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An old woman

LASZIO MESZAROS

Ernst Ottwalt

Last Things

"Everything had been arranged so splendidly. It was only the messenger's carelessness that spoiled it," she complained. "I could cry about it."

The man shrugged his shoulders. "All that's no use now," he said. Glancing uneasily at the hand which the girl had placed on the table, he observed that her outspread fingers trembled slightly. "Anyway, don't speak so loud; there's no need to let the landlady know all about it."

The girl winced at this reproof, made a hasty movement to stroke back a strand of hair which had fallen over her face, and went on speaking. It was evident that she had to make an effort to speak calmly and to the point. "This arrest will make the social-democrat comrades uneasy. As you know, we always have to contend with the psychological element; the Party is swarming with spies. It will be a long time before we get the trade union work going again." The man said nothing.

A note of unreasonable irritation suddenly crept into her voice. "It's not easy to be continually seeing how months of work can be destroyed in a few seconds." And she said this in a tone which seemed to suggest that the other was to blame for the fact that the secret social-democrat agent in the rubber factory had been arrested. "As I said, it was all due to the messenger's stupidity."

"Perhaps you should keep a better eye on your messenger," he cautioned her.

Shaking his head, he expostulated with a smile, "Anna, why do you get so excited? You know quite well that we have confidence in you." And he was silent for a while, watching her closely. "Have you seen . . . I suppose you haven't seen Josef for some time?" he asked somewhat awkwardly, knitting his eyebrows.

"Never mind about that. What has that got to do with it?" she retorted impatiently. When he did not answer she continued in a clear small voice that seemed not to belong to her: "I have not heard from him for three months. I know nothing of what has become of him since he began his new Party work. I don't know where he lives, or under what name. I don't even know whether he is still alive. I know nothing, nothing at all. And yet there is not a single person in the world whom I think about as much as. . . ." She halted suddenly and looked self-consciously past the other as he turned the pages of a notebook with exaggerated preoccupation. Why did she say such things?

"Well now, about the trade union cell," he changed the subject, for he was embarrassed. He really must not let her see he knew why she was so uneasy. "You must devote great attention to seeing to it that no hitch in the work of organizing the trade union results from this arrest. There is no need for me to explain how important the rubber factory is in the district. Whatever happens, you realize that the social-democrat comrades must not be allowed to lose confidence in the Communist Party. You must show them that the interests of the two parties. . . . But you know that. There is not much we can do to help there; you'll have to see to that yourself." He shrugged his shoulders.

Anna nodded attentively. "The next meeting in eight days as agreed? Is that all for today?"

The comrade from the district committee unfolded a small scrap of paper. "One thing more. . . . Note this address. You must go there at once. The messenger from the district committee has arranged it. . . . This is an urgent matter. Here you are—Doctor Walter, Mainstrasse fifteen, c/o Kuehne. Doctor Walter is the password. Is that clear?"

He rose, put on his hat and coat and turned to go. "Wait here at least five minutes after I have left, and see that no one follows you."

What was keeping him? Why didn't he leave? He approached Anna, as though he had something more to say. No, he merely lighted a cigarette with deliberation, and continued somewhat abruptly but in friendly fashion: "Don't worry about Josef. Everything will turn out all right for him. There is no reason it shouldn't all come right in the end, is there?" He smiled encouragingly, and then realizing the futility of what he was saying, added: "Of course, it's easy to talk. But all the same, if anything had happened to him I should have heard. You'll see, everything will be fine."

His leave-taking, which should have concealed his helplessness, sounded like an angry growl. Then he departed and Anna was left alone.

Five minutes to wait. The silence and inactivity were intolerable. Should she look out of the window and see that nobody stopped him? All she had to do was to keep calm. Everything would be all right. That stupid phrase, there it was again. Anna remembered how she herself had often tried to comfort a friend in great trouble with these empty words, just as this comrade had tried to put her mind at ease about Josef. And why should the comrade from the district committee be the one to hear whether anything happened to Josef? Josef's work had nothing to do with him. It was mere foolishness and an overestimation of his importance that made him say that. If any one knew about Josef's work it was she herself.

A feeling of pride, of one privileged, came over her as she recollected her last conversation with Josef. "No cross-relations," he had said. "We have no work to do together and so we must not see each other," he had said. Then taking her head in his hands, he had kissed her warmly on the lips and smiled. "Keep your mettle up, child, and if we do not see each other for ten years, let us remain the same as we are now." Then he left. Three months had passed since then. . . .

That was Josef. He was so strong, so sure of himself. He knew himself and his feelings inside out. Josef would not feel the longing and loneliness she felt every evening. Josef would never be overcome by emotion countless times during the day at suddenly seeing the photograph of his loved one near him, painfully, physically near.

Josef would also never have entrusted anything to an unreliable messenger. Everything went on oiled wheels with Josef, always. Anything he undertook always turned out successfully. People felt safe in his presence. Every comrade who had ever worked with him knew that. When he was near, you never had a sense of danger.

But here I am thinking of Josef again. Instead of planning the organization of a trade union cell, I am thinking of Josef, she fumed to herself, feeling weak and miserable.

The five minutes must be up. . . . Anna wrenched her gaze from the spotted table cloth and rose. Over the chest of drawers there was a mirror. She arranged her hat, put on her light coat, powdered her face. The mirror showed her a very ordinary well-dressed woman whom no one would take to be a Party worker. She might be an office girl, a shop girl, or the wife of a commercial traveller.

She could hear the landlady in the kitchen. Hers were very convenient rooms. The people did not take any notice of what went on and were hardly ever to be seen. She wondered where Josef was living now. The last place had been such a frightful hole. Anna shook her head in despair. Josef again. The comrade had been quite right just now. She had lost her nerve, she was weak and foolish, and was absorbed in her personal emotions instead of concentrating on her work.

Out on the street, she considered the matter in hand. Doctor Walter, the name meant nothing to her; she had never heard it before. She would go there directly and would soon find out what it was all about. The instructions had come from the district committee so the meeting was bound to be safe and well arranged.

Mainstrasse was in an outlying middle-class residential district. She watched the scenes glide past the tram windows: broad streets, discontented looking people and the loudness and glitter of decadence. The street held no particular interest for her. She had never been here before. The young leaves of the gaunt trees that seemed to have their roots in the asphalt were mournful and dust-laden though it was spring. They appeared to have been made of paper. Number fifteen. She regarded the house with indifference. It had a quiet front with a few bay windows and balconies. From a window on the fourth floor, a child's flag with swastika was hanging. Tiles in the steps—red matting in the hall to deaden the footsteps. The names on the doors all meant nothing to her, Hildebrand, Liesegang, Meyer, Schoenfeld, Kuehne. The bell rang out, but there was a dead silence within, an uncanny silence.

Was somebody sliding back the metal plate from the spy hole of the flat next door? Was that the glint of someone's eye in the circle of darkness? Where did those shadows which suddenly darkened the landing window of the floor above come from? Was it a cloud or a human being? Would it not be better to go back, pretending that she had come to the wrong house, and take the first taxi to get away as quickly as possible? It was absolutely unsafe to go on with this business. She turned irresolutely.

But it was too late. Behind the door, shuffling footsteps could be heard. The chain rattled and in the narrow space formed by the half-open door, an old woman's head appeared. "What is it you want?" she asked. "Doctor Walter," said Anna hoarsely and uncertainly. The door closed and then opened wide. A beckoning movement of the hand, a dark corridor lighted here and there by the dim light from opal glass door panes. The woman closed the outside door and fastened the chains.

All these proceedings were perfectly natural, not a thing out of the ordinary, not worth noticing even. Why was it, then, that Anna registered them all with such minute accuracy? She took in every detail of the wardrobe in the passage and did not fail to notice the shapeless parcel wrapped up in news paper on top of it. She became aware of the unpleasant odor of carbolic acid in the air. Then she noted with a strange uneasiness that the old woman had straggling grey hair, arranged in an absurd knot at the back, and that through the strands of her hair, a bare pink scalp was visible.

The old woman turned her head away, constantly snuffling. She opened a door on her left, went on ahead and beckoned Anna to follow. Anna suddenly had the impression of a ghostly silence. She became cold all over and felt faint without knowing the reason why. A fear, a keen sense of danger was hewing itself into her brain; she could not rid herself of it.

The woman sat on a stool in the kitchen, pointed silently towards a chair, and waited for Anna to sit down. Then she began weeping silently. Her face

seemed slowly to dissolve. Childlike tears rolled down her wrinkled cheeks and she whispered: "Why have you come so late?"

What did she mean? Had the woman been waiting for her? It was absurd. What could the old woman know about her, how had she got in touch with her, and in any case why was she crying? She must ask her what was the matter. There was something queer about it all. . . .

"Is it so very urgent?" she asked automatically only a fraction of a second after the old woman had closed her lips.

The woman began to speak in a high, monotonous, childish voice. "It was yesterday that he said it first. When the fever had become really bad, the Herr Doctor Walter kept saying. 'I must tell her, I must tell her,' and 'Why doesn't she come?' I got tired of listening to him, he said it so often. Then late yesterday evening the young man came around. You know him, I suppose, the young man from the doctor's business who is always coming to see him. And I told him that the Herr Doctor probably wanted to see his young lady. And now you've come, but it's. . . ."

"Too late?" said Anna completing the old woman's halting sentence. What had all this to do with her? Had she really so little control of herself that here again she had to try to put a thought, the thought of Josef out of her mind by transferring it to where the real improbable merged in this atmosphere that surrounded her?

The old woman nodded expressively. "Too late. At least so the doctor says. This evening I called him and he said, 'Yes, now it is too late.' That's what he said. Herr Doctor Walter would not listen to him. He had always refused to see the doctor. He had no time, he said. He never had any time to spare, he thought only of his business. He used to leave early in the morning and come back late in the evening, and his typewriter would be going nearly the whole night long. It was a very quiet one, but all the same I used to hear it. Old people, as you know, do not need much sleep. They don't need to sleep much because they'll have plenty of time to sleep by and by, when no one will be able to disturb them."

The tea kettle hummed on the gas range. "Cleanliness is next to Godliness" was embroidered on the curtain behind which the brooms were kept, and its border was worked with blue ribbon.

This woman's name must be Kuehne; that was the name on the brass plate outside the door. She could address her simply as Frau Kuehne. But what had all this to do with Josef? Why was she constantly thinking of him? What if Josef were to lie on his deathbed in this flat, two or three rooms away from this idiotic kitchen where "Cleanliness is next to Godliness" was embroidered on a broom curtain with borders of blue ribbon? How stupid! No, it was terrible the way the thought of Josef kept recurring in the most far-fetched and irrelevant connections. She must think out quite calmly how she had come here. There was a misunderstanding somewhere; she must clear it up without further delay.

"You're quite right, Frau Kuehne, old people do not need much sleep. My mother always used to say that too." (How sensibly she could speak!) "And now tell me, starting at the very beginning, what it is all about?"

The woman licked a tear from the corner of her mouth with a pale tongue and said:

"He has blood poisoning, nothing less. The Herr Doctor pricked himself. Pricked his finger. It may have been a prick or it may have been a cut. Anyway, whatever it was, first of all his hand began to swell, and then his whole arm. Yesterday he could hardly walk. The taxi-man had to help him up-

stairs. That's how it was. And when I told him earlier that he ought to go and see a doctor, he merely shook his head, 'I have no time,' he answered. But goodness me there can be no business so important that it is worth risking your health for it. But whenever I said that to him, each time I began, he would say something in Low German, something he always says when he loses his patience. . . ."

"Lot mi an Land," Anna's face burned and she gasped for breath. "What? was she really thinking about Josef?"

"Yes, that was it, those were his words. And then he wanted to 'phone. He cried that I must get the number for him, but I did not know what number he meant," she whimpered. "I did not know. Then when the young man came in the evening I told him everything. But you know how young people are. He just looked at me blankly and said, 'Very good, very good,' and was off again immediately. And now you've come!"

Yesterday evening? What a smart person this comrade must be, what a marvellous messenger this "young man from the Doctor's business." . . . But how stupid; all this had nothing to do with Josef. Keep calm. It couldn't be . . . got in touch with her in a single night! But there was nothing astonishing about that. Josef always had capable people to rely on. A messenger like this one would never have allowed himself to be caught like the fellow who had spoilt everything at the rubber factory, and had involved all the best social-democrat workers in the place. If she had been able to discuss the matter with Josef beforehand, such a thing would certainly never have happened. . . . But why did her thoughts wander now to the rubber factory? She must keep calm. Josef was lucky, the others had always said. But that was all nonsense. Josef had sense, sense and courage, that was all. That was why nothing ever happened to him.

What then? Was he now in bed two or three rooms off, in bed and dying? Almost three years of illegal work and to prick his finger and die of blood-poisoning? He really might have gone to the doctor. Would not a man like Josef know quite well how much he was needed by the Party and that he must not be rash? It was true that there were many things one preferred to avoid when one worked illegally: the questions about profession, address, place of work, insurance cards, the patients' card index. Moreover, was it such a simple matter just to go to bed when there were so many illegal appointments? And whom could he trust to make the necessary contacts? How could he let the other comrades know? How could he introduce them to the new man who would take over his work? And if a single appointment were missed, the chance of making contact would be lost for days to come, perhaps forever. Yes, there were certainly good reasons why he should avoid seeing the doctor and wait until it was too late. . . . But to be hunted by all the sleuths of the Gestapo for three years and then to die such a mean, trivial death? It was impossible. Impossible. She must put an end to all this mystery.

Anna rose distractedly. "Let's go to him at once. I want to see him," she said abruptly. And she thought to herself, "A few steps along the corridor and everything will be clear. It will turn out that it was all a mistake."

And then—then no doubt remained.

The man who was lying there pale and groaning, with his eyes closed, an ice pack on his head and a thick bandage on his arm—this man was Josef. The drawn curtains admitted enough light to reveal a face which presented thousands of memories and associations to her horrified gaze. It was Josef, there was no doubt about that any more.

Why did she not cry aloud? Why did she not throw herself on the dying

man and sob out the name that haunted her dreams? Why did she not clench the cushions in her hand and lie prostrated under this terrible dull blow that had fallen on her?

She stood motionless, and her eyes wandered aimlessly around the room. It had not been cleaned. Clothes were lying about on the chairs. The outline of the furniture disappeared into the semi-darkness. Behind her the landlady was whispering stupid and meaningless words. Anna had so much to consider that she had to force herself to think "Josef" and to realize that he was lying before her on his deathbed. She felt neither fear nor pain. All that she became aware of was dull astonishment and a strange lassitude. She seemed to be standing aside, watching herself calmly and attentively. Did one really take it like this when the human being dearest to one was dying?

There was a constant whispering in her ear, "The doctor wouldn't send him to the hospital and have his arm amputated. He said he could be spared that since it could not help him now. . . ."

Anna motioned for her to go away. "Leave me . . ." she said.

The door creaked. Anna was alone. Alone with Josef who, with his eyes closed and his breath rattling gently in his throat, was lying before her near to death—death.

She quietly drew a chair up to the bed. Erect and immovable she sat there with her hands placed symmetrically on the arms of the chair, her head tilted to one side. Frowning, she concentrated her gaze upon the dying man, as though she were trying hard to think of something that lay buried at the back of her mind beneath a heap of anxieties and things forgotten.

Yes, this was Josef. She let her gaze grope over his features, from angular jaw-bone to the determined chin pointing so confidently in the air. She mentally followed the lines which drew the corners of his mouth downwards, rested her glance lovingly upon the deep eyesockets and traced out with cool caress the narrow line of his lips.

". . . . His eyes were grey, his voice was deep, his skin smelt of bitter herbs, and his flesh was firm and cool. . . ."

"Josef," she whispered appealingly, but the sleeping man did not move. The hand she seized and pressed in her own was limp and almost lifeless and he did not open his eyes.

"Josef," she said hoarsely. But there was only benumbing silence, and the gentle rattle of his breath as the sleeper lay there stiff and motionless.

The blood rose to her head, hot shivers ran up her back and her eyes darkened. But now as she felt herself slipping down into an abyss of anguish, fear and pain, her mind seized on the strangest and most trivial things, which suddenly loomed large and formidable and claimed their rights.

"Josef," she felt trembling. She thought. "How long were we together? Five years, six years?" She calculated carefully and lucidly: the half year in the little house on the outskirts of the town; then Josef went to prison, a year of loneliness and a few weeks of leave; the last hectic winter, swallowed up by Party work; then on the run—five years altogether, five years.

Had he any relations? How little she knew about him. She had a hazy recollection of a small cottage in Friesland, and of an elder brother whose existence forced the younger one to go into the town, where he became a metal worker. That was Josef, the very same Josef who was able to wear the mask of Doctor Walter, who was always laying his own self aside as one might a piece of worn clothing; Josef who changed from day to day but always remained the same, whose life had been blossoming forth to her gladness,

astonishment and terror into a larger and clearer existence devoted to creative work for the Party.

"Josef," she thought with thankfulness in her heart. As her head sank down into the pillow, so that she felt his moist breath on her face, and as the hot tears rushed into her eyes she thought only of the Party, of what it had made of this man, of the heights to which it had lifted him.

"Josef," she sobbed quietly, as her trembling fingers stroked his lifeless hand imploringly.

The sound of his breathing changed suddenly to a peculiar note which passed into a deep sigh. Anna felt apprehensively how the muscles of his arm stiffened. His lips moved weakly, like paper in the wind.

She crouched over him like a wild beast over its prey, her mouth open in anguish and expectation. With wide eyes she studied the change that was beginning to spread over all his features.

He turned his head to one side and moved his hand with an effort. His eyelids trembled and opened slowly. A narrow white slit appeared and became larger; the grey of his eyeball became visible. Josef looked at her dully and blinked, and her own gaze, deep and passionate, met his.

Then Josef smiled, a tired smile of recognition which made a lump come into her throat. It was some time before he could gain sufficient command over his hand to lift it up and lay it on Anna's hair. It was some time before he could make his lips obey him and frame the word "Anna." A fleeting tremor of life and recollection passed over his face and then gradually faded.

"Josef," she groaned.

With superhuman effort, he raised his eyelids and his lips moved.

She could not hear him, she could not hear him. She saw that his lips were moving, but could not hear a word.

The clock ticking in a corner suddenly clanged the hour. The noises of the quiet street, deadened by the double windows and drawn curtains, formed a continuous gentle roar like the sound of a distant sea. Josef was speaking but his words lacked all resonance. They were like the rustling of dry leaves.

"I cannot hear you!"

Anna drank in his halting whispers through every pore of her skin.

"I am so glad that I can still see you . . . I am so glad that you've come, Anna."

What was that hideous noise in the passage? What was that fiendish din that cleft the silence with crashing blows. It was nothing . . . only the door bell, then a man's voice speaking softly, and the old woman whispering an answer.

". . . I am glad that I am at last able to tell you . . . I have wanted to tell you for ages . . . but always. . . ."

The door opened. Anna was conscious of the faint creak as of a piercing pain, for it drowned Josef's whispering. She heard a step.

". . . . I must tell you, Anna . . . I must tell you before I . . ."

"Josef," she sobbed, "you are not going to die. Please, please, please don't say such things. I implore you, put such ideas out of your head. You will get better, you will take up your work again. Everything will be just as it was before. You will take a holiday and rest, we shall go away somewhere together. . . ." Anna's words trailed off, for with a poignantly familiar gesture Josef poked his chin in the air—as he always did when he was displeased about anything—and his lips moved more quickly. . . .

That step behind her. Which way to listen, which way to look?

A shadow grew threateningly on the floor behind her. She felt it but did

not see it, for she could not take her eyes from the dying Josef. In despair she stretched her hand out behind her, its fingers outspread as though to ward off this fearful shadow coming between their last words together, to silence the ticking clock and smother the street noises, so as not to lose a single precious syllable of what Josef had to say to her.

"No . . . I am dying, I know I am . . . that is why I want to tell you. . . ."

At the sound of his voice she bowed her head and closed her eyes in devotion and gratitude that she might still hear him speak.

A hand was laid on her shoulder. Anna tried to shake herself free by a circular movement of her shoulders, but the hand remained, heavy and threatening.

What do you want with me? Don't you see he is dying? Can't you see he has something to say to me? What can be forcing its way in at this last terrible moment? she thought. She felt tortured and pursued, but did not turn her head towards the hostile hand which was now digging its fingers into her shoulders and gently shaking her.

". . . The first time I saw you I knew. . . ."

That hand on her shoulder.

Anna turned around suddenly. Behind her, close, dangerously close, a man was standing. All that was visible of him were two bright eyes behind the convex lenses of a pair of spectacles. Two bright eyes that were looking fixedly at her.

"Will you please leave me alone with him for a moment." said a sharp polite voice.

Anna shook her head in desperation. Her finger nails dug into the wood of the bedstead until they cracked, and she gazed greedily at Josef's lips.

That hand. Those bright eyes.

"Excuse me, must you really stay here?"

She cried out like one suffocated, "He is dying!"

"That is why I am here," said the stranger bluntly.

". . . I wanted to tell you at the time. . . ."

"If you please, only for a few minutes, it really won't take long."

"Let me alone," she gasped.

Anna suddenly felt her arms being held firmly above the elbows. She felt herself being lifted up, and in spite of all resistance she was soon on her feet. She saw the stranger's face close in front of her, and heard him say sharply, in a whisper, "Be sensible, no one is going to harm him. I tell you that it won't take long. I just have to speak to . . . the Herr Doctor for a few moments. You really must keep calm . . . confound you." Anna struggled and squirmed and tried to shake his hand off but without success. The stranger forced her farther and farther from the bed, all the time urging and threatening her. His voice betrayed great excitement.

"Let me go. . . . Who are you? . . . What do you want with me?"

"Who am I? Who are you is what I want to know. Who are you? What are you doing here? Will you please stop howling and remember this is a sick room?"

A weak sigh could be heard from the bed. "Anna, I cannot see you. . . ."

"Here I am," she called, and with one last effort she wrenched herself free and rushed to the bedside. "I'm here, I'm here, it's all right."

The stranger seemed now to be more at ease. Somewhere in the shadows she heard his deep breathing and his light step as he came nearer.

"Anna," she heard whispered in her ear.

She turned her face towards him. His stiff mask was strangely altered,

it now seemed gentle, friendly, sympathetic. "Anna?" She nodded in answer, her eyes filling.

"His . . . Josef's wife?"

"His wife," she nodded. Now everything has been said, she thought. Now he will know I have a right to sit here and listen to what Josef has to say to me. He will leave me now, this awe-inspiring person with the bright eyes, stern, polite voice, and pitiless hands.

The stranger wiped a few drops of sweat from his brow and groaned. "Thank God! Come here a moment, come closer, do as I say. I have no time to waste; I've lost much too much time already. I heard about this wretched business only half an hour ago—I mean about Josef being so ill, only half an hour ago . . . stupid of the messenger not to have reached me sooner. But now I must get out of this place as quickly as possible. You must keep off the landlady with her damned questions. . . ."

His words crowded out and tripped over one another.

"But you're not listening," he whispered suddenly. "Listen, child. You're a Communist, aren't you? here's a job for you to do here. Listen, will you? I can't spare you this. Did you hear what I said?"

"Has he something more to say to me?" whispered Anna imploringly and turned her head from his piercing gaze. She was far, far away from this voice. She did not hear it, but only felt it like the clang of metal.

The stranger lost patience. "Look here, child, Josef called you Anna? You are Anna, aren't you? You're Josef's wife? Then you must realize that there is a job for you here. Pull yourself together. Do you hear? Listen carefully to what I say. Are you listening now? Good. Well, first of all keep the landlady away from me with her confounded questions. Secondly, tidy the place up as quickly as possible. The boy did not do it when he was here yesterday. Collect everything together, his passport, all photographs, notices, everything in writing . . . you understand, don't you? Search very carefully, nothing must be left here, nothing must be forgotten. Is that quite clear?" When she nodded he softened somewhat and continued kindly, "I thought so. You are Josef's wife all right, you'll do everything splendidly. You won't give way to your feelings? You're Josef's wife, after all. As long as you remember that, you yourself will know what to do."

Tidy up the room, papers, passport, nothing must be forgotten. Yes, she was Josef's wife. That was true. But Josef was dying. He was dying, that was the point. Halt! Of course, she would tidy up the room if that had to be done, and, of course, it had to be done. But there was something huge and dark and terrible, something final to be considered. Josef was dying. He would just close his eyes and be there no more. She would have to live without him. But that was impossible. How could she live without Josef? Was there the slightest possibility of living without Josef, without her love for him, without her many loving thoughts of him? No, it was impossible.

But, of course, she must tidy up the place. Of course, that was very important. It must be done. But not now, not just at this moment when Josef was dying, when he had something to tell her, something that he wanted to get off his mind. The unsaid, which was filling these last minutes to the bursting point, was a secret that would throw light on all the misunderstandings, on all that had kept them apart as man and wife. A secret that the dark hours of death were concealing in their grasp, that would now be disclosed and be as plain as day. A secret that Josef had probably kept all these years and that now only death was able to wrest from him. Don't look at me like that. Leave me just one moment. . . . Her thoughts were racing in mad sequence,

she tried weakly and feverishly to get them under control. But they rushed on headlong, crowding together, asserting their presence and their urgency. "Leave me alone, please leave me."

Death—what does that word mean? Death. Anna closed her eyes, amazed at the thought, unable to believe such a thing. Had she never before thought of death, that now seemed strange and incomprehensible? Had not death been near all the time, every minute of the day and the night during the last three years? Thoughts of Josef, the work in the rubber factory, the printing of the factory newspaper, the instructions to comrades in prison, the illegal appointments, every step, every thought, everything done and everything left undone. . . . Had not death been there all the time, the risk of death and the readiness to die?

The stranger's gaze, that gaze from behind the sharp, rimless convex glasses, pierced mercilessly through her rapid, pleading thoughts.

No, perhaps she had never really thought of death. That had been something else. It was burning fear and the endless nightlong agony of seeing in her fevered dreams Josef's body being tortured and outraged. It was the gnawing fear that she might not keep true in darkness and chains, in the face of discouragement and scorn, under blows and strokes of the whip; fear as to whether she would be able to bear all without letting her mouth frame the awful words of betrayal, which would forever make her an outcast from the society of her comrades. That is what it had been, merely anxiety about these things, not the thought of martyrdom and death. . . .

The stranger gasped with impatience. He took her by the shoulders and shook her. He groaned and swore, "Confound you! You're not listening, you're not listening. What did I say to you?"

"Nothing, nothing, do leave me alone. Just one minute more. I cannot do it; what you ask of me is superhuman. . . ."

Death. What had Josef said . . . had he never . . .? Of course, he had spoken of death. He was on good terms with death. He had no illusions about it, he knew quite well what it meant to do illegal work as a Communist. He had familiar names for death, he talked about "kicking the bucket" and "going to the wall." Had he never . . . ? Yes, he had spoken about death. But what was it, what was it? Everything would be over and done with. The main thing was to have done. . . . No, he did not say one's duty, he had said something else. The main thing was not to have any reproaches to make to oneself about one's life. Yes, that was it. The thing was to die as decently as one had lived. And then he used to say too. . . .

Anna could not remember, there was no time to think, she had no chance to think calmly. They would give her no time to think about death, because life was too big, too immediate. The stranger's finger nails were digging through the thin material of her dress into her flesh. "You're not listening, child. Listen to me, will you? You've got to wake up!" Wake up. Yes, of course, one must not dream now. What was it he wanted? Ah, yes, tidy up the room. Josef was going to die. Strangers would come and rummage through his things; that must not be allowed. All that was quite clear, quite simple. That was not death, that was life.

"Forgive me," she murmured indistinctly and put her hand to her brow. "The thing is my thoughts are moving very slowly today. . . . I did not know till just now that Josef was bad. . . ."

The stranger took a long breath, "Ah, I see. Well, the thing is this," he began, but then hesitated, "Well, collect everything together," and he added with a shrug of the shoulders, "I cannot spare you this."

Without another word he was at the bedside.

Oh! Anna could have cried aloud to see his rough hand grabbing at Josef's shoulder.

She put her fingers to her ears in horror as she heard his virile domineering voice shouting in the dying man's ears.

"Hello, Josef, hello, old fellow. Don't let yourself be knocked out. Don't give up now. What's up? It's only I. Open your eyes, Josef. What, eyes won't open? No question of it. Have a try, that's right, see how splendidly you can manage it. I told you so! Josef's all right, he can't be as bad as. . . ."

Oh, but this is horrible, inhuman. After all, he's dying. Doesn't he realize that the man's dying?

Anna moved uncertainly towards the bed, and as she tried to choke a sob that was rising in her throat the stranger turned towards her and made an impatient gesture. "What's the matter?"

"You can't continue like that," Anna groaned in desperation. "You might at least leave him in peace."

The stranger jumped up. His eyes were on fire, his fingers twitched with impatience. He stood in her path. "I can't go on like what? Like what? You're Josef's wife, aren't you? You don't want to forget that. Stop thinking about yourself and think about Josef. It is he and not you who is the most important person at the moment. And Josef knows that what I am doing has to be done. I must know a few contacts so as to be able to keep the work going. Which is more important—the anti-war work or your feelings? Then leave me to my job. Tidy up the room. There'll soon be no time left; I've lost far too much already. . . ."

Yes, he was right. Josef was the chief consideration—Josef and death. How was that? Yes, he had spoken about it. Of course, to die decently—and not to have anything to reproach oneself for. Once when they had not seen one another for a long time they were lying in bed together. Josef was running his fingers through her hair while she was crying nervously and could not realize that he was with her. She had often made things difficult for him. She had not made the brief intervals they were alone together as happy for him as she might have. She had always thought far too much about herself. And Josef had spoken about death, familiarly, dispassionately, musingly. Why couldn't she remember those words? She needed them now. . . .

The stranger was again sitting on Josef's bed. "Don't exert yourself too much, old fellow, I can hear you splendidly. What, kick the bucket? Don't talk such nonsense. Things a bit askew, that's all. In a few moments, you can turn over and have a good sleep, and then we'll see how things go."

The tone of his voice changed. Suddenly it became a sharp, hoarse, urgent whisper. He sat on the bed, his body bent and his fists clenched. "I must have a few contacts, that's all, just a few words. What? You dont't think? But it may be some days before you're on your feet, and the work must go on, musn't it? So just a few contacts, just a few questions, old man. . . ."

Anna still stood motionless, her head bowed. What was it Josef had said? She knew that death had no horrors, no terrors for him . . . "you just close your eyes and everything is finished. Only it's a pity you cannot see how things turn out. After working so long, you would like to see. . . ." Yes, that was what he had said.

"There's our Schupoffizier. You know the man. The secret agent in the Schupokaserne. . . . Hello, Josef, be sensible, that's a good man. You can sleep as soon as I have everything. In the Schupokaserne. . . . Yes. What,

Oberleutnant? I can't catch the name. What? Schmeidel? Is Schmeidel his name? Splendid, and how can one get in touch with him? The messenger knows the rendezvous? What? Messenger does not know the name? Splendid that he doesn't know the name. Quite right. Now the next. . . ."

Was that death? No, it was life. Nothing of death here, nothing but life, which was right, as always, which no cloud could eclipse, and which in its all-compelling breadth of purpose forced its way to the heart of the secrets which this hour held.

Wake up, Anna! Josef does not belong to you, he does not belong to himself, you do not belong to yourself. We none of us belong to ourselves. We belong to the Party, to our class—to life. Wake up! There are no mysteries.

She started, looked sideways at Josef and the stranger. Then a burning fear seized her. With short rapid steps she came up to the stranger, struck him on the shoulder so that he stepped back in amazement, and said in a clear and authoritative voice: "All this has to be done, has it?"

There were small beads of sweat on the stranger's flushed forehead. There was an uneasy look in his eyes now as though they had lost their mark. He stammered impatiently, "I've told you already . . . I want to. . . ."

"I know, contacts. But that's a big matter, and I have to take a lot on trust, you see that?"

"What's the matter with you? For God's sake don't interfere now. Can't you see that he's. . . ."

"That he's dying? I do see. But these are dangerous matters, my friend. Very dangerous matters indeed. Perhaps Josef no longer knows what he is saying."

The other averted her question. "I can judge that for myself. Leave me now. It's not your business."

"No one can take my responsibilities from me."

"Are you crazy? Keep quiet, I know what he's saying."

"But perhaps *he* doesn't know to whom he is saying it."

"Well, that's the. . . ."

Anna pushed him aside. The mist had lifted and she was aware of nothing but clarity and purpose. What a few minutes ago had seemed to her to be inhuman, before which she had shrunk and which had called forth groans of horror, she now herself began to do. She bent over Josef, took him by the shoulders and whispered to him. She did not heed the pain of seeing his beloved lips trembling, did not heed the pain of feeling the sturdy muscles of his arm soft and wasted.

"Josef, do you hear me? Listen Josef! Do you know this man here to whom you are telling the contacts? Do you know him? Do you know who he is?"

Suddenly above the whispers—unreal as though from another world—a voice sounded clear and strong, filling the room so that the others paled. "It's Anton. It's all right. Tell him to come here."

The stranger smiled, softened and touched.

His hand rose in the air and after hesitating aimlessly and ludicrously there for a moment, fell again to his side. Had he wanted to place it on Anna's shoulder? Perhaps, but there was no time for that, so he turned again to Josef.

". . . .and now, old man. Hurry up, Anna, lose no time. . . ."

Anna nodded. Very good, she would tidy up. It was not a question of herself. It was not a question of Josef. It was not a question of Josef's death. It was a question of work, of life.

Where should she begin? The wardrobe? The suit-case on top was easy to take down for it was empty. It was the suit-case with which Josef had gone to prison, the very same. Anna knew it well. Nothing but a few soiled socks. No, there were no side pockets, no double bottom. What next? The wardrobe was not locked. No, now hold yourself together, don't think of yourself. It was hard for her with that familiar odor rising from his clothes and making her nostrils quiver. All the same, she must take out his two suits and search every pocket. Then there was the vest of his blue suit with the narrow white stripes. This was the suit that Josef had worn the first time they met. That had been at the National Women's Conference. Josef had nothing to do with the conference, had gone only to meet a friend. But there he had met Anna, and after that her life had become brighter than it had ever been before.

Now it was going to become darker than it had ever been. For Josef was about to die. He would just close his eyes and be there no more. He would be deprived of seeing the wonderful life that they were going to usher in upon the earth, for which he had fought for more than fifteen years. That was death for him, that was all it meant to him. But how could that help her? How live without Josef? His voice was deep, his eyes were grey, his skin smelt of bitter herbs and his flesh was firm and cool. . . .

Tears darkened her eyes. She must go on with her work. She must not think of herself. A small slip of paper with figures on it in the upper left pocket of the vest. She laid it on the table. In the breast pocket a piece of newspaper—that probably had its purpose. . . .

"The architect in the Aeronautic Institute. I know his name. But what is the rendezvous? Does the messenger know? Josef, old man, Josef. I want to know whether the messenger. . . . No, no, you musn't give in now. In pain, are you? Rally for just a moment. Afterwards you can sleep and there will be no pain then. Can the messenger put me in touch with the architect? Hello, Josef. . . ."

The comrade's voice could be heard as a sibilant whisper breaking from time to time into a loud groan.

A piece of newspaper. That must have its purpose. A person like Josef did not, without some reason, tear a piece out of a bourgeois newspaper with nothing on it but a few small advertisements. No, Josef knew that one did not carry more papers around with one than was absolutely necessary.

Otherwise, the suit pockets were empty. In the outer pocket of the other suit there was a season ticket for the Underground. It was a good photograph of him. She might ask. . . . No, she must not become sentimental. Josef had once emptied the contents of her bag on to the table and laughed. "My dear child, I hope that is not what it looks like inside your head." She used to carry a photograph of him about with her. "What on earth is that for?" he had asked. "You had far better forget what I look like." She used also to carry her Prisoners' Aid Society membership card about with her and he had said, "You must forget that you're a member of the CWPA." That was Josef, even before the illegal days.

"The messenger only knows his name? So he can't bring me to him? No, no, you musn't say that; you can go to sleep in a moment. . . . What is the password with him? Address? Telephone number? How do you 'phone him? What name do you give? Hello Josef, wake up, old man. What name do you give when you ring up? . . ."

What next? The chest of drawers, the drawer with his clean laundry. His blue pyjamas. The ones she had bought for him herself when they had their

holiday together. The polo shirt was new to her. He must have bought that himself recently. Not necessarily recently, however, for it was nearly three years now since they had lived together. The shirt might be three years old. There was nothing else, no books, no papers, only a few fascist newspapers folded up in a corner. They might remain.

Anna jumped up. The comrade's whispering had suddenly stopped. What was the matter?

Josef's face seemed to be staring more and more stonily into the distance. Even his color seemed to have changed. The bluish shadows under his lower lip and under his eyes seemed to deepen almost as one watched. His temples stood out more sharply and more delicately. The comrade had become quite white in the face and as he rose he swayed slightly. "Anna, can't you . . .?" he began quietly and then stopped as though he had forgotten what he wanted to say.

"What . . . is . . . ?

"No, nothing, but couldn't we . . . isn't there something we could give him to buck him up? I haven't finished yet, there are still one or two things. It is all so important . . . he is the only person who knows. Is there nothing? . . ."

Must she still torture him? Wasn't it enough that she should have to forego hearing what he wanted to say to her? That he should die without feeling her hand on his brow, without her being able to help him, that he should be slipping further and further away from her every minute without her being able to hold him back?

He was dying a painful death. His last hours were being terrible in the extreme. For whom terrible? For him? For her?

She sobbed aloud with fear and shame. Was she thinking of him? Was she not rather thinking of herself and only of herself? She must help, but what did helping him mean? Didn't it mean to help him to die in such a way that he should have nothing to reproach himself for? So that he might die as great, as simple, as serene as he had lived?

"All right," she nodded, after thinking hard for a few painful moments, "all right. I'll see if the landlady can make some really strong coffee." She looked past the other as though she were ashamed of her own strength.

It was more easily and quickly done than she had thought. The landlady had some coffee, she said the Herr Doctor had always drunk coffee, and the kettle was boiling on the gas stove. A few quick movements, and Anna held the cup of poisonous black coffee in her hand. The comrade still sat on the bed shouting at Josef in a rough, miserable, suffering voice and with many repetitions of "Hello, will you listen to me?" "Hold yourself together, old man" and "Don't give in now."

