,* successor to the old *Masses,* suppressed for its anti-war stand. Corliss Lamont, secretary of the committee which has presented Reed's portrait to Harvard, and Granville Hicks his biographer, both graduates of John Reed's University, are also both contributors to the present *New Masses,* which continues the tradition of the *Masses* and *Liberator* for which John Reed wrote.

### *Writers Receive "Southern Hospitality"*

During August the *New Masses* comments on two events which received much attention in all of the American press. The first was the trip of "The Committee of writers (Jack Conroy, Emmett Gowen, Shirley Hopkins, Alfred H. Hirsch and Bruce Crawford) that went into Alabama . . . to test the notorious Downs' Law . . ." and "get a taste of southern hospitality. They were arrested, fingerprinted, photographed; later, sixty-three miles south of Birmingham, the automobile in which they were traveling was fired upon by vigilantes. Two bullets hit the car. A demand for police protection was laughed at; Governor Bibb Graves, ex-Kleagle of the Klan, pronounced the shooting "one of the plainest frame-ups for publicity purposes ever perpetrated in Alabama." While Klan-vigilantes circled the hotel where the delegation was stopping, the police chief told the writers that he could not be responsible for the groups safety because there were lawless elements in and around Birmingham which he could not control. Local papers seized upon this statement, intimating to lynch elements that open season had been proclaimed on the committee."

The *New York Evening Post, World-Telegram* and the liberal weekly the *Nation* all commented upon the treatment accorded this committee of writers. *The New Masses* best explained the reasons for this trip:

"The writers visited Alabama to test the Downs ordinance which forbids the distribution of 'seditious' literature which the police might not approve is defined as a crime subject to 100 dollars fine and six months' imprisonment. The group attempted to make a test case (to be carried if necessary to the U.S. Supreme Court by the Committee for the Defence of Political Prisoners) by selling the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, the *Labor Defender*, the *Daily Worker*, and the *New Masses*. They were taken into custody, 'received,' according to the press by the chief, but no charges were preferred against them. They were illegally fingerprinted and photographed. Refusal by police to enforce the Downs' ordnance prevented an immediate test of its constitutionality. But it is worth noting that immediately after the committee's visit, Governor Graves vetoed a criminal syndicalism bill passed by the state legislature—a bill designed to abolish even the theoretical remnants of civil liberties. That these liberties do not exist in a state that has refused fair trial to the Scottsboro boys for over four years goes wthout saying. Mob rule and lynchings —directed against the working class, Negro and white—have become the tradition of the South. But southern gentlemen in state executive positions shy from publicity when signing anti-sedition bills: Governor Graves apparently found that he was too much in the spotlight to risk endorsing the criminal syndicalism act. The committee (of writers), unable to bring the Downs law before the courts for an immediate test, were able to see Governor Talmadge of Georgia and demand official clemency for the Negro political prisoner Angelo Herndon."

### *Gropper and the Japanese Emperor*

Not only nationally, but far beyond American borders, the activities of American revolutionary writers and artists are being felt. The same issue of the *New Masses* which gives us an account of the writers committee, also has this interesting editorial:

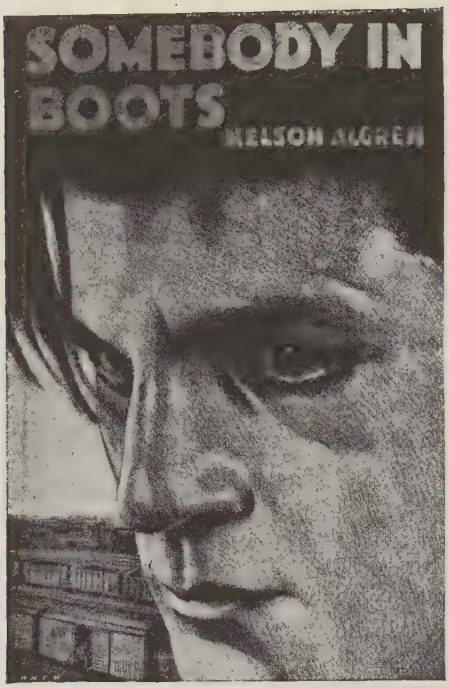
"When our artist William Gropper drew a satirical cartoon of the Emperor of Japan hauling a jinrickisha in which reposed the Nobel Peace Prize he did not reckon on becoming an international incident. Protests against the picture as 'insulting' to the Heaven-born Mikado, and immediate representations to Washington by the Japanese Ambassador, made Gropper's cartoon in the August *Vanity Fair* as celebrated overnight as an old master. *Vanity Fair* has of course been prohibited from circulating in Japan; the publisher, Frank Crowninshield, has been beating his breast and wailing that he didn't mean any harm; but Gropper is just beginning to fight. He told the reporters that Secretary of State Hull might apologize to the Japanese Ambassador all he wanted to but that Gropper had nothing to apologize for and meant to go on exposing Japanese Imperialism. The militarists of Tokyo have succeeded in covering themselves with ridicule and a lively interest has been excited in the internal situation in Japan, which makes the fascist forces there so jittery. In his *Vanity Fair* cartoon Gropper was being playful; in the *New Masses* this week he shows the murderous face of Japanese Imperialism, represented in the Emperor, as it really is."