It was with some difficulty that they raised Josef to a sitting position so as to pour the hot, strong drink down his throat. They felt his body in their arms, his burning skin was in contact with theirs. She must not tremble. . . . With a mighty effort she cast everything from her which might hinder her thoughts from concentrating on the one and only aim of making Josef drink the coffee.

There was still much to be done. The writing table must be searched, and where were the keys? The pocketbook would be in the grey suit which was hanging over the chair. She must lose no time. Where was the mystery? Where was death? Anna tried to sink her consciousness in the sound of the word death, but she could not. A strange void remained, no tremor passed

over her, there was no darkness to terrify her, the horizon remained bright and clear.

She put the cup down. "Anna," Josef called softly. She bit her lip, she stroked his hair and forced herself to say nothing but "Josef, dear, I am here. Josef, dear, tell Anton the contacts, and then we'll let you sleep."

Anton had pulled himself together, his voice had the note it had at first, as he whispered and swore, urging Josef to make an effort. "And now for the artillery barracks, do you understand? The ar-til-le-ry bar-racks."

His pocketbook was, as she had expected, in the grey suit. In the other breast pocket was his passport and a small notebook. His keys and some small change were in his trousers' pocket. The first key she tried fitted the writing table. In the lower drawer there was nothing but unused typewriting paper. In the middle drawer, a packet of papers was bundled together untidily as though Josef had put them away in a hurry. A small light white roll and that was all.

"What's the comrade's name? What? I can't hear. Oberkanonier, did you say? We're nearly finished, Josef. . . ."

All the papers were lying on the table. Anton had only to put them in his pocket. No, she had forgotten nothing. Everything was in order. Nobody would find a sign of anything here to show what Josef had really been. He would have disappeared without leaving a trace behind. He would have gone as though he had never been. Only his work would remain, and that was life.

A fearful groaning made Anna shudder.

The comrade almost wept from strain and excitement. "Just one more minute, dear Josef."

Instead of an answer the groaning developed into a hoarse, gurgling cry.

"Just one more minute."

"Yes, this was death. This was the horrible, the unthinkable, the never-to-be-made-good against which the whole intellect, the whole judgment revolted. Anna had forgotten it only for a moment in the urgency of the stupid crude trivialities of the workday.

The comrade waved his arms wildly as though he would stem the cry, force it back to the seat of terror whence it arose. The veins on his flushed forehead swelled. "The password for the gunner comrade . . . the password?"

What did Josef want? What was he saying? What was he shouting for? Was it terror, was it panic?

". . . Not a word will I say . . . strike me dead . . . not a word will I say. . . ."

Anna smothered a scream.

The other bent over Josef and said in a strangely distinct voice: "This is not the Gestapo, Josef. Anton is here. Anna is here. You are alone with friends."

The lines on Josef's face began to smooth out. The shadows on his skin faded and disappeared. The faintest hint of a deathly understanding smile hovered over his features and he whispered clearly and distinctly "password Se-dan."

That was all. The veins on his neck and temples pulsed and swelled impotently. His eyeballs rolled around until only the white was visible. His chest caved in with a faint whistling sound. The fingers of his free hand became clenched, stretched out slowly and then stiffened in a convulsive clutch.

Josef is dead. . . . "His voice was deep, his eyes were grey, his skin smelt of bitter herbs and his flesh was firm and cool. . . ." Anton's form came into Anna's range of vision. He stood up unsteadily and retreated step by step,

gazing at Josef as he went. His bright eyes were stupified and swimming with tears. His moist underlip hung down limply and trembled. He felt in his pocket and eventually brought out a cigar with which his hand played absentmindedly. He then turned his troubled gaze towards Anna. "He's told us everything," he said in the tone of one who could hardly believe his own words.

"Yes," said Anna earnestly. Then she wondered quietly to herself. "But Josef still had something he wanted to say to me."

"He told us everything," whispered Anton in the same emotionless voice.

"He told everything, everything," said Anna. Was not Comrade Anton perhaps right? Josef could not have said more than he did. This great fact remained, and she would never forget his last utterance. What had it been? A senseless succession of syllables. A password. A small technical point in the common round of Party work. It had been nothing more. Nothing more, indeed? But such words were big with the future, they brought glimpses of a fairer world and made this death great beyond conception in its simplicity and serenity.

The comrade suddenly pressed Anna's head wildly to his breast and groaned through his clenched teeth, "Josef, our Josef."

Then he turned abruptly away, took the papers off the table, stuffed them into his pocket and buttoned up his coat.

"Don't stay here. Leave as soon as I have gone. Give the landlady some explanation and . . ." he made an indefinite gesture to include everything: the room, the dead Josef, the clothing scattered about, the typewriter. "Don't bother about all this, it no longer has anything to do with Josef."

Then he turned to go. On his way to the door, however, his eye fell on the typewriter. "Underwood Noiseless" was written in gold letters on the black enamel of the frame. He weighed the machine in his hand, looked at Anna, shrugged his shoulders as though in apology and went out with it.

What now?

Anna felt her surroundings as though through a thick wall of cotton wool. Her mouth gave way to a helpless childish fit of weeping. Josef was dead. She looked at his face which was strange and beautiful. Those eyes would never again open. That mouth would never again speak. Never again.

Irresolutely, almost in fear, she went up to the bed with short steps. She laid her head in the dead man's stiff hand and sobbed "Josef." Then she heard as though from a great distance Anton's voice saying, "Go!"

What did she want? What was she waiting for? It was all over, all over. She was alone, more alone than she had ever been in her life.

That was Josef's face. She would always be seeing it in her dreams. Nights would come in which her arms would stretch out in longing and abandonment. Nights would come when she would be tortured by solitude and silence, for Josef was dead.

What was she waiting for? She must go. There was nothing more for her to do.

Strangers would touch Josef's body. The police would search the room and would try to sniff out the circumstances of the dead man's life. What had that to do with Josef? Nothing, nothing whatever. She rose uncertainly. On the lower shelf of the bed table lay a dark tie. She took it and wrapped it disconsolately and absentmindedly around her hand.

She stopped for a moment at the door, gave one last farewell look at the dead Josef and then left the room.

The landlady was sitting motionless in the kitchen when Anna opened the door.

"He is sleeping," she said in a matter of fact voice. "I shan't be long, I am going to fetch the doctor." The landlady nodded.

She walked with uncertain step through the street to which she was so indifferent. The leaves of the gaunt trees, which seemed to have their roots in the asphalt, were mournful and dust-laden though it was spring. They looked as if they were made of paper. Every step she made took her further from Josef—further and further and forever.

She stopped in dismay and turned around to look at the house behind one of the windows of which Josef had died. The house meant nothing to her. She had never seen it before. She would never see it again. She would never dare to set foot in this street again for fear of being seen by chance by the landlady. Which window was it? She could not tell, she could see nothing, for her tears blinded her.

"Excuse me," murmured a passerby. Anna started. She must not stay here. She must not attract attention. On, on! Suddenly she felt the silk of Josef's tie in her hand. She groaned. That was the last thing belonging to Josef that was left to her, the very last, a piece of smooth, colored silk.

Now she would have to live without Josef. She would never hear his voice again, she would never feel his lips on hers again. She would never be able to ask his advice, to have his sympathy, his support. Never again.

Whither now? Only with an effort could she realize that everything would go on as usual although Josef was dead. Everything, the long tedious hours of waiting that were part of the life of an illegal worker, the secret meetings, the instructions, the work in the rubber factory. She must now summon all her resources to set things right after the unfortunate incident with the messenger. She must lose no time in seeing to it that a feeling of panic did not spread among the comrades there, in reorganizing contacts and strengthening the conspiracy.

Her thoughts came to an abrupt halt. How could she think of the trade union work in the rubber factory now, after the last terrible hours through which she had just lived? It seemed almost as though she were being untrue to Josef. She must think of him, of him who had always been in her thoughts and would always remain in her thoughts. For what had Josef's death to do with the building up of the trade unions?

Suddenly, a tremendous light broke in upon her and she bowed her head before it. Josef had died and his death had been as great as his life had been. His last words had not applied to her, they had not applied to himself. They had applied to the Party, to his work, to life, to the future. Was that the secret that he had wanted to tell her? What had Josef's death to do with the trade union work?

"Everything," she nodded calmly and earnestly. And she felt a warm strong sense of community with her dead lover that would never again leave her.

Translated from the German by N. Goold-Verschoyle

V. Shklovsky

Captain Fedotov [1]

The Artist Brullow

Karl Brullow was handsome. In Rome he had been called the "head of Venus." He was stout in build and had short legs, but he had posed naked for Kiprensky.

He had drawn from childhood, drawn continuously.

Pavel Andreivitch Fedotov went to see him. Brullow had an international reputation although his pictures were not accepted in Paris. Brullow's path diverged widely from Fedotov's, but Brullow was a master draughtsman. Brullow took Fedotov's drawings, kept them and looked at them for a long time.

Then he said that it did not do to think too much of elaborate detail such as Hogarth indulged in.

Fedotov went piously to Brullow and here he heard crushing words. For Brullow belonged to a family of artists, he had been practising drawing from childhood, as those who learn to play the violin from childhood practice.

That was why he said to Fedotov: "At your age it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to master the technique of painting, but, perhaps you will be able to make up for lost time by extra hard work."

But at home there were parades, inspection of uniforms, garrison and field regulations.

The Grand Duke Michael Pavlovitch would not accept his resignation. He said, "Don't ask for permission to retire, else we shall quarrel."

Through the Grand Duke's influence, Fedotov's pictures of army life were sent up for the Tsar's inspection.

The Tsar needed battle-scenes, therefore his decision was:

"The Emperor, having bestowed his attention on the ability of this officer-draughtsman, grants him his gracious permission to retire voluntarily from service in the army and devote himself entirely to painting, and further, grants him a monthly allowance of a hundred rubles in treasury notes, demanding from him a written reply to this."

Treasury notes were three and a half times lower in value than silver.

Fedotov's father was not employed at this time, so Fedotov had five people dependent upon him.

Fedotov requested that the great privilege be extended over a year and a half.

The pictures in the Hermitage tormented Fedotov; he worked by candlelight, and learned to paint glass and mahogany, and to bind pictures together.

It was no longer possible to serve two masters.

In 1844, Fedotov sent in his resignation, and retired with the rank of captain. He had served exactly ten years in the army, and been in uniform for eighteen years, including the period in military school.

His orderly, Korshunov, was permitted to leave the army at the same time.

Fedotov divided his first month's allowance into two parts, leaving himself fifty rubles to live on and sending the rest to his father.

His brother officers gave Pavel Andreivitch a farewell banquet.

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[1] Continued from the third issue of int. lit.

He looked awkward in civilian clothes, but all the officers felt certain about the future of their ex-colleague.

Fedotov understood all the niceties of the ranks and of uniforms, so he would be sure to paint battle-scenes. The palaces were many and they all needed decorating. Or he would get a commission to decorate St. Isaac's Cathedral with frescoes of the heavenly hosts.

Pavel Andreivitch would make his fortune yet.

They drank toasts, sang songs, and played cards.

Cards took the place of political excitement, cards gave the heart scope.

Cards were beginning to attract the notice of the Third Division of the Gendarmerie.

That evening was a merry one: they played for small stakes.

After the farewell party, Fedotov with Korshunov, went into retirement and lived in a mournful, unwhitewashed house in Line Number Twenty-one.

They bought their dinner for fifteen kopeks at the eating house. Their food cost them twenty-five kopeks a day. Fedotov drew, and Korshunov was his model.

Fedotov never visited his comrades in the Finland Regiment during this period.

The rumor got about that he was working in oils now, that Karl Brullow praised his sketches, but advised him to paint in a broader manner.

Brullow himself was painting "The Siege of Pskov."

Pskov was being defended from the Poles and the picture had to be taken metaphorically: it was intended to humiliate the Polish rebels and to glorify Russian Arms.

Fedotov stippled up his pictures, worked morning, noon and night, verifying his drawing by candlelight.

Once he was seen in the street, and it was said of him: "Pavel Andreivitch's hair is thin, his eyes are tired, but he looks cheerful."

They said that he was not painting battle-scenes now and that this was very foolish on his part, for he had nothing to eat.

"He should learn from Brullow, that's an artist who can paint both battle-scenes and icons."

9

Three Versts from the City of St. Petersburg

"The innumerable varieties of hats, gowns and shawls—light and gay, would dazzle the eyes of anyone on Nevsky Prospect. Here you can meet the unique whiskers, pulled, with astonishing art, through the cravat. Here you can meet marvelous moustaches, moustaches to which the better part of a lifetime has been devoted, moustaches that are wrapped up at night in thin vellum paper. . . . Here you will meet the smartest *surtouts* with the best beavers, here you will meet incredible characters and phenomena.

"Rarely will you meet an artist, though the Academy of Arts is not very far away. . . .

"A St. Petersburg artist is a strange phenomenon. . . .

"What kind of an artist can exist in a country where everything is wet, smooth, pale, level, grey and foggy?

"The St. Petersburg artist is wistful, he never looks you straight in the eyes, or if he does, it is with a foggy, vague look: he does not pierce you with

the hawk-like glance of an observer or the falcon eye of a cavalry officer. . . ."

Thus did Gogol describe Nevsky Prospect.

St. Petersburg was a splendid city and the new wooden pavements were only just being tried out. There were varnished carriages in St. Petersburg, and through the streets hurried government officials who looked exactly like officers, and officers vaguely reminiscent of Nicholas I.

Nevsky Prospect ran right up to the columns of the Admiralty. Behind the yellow Admiralty flowed the pale, seldom blue Neva, on which floated the green, steep-bowed skiffs, and the dark fishing craft.

Beyond the Neva lay Vassiliev Island. Vassiliev Island began with the columns of the Exchange, and the semi-circular embankment before it; after that came the street (or "line" as it was called) rising gradually until it reached the dirty shoals of Galernaya Haven.

Let us go along Central Prospect. Everything grows quieter round about us. Beyond Line Seven the stone pavements give place to wooden bridges. After Line Twelve there are no cabmen to be seen. Farther on come the barracks of the Finland Regiment, then the open fields and at their utmost rim, a wood, out of which peep the cupolas of churches. Under the trees we see instead of shrubs, tombstones with crosses on them and simple crosses: it is the Smolensk Cemetery.

The wooden planks now become rotten and one can walk more comfortably in the middle of the street.

Fedotov never drew Nevsky Prospect and seldom went farther into the town than the sphinxes.

Often, thinking about his own affairs, he would walk in the direction of Galernaya Harbor.

The striped bar at the turnpike came in sight. By the bar sat a bored sentry, beyond the turnpike lay a pale sea, a pale sky, and between them the still paler sails of the boats. On the right stood a row of little houses. This was Galernaya Harbor.

The houses have been colored grey by the rain. Each of the houses has three windows and the roofs are yellow or green, not from paint, but from moss.

Some of the houses bore, in red paint, the words: "This house to be pulled down in May, 1837" or "This house to stand until 1839."

The time limits had long since passed by, the waves had often reached the houses, but they still stood untouched.

All was still. The silence in the streets was only broken by the cries of the geese.

This part of the outskirts of St. Petersburg could not stand comparison with the poorest little town in Russia.

Here dwelt people who were seldom remembered. Here dwelt Parasha, the heroine of Pushkin's poem, "The Bronze Horseman."

As the reader will probably recall, Parasha does not appear in the poem.

This is a description of the place where she lived:

> "Down by the water's edge,
> Nigh to the bay
> Rough palings, a willow,
> A cabin falling to decay."

That house was washed away in the floods of 1824.

Fedotov was fond of walking about the streets of Galernaya Harbor.

Here people lived very simply, and went out into the street in their dressing

gowns. The fences were made of matting. It was so quiet that people could talk to their neighbors in the adjoining houses without raising their voices.

The poorest government officials lived in these parts. Here Fedotov learned to be patient, to be indifferent, and to be cheerfully indifferent.

Once, when it was about time for Fedotov to go home, the son of the man in whose house he happened to be, came in and said, "The streets are under water." No one was alarmed. They opened the window. As a matter of fact the gun in the Petropavlovsk fortress boomed warning but the wind carried the sound toward Smolny Cathedral in the town.

The water rose. They waited half an hour more.

The host stood up and glanced out of the window. The water was splashing about the steps of the house.

The official gave a triumphant look at his guest and said,

"I was right not to plant cabbages this year. Gentlemen, who wants to come out and collect wood?"

His son rolled up his trousers, dragged the boat out of the shed and up to the steps of the house.

The storm drove the waves up to the fortress.

The Neva is level in St. Petersburg: in stormy weather, the river smashes the rafts and flows back to the Summer Garden, returning the water to the canals and raising it to the level of the embankment pavements.

During storms the inhabitants of Galernaya Harbor go out in boats to collect driftwood, planks and logs.

The storm drove the boat towards the town: the massive columns of the Mining College passed by on the left; on its steps great statues appeared to be either wrestling with each other or rescuing each other from the water.

A cast-iron Apollo between the columns raised his hand and begged to be saved. The city floated in water, as if a large dinner-service was being washed on a tray.

The waves reached the feet of Neptune at the Exchange.

The moon shone out and the clouds, escaping from the flood, hurried past it on their way from the sea to Duderhof Heights.

The party of men thought only of the planks and logs to be salvaged. The city with its wet lights was a stranger to them.

Towards morning, when the water, turning pink, receded, the boat returned, dragging after it a heavy, wet load of logs and boards.

The geese squawked in the new pools formed in the grass-grown streets of Galernaya Harbor. The houses seemed slightly askew: wet rushes lay about everywhere.

Fedotov was tired. He took off his cap, wiped his forehead and remembered once more that he was bald and that, therefore, part of the fate he had foretold in the series of pictures called "The Life of a Great Painter" had already been fulfilled.

10

The Artist Encounters Poetry

In Fedotov's rooms there were other acquaintances and other conversations nowadays. The Agins and Jemchujnikov came, and Zarianko drank tea and talked of perspective.

The conversations ran on Brullow, on Michelangelo, on color, on the great writer—Balzac.

Fedotov read Byron as well. And tried to learn English.

Now he was reading the verses of Lermontov, who had already been killed. He read, "In the noonday glare in a vale in Daghestan," and remarked,

"These lines were written by a hero at a moment of incredible anguish. . . ."

And added,

"And once I was on sentry duty with him at the Winter Palace and I didn't know his verses then."

The world around the artist altered. He read the *Iliad* in Gneditch's translation and was astonished at the accuracy of detail; he noticed how Hector moved his feet so as to strike the blow and break down the doors in the Achaean Wall and how the brazen shield of Ajax rang as the stone glanced off it.

He read Hector's farewell to Andromache and was struck by the way in which Homer conveyed the child's fright at seeing his father in a helmet.

The child wept:

"On the bosom of the richly garbed nurse
He fell back with a shriek, terror-struck by the sight
of his kind sire,
Frightened by dazzling brass and shocked by the
tossing plumes,
The threatening horse's mane waving o'er his
father's helm."

Oh, ineffable verses! Here you have the movement of the mane over the brass, people, a child—all in a single movement.

When it grew dark, and the neighbors on the other side of the thin partition had gone to sleep, and when Korshunov had retired to his little room decorated with prints and the drawings Fedotov had thrown away—then candles were lighted and Fedotov and his guests went over his drawings, and talked of Polejayev—a forbidden poet, now in exile.

Fedotov gave up his old friends, and said of them:

"I know that a man without an occupation is at heart an enemy of every man who works."

Besides his painting, Fedotov studied poetry, and wrote verses and fables. One of the fables was called "The Bee and the Flower."

A bee alights on a flower, a St. Petersburg blossom, which has very little honey on it.

The bee reproaches the flower in the same way that Fedotov reproached himself when he recalled the pictures in the Hermitage.

At night, on the outskirts of the town, in the room with the north light—the most convenient for an artist—Fedotov justified himself in verse.

My window looks upon the north,
My eyes upon a wall. . . .
. . . . . .
And though I yearn for sunlight, it
Ne'er breaks the foggy pall.
My hot desires remain all unfulfilled,
From lack of hope their rays have inward turned
Their deadly heat like poison in me burned,
And everything alive within me killed.

11

The Artist's Friends

The old generation of academic painters consisted of Ivanov, a freed serf who had belonged to Count Vorontsov, Sokolov, originally one of Prince

Golitzin's serfs, Martynov, the son of a grenadier in the Preobrajensky Regiment, Alexeyev, the son of a watchman, Matveiev, the son of a soldier in the Ismailov Regiment, Alexandrov, a serf of Count Sheremetyev's.

The Academy was the school that trained artisans for the houses of the nobility.

This generation had been a meek one, it had lived and died in silence.

But now the biography of artists was altered.

Kiprensky had died not long before this. His father had been a serf belonging to a landowner named Diakov in the Peterhof district. Kiprensky was born in the village of Kaporiye and his surname was Kaporsky.

Women who were employed to dig gardens in spring were called "kaporki" or "diggers."

In the Academy they changed his name from Kaporsky to Kiprensky.

Now Kiprensky was dead. He had gone back to Rome to die.

There was a story current that he once burnt a woman who had infected him with syphilis.

On his return to Rome he fell in love with the woman's daughter.

She did not reciprocate, so he took a drink and froze to death at her door.

The classes were run by Yegorov, who, although he had a Russian name, was a Kalmyk. The Kalmyks had fled to China from the Russian government officials. They came from beyond the Volga, but not all of them escaped, for it was in the spring and the ice was cracking. The Cossacks pursued them and they fled, abandoning their children.

Yegorov was picked up by someone and placed in a foundling hospital. From there he went to the Academy of Arts. He was now one of the best academic painters and talked of the necessity of imitating antique art.

Tropinin, the painter who has left us portraits of Pushkin, Gogol, Karamsin and Brullow, was a serf, too. He belonged to Count Markov, and was forty-seven before he got his freedom.

Shevchenko was another serf-artist.

Tropinin lived peacefully to a ripe old age. He used to amuse himself by feeding the cockroaches that appeared at a certain hour every day, and then hid themselves again in the cracks of the wall, out of sheer gratitude.

But the new artists, the plebeians who found themselves alongside the serfs, lived in a different way; they lived a hard life. The plebeian artists, the successors of the serf artists, began in Russian literature a portrait gallery of tales of the needy young man. Timofeyev, Gogol and Panayev wrote about them.

They wrote of the plebeian who loved art after his own fashion, loved a woman from the aristocracy, and, above all, never agreed to do all this quietly.

From Timofeyev's artist, who ended in a lunatic asylum, from the artist Piskarev, who cut his throat with a razor because it was difficult to live in close proximity with Gogol's happy Lieutenant Pigorov, from the ruined artist in Panayev's story "Delirium Tremens," through Nekrassov's heroes—mostly young writers—through young Pokrovsky in Dostoievsky's "Poor People" the destiny of the plebeian proceeds to Raskolnikov.

Raskolnikov committed murder—not because he was hungry, but because he wanted to make life over again.

Dostoievsky soothed him in the epilogue with penal servitude and the Gospels.

Now the young plebeian copied classic works of art in the Academy.

Gogol rightly observed that the artist did not look straight at one. The

artists did not look at things with their eyes nor do what they wanted; this became their customary approach.

Most of all, they wanted to go to Italy. They even envied the fate of the landscape painter Lebedev who died of cholera in Naples, for there was cholera in St. Petersburg, too.

Fedotov's friend, Alexander Alexeivitch Agin, was the illegitimate son of an officer in the guards named Yelagin.

According to the custom at that time he had been given a cut-down form of his father's name. His mother had been a cowherd. Agin and his brother studied at the Academy of Arts and were half starved. Alexander Agin said that it was because he had often to go hungry the whole day that the syllable "yel" (which means in Russian "ate") had been knocked off his name.

It was through the Agins and Bernadsky that Fedotov became acquainted with Nekrassov.

Ivan Panayev and Nekrassov were preparing an illustrated almanac for publication. It was an imitation of French publications, and began with caricatures of Bulgarin, the journalist, and Kukolnik. Then followed a novel by Stanitsky and stories with drawings by Dahl, a story by Stankevitch and one by Dostoievsky, called "Polzunkov."

Fedotov did the illustrations for Dostoievsky's story and, as usual, depicted himself in one of the drawings.

In this drawing Fedotov's double is setting fire to a paper tail attached to the coat-tail of a small man in a fool's cap.

Agin did the illustrations to Gogol's "Tale of Captain Kopeikin" for the almanac. The one-legged, snub-nosed Captain Kopeikin comes to an important official to ask for assistance.

A stout footman with a mace sprawls in an armchair, taking snuff. He stretches out his leg to bar the way.

The footman is a portrait of the Minister of Finance. The illustrations altered or explained Gogol's text which, without that, was disapproved by the censor.

Very likely, Fedotov attended the meetings of the dreamers belonging to the Petrashev conspiracy about that time. Subsequently Bernadsky, Jemchujnikov and Zotov were prosecuted in connection with the Petrashev affair.

Fedotov knew them all well, just as he knew Dostoievsky.

The inquiry and arrests went on, but did not concern them directly. True, Bernadsky was arrested, and interrogated. When he was asked,

"Are you a communist?" he replied, probably not without a touch of cunning, "No, I'm Bernadsky."

And, since he was of peasant origin, they thought his ingenuousness was real and let him off with a warning.

The almanac was confiscated. The artists had to go back to painting water-colors of battle-scenes.

Fedotov drew a group of officers standing near the tent of Mr. Vyatkin.

Fedotov felt uncomfortable about the battle-scenes, and the generals on parade.

Before whom did he feel uncomfortable? Before the dreamers or before Krylov?

Fedotov shut himself up for nine months in his cold studio, where he had to wear a sheepskin cloak while he was working.

He was working on a picture called "The Newly-Created Knight" or "The Morning of a Government Official Who Has Just Received His First Decoration," and, simultaneously, on another called "The Fastidious Bride."

People may paint like that just before their end, when they want to say everything at once.

Fedotov's friends ceased to visit him.

At first Korshunov's old friends from the Finland Regiment used to drop in to see him and whisper together behind the partition. Then they disappeared; something had happened in the Finland Regiment.

Fedotov painted pictures and made sketches for "The Major's Wooing."

In this picture he described still another side of an officer's life—the possibility of marrying well.

In the "Morning of an Official" he depicted the success, perhaps the last, of Gogol's grotesque petty officials, Poprishchin and Bashmachnikov—the official received a decoration.

At this period a great deal was being written about officials; Gogol was still alive.

St. Petersburg was a city of government officials: young officials with hopes, middle aged officials with ranks, and old officials with pensions—were to be seen in every street.

Officials crossing the Neva, officials buying bread and cold jellied meat in the little shops.

Those who were not officials were in search of a position.

Officials of every description and rank populated the town in various ways; they even drifted as far as Galernaya Harbor.

In addition to the officials there were workers, only they lived much higher up the Neva, or across the Neva by Berd's Works, from which a real steamer with smoke sailed to the Kronstadt.

Fedotov worked hard, endeavoring to paint the portieres in the picture of the "Fastidious Bride."

A hunchback was shown kneeling before an old maid.

In the foreground a tall silk hat and a pair of gloves were painted.

The portieres would not turn out well. They looked as if they had been made of leather instead of material.

Artists were getting ready for the spring exhibition. The weather was growing warmer. Fedotov's brother artists and the young dilettanti began to appear once more.

Fedotov met them at evening parties, where he sang to the guitar. He sang his song "Cuckoo."

A cuckoo bird sat in an old oak tree,
And sang in deep dejection
    Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
She sang in deep dejection.

A beauteous maiden sat in her bower
And mourned hour by hour
    Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
She mourned hour by hour.

The beauteous maiden's heart was sore
Because her lover came no more,
As before—Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
Her lover came no more.

But can a maiden grieve for long
Her grief will wane and soon be gone.
    Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
Will wane and soon be gone.

The nest is spoiled
The nestlings gone. All is lost,
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
All is lost.

They all sang in chorus "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" with cheerful melancholy.

In the room there were lay figures that looked like well-drilled people; on the walls hung half-finished pictures in which models strained their academic muscles. The artists talked of Rome and of Gogol. They were gay and strong with the light academic strength, the ability that can be acquired with a little effort. They talked of pictures, and of the life of a painting.

They did not mention the Finland Regiment and what was going on there.

But Pavel Andreivitch Fedotov's tenor rang through the smoke; he spoke of heroic poverty.

"You're all dilettante, gentlemen. Each of you has someone behind him with a well filled pocket, you yourselves are not dependent on anyone and you have no one dependent on you. You talk of cheerful poverty in the same way that I might talk of Switzerland after going to an opera taken from Swiss life."

Fedotov went back to his studio, and painted pictures.

The pictures were finished at last. Fedotov was painting them for the Academy. Unexpectedly, the pictures were liked. It was a genre to which no one could take exception. The artists recalled the Dutch painters and Fedotov even received the condescending title of "appointed to the Academy."

You could appoint people to the Academy, but you could not appoint anyone to know how to paint.

Fedotov went on with his picture of "The Major's Wooing."

He learned to pull his pictures together and to avoid spottiness. He studied furniture. He spent a long time looking for the kind of chandelier that would hang in a merchant's house.

He found out what kind of a meat pie would be set on the table in such a house and how champagne would be served.

It was easy enough to find a model for the major; a friend from the Finland Regiment posed for him.

Fedotov also painted a picture called "Mild Mars-mania."

This is a picture of a man marching about the room, pointing his toes and strutting. He holds his pipe high as if it were his sword. His little son is playing the barrel organ. His other son—a cadet—is beating a tattoo on the drum. The colonel's lady is critically examining, through her lorgnette, her husband's bearing. His orderly or clerk and the maid are peeping through the door.

The lap dog is sitting up, begging.

The dog imitates its master.

On the table before the mirror stands a statuette of Nicholas I under a glass bell. The statuette reviews the parade.

The face of the colonel is reflected in the looking-glass. It is a round, full face.

The face bears a resemblance both to Mr. Vyatkin and to Nicholas I.

12

The Artist Encounters Glory

At the triennial exhibition of the Academy in 1848, there were three pictures by Fedotov: "The Major's Wooing," "The Morning of an Official" and

the "Fastidious Bride." Two of these pictures, with different titles, had been in the exhibition of 1847 as "The Last Feasts" and "The Hunchback Suitor," but had produced no impression.

Two sphinxes, calm, small and elderly—resembling two academicians staring at each other across the table during a meeting—lay on the banks of the chilly, springtime Neva.

A friend of Fedotov's the young, clever dilettante Jemchujnikov, was walking, shivering with cold, towards the Academy.

There was an unusual crowd before the building: people were jostling one another. There were even some carriages.

Jemchujnikov passed the ponderous statue of Anna Johannovna and mounted the stairs.

Fedotov was at the door of the exhibition: he was dressed in uniform, without epaulettes, and wore a hat with a black feather. This was the dress uniform of retired officers for formal occasions.

"You haven't seen my 'Major's Wooing' yet, have you?" he asked.

"No."

"Come along then. What a lot of people there are around it! If you can't pass, I'll take you through."

The room was unusually warm on account of the crowds.

Fedotov took Jemchujnikov's arm and led him up to the picture, though it was by no means easy to get close to it.

"Gentlemen," said Pavel Andreivitch, touching two or three who were on the fringe of the crowd, "will you please allow the painter to pass?"

The people moved aside eagerly and respectfully to let them pass. The man in the black hat with the feather went up to his picture, which was rather a small one. Then, turning to face the public, he spoke in the unexpected tones of a showman, advertising his pictures in the Red Square.

Come all ye honest gentlemen,
This way! This way!
We ask your kind attention
And never a penny of your pay.
Look your fill for nothing, sirs,
Only wipe your eyes well first.
This way! We're just beginning!
You will see how some are sinning,
How they eat their neighbor's bread,
Because to earn their own they dread,
And look for riches when they wed!

Thus the man in the hat with the black feather spoke in a showman's doggerel.

The crowd listened and laughed.

On the opposite wall hung a huge picture of the "Siege of Pskov."

There was no one in front of Brullow's picture.

Brullow had, by the way, introduced an element of topical interest into it. In the background a Pole was stripping the caftan from a slain Russian. The Pole was a portrait of the writer Thaddeus Bulgarin. The staff of the flag had broken, the flag itself was crumpled, so that instead of the words "Rex Polonia," only "ex Polonia" were to be seen.

But even that did not help. Fedotov's picture was very much talked about, it overshadowed everything else.

Fedotov did not hide his joy. Fame had, as it were, freed him from anxiety

about money. It ought to have given him the opportunity to paint as he wished.

Pavel Andreivitch began to appear in the houses even of people in high positions, and made new acquaintances.

He tried to go abroad to study the English painters Wilkie and Hogarth.

Fame brought leisure.

Fedotov went out for walks with Jemchujnikov and Alexander Beideman.

The people around seemed to be new. Here was a fellow who always went about in a Hungarian coat, and was always unshaven; today he had shaved and was almost unrecognizable. Then there was an old mariner who always wore a cap with the peak torn off.

The soldiers of the Finland Regiment hid themselves in Galernaya Harbor, to avoid meeting officers.

Here was a Finn from the fishing-boats playing a card game called "noses" with the yardman: the loser got a whack with the cards on his nose. The yardman's nose was red.

The houses became lower and lower, the grass grew thicker between the stones, the stones themselves came to an end.

Evening, the sun, the bog.

Here was a tumulus almost levelled to the ground. The bodies of the executed Decembrists were buried here.

Ahead—the surf gleamed white.

On the right lay the island called Volny.

"I'll go abroad, without fail," declared Pavel Andreivitch. "Do you know what's happening in France just now?"

There was a revolution in France: people were going about under red banners bearing the inscription: "To live working or die fighting." A new word "Communism" had made its appearance, and even the character of the illustrations in the magazines was altered.

The French Revolution passed by, only the breath of the distant cloud touched St. Petersburg.

Nicholas I's voice held a note of alarm. In Number Sixty-four of *The Northern Bee,* a government communique, called a supplementary declaration, was published.

This declaration sounded bewildered.

"Let the Western peoples seek in revolution that fleeting well-being they pursue. Let each of these peoples select for itself that form of government which it acknowledges as most appropriate. Russia, calmly watching these attempts, takes no part in them, but will not oppose them; she will not envy the fate of these peoples even should it happen that, out of the depths of anarchy and disorder a better future will emerge at last for them.

"As for Russia, she serenely awaits the further development of her social life, which will be brought about both by time and by the wise care of her Tsars.

"Every kind of social structure, even the most highly perfected forms of government have their drawbacks.

"Knowing this, Russia regards as the highest blessing for herself the unshakable stability of the reigning order."

Nicholas I had no strength, he had not even a distinct voice, but, on the other hand, his opponents had no strength, either, to attack. The inquiry in connection with the Petrashev affair were going on.

13

The Artist Struggles, but Life Gets the Better of Him

The trip abroad came to nothing. But the exhibition in Moscow was a success. He could supply his people with money.

At the exhibition the self portrait of Fedotov in "The Death of Fidelka" and "The Condition of an Artist" seemed to be a joke.

The artist had won.

Commissions came in. But they were all for repetitions of the old pictures.

Fedotov could not repeat things. He began to do them over from the beginning, changing the pose of the bride's head in "The Major's Wooing," the position of the figures, the colors. Then the person who had commissioned it would be annoyed at receiving instead of the copy, an entirely new composition not yet praised by anyone.

There was a great deal written about Fedotov. In the *Muscovite* someone printed an article on the idea in pictures, exposing their social significance.

The article was called: "Some Aesthetic Remarks on Mr. Fedotov's Pictures and Sketches." Professor Leontiev wrote, "In Fedotov's pictures there is no truly artistic, serenely-exalted philosophy."

Instead, there was a great deal that was contemporary and temporary.

"Who wants this spite and this satirical gibe, who wants this sententiousness?" the professor asked, and answered himself,

"In a Christian society there is no place for it."

The censor wrote to the editor:

"The article entitled 'Some Aesthetic Remarks on Fedotov's Pictures' is wrought with danger. The sketches and pictures might be misinterpreted. The language of paints and colors could give rise to such ideas—both moral and political—that might even get the painter himself into trouble."

It looked as though Fedotov really had no place in this society.

There was no opportunity to go abroad.

In a large, melancholy room with a north light an easel waited. On the easel was a new picture. In the depths of the picture a little to the right there was something green, in the centre—red. Still farther in the depths something silvery, something brassy with a glint of green, and on the red—gold without a high light.

This was necessary in order to convey in the simplest possible way, in the simplest possible drawing, a simple story.

Fedotov had neither wife nor chosen bride. A woman loved him, but she was very rich and Fedotov had already painted "The Major's Wooing."

The woman's name was Tarnovskaya and her fortune was a huge one. But Fedotov said to his friend Drujinin,

"I have been loved too little, and now this woman will get me completely in her power. But I feel that when my single state comes to an end my career as an artist will end, too."

With Tarnovskaya he wandered about remote streets, entered houses, pointed out to her how people hired a corner of a room from tenants, looked at yards and said,

"How could I live without this? After all, I work in the street, I must remain a lonely lounger."

He kissed his lady's wrist, just above the wrist. He was an officer, he did not love, therefore he was polite.

He wrote her letters, long ones, with words crossed out, about his besmirched triumph, and the success of his exhibition. He said that it was like the

buzzing of a mosquito compared to the peals of thunder that came from Europe, where thrones were tottering and the rich gripped the necks of their sacks of gold desperately.

"I feel," wrote Fedotov, "a species of madness. Golden sacks fear the development of the idea of communism and I am thinking of the position of the artist in the future." Thus he wrote and then crossed out the words.

He was in a state of agitation, of oppressive agitation. He painted his "Major's Wooing" over again. The woman depicted as running away from the major, became beautiful. Formerly she had been plump and sturdy, a little like a turnip, but this later woman was slim and well built.

Fedotov loved, it appeared, another, and painted her portrait. She was poor, but she sent him money for the portrait.

It meant that she did not want to understand love, or was afraid of it. The picture remained his.

"Napoleon," said Fedotov, "was worth millions of deaths. A picture is worth any number of sketches."

Fedotov painted another picture. In the depths to the right—something green, in the centre—something red, alongside the red—something black.

The picture was called "The Widow." A woman dressed in black was shown leaning on a chest of drawers; one hand lay across her stomach—lightly: perhaps the woman was pregnant. Farther off stood a bed, on the floor lay things—silver and brass—belonging to the widow's ruined household. Over the chest of drawers in a gilt frame hung a portrait of Fedotov again. Now he was the dead husband. Once more he was testing his fate in a picture.

This was still another guess at the future. In all his pictures Fedotov showed his dread of the future.

"The Widow" was quite a small picture. Fedotov painted it many times.

For weeks and months he worked, sometimes turning all his pictures and sketches with their faces to the wall, and sitting down before a fresh piece of paper or canvas.

"I'm not going to do anything until I learn to paint mahogany," were the words with which he met his friend Drujinin.

"Can't you paint?" said the journalist. "Why not do what you can, then?"

"Yesterday I couldn't get the chair right. I won't leave it alone until I learn. It's senseless to polish marble before it's properly hewn."

Meanwhile Fedotov grew older. He did a drawing of himself.

In it Fedotov is trying on a periwig. Under the drawing we read, "This way, brides, this way!" In the next drawing he is sitting on a chair, while a little girl is trying a cap on him and saying,

"Oh, how this cap suits you, Papa. It's quite true—what Mamma says—that you're an awful old woman."

Fedotov lived many lives in his pictures. All these lives were unhappy.

It was the month of May when Fedotov, hatless and in a light coat, ran into a friend's house.

"Come round to my room, quick!" he cried. "It's a good thing you were there yesterday evening—You'll see something. I might be called a liar if I claimed to have done it before anyone else."

When his friends entered the room they made their way through disorderly piles of painting materials to the window, where yesterday had stood a picture (the second or third copy of "The Widow"). Only yesterday it had been nothing more than a rough sketch of a figure, a dim face and two or three separate objects in the room.

In its place stood what was apparently a different picture, all its difficult points almost completed with the face and dress finished, with a quantity of highly finished details.

"You're making fun of me, Pavel Andreivitch. Surely this can't be the work of one evening and one morning?" Drujinin exclaimed.

"And one night," added the artist. "It grows light early these days, thank goodness. A funny thing happened to me, a phenomenon—if you want to put it in a nicer way—a thing that I had only the vaguest notion of formerly. It seemed as if a spark took fire in my brain. I could not sleep. I felt an extraordinary power. I was gay. I realized in every nerve what I could do at that moment. Never have I been able to work with such lightness and success; every stroke lay where it should, every spot of color helped the thing on. I saw that I was making progress. With what deftness and pleasure one works in this fashion!"

Next day the artists came to view the new picture and discuss it. Leo Jemchujnikov was painting "The Adoration of the Maji."

"How simple!" said Jemchujnikov, when he saw Fedotov's picture.

To which Fedotov replied calmly;

"Yes, it's all simple after you've done it about a hundred times."

They talked until evening about their teacher Brullow.

Brullow was very ill.

He had gone to Madeira.

It was reported that as he crossed the Russian frontier, he had stripped off all his clothes and flung them away.

But he could not fling away his disease.

Not long before Brullow's departure, Jemchujnikov had visited him. It seemed light and cosy in the first room—the studio—after the long corridor.

Here were the pictures of "The Prophetess St. Anne," "The Siege of Pskov" and a sketch of the ceiling of St. Isaac's Cathedral. This fresco showed the triumph of the Christian religion over all other faiths.

In the adjoining room someone groaned. Jemchujnikov went into that room and saw Brullow half lying in a big armchair, while his pupils, Goretsky and Karitsky, bandaged his wounds, turning him from side to side.

"What are you composing now?" Brullow asked Jemchujnikov. To compose meant to make a plan for a picture.

"Nothing."

"Do you know how they tortured St. Laurence, how they roasted him on a gridiron and turned him from side to side with pitchforks."

"Yes, I know."

"Well, there's a subject for you."

"The pair bandaging him," said Jemchujnikov afterwards—"and the efforts of his pupils who turned his enfeebled body, recalled the sufferings of the martyrs to Brullow's mind and he compared his own sufferings to them."

Fedotov frowned.

"That's the way he has always disguised our life with his martyrs and drapery and columns, and inspiration is deserting him."

14

The End Approaching

An endless war dragged on in the Caucasus. Mountaineers went down to defeat every day. Compulsory recruiting was going on. There was talk of a war with France.

Since Agin was not of the upper class he was conscripted into the army.

Leo Jemchujnikov went to look for him and found him in one of the Arakcheyev barracks. The front of his head had already been shaven so that he could not run away, so that every police constable could recognize him. There was only one thing to do—to buy him out.

They began to collect money. In order to delay his being sent to join his regiment they managed through friends to get him sent as a sick man to a lunatic asylum in the Viborg district of St. Petersburg.

Fedotov and Jemchujnikov went to visit the invalid.

The ice was moving and the bridges were raised.

They had to cross from Vassiliev Island to the St. Petersburg district, and from there to the Viborg district.

The ice from Lake Lagoda pressed against the boat, icicles creaked by the low banks.

It took them a long time to find the ward they wanted in the long, one-storey hospital buildings.

The corridors smelt of cabbage and hospital equipment; the smoky vaulted ceiling was low.

They were directed to the room for lunatics by the shriek that rang out from it and the prolonged, anguished howling of the insane who were being doused with cold water.

A big, low room furnished with flat cots without mattresses; over the cots were rods, upon which hung blackboards. The blackboards bore the name of the patient and the name of his disease.

People were seated on the cots. Some were mending boots, others muttering as if conversing with each other. In the corner some were playing cards and whacking the loser over the nose with the packs.

Agin could be recognized only by his full, lower lip, his sharp chin, and by the fact that he was not as pale as the other invalids. His glance was no longer that of an artist, absent and evasive, but the furtive, restless, hospital glance.

Fedotov sat down on his bed.

"Keep your feet up, your honor," said a man in the next bed, "because the devil's under that bed, he's touching your foot already."

Through the window they could see great rats of different hues chasing each other.

Fedotov returned home feeling thoroughly ill.

In the morning there were the white walls again and the thought of another widow—his sister.

Should he paint a picture? But what should he paint? Nearly all the subjects were forbidden.

The State Council discussed the question of popular old cheap prints. Zakrevsky, the Governor-general of Moscow, had demanded that all the old metal plates from which prints were made should be brought to him. Then he had them broken up and handed over to the bell-merchants to be melted down.

The Emperor discussed the question of whether Kantemir's satires should be re-published, and decided that it would be better not to.

One could paint a picture of a girl from one of the government pensionnats returning to her home—a poor home, like Fedotov's.

But suppose one did. It would be said that the painter was meddling with

the business of the government and suggesting that children were not being properly brought up.

Yet he wanted to draw children.

As it was, his relations with his superiors were spoiled.

To publish prints of the "Major's Wooing" was forbidden.

He was advised to paint "The Visit of His Imperial Majesty Nicholas I to the Patriotic Institute."

Nicholas I was to be shown holding a little girl in his arms. A Madonna the other way about, as it were.

One could paint children all around him. Children with blue-veined temples, transparent pink ears, and heads raised.

Oh, cunning slave who serveth two masters!

There was one comfort, however. Jemchujnikov had collected enough money and Agin was free.

Fedotov went out for a walk, a long walk. He spent the night with an acquaintance in Galernaya Harbor.

The room in which he slept looked out on a yard. All was quiet in Galernaya Harbor. It was interesting to watch the candle burn down and to see how its reflection altered in the window-pane.

In the yard the cocks crowed—some hoarsely, some furiously, some stentoriously.

After a pause they crowed again as if they took it in turns or they were sentries on duty.

It would be interesting to paint a picture of a village in the early hours of the morning—almost before it was light, and a man—a prodigal son—near his old home.

That would be dull. The return of the prodigal.

This was Brullow again. Why must it be the Prodigal Son? Why not something of his own?

Sleeplessness. The cocks crowed in turn.

He lit the candle again.

He called up a vision of a village; outside the window there would be mud and slush that had not yet dried: slush that was so deep, so clinging, you could not forget it even at night.

Mud outside the window. Darkness. A house cut off from the rest. A guitar. An officer. In the shadows an orderly stands, smoking.

Night, and the cocks crowing. As few details as possible.

One would have to paint so as to make people comprehend how that kind of officer felt, although he might be stupid. The kind who drank barley coffee in the morning and played the guitar.

What did he do out of ennui? The candle should light up the edge of the samovar, the guitar reflecting the light, and the officer's shirt in the light.

A black-haired orderly in the depths. In the foreground a chair of hard outline.

It should be painted without leaving off for a moment.

How could he convey the idea that time hung heavily? How give the picture a centre—a centre of ennui?

There was a picture in the Hermitage of a cosy room, with a richly dressed woman at the window. Below, near the lower boundary of the picture a dog sitting up and begging; the woman was obviously bored.

But a dog was a cosy animal, a dog was always willing to sit up and beg.

Let him try to train a tom-cat; it was practically impossible to train a cat and it would serve to show that time was no object with her.

He drew the composition in the darkness. The candle burned down to the paper in the candlestick. It began to grow light. The cocks crowed once more. The drawing on the table grew clearer and clearer. Inspiration wearied Fedotov. It was quite impossible to lie in one place any longer.

He rose, went softly into the vestibule, and found his coat. But where were his boots? Had they taken them away to be cleaned? He put on someone else's slippers, which were too big, and hurried home through the streets with difficulty. It was a long way to Galernaya Harbor. When he reached the house he sat down at his work, and painted for a long time. His eyes ached. He put cold compresses on them.

That night he had a dream: Karl Brullow came to see him. Fedotov saw himself in his dream. He rose. Together they set a picture on a chair and examined it. Fedotov was bald and broadshouldered; Brullow had aged a great deal, but his head was very fine.

"My heart is closed to everything," said the dream-Fedotov standing before the picture. "And the name of the seal is art. I have grown accustomed to failure, because I entered the arena as an artist at a critical moment in politics."

"My soul is wondering," Brullow replied. "Sometimes it exults; the artist and talent disclose the laws to me. I am very unhappy. My wife slept with Nicholas I. My name is disgraced. I tore the ear-rings he gave her out of her ears. I cannot paint any more, so that means I cannot become free through art."

The Fedotov in the bed said to both of them:

"Enjoyment of art is happiness in itself. The gift of observing the laws of the structure of nature has been bestowed on us, and we lay them bare to others. This picture itself should satisfy my heart."

Brullow moved away from the picture and looked at it. As he did so he hid the candle—and the light of the picture changed of itself.

"You resemble me," he said. "You also paint the martyrdom of St. Laurence. Woe cannot be contained within a picture; the frame does not help.

"Twelve years ago Gogol published his book *Arabesques:* in it he described my picture 'The Last Days of Pompei.' He wrote his tale of 'The Portrait' in that book.

"In that tale I was the ideal of the artist's life and Chertov was to blame for not studying sufficiently hard to attain my technique.

"After Pushkin's heath Gogol wrote the story over again, only with alterations—more alterations than you have in your pictures.

"The tale became a reproach: I was no longer the hero of it. Alexander Ivanov became the hero instead and an article was written about him.

"In this tale Chertov was blamed, not for lack of application but for betrayal of art, for facile brushwork, for slavish formality."

"We discussed that at the studio," remarked the dream-Fedotov. "In the first story Chertov simply sold the sketch of Psyche as a portrait, in the second story the artist painted features resembling nature on the antique. Our teacher Yegorov was an honest fellow and that was how he taught us to draw. Thus we transformed antique statues into our contemporaries. In our pictures our time is only distinguished from the past by a difference in hair-dressing. All that we convey of our time is second-rate."

There were three of them in the room. Fedotov (the one who was asleep) sat up in bed and, looking at the two dream figures, said in a husky voice,

"I respect Gogol as the genius whose hand wrote *Torass Bulba.* But I am aware that Gogol's Ulinka in that part of *Dead Souls* which he read not long ago works after Chertov's fashion. I recognized the drapery in her dress; she did not change her attire when she stepped from the antique into a realistic production. He even writes, for instance: 'She dressed carelessly—anyhow; an uncut length of fabric, caught up in two or three places, it clung and disposed itself about her in folds that a sculptor would have transferred at once to marble.' This is strange to me."

But the sick, stout Brullow raised his beautiful head and said:

"My conscience does not stir, it is as clear as the complexion of a beauty. Gogol left me for Ivanov. For Gogol my pictures are no longer pictures but he could not escape from Petromichal—the name of the one who was drawn in the 'Portrait.'

"Skundrojoglo will borrow the dark complexion and bitter, sarcastic smile from Petromichal. Gogol will not escape from Nicholas I. He is painting portraits for him, adding now good looks, which never did anyone any harm."

Then the dream-Fedotov asked the sleeping Fedotov,

"Shall we be able to hold out—you and I? You remember yesterday they came to order a picture of 'The Visit of His Imperial Majesty to the Patriotic Institute?' You didn't refuse, did you?"

The Fedotov in bed said to the other two, "Enjoyment of art is happiness in itself. The gift of observing the structure of nature has been bestowed on us, and we must lay it bare for others. The picture itself must satisfy my heart."

"Well, I have come to you as to an equal," said Brullow. "But I have not come to you as a conqueror. You, too, have grown very old at heart. And you repeat your old pictures. Perhaps you will repeat that picture in which the poodle jumps over a stick, and in the evening light, which glows red through the window, an officer with a guitar lies on a bench and shouts to the poodle: 'Encore! Encore!' You got the effect of the light very well and you look calmly—so calmly on the living scene of death.

"You resemble me," Brullow continued. "You, too, depict the martyrdom of St. Laurence, but woe cannot be confined within a picture and frames do not help."

"I shall gain my end," declared the dream-Fedotov. "Napoleon was worth the millions who died in battle and a picture is worth millions of sketches."

Brullow turned his beautiful, cotton-wool head. Thus the painstaking Germans at the Academy drew from the antique; he looked as if he had been drawn by one of his own pupils. Brullow's cheeks grew round as he said.

"There will be no Napoleon; Napoleon has been taken prisoner among the tombstones at Borodino."

Then Brullow's head fell back, like the head of the Laocoon in the plaster cast, and he began to laugh.

The Fedotov who slept raised himself on his hands like a wounded man who suddenly loses his instinct for self-preservation under fire. Laughter shook him. The shadows on the wall grew larger and then split up. The source of light seemed to come from somewhere below. The dream retreated and Fedotov awoke, laughing aloud.

The morning light had already washed the window from without; it was

white with a touch of yellow. There was laughter in the room. His body ached. Fedotov dozed off again.

In the morning the back of his neck ached. He had an unpleasant taste in his mouth. He awoke slowly. Yes, they had come yesterday to commission a painting of "The Visit to the Patriotic Institute."

They had named the price and remarked that it was time the artist made an effort to improve his political reputation.

Fedotov sat over his preparations for a fortnight. He took measurements to scale, dissolved glue, pasted things together, painted, and cut out. It soothed him greatly.

He pasted together a big white box with apertures for windows cut in it. The walls were painted to imitate marble. Every column was painted in imitation of marble.

The box opened from the side; within it were more columns, and rows of beds, every bed with a quilt on it. Thus the artist could verify his perspective at home.

The Emperor would enter just here. And a crowd of children would surround him. He was tall and would occupy the centre of the picture at once. The group would arrange itself in a pyramid. The child in arms would draw the eye and link it with the crowd of children below.

The whole figure of the Emperor might be taken from the artist's old caricature.

He did not feel inclined to put him in the picture—to go on repeating this stout and apparently handsome Nicholas I with the big forehead and slightly bulging eyes. But the customer cried: "Encore!"

There was no time for this "Patriotic Institute." No time at all.

At that time many pictures were painted against the inclinations of the artist. Brullow was noted for his ability to work easily, but even he had taken about a year to paint the "Ascension of the Blessed Virgin into Heaven." He said he was benumbed in his room in St. Petersburg.

Ivanov always became depressed when the question of his return to Russia was mentioned. His picture "The Appearance of Christ to the Multitude" and the second part of Gogol's book *Dead Souls* had become unsolvable problems: it seemed impossible to finish them.

Everything was in a muddle. Ivanov put Gogol in his picture, made a bearded Christ out of him.

Gogol talked of love for one's country and added, "In order to be of service to my country, it is necessary that I should be brought up somewhere far from it."

"Apart from the state of my health, which requires that I should live in a warm climate," he said, "this absence from Russia is necessary so that my living thoughts may dwell in Russia."

At that time the climate of Italy, or England—Hertzen's climate—would have done Fedotov good, too.

15

The Year that Gogol Burned the Manuscript of Dead Souls

Passionate Pushkin and passionate Marlinsky had already been killed in duels. Lermontov was gone, too.

This was the day of Gogol, of the painter Ivanov, the day of people ap-

parently passionless. Now came the time of the poet Bendictov and the novelist Goncharov, and their unhappy love.

The times said: "You are in a barracks, and in a barracks it is better not to love."

Better not to love, if all you had was a monthly allowance of a hundred rubles in Treasury notes—that is, twenty-eight silver rubles and sixty kopeks, and five persons dependent upon you.

Better not to love, if love required that you should paint the cupola of St. Isaacs's Cathedral, or even copy your own pictures.

Fame had come to him. Fame, they said was smoke. Aeschylus said that man was like the shadow of the smoke. That meant, then, that one had to produce more smoke in the form of new pictures.

But one could not pour one's self off, like a cordial from berries, before it was ready. Cordial needed sunlight, too.

Behind the Academy of Arts lay the Cadet School, behind that the Philological Institute, behind that the University—the Academy of Science. They all paraded before Peter I in Senator Square.

Between the double window frames of the Academy, the University, the Institute and professors' rooms stood large bottles with different colored cordials.

Fedotov's thoughts were spasmodic. His room faced north. It was on the shady side. The St. Petersburg north. The sun gave as much light as a candle. A pale sky, a pale river. A pale sky. He confused the Neva and the word "nebo" (sky) in his head.

A climate like this would make the paws ache of the Sphinxes that had been placed on the embankment in front of the Academy of Arts and called huge.

Fedotov had pains in his side and the back of his neck. The wind from the Neva had pierced him. The fact that he was sturdily built was no help. In a climate like this, the best thing to do was to tie up your jaw to keep your teeth from getting cold and wrap up your throat. Better pretend that you were out of things and become a professor in the Academy. Secure a study facing south, and set along the window sill a row of bottles, one containing cherries in spirit. another raspberries in spirit, a third—birchbuds, a fourth—orange peel—and, when autumn comes, study colors in the wine glasses.

The cupola of St. Isaac's swelled like a bubble over the Neva, swelled and swelled as if delighted that it was so big.

It was so large it looked like the swellings that appear on the belly after it has been subjected to cupping treatment, only in this case the swellings appeared on a bog.

Life was dull. It was impossible to read because his eyes ached. And the back of his neck ached as well.

It was all very difficult. He wanted to do something easy. To go and walk about, and fall in love, and not to admit it.

It was always colder on Vassiliev Island than in the town itself: the wind from Galernaya Harbor blew through the broad streets, carrying the damp with it. The pale sea made the weather chilly, the calendar lied. There would be neither autumn nor spring: here there were fifty-two rainy days and seventy-two snowy days in the year—Martober—in a word.

It blew in from the sea as if someone had forgotten to shut the door.

An artist crossed the bridge, wincing as he looked at St. Isaac's. A drum made of brass and painted to imitate marble.

It was no architect who had built it, but an illustrator named Montferrand. He had done a nice tinted drawing, the sort usually seen in albums, and varnished the little model he had made, and sold it. The huge gates of St. Isaac's were open, there was a service going on. The wind blew as strong from the cathedral as from the sea shore. Under the cupola the Holy Spirit—a dingy dove—hovered grey in the dusk.

What an idiotic building! With its false windows that did not light the temple itself, but were set in its depths, in the bosom, between the false drum and the false vaulting with its cast iron trusses.

Above, quite indistinguishable, were the frescoes of Brullow and Bruni.

Brullow had gone away without completing his frescoes. Bassin was working on them now; even so, there was nothing to be seen.

The belfries stuck on in the wrong way. It was a ridiculous building. The bell must weigh a thousand eight hundred poods; it had been cast from copper money. Very likely the metal plates from the oil prints had gone into it, too.

Perhaps Zarianko would decorate the cathedral?

Zarianko had been made an academician on the personal recommendation of the Emperor.

Zarianko, an ex-serf, knew how to paint portraits that looked you straight in the eyes with devotion. People said he was a Van Dyck, Rembrandt.

He drew very pleasantly. Gogol had written about him long ago, when he was describing the artist Chertov. Zarianko was bound to appear. He had already been described.

Dear Zarianko had sold himself for a window on the sunny side, and set a bottle with birch-buds in spirit on the window-sill.

In Admiralty Square there was a confectioner's shop where one could drop in.

Not long ago, a government official had sat there, drinking something.

When he had finished his drink, he went out to look at St. Isaac's.

Then he returned, and had something more to drink. After that he climbed up the scaffolding of the cathedral, took off his coat trimmed with imitation beaver, hung it over the balustrade and flung himself down.

He had been guilty of embezzlement.

Now, at the foot of the scaffolding hung a notice in four languages: "No admittance."

Over Palace Square an angel dances on a tall column, in honor of Alexander; it is cold and damp; the angel is warming himself.

In Gorokhovaya Street there is a warm tavern called "The Cape of Good Hope."

Fedotov went in and sat down.

On the wall hung a portrait of Bobelina, a Greek woman who commanded the fleet, and a print of Brullow's "Last Days of Pompei." The terrible thing was that this print, made from descriptions in the newspapers, was more interesting than the picture by Brullow.

Fedotov had once been with Brullow to a show booth, where they were showing "The Last Days of Pompei."

The showman's wife, who was taking the admission fees, boasted that she had better lighting than Brullow himself.

So you could say what you liked about St. Laurence and express yourself every time through something old.

In the corner clerks were drinking beer, talking about war, and Poland, and Napoleon III.

They were arguing as to whether Napoleon had the right to call himself the Third, if there had been no Napoleon the Second, as it were.

"Our Tsar doesn't regard him as a tsar at all."

One of the clerks, a little fellow who looked like a bird—a siskin, perhaps—held a different opinion. He regretted the republic and used the word "demagogy" with a mysterious expression.

"Seven million eight hundred and twenty-four votes confirmed Napoleon Emporer during the plebiscite. And he's called Napoleon III. It's demagogy, but that he's the third is a fact, and we'll catch it from him yet."

The others listened to the siskin in silence.

An old clean-shaven clerk grasped the little clerk's hair in his paws and shook him, and bent him down to the floor, saying meanwhile in an indifferent tone: "A good hiding, that's what I calls it. I'm applying domestic methods to punish you for your foolishness, and because there are no strangers about and his honor sitting at the other table will excuse a fool like you."

The little clerk shook his head free and said with a sigh to the whole company:

"Try and argue with people who flare out at you like this!"

Poor siskin!

Fedotov went home. His head ached and the nauseating model of the "Patriotic Institute" confronted him. He read with difficulty the letter from home on spotty paper. Nothing but unpleasantness.

Everything was very disturbing.

He did drawings in chalk and Italian pencil; sketches of gamblers on blue paper.

These were not the gamblers who had once played, comically it seemed to him, on credit. Here the lighting was different. Big shadows. The hands behind the back, the reflection in the mirrors. A bottle on the edge of the table.

This was a different game. The game took the place of fate. It was better to be rendered unhappy by card-playing than not to exist at all.

They would say it was not plausible.

He had another idea sketched out: a husband who has been unlucky at cards steals his wife's diamonds. The sketch showed the attitude to things.

It was a good drawing; he would not show it to anyone.

In the evening Fedotov went out to Smolenskoe Field for a walk, taking Korshunov with him.

There was something new here: blocks of granite like coffins had been flung down. They were intended for facing the embankment at Vassiliev Island.

Ahead lay the sea-shore. The ice had been driven away, there was snow underfoot. There to the left where they were now burying dead cattle lay five men: Decembrists.

Fedotov stood there a long time. Then he sat down on the stones, seized his head in his hands and began to cry.

Korshunov took him home.

Fedotov cried on the way home, and cried and rolled about the floor when he got there. Korshunov put a cold, wet towel on his head, Fedotov grew

calmer. Then he got up, calmly ordered Korshunov to remain at home and went out.

Fedotov disappeared. A rumor got about that he had been to the person who had commissioned the picture, and obtained money from him. He spent this on things for his wedding. He examined a chandelier for his new rooms.

He called in at his friend Beidemann's and left a note, written in a firm hand, all about the greatness of art.

A day or so later he called round again, left a second note, and requested his friend to keep the notes.

After that, Korshunov came; he was searching for his master everywhere. Then the Academy was notified by the police that a madman had been caught who said he was Fedotov the artist. He was now retained at the police station.

The secretary sent word that an artist of this name did actually exist, and was even an academician, and that he ought to be sent to a lunatic asylum.

In the long corridors, divided by monotonous arches, in the depressing corridors of the Academy people talked of Fedotov. They said he could recognize people but asked them to keep away from him, that he gathered the madmen about him and taught them to draw, talked to them of art and held a mass over himself.

Fedotov drew himself on scraps of paper. He drew eyes and swearing officers, geometrical figures, cards with the words "va-banqui!" written on them, and the Emperor Nicholas I as a madman.

The artist Fedotov was tranferred to a separate ward and deprived of paper and pencil.

16

In the Lunatic Asylum

Leo Jemchujnikov and Alexander Beidemann took a cab early one dark autumn evening to the hospital of St. Nicholas the Miracle-worker.

They crossed the newly built Iron Bridge and bought some apples. Fedotov liked apples.

The street lamps were few and far between and very dim; the wind and rain increased.

A funeral procession issued from the hospital. The horses moved cautiously under their white trappings: it seemed as if they, too, were sick and were therefore being led along by the bridle.

Torch-bearers went in front. The torches were not a touch of luxury, because the street-lamps burned so dimly.

Korshunov was waiting for Fedotov's friends at the gate: the yard was dark and filthy in the lisping rain.

Suddenly a shriek rang out—it seemed to come from right under their feet. It sounded like Fedotov's voice.

"That's Pavel Andreivitch," said Korshunov. "He keeps shouting that his friends tormented him."

Then they went on. They stood in the dark vestibule where there was no light.

The dreadful shrieking, long drawn out as if it would last a lifetime, went on.

Korshunov, holding a candlestick with an unlit candle and matches, de-

scended the stairs. They all followed. The lock of a door clicked. They entered a closet under the stairs.

Two eyes flashed from a corner, then the candle lip up. The shadow of a man with his arms bound to his body rushed across the walls, bumping into the corners.

Dressed in a hospital overall, with hands encased in leather bags and drawn round to his back, with bare feet from which a tape belonging to his underwear trailed, with shaven head—there stood before them he who in retirement had been called "Captain," and among artists the painter Fedotov.

He stood there, scraping the floor with his bare foot. The shrieks grew a little less frantic. Foam ceased to come from his mouth. Fedotov looked closer at them, his eyes changed. From out of the shrieking, distorted countenance peered a familiar face.

"Ah, Sasha dear, and you Jemchujnikov, your hair looks like St. John's, as it always did."

"They've brought you presents, Pavel Andreivitch, apples," said Korshunov.

Beidemann began to peel the apples.

"Sasha," said Fedotov, "they've filled in the hospital chart in pencil, a sketch for my whole life. Sasha, I've forgotten the name of the deputy—but it was on his suggestion that at the very beginning of the French Revolution, when the royalist troops were advancing on Paris, the Convention issued an order for the chains to be struck off the insane. It was done very solemnly. The documents about our madness should be destroyed, Sasha. What news from Paris? Is the Convention still sitting? Haven't you come to untie my hands?"

"No, Pasha," Jemchujnikov replied.

"The Neva," said Fedotov, "is formed from the water that drips from the wet tatters of the beggars; that is why it lacks color. We are beaten with three knouts to keep us quiet. My friend has been killed. Gogol, too, is dead. Are there any more living people besides you in the other world?"

On the oil-cloth covered walls all around there were dents at about the height of a man's head; Fedotov had been dashing his head against the wall.

There was a little window in the corner; it was barred and unglazed.

Outside rain was falling.

Fedotov leaned his head against the wall and looked at his friends sideways.

"Is there no order out to untie my hands?"

"He's starting again, it's dangerous to stay," said Korshunov. "He'll be crying and beating his head against the wall in a minute."

The two friends started their melancholy drive homewards.

They could bear it no longer, they let the cabman go and made their way on foot.

On the outskirts of the town there were no pavements, but planks that joggled underfoot.

Jemchujnikov walked along, deep in thought. The cabby dawdled behind as if accompanying a funeral procession.

Suddenly the planks broke. He was precipitated into the cellar of a small shop. Coffins stood around the walls.

"How strange!" he said, "to fall into an undertaker's."

They got back into the cab and drove off.

It was night. Vacuity. Not a soul in sight. The lamps were rare spots in the murk.

Depression seized Jemchujnikov: he jumped out of the cab and rushed down the street with a scream.

Beidemann ran after him.

"What's the matter with you, Leo?"

"Oh, how silly it was of me! I don't know myself what's the matter with me. But I suddenly felt terrified, and just set off running."

For several days both the artists felt tormented. They seemed to see Fedotov and hear his voice constantly.

"How shall we get rid of this?" Jemchujnikov asked.

"Pavel Andreivitch would have put it all into a picture," Beidemann replied gloomily.

They resolved to draw a picture. First of all, each made a separate sketch and then they combined them in a composition.

Both Jemchujnikov and Beidemann decided not to sign the sketch.

It passed from hand to hand. It was decided to transfer Fedotov to the government hospital for the insane, situated in what was called the Second Verst.

17

The Artist Bids Farewell to Life and Pictures

The faithful Korshunov accompanied Fedotov to his new quarters. Fedotov was given a small room to himself. The door had no handle. He grew better, recognized people, and began to draw. His line was firm now.

After the period in the cellar he looked ill, and as if he was swollen. He spoke in a hoarse voice; his face was yellow and wore a horrid smile.

Fedotov had grown feeble.

Korshunov brought him an armchair and the sick man sat by the window.

It was late autumn outside: he could see the reddish-blue leaves of the rowan trees, the rowans so red alongside the green of the firs.

It was cold: Fedotov wrapped a scarf around his neck. He looked like that artist he had once drawn.

There were no books in the ward. His memory returned to him: he remembered books, remembered Kantemir's *Third Satire*. He remembered Krylov's *Spirit's Correspondence* and the poet who lived in a ruined house and imagined himself a wealthy man, talked with spirits, complained to them of the government, and was terrified of a madhouse.

He remembered Beaumarchais, and even attempted to sing, "Little tin soldiers we" but his voice had gone, he could not sing. Better to think about songs to one's self. A guitar was not allowed, it might annoy the other patients. The patients needed quiet, that was why they were doused with icy water.

He could not sleep at night; Korshunov lit the candle.

Pavel Andreivich had never been able to paint light—all his life.

"Korshunov, do you remember the hillock at Golodai Island?"

"Why, of course I do."

"Five men are lying there—Decembrists, they were called."

"So I've heard, Pavel Andreivitch, so I've heard—when I was with the regiment, only don't you upset yourself."

"They're lying ouside the town, where the cattle are buried. I remember Lermontov, we did sentry duty together. He was killed afterwards—outside the town. Pushkin was killed down on the Black River. Outside the town, like a mad dog. How far are we from the town, Korshunov?"

"Eleven versts. Only don't you cry, it's bad for you."

"Send someone in the morning for Sasha and Leo, tell them Pavel Andreivitch Fedotov is dying and wants to talk about pictures."

"Yes, but don't cry."

"I'm not crying, I'm going to sleep."

In the morning an attendant was sent. Pavel Andreivitch sat down in the rubbed, tattered armchair.

He waited, doing his drawings meanwhile. In the morning the autumn grass was white.

The sun rose. The rowans reddened, the firs darkened.

The fourteenth of October, 1853, wore to its close. Fedotov waited, talking softly to Korshunov.

"The paints cracked," he said, "on my pictures. I never could put on paint properly. Our pictures will not be long lived, Korshunov. They age quickly."

Evening drew in. They lighted the candle. It was reflected in the uncurtained window.

Pavel Andreivitch looked at the light. Korshunov covered his knees with his old officer's coat, lined with demi-cotton. Pavel Andreivitch grew quieter. He felt warmer.

The flame of the candle winked like an eye. The ceiling of the ward dipped and contracted, turning into the model of the hall of the Patriotic Institute.

Red veins floated in the air and transformed the walls into veined marble. A small, and—as yet undrawn—Nicholas I, with bulging eyes and bow legs, entered the room, smiling.

The air around him divided into squares. He held a child in his arms.

He drew nearer, and took up in the pose in which he was to be drawn.

"No, no, I won't do it, I don't want to," said Pavel Andreivitch.

Late that night Jemchujnikov and Beidemann arrived. Pavel Andreivitch Fedotov, already washed and dressed in the uniform of the Finland Regiment of the Life Guards, lay on the table.

THE END.

Translated from the Russian by Anthony Wixley

A. Platonov

The Third Son

An old woman died in the district town. Her husband, a worker of seventy, now on pension, went to the telegraph office and sent off to different parts of the country, six telegrams, all worded in exactly the same way: "Mother dead, come. Father."

The elderly woman in the telegraph office took a long time over counting the money, making mistakes, signing the receipts and stamping them with trembling hand. The old man with the red eyes watched her mildly through the window in the wooden partition, and, wishing to distract his thoughts from his grief, wondered absently about something else. The elderly telegraph clerk, it seemed to him, must also have a broken heart or a constantly perplexed soul; perhaps she was a widow or by some cruel fate a deserted wife.

And now she was working slowly, muddling up money, losing her memory, incapable of attending to anything properly; even for simple, ordinary labor one needed to be happy inside.

After sending off the telegrams, the old man went home. He sat down on a stool by the long table, at the chill feet of his dead wife and smoked and whispered mournful words to himself and watched the lonely life of the little grey bird that hopped from perch to perch in its cage. Sometimes he wept softly, then calmed down, wound up his watch and gazed out of the window. The weather was changing; now dead leaves would fall, loaded with clots of damp, listless snow, then it would rain, then again the late sunlight, chill as a star, would peep out,—and the old man sat waiting for his sons.

The eldest arrived next day in an airplane. The other five collected in the course of forty-eight hours.

One of them, the third, brought his six-year old daughter, who had never seen her grandfather before.

The mother had been lying on the table for four days, but still her corpse did not smell of death, cleansed as it was by sickness and wasted by exhaustion. After having bestowed healthy, abundant life on her sons, the old woman had left herself a small spare, meagre body: this she had striven long to preserve, even in its most pitiful state, for the sake of loving her children and taking pride in them until she died.

The huge men, whose ages varied from twenty to forty, stood in silence around the coffin on the table. There were six of them. The seventh man was the father, who was smaller and much weaker than his youngest son. The grandfather held the little girl, who kept her eyes screwed up in terror of the unknown dead woman and only took a peep at her now and again with pale, unblinking eyes, from between almost closed lids.

The sons wept silently with scarcely controlled tears, twisting their faces in the effort to bear their grief soundlessly. Their old father did not cry any more: he had done his weeping alone, before they came, and now he kept glancing at his powerful half-dozen of sons with secret excitement and a delight that was quite out of place. Two were in the navy, commanders of ships, one an actor in Moscow, another—the one who had brought his daughter—a physicist and communist, the youngest was preparing to be an agronomist, the eldest was the head of a department of airplane works and wore on

his chest a decoration he had been awarded for his worth as a worker. The six men—seven counting the father—stood around the dead woman and wept for her silently, hiding from each other their despair, their memories of childhood, of the vanished joy of a love that she had borne in her heart forever, seeking no reward, a love that had always reached them, even though thousands of miles might lie between. They had felt it always, subconsciously, and been stronger for the knowledge, and it had encouraged them to more daring successes in life. Now the mother was dead, she could never love anyone any more and she lay there indifferent, a stranger to them.

Each of her sons felt lonely and frightened now: it seemed as if far in the dark field, a lamp had glowed from the window-sill of the old house, lighting up the night and its flying beetles, its blue grass, its swarms of midges in the air—the entire world of childhood that had surrounded the old home, now deserted by those who had been born in it. The doors of that house had never been locked, so that those who had left it might return to it. But none had returned. And now all at once the light that had gleamed out through the window into the night was extinguished and what had been a reality had passed into a memory.

As she had lain dying, the old woman had desired her husband to call a priest to sing a mass for the dead over her while she should be lying in the house. Afterwards she might be carried out and lowered into the grave without the offices of the priest, in order not to offend her sons and to make it possible for them to follow her coffin. It was not so much because of her faith in God that she had desired this, as that she had wanted her husband, whom she had loved all her life, to grieve and yearn for her the more while prayers were being chanted and the light of the wax candles flickered over her dead face.

She did not want to depart from life without due solemnity and remembrance. After the sons' arrival, the old man had a long search for a priest. At last, towards evening, he returned with an old man who wore ordinary clothes. His face was rosy from living on a vegetarian, fasting diet and his lively eyes sparkled with trifling, calculating thoughts. This priest wore the satchel of an army commander on his hip. It contained all his clerical apparatus, incense, thin candles, his prayer-book, his stole, and a small censer on a chain. Very swiftly he set and lit the candles around the coffin, blew on the incense in the censer, and, without further warning or preliminaries, began to mutter the prayers out of the book. The sons, who were in the room at the time, rose to their feet: they felt somehow awkward and ashamed. They stood motionless, with downcast eyes, one behind the other, by the coffin. In front of them the elderly priest chanted and muttered hurriedly, almost ironically, glancing from time to time with small, comprehending eyes at this bodyguard of the old woman's sons. What he felt for them was partly fear and partly respect; apparently, he would not have minded starting a conversation and perhaps even an argument with them about the prospects of building socialism. But the sons were silent and no one, not even the old woman's husband, crossed himself. This was a watch over the dead, not an attendance at a church service.