*Drawn by Georges Schreiber*

*Kenneth Fearing, American poet, whose latest book of verse* Poems *has appeared recently*

### *A New Revolutionary Novel*—Somebody in Boots

Among the new novels issued in the United States, a first novel by an American worker-writer is receiving a great deal of attention. The revolutionary press has praised *Somebody In Boots* at length. This novel however, issued by the Vanguard Press of New York, has also attracted considerable attention in the bourgeois press.




*A new American novel which is receiving serious critical attention*

The New York *Times* writes:

"Like it or not, one must take this book as in many ways a book of the hour. It is the first novel of a very young man who between graduating from a midland university and beginning to write spent six months among the wandering thousands of our jobless and restless youth. He did not take to the road as a sociologist seeking data or an amateur hunting copy; he was simply a boy after a job, any job. But if there was a job, it had always been snapped up before he got to it, and he soon found himself just one of an unemployable drifting horde disowned by society and required by authority, 'somebody in boots,' to keep moving or go to jail. So for a time he lived by the law of the road and the jungle, till chance brought him leisure to set down, fresh and sizzling from the griddle of experience, some of his hard-earned impressions.

"About a year and a half ago some of his sketches and stories began to appear in the radical magazines. They were, we suppose, too close to the raw for acceptance elsewhere. Their author was bred in a literary generation that identifies reticence and suppression, and begins to attach a ritual value to the vernacular of obscenity and fetor. Also he takes that view of the under dog which involves a denial of any virtue whatever to the upper dog. Solvency and authority, as they appear in this narrative, are invariably cruel, arbitrary and corrupt.

"Luckily for the book (and for the writer's art, if he cares about it), there is a creative impulse at work here which declines to be subdued to the uses of mere realism or propaganda."

The New York *Sun* carries a review which says:

"*Somebody in Boots* is a powerful, disturbing book, which does not shrink from the harsh facts of violence, rape and human wretchedness. It is, quite consciously, an indictment of modern society—though for the most part Mr. Algren lets the reader deduce his own moral. Only in his blistering passages about the Chicago Fair does he attempt to mount the pulpit. His propaganda is, however, less impressive than his pitiless realism."

### *Kenneth Fearing's Poems*

Among the books of American revolutionary writers Kenneth Fearing's *Poems,* a collection of his verse of the past few years has received more than ordinary attention. The book is the first of the Dynamo Poets Series, and appears with an introduction by Edward Dahlberg, American novelist. Dalhberg writes:

"The evolution of the author of *Angel Arms* (Fearing's first book of verse) is amazing, and his place in American literature is not as easy to define as a glance at his book would immediately suggest. So close to America, he is actually more in the tradition of the French Symbolists. There is very much in his life, temperament and talents that recall Tristan Corbiere. His fantastic patterns of slang and speech, 'reasoned derangement of all the senses,' his gargoylish diableries are those of a Tristan Corbiere, torn out of context and place, but a Corbiere with Marxian insights."

Dahlberg concludes: "Kenneth Fearing is a poet for workers; his poems are deeply incarnadined in evictions, strikes, hunger; but his appeal is not restricted to his class. His poetry, for those who are still wavering, is one more piece of documented evidence of the horrible mutilation of human dreams and nobleness under capitalism. In very truth, such a fecund talent of poetic insight belongs especially to us."

Fearings *Poems* has received praise in both the bourgeois and revolutionary press. This book will likely be followed by other collections of verse, those of Edwin Rolfe and Alfred Hayes and Ben Maddow.