Having concluded his hasty mass for the dead, the priest collected his things quickly, blew out the candles around the coffin and put away his property in the army-satchel. The father handed him some money and then, without further delay, the priest passed between the ranks of the six, who did not glance at him, and disappeared rather nervously through the door. Actually he would have been glad to stay for the "wake," and talk over the

problems of war and revolution: it would have provided diversion for him for a long time, this encounter with the representatives of the new world, which he secretly admired but to which he could never penetrate. He dreamed in his lonliness of some heroic exploit that would break down all barriers to a briilliant future and admit him to the circle of the new generation. With this in view he had even applied to the local airdrome, asking them to take him up in an airplane as high as they could and from there drop him with a parachute, but without an oxygen mask. But to this suggestion he had received no reply.

That evening the father made up six beds in the second room and laid his granddaughter down to slepp alongside him in the bed in which he had slept with his wife for forty years. The bed stood in the same large room where the coffin was and the sons went into the other. The father lingered by the door while they undressed and lay down, then he closed the door, put out the lights and lay down beside his grandchild. She was asleep, alone in the wide bed, with the quilt pulled well over her head.

The old man stood over her in the darkness; snow had fallen, it gathered up the faint, disseminated light in the sky and shone dimly through the window, lightening the gloom within. The old man went over to the open coffin, kissed the hands, the brow, the lips of his dead wife and said to her: "Take your rest now." Then he lay down cautiously by his granddaughter and closed his eyes so that his heart might forget.

He dozed off—and suddenly woke. From under the door of the room where the sons were came a gleam of light. They had turned on the light again and loud conversation and laughter could be heard.

The noise disturbed the child and she began to twist and turn in her sleep; perhaps she had not really been asleep, but had simply been afraid to poke her head out from under the blanket for fear of the night and the dead old woman.

The eldest son was talking eagerly and enthusiastically of hollow metal propellers; his voice sounded well-fed and powerful, his good, well cared for teeth and deep, red throat could be sensed. The sailors were telling of things that had happened in foreign ports. Then they laughed heartily to see that their father had made their beds with the same old quilts of their childhood and youth. At the top and bottom of the quilts strips of white flannelette were sewn, with "Head" and "Feet" written on them, so that they could be spread properly and the soiled, sweaty edge where the feet had been should not, by mistake, be turned to the face. One of the sailor brothers started to wrestle with the actor brother. They rolled about on the floor as they had in their childhood when they all lived together. The youngest kept egging them on, boasting that he could take them both on with his left hand alone. Evidently they were all very fond of each other and delighted at this meeting. They had not been all together for many years and no one knew when they would all be together again. Perhaps not until their father's funeral. The two wrestling on the floor accidentally overturned a chair. That quieted them for a moment; then, remembering apparently that their mother was dead and could not hear them, they went on with what they were doing. After a while the eldest asked the actor to sing something, but not loudly—; he was sure, he said, that the actor must know some good Moscow songs. But the other objected: it was difficult to begin like that—off hand.

"Cover me with something," said he. So they covered his face with something and he sang from under it, so as not to feel embarrassed about beginning. While he was singing, the youngest attracted the attention of another

son, who jumped out of bed and fell over the third, lying on the floor. They all burst out laughing and told the youngest to pick up the one who had fallen with his left hand. The youngest was answering them quietly, when two of them burst out laughing so loudly that the little girl in the next room popped her head out from under the quilt and called into the darkness:

"Grandpa! Hey, Grandpa! Are you asleep?"

"No, I'm not— I'm—oh, I'm all right," the old man replied, with a timid cough.

The little girl could bear it no longer: she began to whimper. The old man stroked her face: it was wet.

"What are you crying for?" he whispered.

"I'm sorry for Granny," she said. "Everybody else is alive and laughing and only she is dead."

The old man said nothing. He only gave an occasional snuffle or coughed. The child felt frightened. She sat up in bed to get a better look at her grandfather and make sure that he was not asleep. She peered into his face and demanded:

"And what are you crying for? I've stopped."

Her grandfather stroked her head and whispered:

"It's nothing. . . . I'm not crying, that's only sweat on my face."

The child perched herself by his pillow.

"Are you crying for the old woman?" she asked. "Better not cry any more; you're old, you'll soon die and then you won't cry anyhow."

"All right, I won't," said the old man softly.

Silence fell in the next room, which had been so noisy. A moment before that one of the sons had said something and they had all grown subdued. Then one of them said something again, softly. The old man recognized the voice of the third son, the physicist, the father of the child. Up to now there had not been a sound from him: he had neither spoken nor laughed. In some way he had contrived to quiet the others so that they did not even talk any more.

Shortly afterward their door opened and the third son came out, fully dressed as if in the daytime. He went up to his mother in the coffin and bent over her vague face, in which there was no longer any feeling for anyone.

It was far into the night: all was still. There were no passersby in the street. The five brothers in the next room did not stir. The old man and his granddaughter watched, hardly breathing.

The third son went over to his mother and closed her eyes, which were gradually opening of themselves, as if they had not yet looked long enough on life. The songbird in the cage started in its sleep and chirruped a brief word. At the sound the man jumped back, frightened out of his wits, but before he could clutch at anything for support, his legs gave way under him and he fell to the floor. He did not utter a sound, but his daughter screamed.

The five brothers rushed out half-dressed and carried him into their room to bring him round and soothe him. By the time he came to himself, they were fully dressed, though it was only two o'clock in the morning. Then each of them wandered off, secretly by himself, about the house and yard and they spent the night thus, roaming around the old home where they had spent their childhood. There they wept, whispering to themselves and complaining as if the mother was standing by each of them and heard, and grieved to think that she had died and made her children weep and yearn for her. Had she been able, she would have stayed and lived with them always, so that

none need suffer anguish for her, nor spend on her the strength of the heart and body that once she bore. But the mother had not been able to last any longer.

In the morning the six sons raised the coffin on their shoulders and carried it away to the grave. And the old man took his grandchild in his arms and followed them: he had grown accustomed now to grieving for the old woman and felt pleased and proud that one day he, too, would be buried by those six powerful sons.

Translated from the Russian by Anthony Wixley

Ramon Sender

The Secret

A Drama in One Act

Scene: Barcelona. Private office of the Chief of Police.

Facing the audience stands a large clock, its hands pointing to 9:30. A table, an armchair, a stand upon which a pitcher of water and a glass, another pitcher of water nearby, and another chair. Almost the entire background is taken up by a barred window through which is discernible the street, dimly lighted by a solitary lamp. The office has something of the waiting room about it but the atmosphere is gloomy. If black curtains are used they may be relieved with a yellow border. There are two telephones, one for inner communication within the police station. On the table there are two handgrenades and a revolver, also a printed leaflet. A small green light is burning. The rest of the room is in shadow.

General Gallofa, in ordinary dress, appears to be about fifty years of age. His large head is sparsely covered with hair, which however is arranged with a show of foppery. His serenity cloaks his cynicism and his show of energy, his cruelty. The ostentatious display of these virtues at times is grotesque. When the curtain rises the Chief of Police is seated at the table. The First Prisoner is also occupying a chair. He is a worker, about forty years of age, dressed in a shabby blue suit. The privation and abuse he suffered in prison have not broken his spirit although he appears to be on the verge of exhaustion. His manner is feverish and restless.

Standing between the two, facing the audience, is the Second Detective. He is broad; tall, fleshy and extremely servile to his superior.

General: It is amazing that you've never heard of me. . . (*First Prisoner remains silent gazing into space, breathing heavily.*) Is it possible that you don't know General Gallofa? . . . . (*Pauses for reply*). . . . How long have you been in Barcelona? . . . . *(First Prisoner remains silent.)* General *(to First Detective):* Well, there! Put on the light. Let's have a look at each other. *(Detective switches on the light. First Prisoner raises both hands together—he is handcuffed—to shield his eyes. Then, little by little, he uncovers them.)* The light hurts your eyes. Doesn't it? It's dark in the lock-up and five days of darkness amount to 120 hours—a good many hours, 'tis true.

First Prisoner (With his hands at his throat, unable to utter more than a scarcely intelligible whisper): This is criminal . . .

General (Advancing towards him and cupping his hand to his ear.) What do you say? *(Striking the table a hard blow with his fist.)* Speak loudly! General Gallofa knows how to listen. He's a well-bred man. If you have been told that he has a way of interrupting people by throwing inkwells at their heads you've been told a lie. Speak loudly. *(First Prisoner faintly repeats his words in a barely audible voice.)*

First Prisoner: I am thirsty.

General: Why are you thirsty?

First Prisoner: I have been kept for three days without water.

General: Oh well. The same old story. Neither have you been fed. True?

First Prisoner: Sardines and raw salt cod. It would have been better if I had not been given anything. But . . . give me water. I am perishing of thirst *(with his hands at his throat).* I believe I have the right to be examined by a doctor: I demand that the prison doctor be called.

General (Laughing): The prison doctor. Don't try to precipitate events. That will happen later. *(The detective laughs).* You've just made a serious accusation against the officials under my orders. This accusation may serve as the beginning of a new trial at an opportune time. But General Gallofa is well disposed towards you and forgets the charges. Now you see that what has been said about General Gallofa is not true. . . . You must have been told that I am a hyena, right? *(First Prisoner looks expressionlessly at the general.)* How little imagination these fellows have. A hyena. They can say nothing else about me but that I am a hyena. Let's hear you speak then. Have you been able to convince yourself yet that I do not eat workers alive? Will you tell me what sort of a print shop it is. Where is this fantastic print shop?

First Prisoner: I am thirsty. . . .

General: Yesterday, you answered falsely. You lied to the detectives, doubtlessly because they made you sick with so many questions—you wanted to go them one better. You said that that famous print shop was situated in San-Pablo Street, number. . . . *(referring to some notes)* three hundred and eight. There is no such number as 308, the numbers run only to 295. I could make you answer for this falsehood but I prefer to forget it. All right then you won't lie to me. Will you? Among other reasons is that here's a jar of fresh water. I have had it brought here for you. As you see I'm not a hyena, but an officer of the law, an authority. I am a humanitarian. *(The prisoner rises and walks towards the pitcher, trying to grasp it. The detective intervenes and forces him to sit down again in the chair. He then places shackles on the prisoner's legs.)* What's this? You won't move from here again without my permission. It's I that will give you the water, I! *(Takes hold of the pitcher and placing the glass on the table slowly fills it, making the water gurgle as it flows.)* But that will be when you will have cleared up for us the mystery of the print-shop. One favor for another. It is plain that even after you have explained it to me I will not be able to give you the water before your statement has been verified. *(Slowly pours the water back into the pitcher).* Because you can't fool General Gallofa. Thirty years of service for the fatherland. I joined the year that the eminent Don Valeriano Weyler of Nicolan became a general. Thirty years! And the creature hasn't been born yet who could put it over on me. But let us not lose time Let us see *(holding up the secret leaflet).* You printed this? I am satisfied you did. However, I am disposed to forget this as well. Why not? But you must tell me once and for all what this print shop is like and where it is located.

First Prisoner (Speaking with great effort): There is no illegal print shop whatever. We have only a legal print shop, that is the one where I work. And there's no type like this in the place. You can verify that yourself. Moreover no illegal proclamations are ever printed there so as not to compromise the organization.

General (Very much pleased): That's the way! It's necessary to talk. It's through speech that people get to understand one another. I notice that you are in a feverish state. Thirst is a very bad thing. I also have experienced it, in the African campaigns, and that is why I know what it means. I have had —*(again refills the glass)* I have no interest at all in seeing you burn up here in jail. Here's the water. If your answers are reasonable you will be served tonight with two bottles of fresh beer. You said that the legal print shop does

not print illegal matter to avoid compromising the interests of the organization. I already know it. I also know something else—how and where you got out this leaflet. General Gallofa knows everything. I know how the general strike was organized and how it failed. Your own comrades have told me.

First Prisoner (calm but firm): You lie.

General: I never lie.

First Prisoner: You lie.

General: You're aggravating your position and accomplishing nothing. You're in my hands, your freedom and your life depend on me. Just a word from me is sufficient to send more than one across the line. Am I going to take offense at your calling me a liar? *(He laughs cynically.)* But neither do I want to coerce you. You impressed me favorably from the very start. I haven't sent the judge this leaflet nor the arms which were found in your house.

First Prisoner: That's a lie. I had no arms of any kind.

General (Making show of his serenity): How is it you still fail to understand my desire to help you? I'll have to change my mind about giving you the water. *(He pours the water back into the bottle.)* The print-shop which I have reference to is a fake as you know. Nothing is ever printed there. You have just called it "print shop" in your telephone conversations, in your letters and secret meetings, in order to put us off the track. That print shop is a storehouse for arms. There are two people who know where it is: you and your pal who is in the next room being cross-examined by the Civilian Law. Surely your partner must have told them everything. He was well coached for it by my functionaries. *(To the detective)* Isn't that so? *(The detective snickers coarsely. The general fixes him with a glare and the detective suddenly stops laughing).* He probably has more sense than you. *(The outside telephone rings.)*

First Detective (Taking down the receiver with an injured air): Who? Yes this is police headquarters. *(Suddenly changes to a servile manner.)* Ah, it is you. At your excellency's service!

General (Makes an inquiring gesture to know whether it is the governor. The detective makes an affirmative sign, handing the receiver to the general. The general leaps to his feet, pushes the chair back and stands at attention.)

General: Command me, your excellency! . . . General Gallofa in person . . . Pardon your excellency. . . . I understand and beg your excellency to excuse me. . . . Yes, your excellency, No. 15, 45 and 103. How did it happen? The same as always. They tried to escape while being taken to the court room and were treated according to the law. . . . Yes, your excellency—inflexibility. . . .*(The agent extracts three file cards from the drawer and hands them to the general. The general looks at them. In the meantime the governor says something which he denies.)* No, your excellency, with *your* excellency's permission, it's not Gonzalez but Gosalvez. . . . Yes, I realize that. Sometimes they are not searched. . . . Claims? Is it possible that the parents dare to register a claim. . . . These people have a lot of nerve. If your excellency will permit me to say so. . . . *(Laughs so that the governor may hear him.)* That's true. Why yes, your excellency. . . . These people have no sense of decency. . . . I have always said that there are illegal laws. . . . It was very foolish of me. I understand. . . . I promise your excellency that it won't happen again. . . . At your excellency's service. *(He hangs up the receiver. Angrily turning to the detective)* You are a bunch of idiots. *(The detective remains immobile, at attention)* You told me that Gosalvez had spilled his guts before he went to the next world.

Detective: Yes sir. That's the truth, General. That is true. He died without squealing and took his secret with him to the grave. I'll tell you what, I am surrounded by a bunch of nincompoops.

First Detective: Excuse me, my general!

General: Pardon me. This finesse is for the young gentlemen—this nonsense won't go in the military service. One has to do his job well and if not —suffer the consequences. Is there anything to gain in killing a prisoner before he's been squeezed dry of information? Then it is I who is held responsible. Did this Gosalvez have anything in his pockets?

First Detective: Yes sir, two letters *(takes them out of his pocket).* One addressed to his mother.

General: Did he leave anything in jail?

First Detective: A pair of old shoes.

General: To the judge with them. The justices are ready to register a claim about next to nothing. They're getting to be greater sticklers for the statutes all the time. One has to do things right. The governor is a gentleman and is not the least bit tolerant. Keep your wits about you. Turn the shoes over to the judge and get a receipt. A notice will have to be put in the paper in case his heirs claim them. He is a sensible man for having told the governor everything we wanted to know. *(The prisoner lifts his head and looks at him in surprise.)* Now we know where this mysterious "print shop" is. They had an imposing looking arsenal there. Go and tell the cashier to give him something. If there's any objection, why I'll give it to him out of my own pocket.

First Detective (leaving): At your service.

General: And now that everything is of no avail; now that continued silence on your part is useless, let's talk like friends *(refilling the glass)* I am inclined to think that you'll change your opinion of me. I want to save you. Don't thank me. I shall save you because your life is of little use to me. That's the truth. I am going to give you water. I'm going to remove all evidence. I'm going to forget your contempt of authority and even turn you loose. Right now. I'm your defender. And now, I want just a little proof of confidence on your part. I'm telling you frankly I could kill you. The detectives would kill you in any case, if I shouldn't intercede. War is war. But I am disposed to do everything one man can do for another. In return I ask only that you tell me of your own free will, what your partner has already told the governor. I want you to deserve my saving you.

First Prisoner: That's all a lie. My partner didn't say anything.

General (somewhat excited): I don't lie.

First Prisoner: (calmly): You're lying shamelessly.

General (Rising furiously he approaches the prisoner who does not move an eyelash): Very well. Since you will have it so. I'll kill you. Nobody is going to ask me to explain your death. Do you think you are doing something great by letting yourself be killed? *(The prisoner shrugs.)* You're acting stupidly. You're making a fool of yourself. Do you think you're dignified? More dignified than I? That you are brave? Why you imbecile, you coward, louse. Nobody here is more dignified than I. No one is braver than I. Dignity! With your wife walking the streets in District Five last night. My detectives saw her. You with your dignity!

First Prisoner: You lie. What swine you all are.

General: I am not lying. Your wife walks the streets. She charges three pesetas, but if they bargain, she comes down.

First Prisoner (Tries to free himself to attack the general but finally gives it up): Beasts! The time will come. . . .

General: What time will come, my poor man? Do you think we are going to let it come? You watch what we can do. The general strike. You thought you had everything ready. But where is the strike? I know all about it. I am better informed than you are. Before the decisions of the committee reach you, they are brought to my desk. The strike is scheduled to start at ten tonight. The water and light people are going to give the signal by cutting off the central mains and the central switchboards, leaving us without water and lights. But since yesterday, the committees have been here at headquarters. *(tapping on the floor with his foot)* We have them in the underground cells. Both committees—the legal committee and the secret committee. Everyone will work as usual tonight. The cell you had is now occupied by the secretary for the lights. Headquarters is full of lousy revolutionaries like yourself. We have no cell left for you. You will leave here to rot in a punishment calaboose in the jail. And we shall see if one of your guards doesn't take a shot at you on the way. Anything might happen.

First Prisoner (*With his hands at his throat*): Water . . . water . . .

General (*Laughing, and assuming a black expression*): Water? Have some. (*He takes the glass and moves it toward the prisoner. When the latter reaches out his hand to take it, the general pours the water on the floor around him. Excuses himself grotesquely.*) Pardon me. I spilled it. Mangy dogs like yourself don't deserve human treatment. Nothing but kicks. And if you annoy me too much, a bullet in your guts.

First Prisoner (*Gasping*): *Water . . .* water . . .

General (*Filling the glass and leaving it on the stand*): I will give you the water if you will talk.

First Prisoner (Desperate): I will talk. I will say anything you wish. Give me water.

General: Talk first. We don't pay in advance here.

First Prisoner (Lets his head sink slowly into his chest and is silent).

General: So you would rather die of thirst? Or from a bullet? (*Pause. The Prisoner remains silent.)* I am going to leave you alone to think it over a few minutes. The time it will take me to answer a call of nature. Consider well while there is still time. Remain here. (*Presses a bell three times and goes out.)*

First Prisoner rises and tries with difficulty to walk to the water. Since his feet are shackled, he goes very slowly. Finally he falls groaning to the floor. He tries in vain to get up. First and Second Detectives with Second Prisoner enter from right. Second Prisoner has an abnormal look in his eye and speaks as if desperate.

First Detective (*Giving First Prisoner a kick*): What are you doing there? Come quick. Get up!

Second Detective: He was going after water, the son of a bitch!

First Detective: Do you think you can die when you please? Get up, baby! *(First Prisoner rises with difficulty.)*

Second Detective: These chiefs are all just alike. He goes out and leaves the water here within reach!

First Detective (*Takes the glass and pitcher*): And then we get the blame for it. (*Goes out with the water. First Prisoner remains seated as before. Second Prisoner stands in the center of the stage*).

First Prisoner: I don't suppose you have talked?

Second Prisoner: It's hard to talk because the words strike the walls and rebound against your mouth and ears like blows. I haven't said anything yet.

First Prisoner: Yet? What does that mean? These are crucial moments. Everything depends on whether or not we can hold out. The organization is still on its feet.

Second Prisoner: I don't say it's not. But they have arrested the committees and found the keys. Still on its feet! The dead are still on their feet too, if you like. No? *(First Prisoner looks at his companion in surprise.)* Well, let me tell you. In my cell in the dungeon there is a dead man tied to the wall. On his feet. They have put him there so I can't sleep. I talk and he laughs and that is how we spend the nights. And the days. Is it daytime now? The rats have eaten one of his feet. *(Laughs an icy laugh)* Ha, ha, ha. That's the way it is with the organization.

First Prisoner (Scarcely able to speak): The thing will break out at ten.

Second Prisoner: But if the print shop . . .

First Prisoner: Hush!

Second Prisoner: If the two busses . . .

First Prisoner: Shut up! They are probably listening to us.

Second Prisoner: (*Looking terrified*): Where? One is quiet. Everyone listens. The walls are full of eyes and ears and one neither sees nor hears. In the dungeon I have been five days incommunicado. They beat me twice a day. Then the dead man laughs at me. I have been made into a Christ. My clothes are stuck to me with blood. They feed me only once a day and in the food they put some blue powders to make me go crazy. Even in the dark I know they are blue. And when I fall asleep. . . Do you know, comrade? My head leaves my shoulders and goes up, up in the air until it strikes the ceiling.

First Prisoner: Don't eat.

Second Prisoner: Don't eat! It's easy to say. If the print shop . . .

First Prisoner: Don't speak.

Second Prisoner: Don't speak! Then what? Die? Let them kill us. Don't eat, don't speak, don't look at the stiff hanging there laughing. But the stiff looks at me even when I fall down with my face to the other wall.

First Prisoner: If you speak they will kill you.

Second Prisoner: They are killing me now and they say it is because I won't talk. This very minute the walls are listening to me but when I am talking nobody says anything, nothing happens to me.

First Prisoner: Hush! Hold out and we will win.

Second Prisoner: Comrade. Am I in jail? Is jail like this? This is hell. People in jail eat. Have you eaten today? I have not. Now I can't eat because the food has blue powders in it. I am beginning to go crazy. If I eat those powders, I shall go completely insane. I would rather be just a little crazy. Do your relatives come to see you? Mine don't. I must kill them all. I sent a note to my wife and they said she was not at home, that they had seen her in a brothel with a priest. The detectives saw her. And we've only been married six months. I told the dead man about it and he laughed as usual.

First Prisoner: Don't pay any attention. Everything the detectives tell you is a lie.

Second Prisoner: Lie? When they can hang me if they choose, why should they lie to me? They lie to you when they can't do you any worse harm. Besides, the dead man . . .

First Prisoner: Be quiet, brother.

Second Prisoner (Laughing without expression): Brother, brother. I will talk; I will tell everything . . . and the dead man will stop laughing.

General (*Entering*): Have you talked it over? (*To First Prisoner*) Have you considered carefully? Have you thought about what was best for you?

First Prisoner: Have him taken away.

General: Who? Your companion?

First Prisoner (With the same gloomy air): Yes, my companion. *(The general pushes a button, watching First Prisoner with great curiosity. Second Detective appears at once. The general motions him to take Second Prisoner away. The latter, on seeing him approach, yells.)*

Second Prisoner: They are going to beat me the second time! Don't touch me again until tomorrow! No more now! No more now! *(They take him out. His cries can still be heard.)* No more. . . .

General: You see I am quite willing to do as you wish. That poor man upset you. I understand. Have you thought it over? I consider you a reasonable man.

First Prisoner: Why do they do that? Why do they take away his reason? Of what use to you is his reason?

General: None of the rules have yet been changed. I am still the one to ask questions. (*Looking around*) And the water? Where is the water? (*He presses a button.)* I hope you have thought it over. You have seen where your crimes are leading you, have you not? (*First Detective comes in with the water. The general turns to him.)* Why did they take it away? Leave it here. *(The detective leaves the water on the table and goes out.)* Are you in a reasonable frame of mind? *(First Prisoner looks around anxiously.)* Calm yourself. Nobody is listening to us. You will see. You are talking to a friend who is trying to save you. If you are reasonable, you will understand that my job is to take from those poor deluded boys the arms that will ruin them forever. Hundreds of workers will die from the bullets of the guard if they ever use those arms you have in what you call the print shop. You are brave. So am I and that makes it easier for us to understand one another. I know you are not afraid to die. Of thirst, of hunger or from a bullet. It is all the same to you. But to go slowly insane in a dark dungeon cell is too much. And if you are stubborn, you will go from here to your pal's cell. So let us see now: all this about a print shop is just a fairy tale, right?

First Prisoner (*Hesitating*): Yes, sir.

General (*Very affably*): It is really an armory?

First Prisoner: Yes, sir.

General (*Moving the glass full of water toward him*): I'm not a hyena. Drink.

First Prisoner (Seizes the glass, trembling and spilling a little water. Drinks. Strangles and coughs. Drinks again and chokes. The glass is refilled and he drinks again. He puts the glass down to wipe his face with both hands. The general starts to take it away but the prisoner seizes it again and does not again put it down): He (*indicating his companion)* did not talk, did he?

General: Why do you want to know?

First Prisoner: He can't talk. He doesn't know anything.

General (*With a knowing air*): You mean you are the one who knows?

First Prisoner: Yes sir. I know everything.

General: You are aware of the seriousness of what you have just said?

First Prisoner: Yes sir. But I hope you . . .

General: Don't worry.

First Prisoner: It could cost me my life.

General: I know.

First Prisoner (*Hesitating*): and what could you do for me?

General: I could release you at once.

First Prisoner: That's not enough. My crowd would kill me in the street.

General: Do you want to leave Barcelona?

First Prisoner: Where?

General: To a remote province.

First Prisoner: That's not far enough.

General: To the Canaries.

First Prisoner: There would be the same danger.

General: I will give you passage to America and some money.

First Prisoner (Hesitates. Finally he makes up his mind.) I accept. But I won't leave here until I sail. They would kill me. I will be here until half an hour before the boat leaves.

General: That is quite all right. If that is all, granted. You can speak.

First Prisoner: The trouble is . . . There are revolutionary organizations in America that are in communication with ours.

General: What of it? Who is going to know it was you?

First Prisoner: One other person will know.

General: Your pal?

First Prisoner: Yes.

General: He is half crazy. When he leaves here he will be completely mad and nobody will pay any attention to him.

First Prisoner: There are others crazier than he is and still . . . He must not leave here.

General (Looking at him fixedly): Do you know what you are saying?

First Prisoner (With his eyes closed): He will denounce me. They will follow me. They will go to the ends of the earth to kill me. And they will do right. (*In exultation*) Because I am a traitor. A traitor! But I haven't the strength to stand it any more. I don't want to go mad. I don't want to die. I have two boys who need me. Without my help and my protection they may die on some doorstep some night.

General: Come, calm yourself. I thought you were a strong man.

First Prisoner: You understand. You must arrange this. Otherwise I will not dare to speak.

General (Meditating): The question is complicated. *(Pause. Decidedly)* I give you my word to get rid of him immediately.

First Prisoner: Word . . .

General: Word of honor. Word of a gentleman.

First Prisoner: I have to see it myself.

General: But we urgently need your statement. We must get that arms deposit tonight.

First Prisoner: It is a matter of my life and that of my children. As to the rest, in three minutes it's all over. One window here opens on the street. There is another overlooking an inside court. I can see it from here . . . but . . . *(trembling).* Why do you look at me like that? Is it so bad for a man to defend his life?

General: We've never had a case like this at headquarters before. Some day you and I will be working together . . . you won't regret it.

First Prisoner: Give the order if you want to save time.

General (On the inside telephone): What? Political Prisoner No. 117 to the Model Prison. If he tries to run away, stop him, but before he gets to

the corner from headquarters. . . . Yes, right now. Bring me the order to sign. *(Hangs up).*

First Prisoner (Desperate): A traitor to my own people. A criminal! But, tell me, what else could a man do under such circumstances?

General: Bah! Treachery and crime don't exist. They were invented by poets and judges. And if they did exist . . . all right. The truth is they don't exist. I will fix up the papers and give you the money right away. There may be a boat tomorrow. I would be glad to go to America too. How many guns have you?

First Prisoner: There are about 500 pistols left, 20 machine guns, several American rifles and 200 hand granades. Some of the arms have been distributed but I have the list and can give it to you.

General (Nervously): How slow they are! I am an anarchist myself but above all I am a disciplined soldier and that is why. . . . *(Second Detective comes in with a paper.)*

General: Take the irons off this man. (*The detective obeys.*)

Second Detective (Leaving): At your orders.

General (With an air of weariness, pointing to the window): Go over there if you want proof.

(First Prisoner slowly walks to the window and stands with his back turned, looking at the street. A brief silence. The general takes out another file card and leaves it on the table. The alarm siren of a motorcycle is heard).

First Prisoner (Turning around. Shadows of a group of people pass by): I am a criminal, but it is a question of bread for my children. One is five, the other three. How are they to blame? *(Clutches at the bars. Gazes through the window.)*

(Two shots are heard. First Prisoner turns around, impassive, and approaches the table.)

General (Leaving the card on the table): Well, he's out of the way. *(Writing on the card)* One less. Come, quiet yourself. Tell me. Where is the deposit?

First Prisoner (Raising his arms in exultation): Only he and I knew. Now you can shoot me. Come, coward, fire. Shoot! Shoot! *(The light goes out. The stage is in shadows. Only the phosphorescent hands of the clock show ten o'clock.)*

General (With a flashlight in one hand and a pistol in the other): You will pay for this, dog. They've cut off the lights. The strike has begun. *(Flashes the light in the face of First Prisoner who remains in the centre, impassive.)* It is the first time anyone ever deceived General Gallofa. You are going to rot in a dungeon. *(Presses the bells. The detectives come in.)*

First Detective: At your orders. All the lights in the city are off. Only the gas is left. *(The prisoners inside headquarters protest. Voices are heard. The alarm whistles of the police begin to blow.)*

General: What is that? Prisoners shouting? Increase the guard in the dungeons. *(Alarm whistles and voices continue. The general and the two detectives keep their flashlights on First Prisoner, who continues impassive. The buzz of two telephones, one of metal and the other of wood, are added to the confusion.)*

First Prisoner: Shoot. Go ahead and shoot. Only he and I knew. Now no one will know.

(Curtain falls slowly)

Translated from the Spanish

ARTICLES and CRITICISM

John Lehmann

Some Revolutionary Trends in English Poetry: 1930—1935

During the last five years a remarkable change has been taking place in English poetry. Rarely, in the history of our literature, has a new "school" of poets so rapidly taken the fancy of the cultured public, and driven its predecessors from the limelight. The rapidity of this change is, however, by no means an inexplicable whim of fashion, but is rather a symptom of rapid social and economic changes that have been taking place in England and in the whole world during this period. No intelligent observer can doubt that these economic changes are far from complete, as the structure of the capitalist world reveals itself from day to day more insecure. It is therefore more than probable that further development in this poetic evolution will come, and only an understanding of what is happening to capitalist society in general, and British Imperialism in particular, can give an idea of the character they are likely to have.

This study will concern itself mainly with a group of poets who first began to be at all widely known in two Anthologies, which were published within a short time of one another, *New Signatures* and *New Country*. They are all under 35, young men who were not old enough to take any part in the Great War 1914-18, but whose childhood and early adolescence was deeply marked by war and war's aftermath. They all come from the English upper and middle classes, and, with very few exceptions, have studied at one or other of the two strongholds of English aristocratic-bourgeois tradition; the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

There are other poets, of considerable distinction, who have been writing during this period, and whose work has been influenced by revolutionary ideas and events, and other poets may well be forming now, who stand outside this group and who will eventually mean more in the creation of a proletarian literature, but for the moment this group, from the revolutionary point of view, is the most significant development in modern English literature.

II

During the first decade after the War, the group of poets known as the Georgians were still writing, and still held the ear of the public, though some had been killed in the fighting and though their inspiration was waning. For a time their resolute determination not to admit the new and seething post-war world into their suburban-rustic and prettily romantic dreams suited a reading public trying desperately to forget the horrors of war and to pretend that all would be very soon as simple and charming as it had seemed before 1914. The War itself produced one major poet, Wilfred Owen, who was killed in 1918 and who was after a considerable interval to have a great influence, both technically and morally, on a new generation. It also turned one of the Georgians, Siegfried Sassoon, into a bitter satirist. But in reading the general mass of the Georgians' work, one would have little idea that they were living

in a world in which a violent class-war was raging, threatened with revolt and revolution from its own proletariat and its colonial subjects, a world whose intellectual foundations had been completely undermined by the advance of Marxism, of Freudian theory, and a chaos of new scientific discoveries.

Like the ostrich, they buried their heads in the sand and let themselves imagine that danger had ceased to exist. More courageous and more honest intellectually was a new poet who was soon to have a commanding influence among the van of the intelligentsia. T. S. Eliot, a New Englander born, whose early affinities were rather with the French poets of the later nineteenth century, notably Laforgue, than with the Keats-Tennysonian line of English poetry, published *Prufrock* in 1917, and *Poems* in 1920. Both these books represented a complete break with the poetical fashions of the moment, sounding a new note, cynical and disillusioned, more in keeping with the mood of those intellectuals whose sensitive idealism had been deeply wounded by the war and who realized that the old world of beliefs had been swept away. With the publication of *The Waste Land* in 1922, T. S. Eliot became the model and inspiration for young intellectuals, both those who wished to write poetry and those who were more interested in criticism. For a long time its obscurity and erudition were to be imitated as much as its more positive qualities of "wit" and technical subtlety. In *The Waste Land* the post-war mood of despair and disillusionment reaches its fullest expression. The chaos of the world that had only a few years before seemed so solid, is deeply felt; no way out of the devastated landscape can be seen:

> What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
> Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
> You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
> A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
> And the dry stone no sound of water. . . .

One of the most important themes in the poem is the persistence of patterns in modern society which are as old as primitive ritual and magic, This historical method is used only to reinforce the lesson that there is nothing new under the sun, and that modern civilization is doomed as all other civilizations:

> Falling towers
> Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
> Vienna London
> Unreal. . . .

In the eight years that followed the publication of *The Waste Land,* T. S. Eliot's prestige seemed steadily to advance, and the voices of the Georgians and their followers grew fainter and fainter. During these years capitalism was apparently recovering from the shock of the war, and feeling more secure; the threat of revolution from below seemed to recede, particularly after the collapse of the General Strike in 1926. In his search for order and belief, an escape from the waste land, Eliot was slowly leading his little army towards one of the most ancient strongholds of tradition, the Catholic Church. There seemed no reason why the meditations of the poet in his ivory tower should be disturbed for many years to come.

III

It was in the years between 1929 and 1931 that a series of events occurred that violently upset this sense of returning security, and revealed with alarm-

ing clarity that capitalist society was as much at the mercy of colossal forces of disruption as the farms of peasants on the slopes of a not yet extinct volcano. . . . The Crisis broke over Europe and America with lightning suddenness and catastrophic results. Thousands were ruined on the falling markets of stock exchanges, thousands more as banks closed their doors, ancient industries collapsed, and in the vaster proletarian and colonial world millions went hungry while unemployment figures soared to unheard of heights. Strikes and riots grew more frequent and more savage, while in Germany, where the class-war had been for long more nakedly apparent than in the victorious nations, shootings and battles of every kind between Socialist and Communist workers on the one hand and the police and fascist bands on the other, began to be a daily occurrence. It was at precisely the same moment that Soviet Russia started on a plan of general industrialization that was to increase her world power and the prosperity of her masses at a speed and in a way that left all capitalist critics dumbfounded. The new Russia began to penetrate more deeply even into the sheltered mental world of the English intellectual. The artistic triumphs of the great Soviet films, of *Mother, The General Line, Storm Over Asia, Earth,* and several others, not only impressed the younger intelligentsia with their aesthetic excellence and innovation, but also affected them by the emotional appeal of a civilization with new values.

At the same time a new writer, of partly proletarian origin, began to be more widely read, and to add his powerful influence to those already described which were rousing the more alert minds among the advanced bourgeoisie to find some more positive way out of the chaos and the fundamental decay that every day made it now more difficult to deny. Whatever the contradictions and confusions of D. H. Lawrence's doctrines, implicit and explicit in his stories, may have been, one thing was clear: they were a fierce denial of the accepted values of bourgeois society, and a call to a new and fuller life.

IV

In 1932 a collection of poems was published from The Hogarth Press called *New Signatures.* It presented to the public an entirely new set of poets. It was not by any means the first time that most of them had appeared in print; one or two had already published collections of their work. But *New Signatures,* by placing them together and revealing certain traits that most of them had in common, by introducing them with a critical defence and interpretation, opened the eyes of the public, or rather that limited section of it which was interested in the doings of poets and artists, to the fact that some surprising change was definitely taking place in English poetry. It began to be aware that certain younger writers were using a new and contemporary imagery; that they were oppressed by the menace of international war, that had been present ever since the "war to end war;" that they were demanding a new attitude to life, inspired as much by Marx as by Lawrence, insistently if not very clearly. Michael Roberts in his Introduction wrote on this reaction from the negative post-war attitude:

> Meanwhile the poet, contemptuous of the society around him and yet having no firm belief, no basis for satire, became aloof from ordinary affairs and produced esoteric work which was frivolously decorative or elaborately erudite. . . . For the poet, this isolation had serious disadvantages. A poet who does not expect to find an audience of the right intelligence, experience, and sensibility cannot write well, if at all, for he must, in writing, take his imagined audience into account. . . . The poems in this book represent a clear

reaction against esoteric poetry in which it is necessary for the reader to catch each recondite illusion.

Neither in the book, nor in the introduction, is the revolutionary theme very clearly sounded yet. Roberts is much more concerned with the new imagery. Though he rather exaggerates the part that machinery plays in this, there is a great deal of truth in his main contention:

Mr. Auden's *Poems* and Mr. Day Lewis's *From Feathers to Iron* were, I think, the first books in which imagery taken from contemporary life consistently appeared as the natural and spontaneous expression of the poet's thought and feeling.

Auden, who had already achieved a leading position in his generation at Oxford, and who was gradually being recognized by a wider circle, is not, perhaps, satisfactorily represented in *New Signatures*. In the long *Ode,* however, his curious capacity for creating legends and a symbolic mythology of his own, his favorite imagery of frontiers and mysterious battles with its half Marxian, half psychological implications, is well in evidence:

Do you think because you have heard that on Christmas Eve
In a quiet sector they walked about on the skyline,
Exchanged cigarettes, both learning the words for "I love you"
In either language,
You can stroll across for a smoke and a chat any evening?
Try it and see.

In Day Lewis' new poems, which were later to be published as *The Magnetic Mountain,* the desire for a new, more positive life was continually expressed:

But surely will meet him, late or soon
Who turns a corner into new territory;
Spirit mating afresh shall discern him
On the world's noon-top purely poised. . . .

This desire, and the belief that its attainment implies a complete break with old traditions, is found in many of the poems. John Lehmann, in *Looking Within,* writes:

Your ground is barren, the poison gas that soaked
Too deeply through the clods denied all life,
No corn, no rash weeds, loveliness revives
Under morning's lifting mist. . . .

In Stephen Spender's work this theme is dominant. Not only is the influence of Lawrence's ideas most clearly seen in such lines as:

What is precious is never to forget
The essential delight of the blood. . . .

and

Oh young men oh young comrades
it is too late now to stay in those houses
your fathers built where they built you to build to breed
money on money. It is too late
to make or even to count what has been made.
Count rather those fabulous possessions
which begin with your body and your fiery soul. . . .

But also revolutionary ideas find their most distinct expression in the book from his poem, *The Funeral*:

This is festivity; it is the time of statistics
When they record what one unit contributed.
They are glad as they lay him back in the earth
And thank him for what he gave them.

They walk home remembering the straining red flags:
And with pennons of song fluttering through their blood

They dream of the world State
With its towns like brain-centres and its pulsing arteries. . . .

Stephen Spender is also one of those in whose consciousness the war threat looms largest:

Who live under the shadow of a war,
What can I do that matters?
My pen stops, and my laughter, dancing, stop,
Or ride to a gap. . .

He is not alone. John Lehmann writes:

This excellent machine will illustrate
The modern world divided into nations;
So neatly planned, that if you merely tap it
The armaments will start their devastations,
And though we're for it, though we're all convinced
Some fool will press the button soon or late,
We stand and stare, expecting to be minced,—
And very few are asking *Why not scrap it?*

And Julian Bell devotes a long satirical poem in the manner of Pope to the folly of modern war:

Arms and the Man I sing: Men by whose care
To keep the peace we are equipped for war;
Men who the powers of trade and Empire wield,
Whose pens have cost us many a hard-fought field,
Who balance budgets and evade a tax,
Who write the papers and who rule the Blacks. . . .

In other passages of this poem Bell describes the newly growing horrors of unemployment with their fantastic contrast of wasted natural riches:

Down the black streets, dark with unwanted coal
The harassed miners wait the grudging dole;
The sinking furnaces, their fires damped down,
Depress to poverty the hopeless town;
Or useless cotton, piled in rusty bales,
Waits, unconsumed, the unprofitable sales;
On every hand the stagnant ruin spreads,
And closed are shops and factories, mines and sheds. . . .

It is not for a clear analysis of war's roots that this poem is interesting, or any lesson on the way out of the impasse of "poverty in plenty"—these are not to be found—but rather for its intense awareness of the problems, an awareness new in English poetry. William Plomer, in his Epitaph for a Contemporary, shows the same increasing awareness:

He was not shot for opposing the revolution;
Indeed, he had seen that it had to happen,
Did nothing against it, and held his tongue,
And hearing the first bombs explode, sighed. . . .

His trouble was, they brought him up a gentleman. . . .

New Signatures showed which way the wind was blowing amongst the younger intellectuals. A year later *New Country* was published, and roused even more interest and controversy than the original book. In the meantime, as the various poets had been consolidating their newly won position, the crisis, throughout the world, only showed signs of deepening. *New Country,* which had selections of essays and short stories as well as poetry, registered a remarkable increase in the pace of the "Leftward" movement. The tone is

definitely political, revolutionary, and while those *New Signatures* poets who had little connection with the political side have dropped out, two or three new poets appear, e.g. Charles Madge, R. E. Warner, and Richard Goodman, whose work, owing much to the Auden-Spender school in feeling and technique, is strongly Communist in sympathy. Two prose-writers also appear, of very close personal connection with Auden and Day Lewis and Spender, Edward Upward and Christopher Isherwood. In the former's contributions the Communist sympathies are clear; and though in the short story by Isherwood political implications would be hard to define, it is nevertheless a fact that the views of both Upward and Isherwood (who had lived for some time in Berlin, at the height of the Marxist v. Nazi disturbances) had influenced the rest of the group in the direction they were taking.

The change of tone is immediately noticeable in Michael Roberts's Introduction:

> If our sympathies turn towards revolutionary change it is not because of our pity for the unemployed and the underpaid but because we see at last that our interests are theirs. . . There is another way in which the writer will be influenced by his political attitude; as he sees more and more clearly that his interests are bound up with those of the working-class, so will his writing clear itself from the complexity and introspection, the doubt and cynicism of recent years, and become more and more intelligible to that class and so help in the evolution of a style, which, coming partly from the "shirtsleeve" workers and partly from the "intellectual" will make the revolutionary movement articulate. . . .

All this was well said, but it is doubtful whether Roberts was not exaggerating his claims; the writers as a whole were by no means as politically clear as he implies, and it is not at all certain that individually they would have admitted that he was speaking for them. Another note, which is characteristic of more than one writer in *New Country,* of mixed dislike and suspicion of the English Communist Party itself, can also be heard in this Introduction:

> Communism, in this country, is associated with hooliganism, tactlessness, inefficient propaganda, mere discontent. . . . the politicians will not help us, for the percentage of men who care a tuppenny damn for poetry, for science and for their country is no higher among Communists than it is among Conservatives. . . .

The most interesting section of the book is undoubtedly that in which the poets themselves begin to theorise and to state their views. This reveals considerable conflict and confusion, but shows how burning the problems of Marxism and the intellectual artist's relation to the revolutionary movement were becoming for the more honest and sensitive young writers. Day Lewis, who adopts a rather avuncular attitude towards Communism in general, endeavors to make of the poet a kind of "receiving station" who, if he shows sympathy for the revolution, only does so because he is sensitive to any kind of new life-giving ideas that may be in the air. Day Lewis rejects the theory that the poet's own economic position or the deeper interests of his class can have anything to do with it:

> Present-day Communists represent us as thralls to the art-for-art's sake formula and poetry as a little bit of fluff or at best a scarlet woman until she becomes the handmaid of revolution. Don't you believe a word of it. No true poet has ever written to a formula. He writes because he wants to make something . . the poet, like the revolutionary, criticises, destroys, creates under the integral necessity of his nature. Nor are we propagandists, conscious or unconscious, for the capitalist system. The poet is a kind of receiving station—those poets, I mean, who refuse to weave fantasies out of their own navels or run away into the woods. . . . If there is new life about, you may be sure he will catch it; he has sharp ears. . . .

The limitations of his thought about the possibilities of a Socialist system, even in Russia which he specifically includes, are evident when he says:

Not the Eastern sages, not Plato, not Christ, not a thousand holy men and divines, for all their eloquence and example, have made the slightest impression on the acquisitive instinct, the lust for possessions. . . .

But he is not merely a negative critic, in this essay; though he seems far enough from the positive, militant attitude claimed by Roberts for all his flock, he makes clear his belief in the necessity of some sort of revolution, and his readiness to be convinced by the Communist that he can do it. He also, in an extremely interesting passage, gives a glimpse of the powerful effect of the new Russian films on intellectuals like himself:

For revolutionary works without faith are vain. Of this I am absolutely certain . . . You remember in the film *Earth,* when the peasants are carrying the young hero to his grave, singing new songs, the joy; the calm, terrific, contained joy in their faces. They had made contact with new life. . . .

Spender also, in his essay on *Poetry and Revolution,* gives further evidence of the extent to which Russian films represented the new Russia in the minds of his contemporaries:

If the highbrow Russian films which we see are really appreciated by proletarian audiences, it must be because the Russian proletariat is being rapidly educated into the bourgeois tradition. . . .

In this essay Spender shows that his mind is in a considerable state of confusion about the essential problems and much disturbed by what he imagines to be the official Communist attitude to art:

Separate poems are separate and complete ideal world. If a poem is not complete in itself and if its contents spill over into our world of confused emotions, then it is a bad poem. . . . This is what people mean when they say that it is impossible to write propagandist poetry. . . . It is conceivable that an artist might write from the standpoint of a consistent materialist philosophy, but even then his occupation of writing poetry would remain the very type of idealist activity which is tactically dangerous to Communism. . . . Where there should be friction leading to a final breakdown it oils the machine and enables it to go on running. Dissatisfaction is sublimated into art which can only be enjoyed by a cultivated and endowed minority. . . . The creators of that art . . . may be said to be in effect counter-revolutionary propagandists. . . .

Later in the essay he takes a contradictory line:

Art can make clear to the practical revolutionaries the historic issues which are in the deepest sense political . . . by making clear the causes of our present frustration they may prepare the way for a new kind of society. . . .

All through he battles with a bogey largely of his own making:

The root of the Communist dislike for bourgeois art is the misconception that bourgeois art necessarily propagates the bourgeois ideology. . . .

If he had gone more deeply into the subject before making these and similar statements, he could have known that this supposed "communist dislike for bourgeois art" was not shared by the highest Communist authority. In the Resolution of the C.C. of the R.C.P. in Spring 1925, he might, for instance, have found the following passage:

The Party must vigorously oppose thoughtless and contemptuous treatment of the old cultural heritage as well as of the literary specialists. . . . It must likewise combat the tendency towards a purely hothouse proletarian literature. . . .

Nor could he have been aware of the tremendous admiration which Lenin himself showed for the giants of "bourgeois" art. But Spender's verse contributions to *New Country* also make one feel that he had lost, for the moment, that belief in the revolution which his earlier poems showed. He stands, now, aside from the stream, the channel for which he had to some extent himself

created; the poems are on purely personal themes, and there is no trace of the vividly imaginative grasp of general, revolutionary themes. The fruits, however, of the poems which he had meanwhile published in book form, are already to be found in the work of other *New Country* poets, such as Richard Goodman, which is imitative of Spender in style and feeling.

Auden is represented by three long poems in which his extraordinary fertility, his pleasure in rather obscure, private jokes and legends, and his tendency to lose shape in length are more in evidence than his imaginative depth, though there are still passages such as:

> Some dream, say yes, long coiled in the ammonite's slumber
> Is uncurling, prepared to lay on our talk and kindness
> Its military silence, its surgeon's idea of pain. . .

But there is another side to Auden's versatile gifts, his capacity to write straight-forward, satirical poetry in every-day language and imagery, which appears in *A Communist to Others*:

> Your beauty's a completed thing.
> The future kissed you, called you king,
> Did she? Deceiver!
> She's not in love with you at all. . . .
>
> Comrades to whom our thoughts return,
> Brothers for whom our bowels yearn,
> When words are over;
> Remember that in each direction
> Love outside our own election
> Holds us in unseen connection:
> O trust that ever.

While the Communist note in Auden's poetry is heard more frequently, his influence on his contemporaries politically as well as stylistically is shown everywhere. Charles Madge, in his *Letter to the Intelligentsia,* writes:

> But there waited for me in the summer morning
> Auden, fiercely. I read, shuddered and knew. . . .
>
> Lenin, would you were living at this hour:
> England has need of you, of the cold voice
> That spoke beyond Time's passions, that expelled
> All the half treasons of the mind in doubt. . . .

Madge was later to evolve a style of his own. But if he has not yet emerged from Auden's influence, Day Lewis gives the impression here of being submerged in it, to the detriment of his own distinctive talent. Auden's satirical style is completely dominant in such lines as:

> Scavanger barons and your jackal vassals,
> Your pimping press-gang, your unclean vessels,
> We'll make you swallow your words at a gulp
> And turn you back to your element, pulp.
> Don't bluster, Bimbo, it won't do you any good;
> We can be much ruder and we're learning to shoot. . . .
>
> We can tell you a secret, offer a tonic; only
> Submit to the visiting angel, the strange new healer. . . .

At the same time there are admirable lines which only Day Lewis could have written:

> Comrade, let us look to earth,
> Be stubborn, act and sleep;
> Here at our feet the lasting skull
> Keeps a stiff upper lip. . . .

Another poet, who had not been represented in *New Signatures,* R. E. Warner, also shows very close sympathy with the Auden group:

> What might darker
> Than idle to go to dogs unwanted by men?
>
> Now must die out
> both sob and shout,
> the long athletic stride,
> all poise, all pride,
> since men born to act,
> are stifled under fact
> mole deep, must burrow down, not swing in sky
> eagles to take the sun in eye,
> but grope in dangerous working for bitter root,
> not pace glad plains to gather golden fruit. . . .
>
> Now you can join us, now all together sing all Power
> not tomorrow but now in this hour, All Power
> to lovers of life, to workers, to the hammer, the sickle, the blood.

The addition of "the blood" after the Communist symbols is typical of the group, showing how strongly D. H. Lawrence's influence penetrated them all, with its dangerous hint of potentially fascist ideas. It is worth noting that the connections of all these writers were not merely those of style or cultural background; many of them had been for some time close friends, as the constant inter-dedications of their poems and books shows.

John Lehmann's contributions show a growing awareness of the contemporary social scene, and the class-war; he is learning, as some of the others had already learnt, from contact with Central European conditions:

> . . . . whether to drift
> Down swollen waters, to be drowned in fact
> Washed out one evening in the April floods,
> Or after the firing through the streets be killed
> In a last stampede, or fortunate reserved
> To cheer the morning generations dreamed. . . .
>
> The cries of the tortured break in cells under my feet,—
> Comfort of busy streets, and flowers, and the flush
> Of morning over belfries are as paper in this hour
> Of the inrush of the wind. . .

It is probable that if his best work had not been written in Scots dialect, "Hugh MacDiarmid" would have been included in *New Country,* though he stands alone, completely outside the Auden-Spender-Day Lewis group and its particular pattern of ideas. In 1931, "MacDiarmid" had published his *First Hymn to Lenin,* a poem much more directly and profoundly Communist than anything that the others had written. In a sense it was the prelude to the whole movement. Though Auden, for instance, had established the cornerstone of his creed with the publication of *Poems* in 1930, he does not show any open and clear Communist leanings until after the *Hymn to Lenin* had been published, nor do any of the others. But considering the barrier that Scots vernacular forms for most Southern Englishmen, it is unlikely that MacDiarmid's actual influence can have been anything more than slight. The reasons for the change are much more certainly to be found in the increasing difficulties of the capitalist world as contrasted with rising self-confidence of the Soviet Union, and in the particular disturbances of English political life.

With the publication of *New Country* the group had "arrived." Though individualy they have resented being considered a group, naturally feeling that

considerable differences of style and scope were being blurred to provide a tidy dish for the critics, nevertheless in the public mind they have remained to a large extent a group, and with reason; comparison with a poet such as "MacDiarmid" shows at once that their ideological resemblances are greater than their differences. It is a long way from:

> Lenin was like that wi' workin' class life.
> At hame wi't'a'.
> His fause movements couldna' been fewer,
> The best weaver Earth ever saw.
> A' he'd to dae wi' moved intact
> Clean, clear, and exact. . . .

to this passage of Auden:

> Send to us power and light, a sovereign touch
> Curing the intolerable neural itch,
> The exhaustion of weaning, the liar's quinsy . . .
> Harrow the house of the dead; look shining at
> New styles of architecture, a change of heart. . . .

Or to this already quoted passage of Spender:

> . . . . It is too late
> to make or even to count what has been made
> Count rather those fabulous possessions
> which begin with your body and your fiery soul. . . .

And though it is clear that two quite different minds have been responsible for these two latter passages, they seem remarkably close to one another after the *First Hymn to Lenin.*

An examination of these poets in greater detail will reveal both resemblances and differences more clearly.

V

W. H. Auden is undoubtedly the most interesting mind in the *New Country* group, and it is not too great a claim for his powers to say that, if his *Poems* had not appeared in 1930, none of the poets, including Spender and Day Lewis, would be writing precisely as they are. It is not merely that his fertility and invention, in images, phrases, rhythms, is enormous and scarcely equalled in modern English poetry, but also that he has managed to present consistently through a long collection of poems, with these technical powers, a remarkable dramatic sense of a collapsing culture, a civilization desperately ill beneath an imposing exterior. It was this new way of looking at the world, which Eliot has prepared though it is profoundly different from his own which startled into fresh creative activity many minds already sensitive to the volcanic tremblings through the soil of everyday life. Auden brings a psychological X-ray to bear on contemporary society revealing fundamental weaknesses, inhibitions, streaks of madness, which, through individuals, are acting destructively beneath the surface of life. He sees these weaknesses, too, as historically conditioned; there are forces working in us, from one generation to another, which he calls "love," "the enemy," "death," developing an extraordinary mythology around them. For a generation determined to accept nothing easy or un-complex, nothing that yielded its meaning at first glance, his frequent obscurities, and his love of mystification, private jokes, invocations to names and symbols that could have little sense to those not "in the know," were by no means an obstacle to admiration. Through his

early work he seems to be speaking to an elect few, salvaged from the general wreck of civilization, his friends. Another trait that makes of him a peculiarly "intimate" poet, a poet for a private circle of friends, is his love of charades and clowning—the very first work in *Poems* is a charade, where Father Christmas appears suddenly in the middle of a tense scene. His work is, indeed, extraordinarily complex,—one is reminded of Ilya Ehrenburg's observation apropos of Malraux's *La Condition Humaine,* that just such a complexity is characteristic of a culture in its decline,—and brilliant satirical flashes follow passages where a curious religious note predominates; in his style there are traces of Eliot, G. M. Hopkins (from these two perhaps comes the religious note), Wilfred Owen, Anglo-Saxon poetry, Jazz Songs, and in his ideas, not only of Marx, but also of Freud and Lawrence, to name only a few.

Poems (which four years later was issued in a revised edition,) is probably his finest work. In comparison with the best in this book much of his later work seems to show a drying up of inspiration, a failure to advance to new positions, and a technical looseness which is disappointing. In *Poems* we see his favorite, North Country landscape of industrial decay:

> Smokeless chimneys, damaged bridges, rotting wharves
> and choked canals,
> Tramlines buckled, smashed trucks lying on their side
> across the rails....

At the same time he is continually introducing his favorite symbolic landscape of frontiers, lurking enemies, and passes difficult to cross:

> Crossing the pass descend the growing stream
> Too tired to hear except the pulses strum,
> Reach villages to ask for a bed in
> Rock shutting out the sky, the old life done....

Paid on Both Sides, the charade, and some of the poems with their background of feud and shooting, show how living in Germany had affected him, but on the whole the poems are extremely English in their background, and in the particular kinds of psychological illness which he fastens upon. The sense of belonging to a generation brought up in a tradition that had suddenly shown itself to be inadequate, is everywhere:

> ....They taught us war
> To scamper after darlings, to climb hills,
> To emigrate from weakness, find ourselves
> The easy conquerors of empty bays;
> But never taught us this....
>
> Their fate must always be the same as yours,
> To suffer the loss they were afraid of, yes,
> Holders of one position, wrong for years....
>
> We know it, we know that love....
> Needs death, death of the grain, our death,
> Death of the old gang....

His most remarkable quality, his sense of this cultural decay as a historic phenomenon, is presented in many disguises, the progress of life, or the historical process appearing as "love," or as "I":

> Since you are going to begin today
> Let us consider what it is you do.
> You are the one whose part it is to lean,
> For whom it is not good to be alone....

But joy is mine, not yours—to have come so far,
Whose cleverest invention was lately fur....
Nor even is despair your own, when swiftly
Comes general assault on your ideas of safety....
Your shutting up the house and taking prow
To go into the wilderness to pray,
Means that I wish to leave and to pass on,
Select another form, perhaps your son....

In writing like this he shows that he had passed well beyond the negative pessimism of Eliot. A clinical sense (it is difficult to call it anything else) of the possibility of being cured of psychological illness, as well as a historic sense of life moving on to new hope in new shapes, gives his work a definite optimism. Witness his more direct satirical manner:

Financier, leaving your little room
Where the money is made but not spent,
You'll need your typist and your boy no more;
The game is up for you and for the others....

And the passage already quoted:

Send to us power and light, a sovereign touch
Curing the intolerable neural itch,
The exhaustion of weaning, the liar's quinsy,
And the distortion of ingrown virginity. . .
Cover in time with beams those in retreat....

In *The Orators,* published in 1932, two years later, the same themes are to be found, the same brilliant imagery and unexpected angles of approach. The poetry proper is in this book less important; the set of Odes which come at the end are rather long and rambling, introduce very little that is new, and are almost entirely personal in allusion. The paraphernalia of a schoolmaster's life, and the tone of the games-master giving the boys a talk before the match, make a rather overwhelming appearance. Auden, Day Lewis, Warner, Upward, are, or have at one time been, schoolmasters, and this style now spreads very rapidly, even to their followers, which gives their work of this period an unfortunately cliquish, even semi-fascist flavor. Much more interesting in *The Orators* is the prose, particularly the *Address for a Prize-Day* and the *Letter to a Wound,* which brilliantly develop the ideas of the *Poems,* and more explicitly:

What do you think? What do you think about England, this country of ours where nobody is well? . . . .

Next the defective lovers. Systems run to a standstill, or like those ship-cranes along Clydebank, which have done nothing all this year. Owners of small holdings, they sit by fires they can't make up their minds to light, while dust settles on their unopened correspondence and inertia branches in their veins like a zinc tree. . . .

There are other prose pieces, more obscurely written, in which the religious note reappears. There is an attempt to state a philosophy in private symbols and a style like the litany, which seems curiously passive in comparison with, for instance, the *Address for a Prize-Day.* That passage like:

Speak the name only with meaning only for us, meaning Him,
a call to our clearing....

still occur in his writings, seems to indicate that as yet a profound decision between passivity (religion) and activity (revolution) is unresolved in his nature. The remarkable psychological and historical intuition, one feels, is being wasted for lack of clear rational direction.

The Journal of an Airman is the pièce de resistance, and an examination of its curious symbolism and myth-making makes one feel all the more strongly that there is a confusion in Auden's ideas. It is a work which no one but Auden could have written, dramatizing in an extraordinary way one of his fundamental ideas, that of "the enemy," with moments of deep insight into personal and social psychology. There is scattered evidence of Marxian thought:

> The effect of the enemy is to introduce inert velocities into the system (called by him laws or habits) interfering with organisation. These can only be removed by friction (war). Hence the enemy's interest in peace societies. . . .

But at the same time potentially fascist thought, hitherto latent in his work, comes out now like a measles rash. The curious doctrine of "ancestor-worship," which Day Lewis has maintained is so important to the group, now makes its appearance, and the fondness for clowning, practical jokes and private allusions runs riot. There is to be a transformation of society, but it is to be carried out by the Airman and his friends, and followed by an orgy of private revenge, with a mixture of public school high spirits and vicious cruelty. In the section called *After Victory* the Airman notes:

> Few executions except for the newspaper peers—Viscount
> Stuford certainly, The Rev. McFarlane?
> Duchess of Holbrook for the new human zoo.
>
> Tom to have the Welsh Marches.
> Ian a choice of Durham and Norfolk.
> Edward for films. . . .

His descriptions of traits by which the enemy can be recognized are a mixture of clever insight and comic allusions to purely private dislikes:

> Three kinds of enemy walk—the grandiose stunt—the
> melancholic stagger—the paranoic sidle.
>
> Three kinds of enemy clothing—the fisherman's pockets—
> Dickens waistcoats—adhesive trousers. . . .

Stephen Spender has written, in *The Destructive Element,* at some length on the Airman:

> The symbolic position of the Airman is, as it were, to be on the margin of civilisation. Being an airman, it is obvious that he is not tied down in any way: he is up in the air, and in the position of artists like Rilke or Lawrence who travel . . . The Airman symbolises the homosexual, because like him, he is incapable of exploiting the old, fixed relationships: he has involuntarily broken away from the mould of the past and is compelled to experiment in new forms. . . . His chief danger is his remarkable irresponsibility which leads him to indulge in Fascist day-dreams of fantastic and murderous practical jokes. The Airman, therefore with his bird's-eye view of society, sees everywhere the enemy . . . The Airman being who he is, is bound to fall, because he is alone. . . So long as he is alone he is bound, like pacifists, to answer war by non-resistance of a kind which he believes to be anti-toxin. . . . There is never really any revolutionary issue in *The Airman's Journal,* because the Airman has no friends. . . .

Spender has put his finger on the crucial problem for the writer of bourgeois origin who is dissatisfied with the present state of society, and sees that it must be radically altered; unless he in some way can make contact with the masses, he is lost. This is a point which must be dealt with again later.

The Dance of Death (1933) shows that Auden has for the moment swung right over to an infinitely clearer Marxian position. The theme is clearly stated and worked out, and the satiric verse is perfectly straight-forward. It

has considerable dramatic, even propaganda value as a lively and concise presentation of the present sickness of capitalist society. It is more a dramatic ballet than a play, and is very swiftly moving. The reader, or spectator, is not left this time to deduce for himself who symbolizes what; Auden this time approaches closer than ever before to popular writing. At the very beginning, the Announcer says:

> We present to you this evening a picture of the decline of a class, of how its members dream of a new life, but secretly desire the old, for there is death inside them. We show you that death as a dancer. . . .

The chorus is then shown going through a variety of phases typical of post-war bourgeois society. Sun-bathing is first of all the cure for all their ills; then the Dancer by a trick sets them off on the road to war; at the moment, the audience which represents the proletarian masses threatens revolution, in which the Chorus (which can be taken to represent the middle classes) shows signs of taking part:

> One, two, three, four,
> The last war was a bosses' war.
> Five, six, seven, eight
> Rise and make a workers' state.
> Nine, ten, eleven, twelve,
> Seize the factories and run them yourself. . . .

At this point, the growth of fascism is very cleverly parodied. The Announcer hurriedly makes a speech to confuse the revolutionary impulses that have been roused, and persuades both Chorus and Audience to follow him on an extremely vague adventure for an "English" revolution. They finally join him with enthusiasm, but the adventure ends in shipwreck, and the Dancer collapses. The Chorus then turns to a sort of mystic nature worship, followed by an even more mystic flight from the "alone to the Alone." By this time the Dancer is ready for a further effort, but almost at once he collapses again, half-paralysed. It is here that the piece seems to weaken. The Manager with his Alma Mater night club does not seem to have so clear a place in the argument as what preceded it. There are also passages where characters speak to one another in an English that is a literal translation of German; it is difficult to see the point, or even the humor of these. However, as the Dancer is dying, the Chorus sing a history of the development of society, in which there are some excellent verses:

> The feudal barons did their part
> Their virtues were not of the head but the heart.
> Their ways were suited to an agricultural land
> But lending on interest they did not understand. . . .

The Dancer suddenly dies, and at that moment there is a noise without:

> Quick under the table, it's the 'tecs and their narks,
> O no, salute—it's Mr. Karl Marx.

The play ends as Marx enters, with two young Communists, and says:

> The instruments of production have been too much for him. He is liquidated.

The Dance of Death showed that Auden could write, to appeal to the widest circles of his own class, direct propaganda that is at the same time art. But the contradictions do not yet seem to be resolved in his nature; the next work, *The Dog Beneath the Skin* (1935) written in collaboration with Christopher Isherwood, is also a kind of play. The satirical comedy, in prose and verse, is here broken by choruses which are as serious as any poems of

Auden's. But there is no new advance; private allusions, the schoolmaster touch reappear, the satire is not so cleverly written or so clear in analysis as parts of *The Dance*. There are long rather tedious passages, which give the impression of having been hurriedly written, and one feels that from the revolutionary point of view, one is back again with the Auden of *The Orators,* brilliant as the choruses are. The future direction which Auden will take remains extremely problematical.

VI

Cecil Day Lewis is a poet of quite different capacities. In *From Feathers to Iron* (1931), the first book of his that falls within the period 1930-35, he shows a sharpness of imagery, a "wit," and firmness of rhythm-structure that is reminiscent of the 17th century metaphysical poets, and is very satisfying. It is, poetically, one cannot help feeling, his best book up to date. The poems form a sequence the theme of which is the decision of himself and his wife to have a child, to assume new responsibilities, and the birth of the child at the end of the book:

> Beauty's end is in sight,
> Terminus where all feather joys alight.
> Wings that flew lightly
> Fold and are iron. We see
> The thin end of mortality.

There is much of the "machine" imagery on which Michael Roberts laid so much stress in *New Signatures*:

> Bodies we have, fabric and frame designed
> To take the stress of love,
> Buoyant on gust, multi-engined....

And also of the "frontier" imagery so prevalent in Auden:

> I have come so far upon my journey.
> This is the frontier, this is where I change...

Day Lewis is a poet at his best making a positive, optimistic statement; *From Feathers to Iron* is a direct challenge to the pessimism and obscurity then fashionable in "advanced" poetry. For the time being it seems that Mr. D. H. Lawrence is a dominant influence; there is no trace of the revolutionary theme, though it was logically bound to come when the poet felt the resistance in the structure of society to his positive attitude. But there are traces here, too, of Russian films:

> Beauty breaks ground, O, in strange places.
> Seen after cloudburst down the bone-dry watercourses,
> In Texas a great gusher, a grain-
> Elevator in the Ukraine plain;
> To a new generation turns new faces....

The book ends with a *Letter to W. H. Auden* which is significant for what is to come. In between this and his next book, *The Magnetic Mountain,* the *New Signatures* episode had taken place. The strong current of Audenism carries Day Lewis along with it, at times almost submerging him. He loses the tightness, the athletic quality of his verse, and in following Auden shows that he has none of Auden's sensitive depth or real historic sense. The revolutionary theme is strongly in evidence, but the nature and aim of this revolution remain as vague as the destination to which the poet is continually

setting off by a very impatient train, or other modern means of travel. The extent of Auden's influence can be gauged by a few examples:

Positively this is the end of the track;
It's rather late and there's no train back....

You'll be leaving soon and it's up to you, boys,
Which shall it be? You must make your choice.
There's a war on, you know....

Begin perhaps with jokes across the table,
Bathing before breakfast, undressing frankly,
Trials of strength, innocent evasions;
Concealing velvet hand in iron grip
Play the man, let woman wait indoors....

As for you, Bimbo, take off that false face!
You've ceased to be funny, You're in disgrace.
We can see the spy through that painted grin ..
We'll make you swallow your words at a gulp
And turn you back to your element, pulp....

This last example immediately calls to mind Auden's verses, on the same theme of the Press barons, in *The Orators*:

Beethameer, Beethameer, bully of Britain....
All of us itching in every nerve
To give you the thrashing you richly deserve....

The potentially fascist tendency already noticed in Auden's *The Orators* is marked in this book. Montagu Slater, writing in *Left Review,* has said:

It has been one of the sources of W. H. Auden's power to have worked in colours and symbols so familiar, so *English* that his work would almost have been chauvinist if it had not been negative. . . .

This particular appeal to England is also in Day Lewis' work, but in both writers, when other potentially fascist tendencies appear, the Englishness only adds to the unfortunate effect. It is not that both poets would not strongly repudiate any idea that they had sympathy for fascism; the impression is caused mainly by the vagueness of the revolutionary feeling, the lack of actuality—real events rarely make their appearance,—and the continual insistence on a few chosen friends as the instruments of the change that must come:

Then I'll hit the trail for that promising land;
May catch up with Wystan and Rex my friend...

Wystan, Rex, all of you that have not fled,
This is our world, this is where we have grown
Together in flesh and live....

We can tell you a secret, offer a tonic; only
Submit to the visiting angel, the strange new healer....

The Magnetic Mountain is too repetitive, too cloudy in idea, too thin in substance, to be representative of Day Lewis at his best. At the end of the book the temperature of the enthusiasm and hope seems to drop remarkably, and the poet renounces the idea that he is likely ever himself to see the day of change or take an active part in it:

Eyes, though not ours, shall see
Sky-high a signal flame,
The sun returned to power above
A world, but not the same....

In *A Time to Dance* (1935) he has emerged from the tide of Audenism that seemed likely to overwhelm him, and writes again with the "wit" and the sharpness of outline that are his particular gifts. He is less cocksure that he and his friends have the secret for universal health; the mood that appeared at the end of *The Magnetic Mountain* remains, and he is acutely conscious of division in himself:

In me two worlds at war
Trample the patient flesh.
This lighted ring of sense where clinch
Heir and ancestor. . . .

I sang as one
Who on a tilting deck sings
To keep their courage up, though the wave hangs
That shall cut off their sun. . . .

None such shall be left alive:
The innocent wing is soon shot down,
And private stars fade in the blood-red dawn
Where two worlds strive. . . .

The sense of being unequal, or unworthy to take part in the revolution haunts him:

Yes, why do we all, seeing a Red, feel small? . . .
Mark him. He is only what we are, mortal. Yet from the night
Of history, where we lie dreaming still, he is wide awake . . .

In *A Time to Dance* Day Lewis seems to be marking time politically. He sings hymns to the triumph of the human spirit, to courage and devotion in several line poems. In the second part of the book the long poem is an Ode to the daring of two young lieutenants who made a flight to Australia in a battered aeroplane. It is technically very skilful, but gives a slight impression of emptiness, of being very much less charged with thought than his earlier poems. It is followed by parodies from Marlowe to the latest Jazz style, where a sense of bitterness for the conditions that capitalism offers its workers appear; there are glimpses of writing much more concrete along these lines than he had attempted before, but they are only glimpses. A measure of his distance from the working-class movement is a passage that seems to indicate a confusion between the recentness of the illumination that burst upon himself and the rise of the whole movement:

Yes, you too, even now, the unregarded
Who were called hands.
Into your hands history commits her spirit.
Submerged were you? An ocean's bed? But lately
The skysails have felt a rumor, a seismograph too
Has noticed something
First breath and tremor of your new-born day. . . .

One cannot help feeling that such writing would have been impossible, in 1935, anywhere except in England.

Between these two last books of poetry, Day Lewis has published, in 1934, *A Hope for Poetry*, a prose work devoted to the interpretation and justification of the poems of himself, Auden, Spender and Warner. The chief merit of the book is the study of technique and of technical influence,—Eliot, G. M. Hopkins, and Wilfred Owen, and of D. H. Lawrence as a spiritual father of the *New Country* group. When, however, he is dealing with the work of himself and his friends, there is a less pleasant didactic and congratulatory note. He says at the beginning of Chapter V:

There are superficial signs in the air at present of a boom in poetry. . . This boom has been connected in certain quarters with the names of Auden, Spender and myself. While it is gratifying, it is difficult at first to understand to what we may attribute this honor. . . .

One feels inclined to answer that the honor can be attributed to some extent to his own efforts, carried forward in this book. This confusion on the relation of Communism to poetry would matter little—a young writer of bourgeois origin in England today cannot clear his mind in a moment on these vital and complex questions—were it not for the ex-cathedra tone in which so many of his pronouncements are made. His elevation into sacred tenets of certain mannerisms of the movement (e.g. "ancestor" worship) cannot, one feels, do anything but harm the poetic reputation of himself and his friends in the end. Auden, Day Lewis and Spender are remarkable enough as poets to do without any special boost of this sort.

VII

Stephen Spender, the youngest of the three chief poets under consideration, is the one who has approached most closely to actual events, in the revolutionary struggle, for the material of his poetry. His personal connections with Germany, and his long stay, at perhaps the most formative period for his art, in a Central Europe town with violent strife that could almost seem unreal in the comparative calm of South England, are mainly, one would guess, responsible for this. The ideas of D. H. Lawrence, as has already been noticed in connection with *New Signatures* had considerable influence on him; he is continually demanding that men shall live by their bodies as much as by their minds, asserting that to despise pride in the body, in sex, is socially dangerous as well as unhealthy for the individual. He has a remarkable power of creating flowing rhythms; his images and his rhythms seem organically part of his thought when he is writing at his best, and he has considerably more sense of form than Auden. He seems also more purely lyrical than Auden, being able rapidly to grasp an idea, or an event, with an intensity of imagination and surprising image to be found only in first-class poetry. This does not mean, nor would he, one feels, maintain, that he is absolutely consistent in attitude throughout his poems; the fire lights now one idea, now another, as it flows through his mind; and yet there is a gradual hardening of central ideas. There is a strong tendency to write in a rather mannered, oblique style, —the influence of the whole Eliot movement is marked here—but at his best he can write with moving directness and simplicity, as in the poem of the Communist funeral already quoted. He has also been reproached with an occasional vagueness or confusion of imagery, and softness of thought, though his best poems—not necessarily his most popular poems— right through his development have been clear of these traits.

The contemporary scene, outside his own personal world, begins to occupy him very early on. In his collected volume of *Poems* (1933), pity and indignation at the fate of the unemployed workers he sees in the streets of Germany, or of the submerged elements who have had no chance from birth, appear in poem after poem:

> Now they've no work, like better men
> Who sit at desks and take much pay
> They sleep long nights and rise at ten
> To watch the hours that drain away. . . .

No, no, no,
It is too late for anger,
Nothing prevails
But pity for the grief they cannot feel. . . .

In these poems Wilfred Owen, the war poet, is the predecessor whom he brings to mind most often, both in mood and technique. Very soon after he begins to write poems of revolutionary feeling, such as *The Funeral,* or *After They Have Tired:*

Readers of this strange language,
We have come at last to a country
Where light equal, like the shine from snow, strikes all faces,
Here you may wonder
How it was that works, money interest, building, could ever hide
The palpable and obvious love of man for man.

Oh comrades, let not those who follow after—
The beautiful generation that shall spring from our sides—
Let them not wonder how after the failure of banks
The failure of cathedrals and the declared insanity of our rulers,

We lacked the Spring-like resources of the tiger. . . .

Spender shows, in these poems at the end of the book, an extraordinary sense of Time—a vision of Time, one can call it—which is nevertheless not the sense of History that Auden has:

Our universal ally, but larger than our purpose, whose flanks
Stretch to planets unknown in our brief particular battle,
Tomorrow Time's progress will forget us even here. . . .

The distance he has travelled since he wrote the poem on war beginning "Who live under the shadow of a war" (quoted in connection with *New Signatures*) can be seen from the end of the last poem in his book:

—That programme of the antique Satan
Bristling with guns on the indented page
With battleship towering from hilly waves:
For what? Drive of a ruining purpose
Destroying all but its age-long exploiters.
Our programme like this, yet opposite,
Death to the killers, bringing light to life.