### *What the Working Class Reads*

Robert Cantwell, American novelist, author of *The Land of Plenty* and other books,

takes issue with Louis Adamic, well known writer of *Natives Return*, on "What the Working Class Reads." Cantwell writes in the *New Republic*:

"Some time ago Mr. Louis Adamic contributed to the *Saturday Review of Literature* a curious article called "What the Proletariat Reads"— curious because in spite of its title and subtitle, 'Conclusions Based on a Year's Study of Hundreds of Workers Throughout the United States,' it has nothing whatever to do with what the proletariat reads. In fact, it was all about what the proletariat does *not* read, and since there are many books the proletariat does not read, has never heard of and does not give a damn about, it is obvious that Mr. Adamic has found a fresh approach to some of the more complex problems of literary criticism. In fairness to him, however, it should be said that he makes no attempt to deal with all the working class does not read—he is concerned with a few novels, generally called proletarian novels, which it does not read more markedly than it does not read others. Yet he tells us that 'the overwhelming majority' of the American working class does not read 'books or serious, purposeful magazines'; in fact, 'hardly reads anything apart from the local Sunday and daily newspapers and an occasional copy of *Liberty, True Romances, Wild West Tales* or *Screen Romance*."

Cantwell continues: "This is a serious indictment, not merely of the cultural development of the American working class, but of the cultural development of the country as a whole. To what extent is it justified? Mr. Adamic does not give reasons for his sweeping charges, since he is primarily interested in discovering the exact extent to which the working class does not read such books as William Rollins' *The Shadow Before*, Grace Lumpkin's *To Make My Bread*, Catherine Brody's *Nobody Starves* and other works that fit into the same category of proletarian literature, which he defines as literature addressed to the working class.'

Cantwell takes issue with Adamic on various points and finally centers his attention on a new book *Who Reads What*, by Charles H. Compton, president of the Amercian Library Association and assistant librarian of the St. Louis Public Library. After reading *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* and *Mark Twain's America*—both of which bored him —Compton "wondered if anyone still read Twain, and—as he records with breath taking simplicity—accordingly, he examined the records of 3,289 Mark Twain adult readers in the St. Louis Public Library. He found that Twain is still widely read in St. Louis, and inquiry of other librarians convinced him that at the present time Twain is the most popular writer in the country. He also found that the readers of Twain were almost entirely drawn from the working class, from the industrial proletariat or from the lowest paid ranks of the white-collar workers."

But the investigator found that not only Mark Twain was listed among the popular writers. "He then investigated 700 readers of Hardy, 341 readers of Shaw, an unstated number of readers of Sandburg, William James and the Greek classics, with similar results."

Commenting on Mr. Compton's findings, *Publishers' Weekly* says they seem to show "that the general level of intelligence among people without formal education is higher than people generally believe. . . ."

Concluding, Robert Cantwell writes: "For his suggestion that novelists look to other classes for a vital and responsive audience, Mr. Compton suggests a possible answer. 'Do you suppose that the ninety-one bosses are readers of Hardy like their ninety-one stenographers?' he asks. And he is forced to conclude that the bosses, like our Presidents since Wilson, get most of their esthetic satisfaction from detective stories and from romances with happy endings."

## USSR

### *Gorki and the Poets*

In a meeting with Soviet poets, Maxim Gorki, beloved Soviet writer, urged the poets to overcome the general tendency of literature to lag behind reality. "Ours is an age of extraordinary events and great people; our culture is growing at an unheard of pace. Our science deals with problems of which foreign scientists can only dream—problems of building a new generation of people, people with talent, physical strength, socialist outlook. These are the themes which should concern our poets and our writers."

Passing on more concretely to the theme of the socialist countryside, Gorki declared that Soviet poets should play a responsible part in changing the psychology of the peasants. In approaching this theme, however, exceptional skill and a complete understanding of the human material involved is a first essential.

Taking up the tasks of Soviet literature in preparation for the 20th anniversary of the Revolution, Gorki lamented the extreme poverty of the existing repertoire of mass songs. Here is work for the poets. There could be no better field for their lyricism than in creating songs to be sung by the broad masses.

Gorki proposed that a meeting between leading musicians and poets should be arranged to acquaint the latter with the already existing poetic material which might be used for mass songs.

He further suggested that composers, artists, regisseurs and actors should work to-

*A group of Soviet writers: Left to right: Scherbakov, Panferov, Kirshon and Ivanov*

gether with the poets in getting up a review of national arts for the anniversary.

In conclusion, Gorki invited the poets to assist the collective farm journal *Kolkhoznik* in its project for publishing a series of books for the masses. The series should include an anthology of poetry suitable for the purpose.