The sharply enunciated "programme" still contrasts a little oddly with such a purely decorative phrase as "hilly waves" or some of the lines preceding it:

Eye, gazelle, delicate wanderer,
Drinker of horizon's fluid line. . . .

This contrast, this unresolved poetic problem, is also to be found in his next published book, *Vienna.* In between he wrote the *New Country* poems, which, it has already been observed, indicate a temporary retreat from political interests. It seems, however, as if the course of events in Germany after Hitler came to power, and the parallel increase in fascist pressure in Austria, culminating in the Insurrection of February 1934, roused him too strongly for him to be able to keep away from the battle. In the Spring, after the Insurrection, he went to Vienna, and there having studied the full reports by the Commission of Enquiry, wrote his long poem which was published in the Autumn.

Vienna, remarkable as one of the earliest attempts of a young English bourgeois poet to write on actual revolutionary events, is an unsatisfactory poem in many ways. Some of it shows a return to the style and methods of Eliot, with obscure and mannered writing which seems curiously inappropriate to the grandeur of the theme:

> Whether the man living or the man dying. :
> Whether this man's dead life, or that man's life dying
> His real life a fading light his real death a light growing.
> Whether the live dead I live with. Ladies of the Pension
> Beaurepas. . . .

Vienna as a whole gives one the impression of having been hurriedly written, the material seems often undigested, and the images are weaker, prettier, less appropriate imaginatively than in Spender's best work. It is also significant of the way in which his mind has developed, that the whole revolutionary episode is subordinated to, emerges from and sinks again into the poet's narrower, private world. The first section introduces the Pension Beaurepas, with its bourgeois insolence and "death," and a really dying patient in a hospital in contrast. The scene gradually moves to the city, and the second section is a satirical picture of the fascist chiefs parading after "order" is restored, and beside them the life of the unemployed. The latter are represented as indifferent, drowned,—in fact pitiful—at a point where the very different, bitter and active mood of a large section of them might well have been effective. The Executive is shown as only half believing in itself under all the pomp and pretence:

> Is history ungrateful? Do books
> Ignore us? Can a government be unimportant? . . . .
>
> The speeches, the photographs, the Grand Mass, and the volleys
> Of gunfire hammered with Holy Ghost, hammered
> Into the steel of barrels, of rifles, of howitzers. . . .

The atmosphere of Vienna at this time is well given: the unconvincing and unconvinced displays by the rulers, the real nervous apprehension. The third section returns in time, describes the highlights of the Rising, the heroic collective acts and heroic individuals, at times in what ceases to be poetry and becomes direct prose,—often almost exactly transcribed from the reports. It is here that the poem seems least "created," the various elements insufficiently fused together. There are admirable passages:

> Our fatal unconfidence attempted a bridge
> Between revolution and the already providing
> World. . . .
> Also, failure of leaders who betrayed us. . . . .
> . . . their newspapers
> With lying words foreknowingly cast in lead
> By our fellow workers saying "All but a small clique have fled"
> And "the red filth is bled"; these things chiefly destroyed us.
> Their foursquare voice through unassailable air
> Proved that at no time were their brain tracks severed. . . .

In the fourth section this directness is abandoned again for some rather involved and mannered self-probing, and a catalogue in the Auden manner, of victims of "the enemy," the psychologically diseased or maimed in bourgeois society, which is finally contrasted, in what is undoubtedly the finest passage of the poem, with:

Those burrowing beneath frontier, shot as spies because
Sensitive to new contours; those building insect cells
Beneath the monstrous shell of ruins; altering
The conformation of masses, that at last conjoin
Accomplished in justice to reject a husk.
Their walls already rest upon their dead, on Wallisch
Trapped in the mountains, on Weissel the engineer
Who lied to save his followers "I forced them after
With my revolver." On all the others. These are
Our ancestors. . .

Vienna, as an indignant protest against fascist atrocities and blood-stained hocus-pocus, as a direct approach to actual events, by a young poet, was a portent for the future. In his latest poems, however, Spender seems still uncertain of his way, brilliant as some of them are; further evidence that he is still fairly deeply confused about Communism and the poet's relation to revolutionary politics, is provided by his book of criticism published in 1935, *The Destructive Element*. There is an immense amount of valuable material in this book, in scattered comments and sudden imaginative flashes of criticism, and its main theme, the tracing of an *implicit* condemnation of the whole of bourgeois modern society in the work of Henry James and other writers of a previous generation, is really illuminating. It is when he gets down to those writers who are his own contemporaries that his judgment seems to stray, and his general theoretical remarks on war, and propaganda, and Marxism can often only be considered an insult to his own intelligence. In part, one suspects, Max Eastman's critical writings are responsible, and a totally insufficient knowledge of Soviet theory and practise in relation to literature. Edgell Rickword, criticising the book in *Left Review,* wrote:

In Spender's book we are confronted with the influence of that empiricism which has for long been the prominent tendency in English thought, and which is reflected equally clearly in the ideology of the Labor movement and in the opportunism of the book-reviews in the few literary periodicals the cultured classes of this country can still afford to support. This tendency expresses itself in a contempt for theory, usually nicknamed "dogma" as though the precious buds of poetic beauty (or political action) must spring spontaneously out of obscurity, and would be stunted by understanding and conscious development.

Spender is continually exercising himself in this book to refute all kinds of theses which only he can imagine represent the central Communist attitude, such as:

I imagine that to the perfect Communist literary critic it must be a matter of almost dumbfounded astonishment that a Chinese coolie who is a member of the party cannot write books far better than the bourgeois propaganda of Shakespeare. . .

He struggles to avoid admitting any theory that good art can, or must, have an element of propaganda, and in so doing is led into such strange statements as:

For ultimately however interested the artist may be as a person, as an artist, he has got to be indifferent to all but what is objectively true. . . .

A novel of South Africa, *In A Province,* which ends with a riot as the culmination of a young Communist's efforts to rouse the natives to a realization of their wrongs, he considers a complete refutation of the revolutionary tactics of Communists. The very violence of these ideological struggles of his, is proof of the way in which Marxian theory, and the Soviet Union, are beginning to disturb the complacencies of modern English literature.

VIII

Of the other original *New Signatures* poets who had shown that their minds were turning to political and revolutionary problems, the only other who has since published a book is John Lehmann. In 1934 he published a collection of poems and prose sketches closely approximating to poetry called *The Noise of History*. Lehmann's early influences were more from the "Bloomsbury" side of modern English literature, as also Julian Bell's, where emphasis on the "French" virtues of form, clarity, precision, was prominent; his earlier book of poems, *A Garden Revisited,* shows this influence as dominant, though he is unable to avoid the influence of Eliot, in however small a degree, any more than any other young writer. Soon after writing this book and publishing in *New Signatures,* Lehmann left London to spend some time in Central Europe. In *The Noise of History* he attempts to show how contact with Socialist and Communist circles out there, and the advance of fascism in Berlin and Vienna began to effect a profound change in his attitude to life and in his poetry. A critic in *The Daily Worker* wrote:

> Apart from their interest as poems the lyrics and sketches in this book are a valuable record of a journey that is being made with increasing frequency in our days. Their author would seem to have been an honest and sensitive intellectual, very much in love with living but puzzled and distressed by the world in which he finds himself. A world of—
>
> How splendid a texture, but woven so thin in places
> Tearing to gape on darkness, gulfs of cold,
> Where a white-cheeked mother holds by flaming windows
> Her ulcered child in arms of ice. . . .
>
> He travels widely in space and time, seeking respite from present misery, but, being genuinely honest, finding none. And gradually, from being a spectator he becomes a participant; in the turmoil of the battle against fascism in Berlin and Vienna he finds a meaning and a purpose. So that he is able to write with perfect understanding of the work of a Communist living "underground."
>
> In every town there is a room prepared for him, on every side a hand stretched to greet him, and when he calls his shout is answered in a thousand secret places. . . .
>
> As poetry much of this book suffers from the uncertainty of its origin. While it has almost always a light and warmth, there is often a softness of rhythm and a lack of precision in its images. These defects, however, seem on the way to being overcome, and at least Lehmann is a real poet writing about real things.

Lehmann contributed to the first attempt at a revolutionary critical paper in England, *Storm,* in 1933, and has since collaborated with *Left Review.* After writing *The Noise of History,* he visited the Soviet Union and his work since his visits has shown an increasing preoccupation with, and sympathy for, the revolution, though he has some way to go before he has solved the problems of presentation which this involves for his poetry.

It is too soon to say how poets such as Charles Madge and R. E. Warner and Richard Godman, contributors to *New Country,* will develop; their first books will be awaited with considerable interest. Other young poets there are of the same generation, whose work has been profoundly influenced by the Auden-Spender-Day Lewis group, such as John Pudney and Randall Swingler, who, though technically and imaginatively inferior to the chief three, may one day produce some good revolutionary poetry. The tide, however, does not yet seem by any means set in this direction. Younger poets have appeared during the last year or two, whose work commands considerable respect, such as David Gascoyne and Dylan Thomas, and there are still poets of highly distinctive talent of the Auden generation, such as Louis MacNeice, all of

whom carefully avoid any political subject. And the gains from the older generation are rare; of these the most notable in recent months is Sylvia Townsend Warner; whose first revolutionary poems have appeared in *Left Review*.

IX

The essential contribution of the *New Country* poets to the development of a revolutionary poetry in England, has been their *awareness* of the crisis and the class-war, of the Marxian alternative to the solutions offered on all sides in bourgeois circles, their insistence that something was fundamentally wrong with society that would lead, and should lead to revolutionary change. This contribution was a very important one, though it may seem remarkably belated when the development of a revolutionary literature in other European countries and America is considered, but for England, with its peculiarly backward political conditions, it was an enormous step forward. The theme so continually met with in their poetry that "the revolution will happen tomorrow, there's no time left" is an indication of how successfully the English bourgeoisie had managed to muffle the noise of international revolutionary events from 1917 until the collapse of their own £ sterling. The revelation of the rottenness of bourgeois civilization seemed to burst with horrifying suddenness on the young intellectuals. Not only did they feel that their civilization was becoming too great a sham to be accepted by anyone of the slightest intellectual honesty, and that it was therefore impossible to write except in opposition to it, but also that their own very existence as artists, and the existence of their friends as critics, scientists, doctors, was being threatened by the counter-revolutionary violence of facism, and far more the existence of all of them simply as human beings was likely ruthlessly to be cut short by the next large-scale imperialist war. The establishment of literary magazines, such as *Left Review,* for the treatment of artistic problems from a Marxian point of view, has helped on this process, forcing them to concentrate on these problems and to clear their minds; the effects of the more recent Congress of writers in Paris, as soon as they begin to be more widely felt, should be even more important in this direction.

The development of this specifically intellectual-bourgeois revolt in the future will probably depend on the power of the leaders of it to move beyond their present positions, where they can so easily, standing still, be discredited by their imitators. This in its turn, one feels, can only mean a movement away from obscurity, private jokes, ambiguous political implications, to a wider anti-fascist kind of writing, unequivocal, with an appeal that can reach many thousands more than their present writing can, encumbered as it still is with the remains of Eliotism and surrealism. What probability is there that this will happen? Unless the world economic position of British Imperialism alters suddenly and profoundly for the worse, unless a war intervenes, the tendency is likely to be slow. Nevertheless it is not impossible that the steady approach in future of Marxian revolutionaries and bourgeois intellectuals to one another, which the recent Congress of the Comintern and events in France seem to indicate, may bring them, even without such whips at their backs, to a far closer contact with active revolutionary politics though no one would wish them to swamp writing in political activity which many who cannot write may be able to carry through as well—or induce them to undertake a temporary migration to colonial or other regions outside England

where the class-struggle is more vivid and more advanced. It has already been seen what an important part an experience of Central European conditions has played in the development of many of them. Others have recently joined the Communist Party, or associated themselves in one way or another with anti-fascist activities. If they can move forward, then, under these influences, and assimilate themselves to the struggle of the masses, they should be the heralds, perhaps the leaders of a new and powerful revolutionary literature in England. If not, the mannerisms and impurities in their work, the side most easily imitated, will gradually stultify their influence, and England will have to wait for new, different writers to rise, as there are already signs of their doing, but without the help that such intellectuals can give, from the ranks of the proletariat itself.

Academician A. Deborin[1]

The Proletarian Revolution and the Problem of Genius

V

But what is creative work? What is genius? These questions occupy the minds of many bourgeois thinkers and learned men who, by the way, have wrapped the problem in a thick fog of mysticism. By creative work they understand the spontaneous birth of something primitively new. This is a conception intimately connected with the religious idea of the creation of the world by God. Others, like Beck, for instance, in his *Creative Philosophy,* proceed from the necessity of creating a "new culture" based on the metaphysics of the spirit, on metalogic as distinguished from logic or the alogical.

Spirit, he says, is by its nature and essence metalogical, i.e., beyond logic. The philosophy of the spirit rests on a metalogical basis. The spiritual, he holds, is beyond all temporary and subjective opinion, and acquires eternal value only when it has its source in super-human and supertimely essence. And just as logical truths have a significance due to logical a prioris independent of experience, the eternal significance of spiritual reality is due to the a priorism of the spirit.

This is, of course, all empty word juggling without the least concrete meaning. The author himself refuses any further concretization or any other proof of this metalogical "spiritual a priorism" on the grounds that in our time we are accustomed to think logically while it is impossible to prove this nonsense logically, to which we heartily agree.

Metalogical a priorism implies a universal organ of cognition and the synthetic function of creation. Beck's *Creative Philosophy* represents an attempt to merge logos and life into a higher, absolute unity a superlogical "creative synthesis." It is an attempt to conciliate the "philosophy of life" and logic. His metalogic is a variety of intuition which he calls "supralogical intuition." "The idea of creativeness, in the meaning of our philosophy," he writes, "is nothing but pure form, the really perfect expression of primitive spirituality. It is contained in every genuinely creative function, in it the eternal meaning of synthesis constitutes itself. It has no logical traits and can be cognized only spiritually as pure unity." [2] Genius is the highest expression of spiritual life *an absolutely irrational phenomenon of such life.* But unlike Schopenhauer, who saw the essence of genius in the endeavor for intuitive and artistic *contemplation* of eternal ideas, Beck emphasizes the feature of activity, the feature of creative productivity, "the dynamic process of the formation of life," only mystically conceived.

We dwell so much on Beck's ideas only because he, firstly, expresses a general tendency of contemporary bourgeois philosophy towards the irrational and intuitive and secondly, because he, also in accord with fascism, advocates the necessity of creating a "new culture" on the basis of a "spiritual aristocracy" as against a "spiritual democracy."

The "aristocratic of the spirit," Beck, cannot deny, however, that "productive ability is an all-human function and that every man can be "creative" to

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[1] Continued from the third issue of the Int. Lit.

[2] Friedrich Beck—*Schöpferische Philosophie,* 1933, S. 121.

some extent. Only he makes a distinction between "originality of genius" and "human originality." As if genius were not a human trait precisely. As if a genius were not human but a god!

Let us now leave "supralogical intuitivism" for Bergson's irrationalistic intuitivism which is based on the conception of élan vital. Life is essentially *creative development.* Nothing is repeated in organic nature, there is only activity, and this can be either formational activity, i.e., the springing up of unforseen forms of movement, or non-formational activity, i.e., automatized and strictly determined development. The moving force of development is élan vital, i.e., an outburst of life. This outburst of life is the tendency towards creation. It is the inner cause of all creative development. Not Bergson alone but all modern neo-romanticists deny any creative role whatever to reason, to human thought.

Matter and vital force (élan vital) are two principles always struggling with each other. Vital force is essentially the motive principle of creative development. But it cannot be *absolutely* creative insomuch as it finds matter a force in its way, opposing its direction, its aims. Consequently, according to Bergson, both thought and matter are static factors, contradictory to and opposing all creative development.

Nietzsche's teachings on creativeness and genius proceed, so to say, from the contrast between instinct and intellect in principle. The genius differs from ordinary men in his instinct, his intuition which, as with Bergson, constitutes the moving force of creation. At the foundation of genius lies an unconscious, irrational principle; it is this that urges the genius to creative activity. To Nietzsche and his modern disciples the meaning and aim of culture resolve themselves into the creation of the superman, who is a genius of will to power.[1] Evidently, the leaders of fascism, like Hitler, imagine themselves such "geniuses." The mass of the people to them is an aggregation of units fulfilling slavelike functions and constituting the base for the social pyramid topped by the new aristocracy of supermen—the "heroes."

VI

Karl Joel asserts that Engels supposedly considered genius, the great man, "the curse of mankind." According to Joel the nineteenth century, unlike the eighteenth, declared open war on genius.[2] This presumably explains the tragic fates of Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Kleist, Meynlander, Van Gogh, Weininger, Hölderlin, Maupassant, Nietzsche, etc. As a result, individuals of genius almost completely disappeared, died out at the end of the nineteenth century. Our philosopher, Joel, has approached this exceedingly interesting question altogether too superficially. Leaving aside the question as to whether all the names listed can be considered those of geniuses, we think it necessary to emphasize that the degeneration of great talent and men of genius among the bourgeoisie of our time reflects the period of decline of the capitalist system as a whole, and, consequently also of its creative energy, of its creative forces. This fact, though indirectly, is really confirmed by Joel himself.

In its work the creative personality reflects the needs, endeavors and "character" of the social class it represents (or one or another section of it). This

[1] In the early days of his activity Nietzsche considered the artist, philosopher and saint the fundamental types of genius (cf. besides Nietzsche's Works, W. Brock, *Nietzsches Ideal der Kultur,* S. 64-83, 1930).

[2] Karl Joel, *Wandlungen der Weltanschauung,* Bd. II, S. 888. 1934

it does through its individuality, whose psychology is more or less analogous to the social psychology of the class or section.

Let us take Kant. Lange-Eichbaum, from the point of view of a psychiatrist, it is true, makes this very correct observation: "Behind the objectiveness, impersonalness and frigidity of his work there is hidden a weak emotionality and affectivity; his passions are feeble, eroticism insignificant, lust for battle very small. . . . Reason (die Ratio) is strongly developed: the mind abstract, little graphicalness; he is not of the optical type (kein visueller Typus), his thought is typifying-logical (Schizotemistic). Hence his intellectualism and rationalism. By nature Kant was depressed and timid. His inclinations to melancholy amounted to satiation with life. This timidity and shyness, or, as Mueller-Freinfels expressed it, his middle-classness, together with devotion to justice, veracity and love of truth, in short, a timid, fearful adaptation to the surrounding world, lies behind the categorical imperative." [1]

There is evidently a definite "congeniality" between the ideologist and the class he represents. The typical traits of the class find their expression in the individual psychology of the ideologist. Kant's personal character: feeble emotionality and affectivity, his timidity, powerlessness, depressed condition, adaptation to surroundings, fear of struggle, weak will and hypertrophy of abstract reason—all these individual traits of his personality are also typical traits of the German burgher of the time.

In his estimate of Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* Marx emphasizes that the weakness and lack of force of German burgherdom which went no further than "good will" are reflected in Kant's philosophy. "Kant was satisfied with only 'good will,' " Marx says, "even if it remained fruitless and he transferred the realization of this good will, the harmony between it and the needs and aspirations of individuals to a world beyond." [2] Marx further emphasizes the consistency between Kant's "good will" and the powerlessness, depression and wretchedness of German burgherdom resulting from its economic position.

"The characteristic form assumed in Germany by French liberalism which was based on real class interests," Marx continues, "we find in Kant. Neither he, nor the German burghers, of whose interests he was the embellishing spokesman, noticed that at the base of these theoretical ideas of the bourgeoisie lay material interests and a will determined by material production relations. That is why he separated this theoretical expression from the interests it expressed, transformed the materially motivated definition of will by the French bourgeoisie into the pure self-determination of the 'free will,' will in and for itself, the human will, and thus made out of it purely ideological moral postulates and logical attributes. The German petty bourgeoisie therefore fled in horror before the practice of that energetic bourgeois liberalism as soon as it manifested itself, whether in the form of a terroristic regime or that of shameless bourgeois gain." [3]

Thus every class puts forward only such leaders and ideologists as reflect its own "nature," reflect not only its interests, but also its ideas and phychology which are intimately connected with and determined by its position in society, its hopes and aspirations, desires and expectations.

In his essay "To Tactics of Social Democracy and the Democratic Revolution," pointing out the difference between the resolution of the Bolshevist

[1] W. Lange-Eichbaum, *Genie, Irrsinn und Ruhm*, S. 123, 1928.
[2] Marx and Engels—*Works*, Vol. IV (Russian Edition), p. 174.
[3] Marx and Engels—*Works* (Russian Edition). Vol. IV, pp. 175-176.

congress and that of the Menshevist conference, Lenin says, among other things, the following:

"The resolution of the congress, after briefly characterizing the socio-economic basis of the revolution, concentrates all attention on the sharp, determined *struggle of the classes* for definite achievements and puts the *militant tasks* of the proletariat in the foreground. The resolution of the conference, after a long, misty and confused description of the socio-economic basis of the revolution, speaks very vaguely of the struggle for definite achievements and absolutely *neglects the militant tasks of the proletariat.* The resolution of the conference speaks of the abolition of the old order in the process of mutual struggle among the different elements of society. The resolution of the congress says that we, the party of the proletariat, must effect this abolition, that its real abolition means the establishment of a democratic republic, that we must fight for this republic, that we will fight for it and for full freedom, not only against the monarchy but also against the bourgeoisie when it will (and it surely will) try to rob us of our conquests. The resolution of the congress *calls a definite class to arms* for a definite immediate aim. The resolution of the conference *discourses about the mutual struggle* among various forces. One resolution expresses the *psychology of active struggle,* the other of *passive observation*; one is imbued with the *call to live activity,* the other—full of *ghastly moralization.*" [1]

This masterful analysis of two different "psychologies"—the phychology of active struggle and the psychology of passive contemplation, being a characterization of people, is also a characterization of definite social groups and classes: of the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie.

Elsewhere, polemizing with the "Bund" (in 1906), Lenin says: "Revolution is the lot of the strong!" Liberty is given only to the strong! All talk of weakness, of weakness of the proletariat, Lenin considers *treachery* to the revolution. And this remarkable, profound, golden thesis: "Revolution is the lot of the strong!" could only be put forward by *a strong, mighty leader of a mighty class, by a fearless marshal of this great army of fearless fighters.*

"Revolutions are the locomotives of history, says Marx," Lenin writes. "A revolution is the holiday of the oppressed and the exploited. *At no other time are the masses of the people so able to appear as the active creator of new social orders as during a revolution.* At such times *the people are capable of miracles,* from the point of view of the narrow middle class criterion of gradual progress. But it is essential that the *leaders of revolutionary parties also set their tasks more broadly and at such times their slogans must always come in advance of the independent revolutionary activities of the masses and serve as beacon lights showing all the grandeur and all the beauty of our democratic and socialist ideal, showing the shortest, straightest road to complete, unconditional and decisive victory.* Let the opportunists of the 'emancipational' bourgeoisie, out of fear of the revolution and out of fear of the direct road, invent roundabout, indirect ways of compromise. It we should be compelled perforce to drag along such a road we should know how to do our duty also on petty everyday drudgery. But *let a relentless struggle first decide the question of choice of road. We shall prove perfidious traitors of the revolution if we do not utilize this holiday energy of the masses and their revolutionary enthusiasm for a supreme and relentless struggle for the direct and decisive road.* Let the bourgeois opportunists cower as they think of the future reaction. *The worker will not be afraid either at the thought that the*

[1] Lenin, *Collected Works* (11th Russian Edition), Vol. 8, p. 49. Italics mine.—A. D.

reaction threatens to be terrible or that the bourgeoisie is getting ready to quit. The workers expect no deals, ask for no favors, they aim to crush the forces of reaction relentlessly, i.e., to establish a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." [1]

These flaming lines of Lenin's are characteristic of a revolutionary people, primarily of the proletariat and its leaders. In these lines one vividly feels *a flaming revolutionary temperament, a mighty, integral character of uncommon force, bravery, enthusiasm, faith in the creative powers of the proletariat, in its revolutionary activity, the supreme devotion and fearlessness of a front rank fighter.* Lenin demands from leaders breadth of vision, boldness in setting revolutionary tasks, a relentless and supreme struggle for the aims set, the rejection of all deals and compromises with the enemy, condemnation of all weakness and vacillation, lack of character, because "Revolution is the lot of the strong!" Lenin contrasts the "firmness of the proletarian" to the "characterlessness of the petty bourgeois." Is it necessary to prove that the steadfastness, firmness, determination, irreconcilableness, bravery, etc. of the proletarian and the flaccidness, spinelessness, cowardice, instability of the petty bourgeois are predicated by their position in society, by the sum total of the material and social conditions of existence of these two classes—in other words, that these qualifications are not only the subjectively psychological but also the social " attributes" of definite classes!

The ideologist, the leader of the party and class differs from the rank and file in that the ideologist, the leader "proceeds in *advance* of the spontaneous movement, directing it," knows how to solve before all others the theoretical, political, tactical and organizational problems which the "material elements" of the movement meet on the way. In order to really "take into account the material elements of the movement it is necessary to take a critical attitude to them, to be able to point out the dangers and failings of the spontaneous movement, to be able to *raise* spontaneousness to consciousness." [2]

No class in history has achieved power, says Lenin, without advancing its own political leaders to guide it. The genuine leaders and ideologists of a class are those great men, personalities of genius who, basing themselves on the corresponding class, realize the historical tasks and aims that face it, realize its ideals and at the same time are the embodiment of the typical traits and qualities of this class. Is it conceivable, for instance, that the proletarian revolution could be accomplished if it were led by characterless, spineless people, lacking proletarian steadfastness, irreconcilability, firmness, determination and initiative?

The proletarian revolution, as the most radical revolution of all recorded by history, requires leaders possessing an iron will and minds of genius—great creative geniuses, such as Lenin and Stalin. In these figures we have an especially vivid manifestation of the intimate connection between the personality with its creativeness and the class it is guiding since, to achieve a given cause, to reach a given goal, such qualities are needed as only definite leaders can "muster,"—such as can "sublimate" the creative genius of a class. It is evident therefore that the personal genius of Lenin and Stalin represent the potential genius of the class and that a certain "congeniality" exists between the leader and his class.

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[1] Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 104-105, Second edition Russian. Italics mine.—A. D.
[2] Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 341. Second Edition Russian.

VII

The problem of genius, talent and creative effort have intrigued man for ages. Many books and essays have been written on this subject. There is, however, to this day no scientific solution of the problem in spite of a number of, generally speaking, very valuable works on the subject, some of them based on experiment. The problem can be resolved into four fundamental questions:

1. What is creative effort generally?
2. What is genius?
3. What are the interrelations of genius and talent?
4. What are interrelations of genius and its social surroundings?

We leave aside the problem of inheritance and the questions connected with it. As has already been mentioned, there is a great deal of literature on every one of these questions. We shall consequently stop on the second and fourth questions only.

Let us investigate the question of what is genius With the Romans, as is well known, genius was a special spirit, a guardian spirit, under whose protection man lives. Every city or congregation had its own genius. This was a force external to man which guided him. More than that it was the "spirit" which generates man (qui genuit). In the further process of history the conception of genius underwent a complex evolution which we shall not stop to investigate. The modern bourgeois conception of genius grew up in the eighteenth century. Until this very day, however, it has retained a certain mystic implication against which the French materialists yet began to battle beginning with Helvetius.

It is necessary to pay particular attention to three peculiarities of the views of bourgeois thinkers and writers on genius. First, that genius is divine revelation, second, that genius creates not consciously but instinctively, intuitively, unconsciously. This implies that it is not the personality of genius proper that creates but genius within the personality, a special spirit, over which man himself has really no power. Finally, all the older theories (including that of Kant), with very few exceptions, assume that genius is inherent only to artists and poets, but not to scientists, philosophers, statesmen and the like.

Among the French materialists of the eighteenth century two points of view in the question of genius vied for supremacy; the point of view of Helvetius and that of Diderot. Helvetius [1] denied all mystery, divine inspiration, irrationalism and intuitivism in the phenomenon of genius. Diderot took an opposite view. To the latter genius was "l'activité de l'ame," a particular kind of inspiration, an activity of instinct, "a creative force similar to that of the omnipotence of nature."

Helvetius' ideas merit special attention because of their clarity, profundity and simplicity. It seems to us that in the analysis of the problem of genius Helvetius came closer to the truth than a great many other writers and philosophers who have written on this subject, though we cannot agree with his views completely.

"The word genius," he writes, "comes from gignere, gigno: I generate, I produce; it always implies invention and this is the only quality common to all genius. There are two sorts of invention or discovery. Some are due to

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[1] Helvetius—*De l'esprit.* (Quotations are from the Russian translation 1917, retranslated into English.—Tr.)

chance: such, for instance, are the discovery of the compass, powder and almost all discoveries in science.

There are, however, other discoveries due to genius: by discovery we here understand the noting of new combinations, new interrelations among well known objects or ideas. The title of genius is given in those cases when the ideas flowing from those interrelations are rich in truth and beneficial to mankind."[1]

Genius, says Helvetius, is gleaming lightning illuminating the horizon. Its power consists of the degree of perfection which its discoveries achieve and their fruitfulness for the development of thought and life. The title of genius is given to a man whose discoveries concern things of general interest to mankind. In order to receive the title of genius one "should be born" at a time when due to his talents and discoveries a man can create an era—in science or in the social field.

Mind always implies *inventiveness*. It represents a collection of new ideas and combinations (of ideas). Genius connects up a greater number of truths or ideas and makes something more integral out of them than others. But the connection of a greater number of truths presupposes a greater number of combinations. Besides, it is demanded of a genius that he unite in one principle, in one point of view an infinite number of truths.

With regard to inventiveness, "it embraces also a broad mental outlook; it consequently also implies greater persistence triumphing over all difficulties and the daring which opens up new roads." Helvetius draws fine distinctions among the conceptions of talent, a bright intellect, a broad intellect, a penetrating mind and genius. Mankind is obliged for no new discoveries to talent or bright intellect. "Bright intellects do not widen the confines of our thought." Talent is the ability to convey ideas clearly to others. A broad intellect is one that is capable of encompassing a great many things. A penetrating mind encompasses few things, but deepens them and "travels the same distance in depth that the broad intellect covers on the surface." Genius is primarily—deep mind. It is "the ability to reduce ideas comprehensible by themselves to other ideas even more clear and simple, until the final possible solution is reached. Anyone that could gauge," Helvetius quotes Formey, "the limit to which man brings this analysis, would have a scale for measuring the depth of every mind."[2] With regard to common sense—this does not imply any inventiveness whatever, nor any intellect; intellect begins where common sense ends.

While a bright or penetrating mind by itself is not yet a deep mind, consequently, not yet a mind of genius, this does not preclude the reverse, i.e., this does not mean a mind of genius cannot also be bright and penetrating. "Genius like a bold mariner seeks and discovers unknown regions." This is its essence and its vocation. It illuminates the way along which mankind plods gropingly as if in the darkness of night. It goes in advance of all others.

Helvetius further analyzes in detail the role of imagination and feeling in man's creative work. Imagination consists essentially of the new correlation and unification of images, it is the inventor of images, just as the mind is the inventor of ideas. In its pure form imagination is applied in the creative work of the artist. At a lower stage of development it plays a great role as the sole organ of cognition, trying to explain all the phenomena of nature by means of images until this sort of knowledge is replaced by reason through experience and observation. Imagination plays an insignificant role in science and

[1] Helvetius—*De l'esprit,* Russian translation, p. 315, 1917.
[2] Helvetius. *De l'esprit,* Russian Translation, p. 347, 1917.

philosophy. Here it only serves to lend greater clarity and elegance to abstract principles and ideas.

By passion Helvetius understands continuousness of like feelings: "For those ardent spiritual emotions and transports which are known as feelings, man is obliged only to entirely definite passions.

"Man is animated by these passions when in his soul only a single wish rules and reigns imperiously over all other wishes subjected to it." [1]

Strong passions rouse one to accomplish courageous, heroic deeds and to create great ideas. "It is to strong passions that we owe the inventions and wonders of art and they should be considered the fruitful germs and powerful inciters of man to do great deeds." In this passage Hegel agrees entirely with Helvetius in stating that nothing great in the world is accomplished without strong passion. Passions, in the words of Helvetius, constitute the creative germs of intellect. Only strong passions give rise to great men. But passions, in their turn, are moved by interests—personal, or social; class interests.

"Maintaining a constant fermentation of our ideas they fructify these ideas which in cold souls remain sterile and like seed thrown on rocks.

"Passions concentrate our attention on the thing we desire, compel us to investigate it from points of view unknown to others and *compel heroes to contemplate and accomplish bold enterprises which seem and must seem mad to the crowd until success proves their wisdom.*

"That is why, as Cardinal Richelieu says, a weak soul thinks the simplest projects impossible while great projects seem easy for strong souls: before them mountains go down while for the weak, mole hills grow into mountains."[2]

Speaking of heroism, Helvetius makes a very interesting remark bearing directly on our subject. He says that *genuine heroism is possible only in a social order where individual interests coincide with social interests.* We are not concerned here in what form Helvetius conceived for himself this harmony of individual and social interests. He was neither a socialist nor a communist. From our point of view it is evident that such harmony can only exist under communism and it is consequently natural that the highest degree of heroism can only be reached on this basis.

Another important point should be stressed in the teachings of Helvetius on genius, one that on first view might seem surprising in the mouth of a Frenchman of the eighteenth century: Helvetius claims that every class has its own geniuses. Here are his own words: "And really, since individual persons who constitute society group themselves into various classes which, in order to hear and see possess different hearing and sight, it is clear that one and the same writer, however great his genius, cannot please them all equally and that every class needs its own authors." [3] This is naturally of particular significance with respect to great historical figures and political leaders.

Let us now return to Kant. To him "genius is talent (natural giftedness) which prescribes rules to art. Since talent," he continues, "as an inborn productive ability of the artist, itself belongs to nature, one can also say: genius is an inborn inclination of the soul (ingenium), *through which* nature prescribes rules for art." [4]

Without agreeing with Kant on the limitation of genius to the sphere of

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[1] Helvetius, ibid., p. 326.
[2] Helvetius, ibid., p. 197. Italics mine.—A.D.
[3] Helvetius, ibid., p. 358.
[4] Immanel Kant—*Kritik der Urteilskraft,* S. 160, Vorlander.

artistic creation or on talent belonging to nature, rejecting his anti-historism and naturalism (Kant speaks of nature, entirely ignoring social conditions), we shall stop on some other features of his definition of genius. Originality he considers the first peculiarity of genius. It is consequently impossible to "learn to be" a genius, there are no rules by following which one may become a genius. The works of genius must serve as *examples* and cannot be the result of simple imitation. Genius becomes a lawgiver in its field; rules are abstract formulations of the results of his creative work and talents can test their abilities by following the examples of his creation. The creator himself, however, does not know how he comes to the ideas of his creations, as creation itself lies beyond logical thought: it does not fit into any concepts. Here Kant makes a sharp turn towards mysticism and the irrational, referring, by the way, to the concept of genius—as a guiding spirit.[1]

Elsewhere Kant writes: "To invent is something entirely different than to discover. What is discovered is supposed to have existed previously and was only unknown, for instance America before Columbus. But what is invented, for instance, powder, was entirely unknown (non-existent) up to the inventor who first made it. Both the one and the other are merits. But one can also find something one was not looking for at all . . . then there is no merit in it. Thus a talent for invention—is genius. Only the title is always given only to the artist (dem Kunstler), i.e., to the one who can *make* things and not to the one who only knows much; and at that to the artist who does not only imitate, but is capable of creating his work originally (ursprünglich), further, only to such an artist whose work is exemplary, i.e., when it merits becoming an object of imitation as an exemplary one. Hence, human genius is 'exemplary originality of talent' (depending on one or another sort of the products of art)[2] Kant further develops the idea according to which the organ of genius is power of imagination as only this is of a creative nature and is much less subject to the compulsion of rules than any other organ. Speaking of art and artists (Künstler) Kant has in mind, as we have seen, also inventors and not artists of word or brush only—in other words, all that can make things, create anything new and original.

On these grounds Kant refuses the title of genius to the scientist, for instance to Newton, whom he held in very high regard, because Newton like all scientists, only *discovered* what existed in nature before him but did not invent, while on the other hand, science is a sphere where anyone can learn what Newton discovered. In other words, Newton could transfer all his knowledge to others while the artist can not, because "Homer or Wieland cannot tell just how their ideas, fantastic and yet full of meaning, come to them, as they do not know this themselves and are therefore incapable of conveying this to others."

In this respect it is interesting to stop on another question touched upon by Kant in his *Anthropology*. This is the question of soothsaying, divination and prophecy.

Kant rails against the Roman poets because they took it upon themselves to divine and prophesy the future. How, he writes, could poets reach such a point as to consider themselves inspired (or possessed) and capable of divining the future, bragging that in their poetic fits (furor poeticus) they have in-

[1] "Daher denn auch vermutlich das Wort Genie von Genius dem eigentümlichen, einem Menschen bei der Geburt mitgegebenen schützenden und leitenden Geist, von dessen Eingebung jene originalen Ideen herrührten, abgeleitet ist." Kant, Ibid., p. 161. (Also the word genius is probably derived from that singular guarding and guiding genius who accompanies man at his birth and in whose inspiration those original ideas have their source.)

[2] Kant. *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, S. 146, 557, Vorländer.

spirations—that can only be explained by the fact that the poet must wait for a favorable moment until he reaches such an inner state when live and powerful images and feelings seem to flow into him as if by themselves while he himself is passive.

Kant justly rejects divination and prophecy, recognizing only scientific foresight (Praevisio). The ability to foresee things interests us above all, he says, as it is the condition for any possible practical life and realization of aims. Recollection envisioning the past—is accomplished in order to make prevision of the future possible in its light. Empirical foresight is the expectation of analogous sequences and only requires the recollection of observed events in the order they usually follow, and repeated experiments create definite habits in this respect.

Kant is, of course, entirely correct in denying to poets, however great their genius (and it is genius that is under discussion) the right and ability of divining or prophesying the future, holding that the only possible prevision is that based on science. Only he conceives the ability of prevision altogether too schematically. It is true that in order to foresee, one must be able to see both the past and the present, true that the ability to foresee things is a condition for any possible and real practical life. But it is not altogether true that scientific divination or prevision is limited to "recollection of observed events and the expectation of analogous sequences" although this is a condition for making foresight possible.

It is not true with respect to nature. In the province of social phenomena things are even more complex, because here we are dealing with the foreseeing of the coming of such *new* phenomena or events as had never taken place before, although they are, of course, a necessary result of the past. The scientific prevision, for instance, of the transformation of one social formation into another, *entirely new one,* on the basis of a study of the laws of development of the old formation, foreseeing its basic contours, etc., cannot be reduced to the mere "recollection of observed events." Hence thinkers and scientists who rise to such a degree of prevision of the *new, that never happened before,* are geniuses. And if in addition they also *create, shape* this new world, that makes them all the more geniuses. As *artists* (Künstler)—builders of an entire new world—they fill even the requirements set by Kant more than sufficiently.

Schopenhauer's theory of genius adjoins that of Kant, but he also follows his own course, approaching Plato. His theory is a purely contemplative one. The sort of knowledge, he holds, which contemplates all existence beyond and independently of all relations, and only what is actually essential in the world, the true meaning of its phenomena, which is subject to no changes and is therefore cognized with like truth for all time, i.e., *ideas,* which are the direct objectivization of the essence of the world—of *will*—this sort of knowledge is art, the work of genius.

"Art repeats eternal ideas, what is essential and constant in all the phenomena of the world, perceived by pure contemplation, and depending upon the material in which it repeats them, becomes plastic art, poetry or music. Cognition of the idea is the only source, conveying this knowledge—the only aim. [1]

Schopenhauer makes a sharp distinction between science and art. Science investigates an object in its various relations and connections with other objects, it follows the "basic laws." The function of art is an entirely different one. "It snatches the object of its contemplation out of the world stream and

[1] Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung,* Russian translation by A. Fet, 1888, p. 222.

sets it up before itself in isolation; and this separate atom that was part of the disappearing stream, becomes to it the representative of the whole, the equivalent of the infinitely many in space and time; hence it stops on it alone; it holds back the wheel of time: relations vanish; its object is the essence, the idea. We can therefore define art as a manner of contemplation of objects which is independent of the basic law, in contradistinction to knowledge depending upon this law, that of experience and science. This last sort of knowledge can be compared with an infinite, horizontal straight line; the first—with that of a point intersecting this line perpendicularly. The sort of view which follows the basic law is a reasonable one, the only one which has any meaning and force on practical life as well as in science; the view looking outside the contents of this law is the one of genius and is the only view which has any meaning or force in art. The first sort of view is that of Aristotle, the second, generally speaking, that of Plato. . . ."[1]

According to Schopenhauer, therefore, the essence of genius consists of the prevailing ability to contemplate eternal ideas, totally forgetting its own self and its relations. Hence the "perfect objectivity of genius." He must be a "purely cognizing subject," the clear eye of the world. To genius cognitive ability is the sun illuminating the world. The scientist, according to Schopenhauer (as with Kant) cannot be a genius. The philosopher is quite another matter. To the extent to which philosophy is an art, and according to his point of view, philosophy is an art and not a science, the philosopher is an artist and consequently can rise to the heights of genius.

Schopenhauer's theory of genius is most intimately connected with his theory of knowledge and with metaphysics. His entire theory is permeated with contemplativeness. Its basic vice is further rooted in his acceptance of the teachings of Plato on the existence of eternal ideas, the contemplation of which is the essence of knowledge. To Schopenhauer, genius consists of the ability to dissolve, lose oneself in contemplation and to free knowledge from service to the will. We can here see the connection between his theory of genius and metaphysics requiring the destruction of will, the renunciation of life.

Contrary to Schopenhauer and his contemporary followers, we think that genius, inasmuch as we are dealing with its cognitive aspects, does not rest on knowledge of the isolated object but on knowledge of the connections, of the essence and laws of the world. It is in this sense that the great artist gives in the works he creates typical, general laws and all-sided connections of the individual with a definite whole in the particular, individual image. Naturally, the individual image embodies, or should embody, the essential, the essence of the whole. With respect to the relation of knowledge to will, more broadly —to practical life, it would be purposeless if it did not aid in transforming the world.

In Hegel, the ideologist of the bourgeoisie of the pre-revolutionary period, we find an entirely different approach to the question. Regardless of the fact that his theory of "all-world historical" personages is clothed in specific Hegelian terminology and idealist mysticism, we find there much that is correct and profoundly true. What draws one's attention first of all is that Hegel approaches the problem of great men from the point of view of history, and then, that to him the historical personage is an active figure, really a revolutionist and not a great contemplator.

We shall take the liberty of giving his theory in ordinary language without

[1] Ibid., pp. 222-223.

deviating, of course, in any way from the text, but avoiding the specifically Hegelian terms, such as idea, concept, world spirit, etc.

Hegel says this: the appearance of great personalities in history is connected with the destruction of existing forms of life which have historically outlived themselves.[1] Here the great conflict arises between the existing, acknowledged laws and rights, on the one side, and the new possibilities, contradictory to this system, which infringe upon it, destroy its foundations and reality, revealing in themselves a new content which is necessary and essential. These possibilities become historical ones. . . .

Great historical personalities who grasp this new, higher form of reality and make it their goal, realize it, are heroes. They do not evolve their aims and their calling from the serene, existing system, from the sanctified course of things. Their justification does not have its roots in the existing situation, in the given order. It has an entirely different source in the "hidden spirit" which knocks at the door of the present, which lives underground (unterirdisch ist) up to a time, has not yet become reality, but is endeavoring to become such, to whom the existing world represents only a shell which has within it another core besides the one now existing in it. But everything that deviates from what is now existing: intentions, aims, opinions, so-called ideals —all differ from it in like degree.

The activity of the heralds of the new ideals proceed contrary to existing relationships. But general principles and good grounds, representations differing from the existing ones, in themselves do not yet serve as a justification. The true aim should be a definite content. And all-world historical personalities or heores are those who aim, not at the virtual and imaginary, but at what is right and necessary, those who know what is necessary for the given era and what has really matured. It is their lot to know what the necessary higher stage of the world consists of, to make this their aim and apply all their energy to its realization. And they are right because they are perspicacious, because they know the truth of their time. And others gather about their banners because they express that which has matured. They are the most penetrating people of their period and know better than any others what should be done. And what they do is truly right.

Others must follow them because these others feel, if not altogether consciously, then instinctively, that they are right. Their speeches, their deeds are the very best that can be said and done. Great historical personalities can thus be understood only by the positions they occupy, but what is most amazing in them is that they become the instruments of "universal," i.e., historical necessity, expressing the needs of the objective process of development.

Such is the true relationship of this personality to the objective process of development. And the force, might and power of these personalities are determined by these relationships, while, inasmuch as their aims correspond to the needs of the period and they endeavor to achieve them—absolute truth is on their side.

The function of leaders or all-world historical personalities, to use Hegel's terminology, consists primarily of achieving an end dictated by history, in this they find complete satisfaction for themselves. They know better than anyone else the powerlessness of what exists, of that which still glimmers but is already a mere appearance of reality.

But people, i.e. the new class, as we should say it, experience discontent,

[1] In Hegelian language this would sound: "Forms of reality which have developed their concepts in full. . . ."

dissatisfaction; they adopt a negative attitude to what exists without being able to express what they want in a clear definite form. Historical personalities are those who first tell people, i.e. the foremost class, what it is they want.

They only endeavor to realize the aims set by history and by themselves, inasmuch as they have perceived the course of history. The achievement of the ends comes by tireless labor. Setting themselves such goals, they are courageous enough to go against the opinions of all opponents. They do not seek personal happiness, but labor and struggle for the sake of achieving those aims. Their personalities consist of their deeds, their passions—and nothing great in history has ever been created without great passion—fill all their being, so to say, and shape their character. But these passions, as Hegel expresses it, are "the passions of their aims," i.e., they have put all their character, all their genius, all their being into these aims. To the superficial mind it looks as if they are only pursuing their passions, but what they seek is the realization of the necessary end. And in this aim, in this "universal" aim, as Hegel says, lies their grandeur. Hence the power of passion, the tension of will and energy which distinguishes the leaders. Without this they could do nothing great.

The aim of passion and the aim of the idea is one and the same. Passion is unity of character and the "universal," i.e., the idea, the aim. A man who accomplishes anything great must put all his energy into it. He is completely devoted to his aim, he seems to dissolve his personality in it. Passion is the energy of the aim itself and the definiteness of a given will, it is like a natural force compelling a man to put all his energy into this cause. This passion is called *enthusiasm.*[1]

VIII

Summing up what has been said about genius, we consider it necessary to stress a number of individual points in this connection, to return to the subject of creative work generally later.

We assume that genius, like creative work generally, has its source in accumulated creative energy. This is equally true of individuals and of an entire social class. If we take the working class, its liberation after the proletarian revolution opens up a vent for the creative energy that had accumulated for a hundred or hundreds of years and was suppressed under capitalism. The genius of a class awakens in the process of its struggle for a new social order and a new culture.

The developments of production abilities, talents, creative forces, intellect are determined by the development of social relations. When speaking of *the category of creation, which plays a special role and acquires a special significance under socialism,* it is essential to remember that a rise of all creative abilities becomes possible only on a basis of definite material conditions as a result of the struggle for the higher forms of life. The historically inevitable coming of a higher form of life for the class that is struggling for it and the advance of its intellectual powers are intimately connected. The process of formation of the new society, the building of socialism, are at the same time the process of formation of a new consciousness, the process of an upward development of intellect of the entire class, the process of unfolding of all its creative forces and capabilities.

In an exeedingly interesting chapter entitled "Master and Slave" (in the

[1] Hegel, "*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*" B. I, s. 75-79.

book *Phenomenology of the Spirit*) Hegel, true to his idealist point of view, shows how *the slave forms his consciousness in the process of labor and rises above his master.* The creation of material values, which composes, so to say, the social function of the workers, in the process of historical development inevitably leads to that new stage when this function must merge with the creation of spiritual—scientific and artistic—values. The beginnings of this new, higher, stage of culture we already see in the Soviet Union where the elements of the future integral man are shaping themselves.

Connected with the conception of individual genius, in addition to the element of creative originality, of which we have already spoken, are also fulness of representation and all-sidedness of connections. The mind of genius conceives the world more fully, more all-sidedly and more clearly than that of the ordinary man.

Can genius be reduced to excessively developed imagination and to activity of some unconscious principle in man? It seems to us that it is incorrect to put the problem this way. The admission of unconscious elements borders on mysticism, as it implies the presence in man of some special substance, a special "spirit," acting independently and dictating its laws to the intellect.

The role of imagination should neither be exaggerated nor minimized. On this point Lenin liked to refer to Pisarev, with whose estimate of the role of imagination or fantasy he fully agreed. "If man," Pisarev writes, "were entirely lacking in the ability to spin fantasies . . . if he could not from time to time run ahead and view in imagination a whole and completed picture of that which is beginning to shape itself in his hands, then I could not conceive what would induce man to undertake and bring to completion any big and tiring works in the field of art, science and practical life. . . ."

It is evident that fantasy, or imagination, in this case "runs ahead of the natural course of events" as Pisarev says. And Lenin ridicules those who deny the role of imagination in man's creative work. But there are different imaginations. When imagination works in the direction of the natural course of events it is useful; it helps run ahead and view the imagined whole picture of what is in the process of being created. But if it goes astray, in a direction which the natural course of events could never take—then it is vain dreaming. Consequently, fantasy (or imagination) should base itself on the natural course of events, and, issuing from the elements of the picture in the present, mentally, so to say, continue them to the complete picture.

In other words the work of the imagination must proceed under control of the intellect which directs ideas. "It is absurd to deny the role of imagination in the most rigid of sciences," says Lenin. So what can one say about the role of imagination in art? It is required of the great artist that he have a live imagination, a rich fantasy, as by the very nature of his work the artist creates generalized, typical images in which, however, definite ideas are incorporated. Hence the image is in one way or another subject to the idea, because there is a definite correspondence between image and idea with the "leading role" belonging to the idea. It is unnecessary to proceed with the proof that the idea in its turn is the product of a definite reality which must find its truthful, adequate expression in the idea. Thus, theoretical knowledge and artistic depiction of the world are intimately connected with each other. Without a profound and subtle knowledge of the world it is impossible to create great artistic works.

One can hardly deny the role of imagination with great leaders of armies, etc. With respect to Lenin, we see that his "imagination" always ran ahead and foresaw the future creation of the great master of revolutions in a "whole,

finished picture." But, it might be objected, with them it was a matter of scientific prevision, of *thought* running ahead and not only imagination, of definite prospects which are the expression and the result of strict scientific analysis of reality.

It is unquestionably true, and we have tried to prove this, that in thinkers of genius like Lenin and Stalin, intellect plays the basic role, that they are primarily men of intellect.

We stop on this point at some length because many investigators are inclined to exaggerate the role of imagination, seeing in it the only source of all creative work and denying any creative powers to intellect and reason. There is no doubt that creative imagination, as we have shown, plays a big role in all fields, although not to an equal extent. In the field of art, creative imagination plays an incomparably greater role, of course, than in science. A highly developed capacity for association and combination, an ability for plastically live representation, for invention, etc., is required for all creative work. At the same time no really creative work can be done, particularly in science and politics, without deep ability for *abstraction*, which is an expression of the activity of the intellect proper.

The birth or springing up of anything qualitatively new in nature and society is bound up with the "interruption of gradualness," i e., with a leap. The creation of the new implies a leap in the course of thought or imagination. It is on these grounds that some investigators claim that *un*conscious thought is the source of this leap, which is the result of accumulated recollections assuming to some extent the nature of hallucinations and acting as independent forces. A logical chain of thought or ideas is the result of accumulated recollections which give rise to this leap to the new, previously unknown. So arise new ideas or inventions, etc. But one can hardly agree to such a conception of the creative process. No doubt "recollection," i.e., accumulated experience and an ability for association and new "combination" play a considerable role in creative work, but accumulated experience does not necessarily have to lie somewhere in the province of the unconscious; on the contrary, it is conceived or comprehended from the point of view of a new problem, of a new task to be solved by the intellect.

True, in a man of rich, broad experience, his recollections and associations function with a certain degree of "automatism," i.e., he commands them easily, calls them to life without any particular mental effort, but this does not by any means signify that the unconscious acts by itself like some force foreign to consciousness, independently solving problems, that the leap or explosion of the new occurs in it without the participation of consciousness. We now approach the question of the role of intuition to which many modern writers (like Bergson) attribute a particular significance.

All knowledge, they assert, is possible only due to intuition, understanding by this direct knowledge, received by means of simple inner vision as opposed to discursive, logical thought by means of concepts. From the point of view of the advocates of intellectual intuition (which should not be confused with sensory intuition, i.e., the contemplation of sensory subjects), it is assumed that man is capable of envisioning conceptions. Such a position is thoroughly mystical, as it is impossible to envision an idea or conception, one can only envision concrete, sensuous things, i.e., that which is materially extant. By intuition is also understood the ability to reach conclusions by evading, "skipping," a number of steps in the logical chain of reasoning.

It seems to us that the "rational germ" of intuition consists of this possibility of avoiding intermediate links and this is what served as a reason for the as-

sertion that one can do without discursive thought, that man cognizes by means of *inner contemplation of ideas*. But there is nothing mystical in "rational intuition" because it implies experience gone through more than once and which can be called up immediately under new conditions. It is a silent leap, so to say, over an obstacle long overcome, which requires no repetition of effort. It is a short road which great people, people of genius, usually take.

It is evident that the ability of the mind of genius to grasp the essence of phenomena rapidly, to grasp their inner meaning quickly, implies a short—and consequently, exceedingly condensed and intense—method of thinking.

In his essays and speeches on Lenin, Comrade Stalin gives us a great deal of material illuminating our problem of analysing proletarin genius. In his speech on Lenin of January 28, 1924 Comrade Stalin quotes two particularly characteristic facts to illustrate his thought on the penetrating genius and "giddy" boldness of Lenin's revolutionary projects. The first fact is the October uprising. Characterizing the situation then, Comrade Stalin says: "What did it mean to start an uprising at such a moment? To start an uprising in such a situation—meant to stake everything on a card. But Lenin was not afraid to risk, because he knew, saw with his clear-seeing eye, that an uprising is inevitable, that an uprising will win, that an uprising in Russia will prepare the end of the imperialist war, that an uprising in Russia will transform the imperialist war into a civil war, that a Soviet republic will serve as a bulwark of the revolutionary movement all over the world." [1]

The second fact concerns the negotiations of Lenin and Stalin with commander-in-chief Dukhonin during the first few days after the October Revolution on the question of terminating military activities and beginning peace negotiations with Germany. "Dukhonin and the Stavka," [2] Comrade Stalin relates, "categorically refused to obey the orders of the Sovnarkom.[3] The commanding staff of the army was entirely in the hands of the Stavka. With respect to the soldiers, it was not known what the twelve million strong army, subordinated to the so-called army organizations inclined to be against the Soviet government, would say. In Petrograd itself, as is well known, an uprising of the Junkers had matured then. In addition Kerensky was moving against Petrograd. I remember how after a short pause at the apparatus Lenin's face brightened with some extraordinary light. It was evident he had already come to a decision. 'Let us go to the radio station,' said Lenin, 'it will serve us a good turn: we shall remove General Dukhonin by a special order, appoint Comrade Krylenko commander-in-chief in his place, and appeal to the soldiers over the heads of the commanding officers, calling upon them to surround the generals, cease military operations, get in touch with the Austro-German soldiers and take the matter of peace into their own hands.'

"This was 'a leap into the unknown.' But Lenin was not afraid of this 'leap;' on the contrary, he went to meet it, because he knew that the army wants peace and it will win peace, sweeping aside all obstacles in the way of peace, because he knew that such a method of establishing peace will not be wasted for the Austro-German soldiers, that it will unchain the yearning for peace on all fronts without any exceptions.

"It is well known that this revolutionary prevision of Lenin's also turned out later exactly as he had foreseen.

"Penetrating genius, the ability to grasp quickly and decipher the inner

[1] Stalin, *On Lenin*, pp. 28-29, 1934.
[2] Stavka—General Staff Headquarters.
[3] Sovnarkom—Council of Peoples Commissars.

meaning of coming events—this is the proper strategy and a clear line of action at turning points in the revolutionary movement." [1]

Characterizing Lenin as a genius of revolution, Comrade Stalin thus stresses, besides his "giddy" boldness—clear-sighted vision, the ability to grasp rapidly and decipher the inner meaning of events, penetrating genius, the ability to foresee events on the basis of a study of the laws of developments, etc. The essence of the genius of proletarian revolution is expressed and revealed in these attributes, which, from our point of view, represent the highest degree of genius generally.

Speaking of Lenin's ability to foresee events, "see with clear-sighted vision" the picture of future events, Comrade Stalin at the same time emphasizes that Lenin knew how events would unfold. We wish to say by this that "intuition" understood as anticipation by means of simple, direct inner "vision" of the future picture in its entirety and completeness, also rests on a misunderstanding. It is perfectly true that the proletarian genius anticipates the future, is distinguished by the greatest degree of penetration. But it is entirely wrong to assume that these peculiarities proceed from a mystic ability of direct vision of the picture without discursive logical thought taking any part in it.

Two types of genius can be distinguished: the analytical and synthetical. Without entering here into an analysis of these two types, we consider it necessary to emphasize that geniuses like Lenin and Stalin are simultaneously analysts and syntheticians, i.e., dialecticians. This is a peculiarity of proletarian genius. In the above mentioned speech, Comrade Stalin points to Lenin's power of logic: "The logic of Lenin's speeches—like some all-powerful feelers which grasp you from all sides as in a vise and one has no strength left to tear away from their embrace: either you yield or decide upon complete failure." And really, anyone who had occasion to hear Lenin experienced this feeling himself.

Try to analyse any work of Lenin's and you will be convinced of this unusual power of his logic. He analyses the subject under discussion to its minutest details, reduces it, so to say, to its prime, simplest "chemical elements," reveals all connections and relations. These analytical abilities were a great power of Lenin's. His "simplicity and clearness of argumentation" about which Comrade Stalin speaks, are connected with this. Lenin's analysis makes the studied subject completely transparent. His power of analysis reminds one of Roentgen rays, which make it possible to make any body translucent.

Comrade Stalin also possesses this amazing ability. Comrade Stalin writes about Lenin: ". . . Lenin's penetrating genius was never manifested as fully and clearly as during revolutionary explosions. On days of revolutionary turning points he literally flourished, became clairvoyant, foresaw the movement of classes, and the probable zig-zags of the revolution, seeing them as if on his palm." [1]

This remarkably subtle and profound characterization of Lenin as clairvoyant, foreseeing the movements of classes and the probable zig-zags of the revolution, seeing them as if on his palm, sets another problem before us: what is the source of this clairvoyance? We have emphasized Lenin's tremendous analytical powers, powers of making reality translucent, of seeing through it, of reducing it to its constituent elements and uncovering their inner ties, of penetrating to the essence of reality of which events are a manifestation on the surface of life. But this is only one aspect of the matter.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 29-30.
[1] Stalin—*On Lenin,* pp. 29-30.
[1] Stalin—*On Lenin,* p. 28.

Lenin's was not only an analytical mind; his was also a great constructive, synthesizing mind, able to build up in thought the new reality as it *must* actually come by force of definite laws eventually, taking into consideration, of course, conscious interference, the bitter struggle for the tasks set before the party and the class it leads, as well as possible diversions and inevitable actions of all other classes. Such clairvoyance is the result of a profound and all-sided knowledge of life with all its richness of color, connections and relations—economic, political, ideological, etc.

The genius of the proletarian revolution must necessarily be of the highest type of genius, if only by virtue of the extraordinary complexity of the object of his creative efforts. He must be, in a certain sense, a universal genius. This is required by the very "nature," by the character of the proletarian revolution, because we are dealing here with a radical transformation of the entire world, with the solution of problems of such magnitude as have never faced mankind since history began. Comrade Stalin states that the qualifications necessary "to retain the post of leader of the proletariat are theoretical power with practical organizational experience in the proletarian movement."

Only creative geniuses and heroes can be leaders of the proletarian revolution, successfully building a Socialist society amid hostile surroundings.

Lenin, writes Comrade Stalin, was a leader of the highest type, a mountain eagle who knew no fear in struggle and was distinguished by his overwhelming boldness. Heroism is a special form of genius. Like genius, it differs in degree, of course. There are different degrees of heroism and genius. Every worker udarnik who does not spare himself in order to realize the Socialist transformation of society is a hero and creator to some degree. The specific distinguishing feature of the hero is that he stakes not only his creative powers but his very life for the realization of the great historical end.

One can be a genius in music, poetry, science, without being in the least a hero. But it is impossible to be a leader of the proletarian revolution without being at the same time a genius and hero. The hero scorns danger. His very calling is the overcoming of dangers, obstacles and difficulties, the struggles with them, the quelling and subduing of inimical forces whether of elemental nature or of society. In any case the hero stakes his very existence. *He is the bearer of the intellect and will of an entire class.* In him the highest degree of development of mental powers is linked with mighty desire, with tremendous will power bent on destruction of the old and the building up of the new world. Penetrating genius and mighty will power—these are the two prime traits of the true leader of the proletarian revolution.

But genius is a product of social life. It is in this sense that Hegel speaks of the genius or hero expressing in conscious form what has matured in the objective conditions of reality but is only vaguely felt and semi-consciously experienced by the others. The genius tells people about what they want but are not conscious of. He knows what others do not. He discovers what is historically necessary, what has matured and points out to the people, i.e., to his class, the road which leads to the desired end, and puts himself at the head of the movement.

In his interview with the German writer Emil Ludwig, Comrade Stalin has pointed out that Marxism does not deny the role of heroes or prominent personalities in social life. People make history. "But, of course, people make history not in any way their imagination might suggest, not in any way it might occur to them. Every new generation meets with definite conditions which were already there when this new generation was born. And great people are only worth their salt in so much as they can understand these condi-

tions correctly, understand how to change them. If they do not understand these conditions and want to change them as their imagination suggests then they, these people, fall into the position of Don Quixote."

Only he who leads his class, and together with it, society as a whole, forward, to higher forms of life is a truly great man, a hero of history.

The creative work of the proletarian genius—and particularly of the genius of revolution—is a vivid expression of the "sublimation" of the creative efforts of the masses themselves. In him the creative efforts of the masses reach the highest tension and realization. In characterizing Lenin's relationship to the creative powers of the masses, Comrade Stalin writes:

"I know of no other revolutionist who believed so profoundly in the creative powers of the proletariat and in the revolutionary expediency of its class instinct, as Lenin."

"Hence Lenin's disdainful attitude towards all those who tried to look down on the masses and teach them by booklets. Hence Lenin's constant enjoinder: to learn from the masses, to comprehend their actions, to make a careful study of the practical experience of the struggle of the masses.

"Faith in the creative powers of the masses—this is that peculiarity of Lenin's activity which made it possible for him to comprehend elemental forces and direct their movement into the channel of proletarian revolution."

The faith of Marx, Lenin and Stalin in the creative powers and abilities of the proletariat constitutes an integral part of their world philosophy. This "faith" is a conclusion from a generalization of the tremendous historical experience of the class struggle of the proletariat.

The genuine genius is a great creator. Goethe defines genius as a productive force which creates immortal deeds. Goethe emphasizes particularly the significance of effective productivity. The creative work of proletarian geniuses is distinguished in the highest degree by the character of effective productivity. Their deeds are vital and long lived, descending far into future history.

The constructive genius of Stalin, for instance, finds its fullest expression in the effective productivity of all-sided creative leadership in the building of a new world, with a new, higher, Socialist culture raising mankind to a new higher status.

As applied to the proletarian genius, the attribute "man of granite" is especially apt. Lenin and Stalin are men of granite. Hence the party they created is also a granite party. Such a party, constituting the vanguard of the great working class and guided by a leader of genius cannot but be distinguished for an iron will to achieve the triumph of Socialism the world over, and cannot but triumph.

The proletarian revolution means the appropriation by the proletariat of the means of production. And the appropriation by them of the sum total of production forces means, as Marx said, the appropriation by them of their own cumulative production forces which for the first time produce the conditions for creating a new, higher type of culture where every man will take an active part in collective labor and in the creation of the highest cultural values.

While Helvetius claimed that talent (not genius, of course) is a common gift and that consequently its development depends upon external favorable conditions, i.e., on the art of education, his basic error consisted in that he reduced these external favorable circumstances to a form of political administration, not understanding the essence of social relations. In despotic states, he says, one must renounce the hope to produce people distinguished for virtue or talent. In monarchical states such an undertaking could be risked with

some hope of success. But evidently Helvetius thought it possible to achieve great success in this respect in republican states. "Great men, up to now the result of blind chance, will become the result of the activity of the legislator: then, leaving less room for chance, an excellent education will make it possible in great states to multiply both talent and virtue without end."

The task set by Helvetius can be accomplished only under Socialism, where the art of education, taken in its broad all-embracing sense, will really produce the results of which Helvetius speaks. This is true because in a Socialist society there is realized that "appropriation of production forces" which involves the appropriation and development of the cumulative abilities and talents spoken of first by Marx and realized in our country under the leadership of genius—Lenin and Stalin. The genius of the working class is beginning to preen his wings and manifest his creative abilities in the struggle with the bourgeoisie for a new, Socialist order in society.

The faith of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin in the creative powers of the proletariat is a recognition of the genius of the class, is the certainty that the creative energy latent in it, with an adequate development of the material conditions of society, assures the overcoming of all difficulties in the way of building Socialism and is itself the best guarantee of the triumph of Socialism. The art of education under Socialism is of paramount significance. Only Socialist society, where private and social interests coincide, can actually realize the ideal of "multiplying talent and virtue without end" which Helvetius vainly expected from the "legislator."

The problem of the shaping and all-sided development of the creative forces and productive abilities of man can be put in its full breadth and solved only in a Socialist society, because it alone possesses all the material requisites for its solution.

Our country has entered upon this road—and is at present the only one in the world to have done so. And we are profoundly convinced that the "art of education" of talents and creators in the diverse fields of human endeavor, after it has been put on a rational and scientific basis, will result in the fullest development of creative abilities and talents of its people.

A member of a Socialist or Communist society is primarily a conscious creator of new values, a talented builder of Socialist culture. In Socialist society, human genius, of which Lenin has said that up to the present it has worked for the benefit of an insignificant minority of society, merges with the cumulative creative forces of society and becomes the heritage of all.

Translated from the Russian by S. D. Kogan

V. Libedinski

Our Comrade Furmanov

Commemorating the Tenth Anniversary of the Death of D. A. Furmanov

I first saw Dmitri Andreyevich Furmanov early in the winter of 1923, in the editorial offices of *Molodaya Gvardia,* a monthly magazine. The offices were then situated on the Novaya Ploshchad, not far from the Varvarka, beyond the Chinese Wall, which no longer exists. I cannot recall the reason for his coming—perhaps he had been asked to call and make arrangements to write for us . . . (*Chapayev* had just been published).

I recall my first glimpse of him. He was wearing a soldier's greatcoat of grey or green, and a military looking fur hat, the brim and ear flaps of which had been turned down, partly covering his cheeks and neck. It was a severe winter day, with a white sky above but no sunshine, and hard snowflakes falling sideways to the ground. Dmitri Andreyevich had come by automobile, and was almost frozen.

I noted later that the frost did not deal gently with his face for it was always weatherbeaten. He was jolly, and the whole office liked him immediately. Dark brown, quick merry eyes that would rest intently upon the person with whom he was conversing, caressingly and at the same time seriously concentrating on what he was regarding at the moment. These eyes were somewhat deepset, stubborn and observing.

There was stubbornness also in the set of his head;—his forehead tilted slightly, especially when he walked. Perhaps this was due to his habit of being continuously engaged in thought. His was a quick, light gait, a youthful, graceful stature, shoulders slightly sloping, softly curling hair above a high forehead, seriousness in the shape of his beautifully shaped mouth, which was ever ready to smile. That was how he looked—one of the pleasantest persons I have ever encountered.

Furmanov embodied the very best elements contributed to young Soviet literature by writers who had come at the conclusion of the civil war from various fields of political work: Komsomol activists, political workers of the army, journalists, Soviet workers.

Entering the revolution with character already formed, it was during the fire of the civil war that he first began to develop into a new type of writer —a participant in the fight for socialism, a builder of socialism, an intent and constant observer, noting all that was happening to him and around him, and reflecting it all in his writings and characters. A commissar of the Chapayev division, an important political worker in the army, in the thick of events, his notebook did not leave him for a moment, not even when he was captured by a kulak counter-revolutionary band and lay in prison awaiting death. With heroic endurance he continued to take notes. (See *Mutiny.*)

He showed a steadfast, fiery enthusiasm towards the revolutionary events in which he participated. Note-taking became a persistent necessity; more than that, he considered it his duty to calmly and collectively make notes of what was going on. And he did this in the systematic and businesslike manner characteristic of him. Thus were *Chapayev, Mutiny* and *Desant* born. Thus did he create *Writers,* a book on literary surroundings to which Furmanov brought the fervor and enthusiasm of a proletarian revolutionary—the

driving power of his political work in the army—and that crystal-like, serious and thrilling attention which characterized the creation of *Chapayev*.

More than any of us, his comrades who together with him laid the foundation of the Revolutionary Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), Furmanov should have felt that newness of principle, and its significance to literature. Incidentally, less than any of us did he show signs of communist conceit or arrogant snobbishness regarding all that had previously existed and all that existed side by side with us in Soviet literature.

I remember how impressed he was by Babel's works. It would seem that here might be ground for antagonism, for Babel wrote of the very people with whom Commissar Furmanov had participated in the civil war, and Babel was no mean writer. . . . Much seemed incorrect and hideously distorted to Furmanov, but, as I still recall, Furmanov noted that which we were inclined to ignore—Babel's great skill in the mastery of words. There is an excellent poem by Kirsanov in which this trait of Furmanov's is immortalized.

Vsevolod Ivanov, Leonov, Seifulina and a number of other authors—now indubitably associated with the creation of our socialist literature, but then budding writers, timidly entering the field of literature, were ever under Furmanov's attentive and proprietary eye. A proprietary eye, for he considered himself not only a representative of the youthful and militant literary school —this feeling also existed and he participated in literary disputes of that time with no less heat than the rest of us—but in addition, he was able to retain a proprietary, solicitous attitude towards all that was then taking place in Soviet literature. One could find his deep feeling for the Party only in Serafimovich. It was exactly these qualities that made possible the intensive organizational work in literature which Furmanov packed into a brief period of time.

Furmanov was the first secretary of the Moscow Association of Proletarian Writers, and, in reality, the creator of this fighting organization, which gathered under its wing the overwhelming majority of the growing proletarian cadres of Soviet literature. He conducted meetings, supervised literary circles and groups, participated in literary discussions, represented the Association upon various occasions and guided its daily work. At the same time, he worked as chief editor of the Literary Art Department of the State Publishing House.

Despite the thousands of printed pages he read and edited, he was practically the most important lever of Party policy in literature, undertaking, without fuss or noise to paralyze the disorganizing, anti-Party influence which Voronski had begun to exert upon non-Party writers. In spite of all this enormous organizational work, he found time to write *Mutiny, Desant*, to re-dictate *Chapayev,* to write a number of short stories and tales, to make notes and work out plans for his novel, *Writers*, and—as during his whole life —to systematically keep a diary in which all this vast work, in addition to his daily observations of people, and his thoughts and feelings, found concise expression. As a result of this note-taking he had but to jog his memory to begin another literary work.

How did he manage to do all this?

First of all he brought into literature a hitherto unknown discipline and order. He immediately declared a decisive war upon bohemianism and laxity which characterized Party writers in no less degree than non-Party literary men.

I arrange with him to come to work at 2 p. m., but arrive at 2:30 instead

—and he refuses to talk to me. . . . We are friends. I see by the expression on his face that he is glad to see me, but I ask in vain for an "audience." He laughs affectionately, but firmly refuses to talk to me since other affairs await his attention. Moreover, he manifestly wants to teach me to be punctual, but does it all without a trace of pedantry, merrily and affectionately.

He was always upset and indignant when the secretariat or management of the Moscow Association of Proletarian Writers were late at meetings. Not infrequently the late-comer would find the following situation: Furmanov himself would raise a question, and after some consideration answer. L. I. Kogan, technical secretary of the Association, would take notes. "Sit down!", Furmanov would say in an angry tone to the late-comer. Since you came 20 minutes late, I myself took up two questions. You can find out about it after the meeting and if you have any objections we'll come to some agreement." For Furmanov, waiting for a late-comer meant submitting to the latter's lax mode of life. He had declared war upon this mode, and carried on this war stubbornly and vigorously.

He himself lived at a perpetually lively, energetic tempo of work, a tempo in no way forced, heartlessly hypocritical or doctrinary. His was an intense, organized and disciplined life and he took pleasure in it. His day was so compact that every quarter of an hour was filled. He would walk to and from work for fresh air.

He wanted to spend more time with his friends, to talk with them, so he would invite them to spend the night with him. Till this day I cannot gaze upon the outer sidewalk of Prechistinski Boulevard without a feeling of tenderness and agitation. How often, after fierce arguments, had we walked along this empty street, gaily and quickly, past houses that stand today as they did then. All that during a discussion would be clothed in distinct and dry formulas of literary-political disagreements, were in a friendly talk expressed in the lyrical strivings of a writer, in his creative plans, inseparably linked with his own life. Telling us of his plans (he was working on *Mutiny*) he would be transformed into an excited participant of these magnificent events. . . . "A play should be written about this," he exclaimed, "and it will be written in a year or two, I am sure."

Furmanov rested with the people with whom he worked. Friendship for him was a recreation inseparably connected with work.

He was able to bring out the best in every person, without closing his eyes to any shortcomings. This best he cultivated, emphasizing it in a comradely circle, making it, as it were, worthy of the entire group. Moreover, this was done without lecturing, but with lively and spontaneous enthusiasm. I recall the intonation of his voice, as if it were but yesterday:

"Yesterday X got up and spoke at the discussion. (X was a comrade Furmanov called by his dimunitive.) Small, frail looking, you wonder what keeps him together—and against him so and so (here followed names of a number of our literary opponents). Yet you should see how he unfolded his arguments and how they all kept quiet. There's no denying he's clever and plucky, a fine person."

Furmanov's conversation was colored with similar stories of his comrades. In this manner he would teach us to value each other for the mutual cause.

And this was the basis for that marvellous atmosphere of happy recreation which Furmanov created in his own home whenever he decided to give a party. He would announce the date of the party as if it were the date of a meeting that could not be postponed, and with the same persistence he

asked one not to forget it. He would carefully think out and prepare everything to make the party a gay one. Here he greets his friends. He himself would be in a festive spirit, the very embodiment of the party. Curly-haired, darkly-red, wearing a shirt with a soft collar, he would smile affably, joke, poke fun. His eyes would sparkle, with their usual intent look. As soon as you arrived you felt his attentive care. Everything had been arranged beforehand: wine and food, music and dancing, who was to sit next to whom, so that everyone should feel gay. And everyone was gay, and he gayer than all.

But all the time, whether at work, merrymaking, or with friends, he would constantly plan, recollect things, make notes. Having an eye for the shortcomings of people, he possessed excellent ability in defining these shortcomings in various ways. For one fault he would reprove, for others he was capable of becoming an enemy. . . . The whole gamut of his relations towards people found expression in his *Diaries* of the last three years, in his preparations for work on his novel *Writers*. There were to be found characterizations that were merciless and penetrating.

He was for the communist cause, and if he saw that anyone adulterated the cause with mercenary or careeristic motives, that person was his enemy for life. This fact explains his implacable hatred for intrigues, for Dovshinism (named after the first but by no means the last bearer of this vice in the ranks of the leadership of the All-Union Association of Proletarian Writers).

There was yet another element of Furmanov's character, that distinguished him as one of the communist vanguard—modesty. Not that kind of hypocritical modesty which is "humiliation worse than pride," but that special quality of being able to see himself objectively, to see his good and bad points, to weigh himself, as it were, on the scales of the general Party cause.