*Author, Author!*

M. N. Alexander, writing in the *Moscow Daily News* presents a new situation in the world of literature. He writes:

"From the time printing was invented, the chief concern of writers seems to have been to find a publisher for their works. What then, shall we say of the plight of the State Publishing House for Literature, which has failed to fulfill its plan for new Soviet books in the first half year because authors did not deliver their manuscripts?

"Of 150 works by Soviet writers which were scheduled for publication, only 70 have appeared. Among authors who did not fulfill their contracts were A. Avdeyenko, author of *I Love,* who has a new novel in preparation; Ilf and Petrov of *Little Golden Calf* fame, whose new satirical novel is to be called *A Journey.* A. Serafimovich, known for his *Iron Stream,* is still working on *The Struggle,* a new novel; N. Ognyov, author of *The Diary of a Communist Schoolboy,* Boris Pilnyak, Vladimir Lidin and Valentin Katayev are also on the list of those who have failed to submit promised manuscripts."

But there seems no reason for great worry as yet. New writers continue to appear steadily.

"Over 240,000 typed pages of manuscript have been submitted to the State Publishing House for Literature alone, since the first of the year, by authors writing their first books. Every manuscript received detailed criticism and suggestions for future work from competent critics, and through a special consultation bureau 2,500 aspiring writers were given personal interviews and criticism.

"In 1935 alone a special Government subsidy of 250,000 rubles has been assigned to carry on such work. Groups of beginners are being organized, with professional writers attached to them for instruction and advice."

*What the Working Class Reads*

In this chronicle, in the section on the USA, we report the article by Robert Cantwell on what the American working class reads. The following account of what Soviet workers read, concerns not only their own literature, and all the classics, which they love, but also the best of foreign writers which they read in the original language. The account reads:

"Proof that shop and factory workers, given the incentive and the opportunity to do so, quickly acquire the elements of culture is strikingly illustrated in figures just published by the Central Library of Foreign Literature, Moscow. Heeding the increasing demand of workers for literature in English, French and German, the Central Lib-

rary has opened branches in three of the largest enterprises in Moscow, the Stalin Auto Plant, the Kaganovich Ball Bearing Plant and the Kuibyshev Electrocombinat. published many millions of copies of Sholokhov's *Soil Upturned* and *Quiet Flows the Don,* Novikov-Priboi's *Tsusima* and Tolstoi's *Peter the Great.* Four million copies of Pushkin have been published and distributed.

"According to registration lists of the Kuibyshev Electrocombinat, there are 400 workers in that establishment who read foreign books. The other two plants list approximately 200 each. Where the library thinks it necessary, it sends experienced teachers to students who require individual attention.

"In one of the plants there is a woman in the repair shop who has just finished reading an anti-fascist novel in German and is beginning to read, with equal facility, Guy de Maupassant's short stories in the original French. A worker of the grinding department of the Kaganovich Ball Bearing Plant reads O. Henry, Jack London, H. G. Wells with great ease.

"This interest in learning foreign languages is not confined to Moscow but is general throughout the Soviet Union, says the Central Library, which accordingly, has started factory circles for the study of English, French and German in industrial centers wherever demand for them has arisen."

*More of What the Working Class Reads*

Supported by scores of diagrams and sheets of statistical data showing the progress of publishing in this country since the October Revolution, the All-Union Exhibition of Soviet Literature in the Central Park of Culture and Rest, continued until the end of summer.

The exhibition displayed literatures not only of 68 nationalities of the Soviet Union (including those of peoples almost totally illiterate before the Revolution), but, on separate stands, it displayed also the works of such revolutionary writers of the west as Henri Barbusse, Bert Brecht, Martin Andersen- Nexo, Theodore Dreiser and John Dos Passos. Average daily attendance was reckoned at 6,000.

The diagrams and statistical material dealt with the Soviet publication of books in general, but gave most attention to the publication of fiction. It was shown, for instance, that during 30 years under tsarism there were only two billion volumes turned out as compared with nearly 18 billion in the 17 years since the October Revolution. These books include works by both Soviet and foreign writers, the data show, pointing out that in a capitalist country even so great a writer as Gorki could not expect to live to see his novels published in 30 million volumes. In addition to the 30-million volume sale of Gorki, there have been

*Culture Comes to the Village*

N. Krupskaya writes:

"The contest for the best village, state and collective farm library announced recently is of great significance. The collectivization of agriculture now brings us face to face with solving one of the most important problems of socialist construction—the liquidation of cultural backwardness in the villages."

Progress has already been made. She advises:

"Statistics on libraries in the RSFSR, collection of which was begun Oct. 1, 1934, show a total of 43,139 village libraries containing 276,062,000 volumes. There are very few scientific libraries in the village—combined with special libraries the number amounts to 1,451 with but 1,853,000 volumes. Child, youth and school libraries 22,000 in number, form the great majority but the number of books owned is likewise small—8,149,000. The greatest number of books, 17,602,000 volumes, is found in general libraries. Taken by themselves, the figures are quite large, but if we take into consideration the population of the Union and its enormous territory, we realize and acknowledge the great work which must be carried on to develop village libraries."

The tremendous progress of Soviet libraries, even in the village, has been widely praised abroad. But this is not enough for a country like the USSR. Krupskaya writes:

"Our delegates attended the International Library Congress, held recently in Spain. They reported on the service rendered by libraries to workers and peasants. Delegates of other countries told them. 'Your mass libraries cater to the very 'lowest,' ours cater to the middle class and petty bourgeoisie.

"On the whole this is true. We must now pay special attention to catering to the village, to the collective farmers and village workers. We must strengthen the existing libraries, giving them our care and attention, and then we must see that the chain of libraries is increased, that they are situated in the most convenient places, where people gather."

# IN THIS ISSUE

*Sergei Dinamov*—editor in chief of *International Literature* is author of critical volumes on both Soviet and foreign literature. He is a contributor to leading Soviet journals and lectures frequently on foreign literature. He was formerly editor of the Moscow *Literary Gazette.*

*Simone Tery*—prominent French journalist, is now visiting the Soviet Union.

*Bruno Jasienski*—now a Soviet writer, is a Polish ex-patriate. He was deported from Poland, later from France, his offense being the novel *Paris Burns*, which attracted widespread attention in European countries. He is author of a number of novels. His *The Man Who Changes His Skin*, extremely popular in the Soviet Union, is being published simultaneously in a number of languages in Europe.

*Paul Zech*—German short story writer and novelist, is now living in exile.

*Sandor Gergely*—Hungarian novelist, has appeared in previous issues of *International Literature.* For two years he was blind as a result of his world war experience. (His autobiographical story "Homeward Bound" appeared in *International Literature* No. 6, 1935.) His sight restored, he is now at work on a new novel in Moscow.

*Bob Brown*—American poet and novelist has contributed to the revolutionary press as far back as the old *Masses* of 1910. He is author of half a dozen books and contributes steadily to leading American journals.

*N. G. Chernishevski*—pioneer Russian revolutionary critic, whose *Life and Esthetics* (1853) concludes in this issue, was noted particularly in *International Literature* No. 6, 1935—with comments on his work by both Marx and Lenin—together with his own introduction to his book.

*Louis Lozowick*—American lithographer and art critic, is active in the American Artists Union, a frequent exhibitor in the galleries of various cities, was formerly on the editorial staff of the *New Masses* and has contributed to various art and theatrical journals. Recently he again visited the Soviet Union where his work is widely appreciated.

*Maxim Gorki*—beloved Soviet writer, despite ill-health continues to contribute frequently to the Soviet press. His plays enjoy unusual popularity and his many books steadily go into new editions.

*Andre Gide*—noted French writer, is taking an active part in the world-wide movement against fascism. He is a whole-hearted supporter of the AEAR, French revolutionary writers organization which includes Romain Rolland, André Malraux, Louis Aragon and others.

*John Fisher*—is an Australian journalist, formerly on the staff of the Melbourne *Herald*, for whom he is still a correspondent from Moscow.

*Vladimir Dmitrevski*—is a Soviet critic, contributor to leading journals; and a playwright, all of whose plays deal with countries beyond the Soviet borders. He is now at work on a new play dealing with Germany under fascist rule.

*Robert Forsythe*—American revolutionary satirist, whose pieces in the *New Masses* are attracting an ever larger following, is author of the recently published and popular *Redder Than the Rose.*

*Dale Curran*—is a novelist, contributor to a number of American publications.

*Alfred Kerr* (Germany), *John Lehman* (England), and *Jose Munoz Cota* (Mexico), contribute their own biographical notes to this issue of *International Literature.*

**Editor-in-Chief SERGEI DINAMOV**

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*Editorial Assistant WALT CARMON*

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