A certain conceited and foolish person told me the following story about Furmanov, with a view to asserting himself in my eyes:

Furmanov was editor of a periodical and this person (let us call him N.), was appointed assistant editor. With time N. developed such activity that there was practically nothing for Furmanov to do. Furmanov realized this fact and was somewhat troubled. Unexpectedly he turned to N. saying in a friendly tone of voice:

"Listen, I see that you work better than I do and can very well get on without me. Unpleasant as it may be, let's go to Comrade X and tell him this —you will be editor."

"And you? "

"They'll find something else for me to do."

This is what did take place.

I believe this story, because Dmitri Andreyevich Furmanov frequently revealed this fine Party modesty in a number of similar instances.

At the time he was finishing *Mutiny*, he, author of one of the most historically accurate of works, the closest to fact in Soviet literature, very much wanted, it seems, to change his style, to develop the elements of imagination in his creative works.

I remember several such attempts, one of which stands out especially clearly.

At one of the weekly creative meetings of the Moscow Society of Proletarian Writers, (held in the hall of the then Proletcult, on the Vozdvizhenka), Dmitri Andreyevich read his new novel to us. After the realistic picture of *Chapayev*, at a time when we already knew the first draft of *Mutiny*,

his story of an abstract-romantic communist imprisoned in jail in an abstract capitalist country, seemed unsuccessful. The members of the Association, one after another, commented critically. About half of the number were youths lacking a year or two of army age. He, Commissar of the famous Chapayev division, listened to them in silence, gloomily holding his handsome, curly head in the palms of his hands. Now and again he merely asked the speaker to repeat his words when he was not clear as to the meaning of the objection.

When they had all finished, he asked for a word and said approximately the following: "I put a lot of work into this story and I like it even now, but your arguments have convinced me. Evidently it's a bad story. . . . What shall I do about it?" he asked in an animated tone of voice, and then continued with the answer to his own question, "I won't publish it then. . . ."

And indeed, this story was published only after his death.

Furmanov, when convinced of the correctness of his position, would not swerve from it one iota (*Mutiny* is imbued with the conviction that it was impossible under the given circumstances in Central Asia for him to act otherwise than he did).

Diaries, found after his death, enable us to follow the process of the molding of this fine person. Especially interesting in this connection are the diaries of 1917, correctly entitled "The Path to Communism." Here we find material amazing for its sincerity, for the pitilessly truthful criticism of Furmanov's political activities, for the painstaking and critical analysis of his emotions, an analysis made not for the purpose of fruitless regret, but with a view to getting rid, once and for all, of any defect noted. And we see how the slobbering great-hearted petty bourgeois of adventurist careerist nationalism is thrown overboard. We see how, conforming to a natural process, is born, in the test of revolutionary practice, a fine bolshevik, that clean daring, firm and cheerful person, good to his friends and merciless to his enemies, who won for the Party the peasant regiment commander, Chapayev, who, thanks to Furmanov, has been immortalized in the book of the same name. And in our time, when this book has found its way into an excellent film directed by the Vassilev brothers, a film personifying Chapayev, as played by Babochkin, one should note especially intently the excellent features of Chapayev's Commissar. . . .

He lived, worked and rested—disciplined, inspired and gay, devoting every bit of his life to the communist cause. In his character it is not difficult to trace the foundation of that socialist mode of life which is today being created by thousands of Stakhanovites, which is becoming the mode of life for all Soviet people.

Translated from the Russian by L. Zelikova.

HUMOR and SATIRE

Valentin Katayev

The Public be Pleased!

A playwright, young but already somewhat known, brought his play to the director. The director took the manuscript in his hands and said sharply:

"What are your relations with Romuald Fedorovich?"

"Good."

"Fine. How many?"

"How many what?"

"Feminine roles—how many?"

"Eight."

"Not quite enough. We really need about eleven of them. But we'll manage somehow. It is still better than two. Acts?"

"What acts?"

"Acts—how many?"

"Five."

"We'll make it three. The play must end by half-past ten. Much music?"

"You didn't quite understand me. This is a drama."

"Never mind. We'll make it lively. And with music. Romuald Fedorovich was here only the other day and asked why we don't have cheerful plays. So just don't worry about it. Are there students?"

"Where?"

"Oh dear, how dull-witted you are. I am asking whether you have students in your comedy?"

"I have. One. Not quite a student but in the process of becoming one. He is just about ready to take an examination in the technical school of construction."

"That's not important. Is he a member of the Young Communist League?"

"Yes."

"And the girls?"

"What girls?"

"Girls—are they members of the Young Communist League?"

"One is—the other is not."

"I see. One is positive and one is negative. No one of the subway workers?"

"No."

"Too bad. And why shouldn't you make the positive one a subway builder?"

"Unfortunately it is impossible. She is already a college student."

"Pardon my indiscreetness. Which college?"

"Medical. She is going to be a doctor."

"Aha. One can say—almost a member of the physicians' union?"

"Perhaps."

"Well, not so bad. Sounds plausible. Are there military people?"

"Yes. One. An artilleryman."

"An academician?"

"No. An officer."

"You can't make an academician out of him?"

AMONG THE DIPLOMATS

Drawn by JOHN EFFEL (Paris)

What is it that you are preparing? The scheme of a project of a plan of a treaty or a project of a plan of a scheme?
No, it is a plan of a scheme of a project.

"You can, of course. But . . ."

"Well then, better let him be an academician. All right? Are there motormen?"

"No."

"Construction workers?"

"No."

"Professors?"

"Professors I have."

"How many?"

"Two."

"Positive and negative?"

"Right. How did you guess?"

"My dear man! It isn't for nothing I receive money. A kind old lady, a maid —have you those? No? It's a pity. And a neighbor with a gumboil? Not that either? That worries me. Then what have you?"

"I have a former nun. She makes quilts."

"Drinks vodka on the sly?"

"How do you know?!"

"My dear man! Well, that covers everything. Good-bye."

"When do you want me to come back? In about two weeks?"

"What do you mean. Come in about four months."

"In four months!"

"Well, yes. Why are you surprised?"

"In four months for an answer?"

"What sort of an answer can it be? The answer is the usual one: Your play is accepted. It will be performed 245 times before full houses. Congratulations!"

"But you haven't read it yet."

"And I don't want to read it."

"How do you know then that it will be successful?"

"But I am telling you it will be successful."

"Let me think: 245 times before full houses. . . ."

"That's right. Thirty-five evening subscriptions, twenty-two matinees, fifty performances sold to the Proletstudent, twenty for street car workers, seventeen for stone masons, thirty-four—for the physicians' Union, five—for the Military Academy. . . ."

"Pardon me for interrupting. Supposing the stone masons don't want it?"

"Don't want it? You child! They'll cry, but they'll want it. Well, pardon me, I must run on to the Central Theatre Box Office to sign a contract for the sale of two hundred performances of 'Wolves and Bees.' "

"Why, are you running 'Wolves and Bees'?"

"We are putting it on in two years."

"And what if the play is bad?"

"Child! Where there is planned distribution of tickets, you cannot have bad plays. Mark that down. Well, good-bye."

Two years later, the young but already famous playwright took off his beaver coat and briskly walked into the office of the theatre director.

"Here is a new play. Romuald Fedorovich is quite excited about it. Fifteen females, ten males, twelve positive, thirteen negative, five subway builders, six street-car workers, seven stone masons, three professors, many entertaining old ladies, students, members of important trade unions, music, three acts . . . Guarantee three hundred performances."

"Come around in two weeks."

"Will that really be time enough?"

"And why not? It's a short play. Fifty pages. Three pages a day."

"I thought you might want to put it on in two weeks."

"Why, what do you mean? It has to be read first."

"But why read it when it's all so clear. Romuald Fedorovich likes it."

"Then let Romuald Fedorovich put it on if he likes it. But I want the public to like it or we'll go bankrupt."

"But why must the public like it? What has the public to do with it? It will go over anyway. The professors will be driven to see it, the stone masons, the proletstud . . ."

"Alas!"

"Alas what?"

"Alas!"

"You frighten me. What has happened?"

"Only through the box office."

"What—through the box office?"

"The tickets, my dear man, the tickets."

"And if the public will not want to buy tickets for my play?"

"Therein lies the rub."

"Well, what is to be done?"

"Write a play that the public will like."

"That's easily said."

"Hm . . . You simply overwhelm me. So you say that I am to come for

an answer in two weeks. And if the play will. . . . not quite. . . . so to speak, sufficiently . . . hm . . ."

"Then we won't take it. A bad play we will not take."

The playwright was walking along the street and smiling wryly; he whispered:

"A good play they want. Is that possible? Won't take a bad one. Some kind of a paradox. Who would have believed it! And above all—when? In the eighteenth year of the revolution! Monstrous!. . . ."

Translated from the Russian by Rae Bunim

M. Zoshchenko

A Ticket to Topsi

Here is an interesting psychological case.

Not long ago my wife had to journey into the country.

There in the country one of her relatives had fallen sick. Some sort of what you might call mental disease had taken hold of him. And so, the anxious relatives summoned my wife to the country town of Topsi.

Of course the impending journey excited our family. After all, we thought, it's a difficult business and takes a lot of trouble to get a ticket and so on. But there was nothing else for it; she had to go.

Well, of course, we prepared ourselves for all possibilities with various documents and certificates. At my place of work I also got a paper for her: she was going, as you might say, in circumstances connected with the family aspect of my social position as an employee. And just to make certain, I got a doctor friend of mine to issue a certificate that mental diseases require solicitous attention on the part of the relatives. And he requested all whom it might concern to render to the bearer of this document all possible medical assistance on her journey to the country.

And so, with these documents we went to the station-master. But he turned out to be a soulless and inhuman person, quite indifferent to sick cadres.

He said:

"Be so good as to leave my room. No tickets are issued here. Go to the ticket-window and buy whatever tickets you want."

We did not take kindly to his sarcasm and decided at once to make use of an acquaintance of ours, a pretty highly placed fellow whom we would care to trouble only in the most extraordinary and difficult circumstances.

But this official proved to be elusive. All the time he was at a meeting somewhere, or was touring about and so we couldn't find him. Even his wife did not know where he was to be found.

Then my wife turned to still another acquaintance, a man who has been decorated for heroism, but he refused to do anything.

Then my wife decided to send a telegram to Topsi, saying she could not come because all the buttons had been pushed and all the threads pulled without results. But at that moment there came to me an ancient but bright thought—to try a porter. Of course this is forbidden, but I decided to sin for the sake of family relationships. I decided to make a little present to a porter so that he would get me a ticket to Topsi.

I understand that this was a crime before society, but at the same time our sick relative meant a great deal to us. And right up to this illness he was a very useful member of society. He served in a certain institution on the management side and—whatever people might say—he did his bit in the matter of building the future society. And inasmuch as he had gone off his track, he really had a right to demand attention and care.

I imparted these thoughts to the porter when I arrived at the station.

"Upon my word of honor, it's a dirty business and I wouldn't care to have anything to do with it. But seeing your relative is plainly in a bad way, I want to show a human attitude to him. And seeing there's some risk and trouble, I'd ask you for twenty rubles. Come here in the evening and you'll get a ticket."

NEWSPAPER FORECAST

Drawn by JOHN EFFEL (Paris)

Where are we going, papa?
Into an abyss.

And then, just as I left the porter to go home, I suddenly saw a ticket window. Just an ordinary hole in the wall, you know, and someone sitting behind it. With an inscription: Tickets.

I thought that it wouldn't do any harm to try it.

I offered the cashier my documents.

But he said:

"Don't bother me with your papers. I'm dazzled enough already by looking at all the tickets I've got."

Then I told the cashier all about my trying experiences, and about the relative who had gone off his track.

The cashier said:

"I don't know what's the matter with your relative, but I know what's the matter with you. You pulled strings and pushed buttons when you could have freely come here and freely bought a ticket to this Topsi of yours."

I said:

"Excuse me, but did I hear you correctly? Perhaps there's some kind of misunderstanding. The porter was hardly willing to do it even for twenty rubles."

The cashier said:

"You must be well off to throw away your money like that. Well, to cut it short, how many tickets do you want to Topsi?"

And right there, he stamped the ticket in his little machine and very humanly offered it to me.

I took hold of it a little suspiciously, and then the cashier and I began joking and laughing.

I said to him:

"I suppose in another two years or so things will be wonderful. You'll be able to get a ticket not only to Topsi, but anywhere you like. The question will be where to go."

The cashier said:

"It'll be better than that. Frankly speaking, I must tell you that I am thinking up some little things. I, my dear comrade, would like to give passengers a little surprise along with every ticket they buy. Flowers for the ladies, and various little things for the men: razor blades, combs, a soap box or a pair of trousers. For long distance passengers a little statuette, or a health leaflet. Well, perhaps my idea won't be carried out, but if it is, I'll probably get a premium."

Then I bade farewell to the cashier and went home.

Well, the wife of course was very happy. She got her things together right away, and the same evening went off to Topsi.

Certainly on the journey she sent me a pretty sharp and even, I might say, rude letter, in which she demanded to know why I had bought a ticket for such a slow train. All the other trains, she said, were easily overtaking this milk train of mine.

But on arriving in Topsi, her irritation passed away, and she sent a pleasant little postcard to say that our nutty relative had suffered just a temporary attack and was now once more reacting to almost everything that went on around him. And he even requested her to convey his compliments and thanks for the sensitive attitude displayed by his relatives.

Flaming greetings to him, and best wishes for his further recovery—a recovery possible only in conditions of all-around solicitude and sensitive sympathy.

Translated from the Russian by H. Whyte

Overtaking and Surpassing

We still have very little experience in the organization of balls. This we must admit to ourselves. We haven't as yet achieved the world record in ball technique. Why, only until very recently, our chief means of entertainment was a meeting where the most exciting event was a two-hour speech by the president of the Local Trade Union Committee. After swallowing that with difficulty, by the time it came to the "artistic part" which consisted of a ham singer with a cold and a dull humorist-satirist, the audience, instead of remaining, would for some reason or other quietly depart for home, singly or in groups, and there behind curtained windows, would secretly enjoy themselves by dancing western dances to the music of the phonograph.

The president of the local trade union committee who was firmly convinced that balls, masquerades carnivals and dances were the inherent privileges only of the world bourgeoisie, also went home and enthusiastically related to his yawning wife:

"It was extremely lively today. After my little speech, seven more comrades spoke, not counting Ivan Petrovich and two members of the Inspection Committee."

And so—a ball! A real ball. Three orchestras, including one military band. The conductor with an imposing looking mustache! Flowers, elegant ladies, dapper cavaliers. But what will the ball be like? Will it be a happy affair? And how to describe it?

Perhaps to follow the path of the classics and, utilizing the jubilee, quietly steal from Leo Nikolievich Tolstoy his famous description of the first ball of Natasha Rostov.

"The guests were passing in back and in front of them, also conversing quietly and dressed in evening clothes. The mirrors along the stairs reflected ladies in white, pale-blue, pink dresses, their bare necks and arms bedecked with jewels and precious stones."

After mature deliberation, however, we abandoned this method. It wasn't at all suitable for the first Stakhanov Soviet ball. The style is different. And Dusia Vinogradova is not Countess Besuchova, and the famous flyer, Kokkinaki, who flew to the dance straight from the stratosphere, is not Count Bolkonski.

We decided, therefore, to describe without any fiction honestly and simply, only that which we saw with our own eyes, and that which we did with our own feet, at our first ball.

What we saw were real, genuinely happy young people. Everything was simple and natural at this remarkable ball of turners and flyers, parachutists and bakers, subway diggers and railroad oilers.

At the beginning of the ball, after a conference with the secretary of the Moscow Young Communist League, Comrade Lukianova, Dusia Vinogradova announced simply and cheerfully, that from now on, she, Dusia, would work on 208 looms, which was twice as much as the world record already held by her.

The entertainers, too, were in a particularly gay mood and seemed to perform unusually well, particularly Asof Meserer, whose performance of a football game on the stage with an imaginary ball appeared so real, that the football fans could hardly restrain themselves from shouting:

"Hit the goal, Asof! Hit it! Don't drag!"

Everyone in the hall wildly applauded the Pioneers, who played on all sorts of musical instruments, whistled like nightingales, danced and beat the

AMONG THE DIPLOMATS

Drawn by JOHN EEFFEL (Paris)

Tell me, what is an aggressor?
An aggressor is one who does not comply with my demands.

drums. The self-trained artists—jazzists, sound-imitators—were also very popular, and we liked them no less than the Pioneers.

However, I will not deny that we waited impatiently for the dancing. For after all a ball is basically a dance.

And then the dancing began.

It was during the intermission that we had overheard the significant remark:

"Tonight we'll see some remarkable dancing. There'll be something doing!. . . ."

This prophetic phrase was enunciated by a black-browed lad dressed in a fashionable suit, looking like a small nimble-footed beetle. As it turned out later, he was the famous metropolitan Stakhanovite baker.

When the dancing began it was evident that it was the baker himself who was the most remarkable dancer in the hall. He danced magnificently; such fancy pretzel designs did he make with his feet, and with such abandon and passion did he glide around the hall, that he at once made clear to us the roots of his creative temperament. Such a dancer could not be anything else but a Stakhanovite.

The fox-trot changed to a tango, the tango to blues. The baker danced them all, without omitting one, all with the same skill, as though he were baking

some of his famous pretzels. As a cavalier he was terribly in demand. The most attractive young ladies in the hall vied with each other for the honor of dancing a tango with the baker, particularly since there were many more dancing young ladies than dancing young men.

The orchestras were roaring. The conductor with his imposing mustache was excellent. The well dressed people rhythmically circled around the ballroom decorated with flowers, plants and portraits of the leaders. Editors of dignified and respected publications mixed with their co-workers in the "whirlwind waltz." The hero of the Soviet Union, Chelyuskin-flyer Doronin, slid along the parquet floor as though on ice, with an ease that was amazing for his monumental figure. The secretary of the Central Executive of the Young Communist League, Comrade A. Kosarev, with an expression of fatherly approval, walked around the hall, but did not dance for some reason. And why not, Alexander Vasilevich?

The dancing was followed by other entertainments. The colorful confetti and serpentine were floating through the thick air. The ball foamed and glittered.

The first Stakhanov ball was very successful. Such balls will probably become the customary thing. They will be run collectively—metal workers and railroad workers, bakers and flyers, journalists and artists. We must see to it, however, from the very start, that certain overzealous people do not bring into these simple and beautiful affairs a spirit of stock-jobbing and a nervousness and ostentation in organizing them. Or we'll be reading in the papers such announcements:

"We are organizing a ball for 1000 people and 5 orchestras. We challenge to a competition. . . ."

"We pledge to give three balls annually and we summon others to follow our Stakhanovite example. . ."

We'll get along without such ostentation. We'll make merry and dance simply and well like Moscow Stakhanovites.

Translated from the Russian by Rae Bunim

ART

Alfred Durus

Laszlo Mészàros

A Hungarian Revolutionary Sculptor

During the last few years an important process of regrouping has been going on in the Left wing of Hungarian art. The paths of revolutionary artists have separated from those for whom the world Revolution was nothing but a fine phrase, involving no obligations. It has been shown that revolutionary content and radical gesticulation are two different things.

Among the Hungarian artists who give form to revolutionary content, the young sculptor, Laszlo Mészàros, occupies a prominent place. When the "Left" Tamàs Gallery in Budapest gave the first exhibition of his works seven years ago, the critics were very favorably disposed towards the work of the 24-year old artist. The bourgeois press praised his technical proficiency and maturity of artistic conception. The heads, studies and life-size figures modelled in stone, bronze and plaster met with no objection whatever. Indeed, when the Tamàs Gallery exhibited another collection of Mészàros' works a few months later, a bourgeois critic wrote (and here, as is so often the case, the wish was father to the thought) that the artist's mature sense of form, his moderate nature and the "motionless" quality of his sculpture made him seem almost conservative, despite the affinity of his style to the most modern trend in art. Luckily (for us and for the artist) this "conservatism" proved illusory. Mészaros, as a proletarian revolutionary, escaped the danger of becoming an artist feted by the Hungarian bourgeoisie and stifled in his chances of further development.

As a guest of the Soviet Union during the past six months he has already brilliantly executed a number of sculptural works. For the recently erected Karl Liebknecht School in Moscow he executed the life-size standing figure of a shock-brigader, and has produced fitting portrait studies of themes of our time—leaders and heroes of the proletarian revolution. His figure of the shock-brigader Orlov reflects the unaffected simplicity of really great art. It is a monumental work, and its closeness to nature has nothing in common with the pettiness of naturalism, its monumentality has nothing in common with the spasmodic character of so much pseudo-monumental trash that is produced.

Mészàros is the son of an iron foundry worker. He was nine years old when the imperialist war broke out. The largest Hungarian munitions plant was located in Csepel, the suburb of Budapest where he lived. From there he saw arms and munitions rolling off to the battlefields in a continuous stream. And he lived to see the day when the plant became a centre of the Hungarian revolutionary movement. The Hungarian Soviet dictatorship left a profound mark on his character. His father fought as a soldier in the Hungarian Red Army, and lost his job after Soviet power was overthrown.

The "art career" of "Laci" began early. At the age of three, he made a drawing of a funeral procession. Two or three years later he was busy scribbling with chalk on fences, doors and cupboards. Men and animals were the objects of this "creative process."

At the age of fifteen, he became apprentice to a jeweller. Here a picture book which fell into his hands, proved his first introduction to real art. It contained reproductions of the great Michelangelo's sculpture. The boy's secret wish was to emulate him. The great master's "David" was his favorite. The works of Benvenuto Cellini and of Rodin also fired his imagination. Thus he conceived the idea of becoming a sculptor, and at night, on the sly, he would cut various kinds of figures out of wood, stone and brick. At the age of eighteen, he managed to enroll in the sculpture course at a polytechnical school. At the same time he worked as a driver, bringing milk into the capital from one of the suburbs on a two-wheeled cart drawn by a donkey. Even after graduating, he continued to ply the trade of driver simultaneously with that of sculptor. Nevertheless he developed, by dint of hard work and study, into one of the most accomplished and powerful young sculptors of the present day.

Culture and strength are harmoniously blended in his work. He is wholly and fully conscious of the fact that real revolutionary art presupposes the highest art culture, that

the art of a culture-less revolutionary artist is pseudo-revolutionary art. But from the very start he also grasped the fact that the culture of the past must not be adopted mechanically or uncritically. A man who employs an antique technique, whose creative methods are alien to our time, is no longer a revolutionary artist. Without for a minute lapsing into mere threadbare eclecticism, Mészàros realized that the revolutionary artist of the twentieth century must develop his own style, attuned to the spirit of the times.

His evolution as an artist proceeded without any devious excursions into formalism. He began with the realistic portrayal of the people around him. In 1929 he held his first exhibition in Budapest. Other exhibitions followed. In 1931 he had exhibitions in Munich. Berlin and Graz. His statue of a seated worker won him a silver medal at Graz. From this time on his evolution as an artist proceeded more and more rapidly. In the Left circles of Hungarian artists, there were frequent discussions on whether an artist's work can be of present-day political significance without losing in art value. Mészàros proved in practice, by his own work as an artist, that there is no such danger.

His sculpture glows with sensuous exuberance, strength and freshness. Not a trace of decadence. He has not adopted the spirit of classical Greek sculpture in a decadent, eclectic fashion, in the lame, tired manner characteristic of so many who imitate the antique. Rather, he has renewed the original, exuberant seriousness and the vital fullness of Greek plastic art. His sculpture gives vent to the joyous optimism of the class to whom the future belongs. His human figures, molded with strength and tenderness, are alive in every limb. They express a humanism quite different from the one-sided, joyless social criticism of many radical artists whose work is tainted with decadence. Mészàros' statues glorify the healthy body, the healthy human being. The original meaning of Juvenal's *"mens sana in corpore sano"* is here restored. These statues are Greek in the best sense of the word. They are the works of a master. Mészàros knows the laws and properties of the material in which he works, he masters and spiritualizes this raw material. Whether he works in wood, stone, bronze or granite, he encounters no difficulties that he cannot overcome. Life modelled into form arises from the dead material.

From "neutral" sculpture, the transition to revolutionary art proved not so difficult. The artist's figures of sitting and standing workers still show certain traces of repose, motionlessness, passivity. But the activity of the revolutionary fighter was already beginning to find vent in his last works done in Hungary. Sculpture of the strength and dynamic power of the two "Red Front!" groups represent an important step forward as works of revolutionary art. Weighty and rough, they are shaped with the fists of the fighting proletarian. With the fists, but not with the head. The rude strength of these works is liable to be misunderstood; it is not sufficiently unequivocal. This explains why these sculptures were able to win success in bourgeois exhibitions. They were shown there as the "dynamic problem of movement," and the bourgeoisie was able to evaluate and acknowledge them from the standpoint of "pure art."

In his work in the Soviet Union Mészàros has already overcome these shortcomings completely. It is noteworthy for us that, as a sculptor in the land of socialist construction, he began to work on a building site.

Translated from the German, by H. Scott

SCULPTURE OF LASZIO MESZAROS

Rot Front

Peasant Woman

Mongolian Shephard

REPORTAGE

André Gide

An Encounter

Last spring Jef Last and I went across Spain to go to Morocco where friends were expecting us. Though he had traveled a great deal Jef Last did not know Spain. We had decided to stop in Toledo; why, I don't quite know; probably because it would have been much easier and simpler to stop in Madrid. Of the town itself I find I have nothing special to say, nor of the hotel where we put up for two nights. In Paris we had bought Spanish railroad mileage, 3000 km's worth; a system which enables one to travel at a much cheaper rate. On leaving Toledo we were to exchange the required number of miles against regular tickets.

While I was paying my hotel bill I was told that I needn't trouble myself about the baggage, for I should find the hotel porter at the station who would have seen to everything.

The man did meet us at the station with our tickets for Algéciras where we were to sail from next day. He accompanied us to our carriage on the pretense of helping arrange our luggage. Jef Last ran out to buy a few papers. All had been paid. What was the fellow still waiting for? I watched him shifting from one leg to the other. He was a sturdy chap of about forty, with a handsome figure and an energetic face. He kept his eyes fixed on the ground. "I believe you might perhaps help me. . . . But I am afraid of being indiscreet," he said at last, in perfect French and without any accent. We stood alone in the carriage. I tried my best to encourage him. Then, somewhat confusedly, but with a sudden impulse he blurted out: "Well, it is like this . . . You know that we can't read any papers here . . . I mean no papers that supply us with any information, none that tells us the truth. Then, when I recognized your name on the hotel register I thought I might address myself to you . . . It is rare you know to meet anyone one dares speak to."

I held out my hand which he grasped.

"What can I do for you?"

"Well it is like this . . . I'd like to read the *Journal de Moscou*."

"Why, that's easy enough. I'll be only too glad to offer you a subscription."

He made a gesture.

"Oh that's not at all what I mean. You must understand me. I could have easily subscribed to it myself, and long ago too. If I take it in it will be sent to me all right; but it won't be delivered. No, what I would like is that you should tell me of someone in Paris in whose name I could subscribe and who would receive it for me and then send it on here. . . . but in the proper way. I know no one in Paris. . . ."

At that very moment Jef Last appeared in the corridor. I ran up to him.

"Hurry up here, old man, I've got to introduce you to a comrade." The train was ready to start.

"I'll think it over," said I to X. . . "It seems quite feasible. Quick, give me your private address. I think I'll be able to manage this." I at once thought of. . . But the train was leaving.

"I'll pass through Toledo on my way back from Morocco. I hope to see you then," was all I could say to the porter.

The person I was thinking of was a young woman whom I knew slightly, well enough however to rely on her entire devotion. I had no doubt that she would be only too glad to do something for me and would appreciate my request as a mark of confidence and affection. The sequel of the story proved that I had not overestimated her.

A month later I passed back through Toledo. I was alone, for I had left Jef Last in Fez where he was working splendidly, having recovered that particular state of joyful lyrism so propitious to poetical creation and which neither of us had been able to recover: not Jef Last in Amsterdam, nor myself in Paris, where one is perpetually besieged by all kinds of pressing and even indiscreet requests. We had not gone to Morocco as tourists, in spite of the great attraction of the country, but only in the hope of finding there that peace of mind without which all creation is impossible.

Back in Toledo I found X again, the hotel porter. After his duties were over he had dropped his uniform in the cloak room, and with it all constraint; he took me to a modest café where we might chat at our ease.

"She is awfully nice, your friend," was the first thing he said . . . "Yes, the lady to whom you recommended me for the *Journal de Moscou* you know; at the beginning she didn't quite understand how to do it. The first numbers she sent never reached me. It is just as I told you: Here in Spain no information must come through. Only, as you had given me her address I warned her, and now she is more careful. I received three numbers at once (and he then told me of the clever trick used by our comrade to escape the censor). We gather seven of us to read them you know. . . . And then she sent . . . Oh she is fine!. . . . She sent us Easter eggs for the children.

"How many children have you got?" I enquired.

He shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"Me? Why I haven't got any children of my own. I'm talking of the orphans of Asturia. Their parents were killed during the 'repression.' We have all adopted them you know. But we are none of us very rich. Poor kiddies. We can't give them many pleasures. Then came those chocolate eggs, and from abroad too . . . Oh they were so happy . . . And so were we you know." He began to talk at length of the horrors of repression, and of the shameless lies of the press.

"It is dishonest, what they are doing there. All the papers are in their hands, and they just print what they are told, and *that* is what is reproduced in the whole world. We have no means of being heard; and when by chance we manage to say something if it doesn't fit exactly with what *they* say, everyone believes that it is we who lie.

His voice trembled with indignation; he held his head in both his hands and remained silent for a while, perhaps because people were going by. He went on in a lower pitch.

"Yes, it's true that they have won—misery, prostitution, bull fights, catholicism . . . it has never been worse. It's true that our revolution fell through . . . Yet you know, it hasn't been in vain. To begin with, we had too many anarchists in Spain. Now the anarchists have realized that they are beaten beforehand if they don't unite, if they are not organized."

I offered him a cigarette. He refused.

"No, thank you."

"You don't smoke?"

"And I don't drink either—not even wine or beer, I take care of myself . . . And every night I go to bed at ten o'clock. If you only knew what care I take of myself!"

There was such warmth in his voice that one felt this was no selfish coddling, but an ardent conviction, almost a religious one, He added:

"Oh, I'm too anxious, you see!. . . . I want to be there. I want to live."

I remembered, but dared not tell him, that those were the very words used by Kirov in one of his last speeches shortly before he was murdered. I told him how I envied his youth that would allow him to witness great events.

"They won't be so long in coming that you shan't witness them also," said he.

The train I was to take was due a few hours later. He accompanied me to the station. Dignified and stiff in their uniforms the porters of other hotels were there, waiting for uncertain customers.

Stealthily X pointed out one of them and whispered to me:

"You see that one of the Spendid Hotel, there on your left. . . He is a comrade. Go and shake hands with him, do, he'll be so pleased."

But I know it was to me our hand-shake gave the greatest pleasure.

Valentin Kataiev

Beet Red

"May I come in?"

"Come right in. Come right in."

And into the lobby walked a short little woman in a new coat with a stand-up seal-skin collar. Her head, down to her brows, was wrapped, peasant fashion, in a silk crocheted shawl. Then standing before the mirror, with a frown on her face, she fixed the knot under her chin, arranged the long handsome fringe of the shawl over her shoulders, and adjusted the crimson rayon sweater. It was new and shiny—hardly worn. She then passed into the dining-room and immediately sat down in the corner of the soft divan, with the rough, weather-beaten lips of her small peasant mouth stubbornly shut. She sat for a long time, without saying a word, staring straight ahead of her at one spot. Her small collected face with its high round forehead was slightly flushed revealing a deep inner emotion. It was evident that she had to exert great effort to conceal this emotion. She was angry with herself for this lack of self-possession. But there was nothing she could do about it.

Thus unsuspected, a heroine walked into the room.

Wonderful is the fate of this Kiev peasant girl, the young communist, Maria Demchenko.

Essentially, she has done a very simple thing, simple and yet great because of its very simplicity: she has given and kept her Leninist and communist word.

By this time her story is known to everyone.

As one of the best shock brigaders in her district, Maria Demchenko was sent to the second All-Union Congress of the collective farm shock brigaders. She came to the Congress with the figure of 460.

Four hundred and sixty centners of sugar beets per hectare. Considering that the country's average at the time was 100 centners per hectare, Maria Demchenko's accomplishment was great indeed. But until her arrival at the Congress she wasn't even aware of the fact that hers was the record crop of the country. She thought she was first only in her district. It turned out, however, that she was first in the country. She was chosen to the presidium. There she became acquainted with Comrade Stalin.

"How many beets do you intend to give the following year?" asked Stalin.

Maria Demchenko was embarrassed and perplexed

"Will you give 500?"

She didn't answer at once, but remained in thought for about five minutes, weighing in her mind whether it was possible or not. At last she decided.

"I'll give 500." She answered resolutely.

She came back from the Congress to her kolkhoz (collective farm) and went at her task and in the following fall delivered 523 centners per hectare, seventy kilograms of the best kind of beets. That's all.

Simple, wasn't it?

At first glance it appears very simple.

But was it really as simple as it appears?

The beets grew beautifully. Lovely little green leaves shone in the bright May sun. And suddenly, bang!—frosts. Never were there frosts before at this time of the year in Ukraine. And now—as though in spite.

"And just think of it, my plot turned out to be the worst one in the entire kolkhoz," Maria Demchenko said in her quick and lively manner with a vigorous but soft Kiev dialect. "We call it 'the dump.' And such a low place. It must have been a breeding place for vermin at one time. And right along side of it there is a pretty high hill and on the hill—a pine forest. Well, you know how things freeze near a forest. It did really seem like spite work. All around me no one's beets freeze, but mine freeze and freeze. We all nearly went mad. We—that is I and three more girls. My section. The beets freeze and freeze. Well, what would you say to that!"

Maria Demchenko flushed angrily at the mere remembrance of this unusual May frost. She pulled the shawl off her head and began to fan herself with it. Her eyes flashed.

"You know, I simply didn't know what to do! I gave my word to Comrade Stalin and suddenly such a disgraceful thing happens! Tell me, for God's sake, could I have foreseen this frost when I was giving my word? You know, I nearly threw myself into the river from shame. But then I decided, no matter what happens, the beets must be saved. I don't even know how the idea came to my head—to save the beets with smoke. We, the girls and I, began to pile straw around the plantation. Day and night we burnt it, didn't leave the beets for a moment."

"Well, did you save them?"

"Forty per cent was lost—sixty saved. The forty per cent I later replanted. But the worst of it was that while the frost was killing the beets, ruinng the crops, all around me the malicious tongues of the few surviving kulaks were already agitating on the market place. In our kolkhoz there is another

Demchenko, only not Maria but Fedora. Same surname. She also is at the head of her section. Her plantation was completely untouched by the frost. In general, no plantation suffered from the frost but mine. You can imagine the venomous gossip that was spread on the market place. They said that since our names were similar, the kolkhoz decided to transfer her to my plantation and me to hers in order to cover up the disgrace. Well, shouldn't I have spit in the eye of such vermin? But I, although boiling inwardly, only laughed nervously, and said to Fedora Demchenko.

"'You little fool,' I said, 'why do you believe the enemies? I'll squeeze 500 centners even out of my frozen plantation, while you whose plantation didn't freeze, will get nothing out of it, if you don't apply yourself.'

"And it was just as I said."

She jumped up with a start and began to pace the room, and with a crunching sound bit into an apple.

We went out on the balcony. A magnificent view of the Kremlin was revealed before us. Maria Demchenko was eagerly gazing at the new stars glowing with a red flame over the Kremlin forts, transparent flags over the CEC (Central Executive Committee) and the Sovnorkom (Soviet of Peoples Commissars) the huge many-storied building of the Labor and Defense Council, the brick, cupola shaped, picturesque stage of the Art theatre.

A fresh wind was playing with her boyishly cut hair. From underneath the sweater a snow-white little collar of a mannish shirt was looking out, which she wore with a new little tie. Amid the green flower boxes of the balcony, where the last of the asters were blooming and the round leaves of the nasturtium were swaying under the weight of the lusterless dew, she stood for a long time, in the cold November sun, fascinated by the Moscow scene.

In the midst of a lively conversation on other subjects, she suddenly again recalled her beets.

"You've no idea what awful luck I've had this whole year. All summer it was weeding and hoeing and fussing, and fussing and weeding and hoeing . . . Not one superfluous blade of grass was permitted on the plantation. And then, as though to tease me, people from all over the Soviet Union began coming to me. Every day five or six of them came. Correspondents, photographers, writers, artists, instructors from various regions, districts, centers. I had work to do and they followed me around at every step. The devil take them all. They made me dizzy. And how they pestered me: Maria, don't go back on your word! See to it, Maria, that you keep your word! This one takes my picture, that one draws my portrait, that one writes a novel about me. And they follow and follow me around. . . I was afraid they'd step all over my beets. I even put such a sign out on my plantation: Trespassing over the beets strictly forbidden. One came with a whole group. She came straight to the plantation, and yank! out came the biggest beet. Well, here I couldn't control myself any longer and I scolded her, good and proper. And she answered: 'I,' she said, 'am so and so. I,' she said, 'pulled this beet out for scientific purposes.' And I said to her, 'Citizeness, that's nonsense, no matter who you are, be it Postishev himself, you have no right to pull out my beets. You ll be answerable for your affairs, and I'll be answerable for my beets to the Party and Comrade Stalin. Excuse me!' All sorts of silly letters were sent me, even marriage proposals, offers of the hand and the heart, and some fool even sent me a bible with a passage underlined saying that God would punish me for this.

"And the weather, too, was unbearably hot. In August—another misfortune: a drought. Like spite work. Not a drop of rain! And without rain everything would be lost. I realized that my plantation was again in danger. It seemed as though because I gave my word of honor to my country nature was determined to oppose me: now it is the frost; now the sun! Disgusting! Well, I was forced to water the plants. And to the river it was about two miles. So I mobilized everything under the sun: Barrels, pails, pitchers. . . .

"I must admit that my friend and competitor, Maria Gnatenko, helped me tremendously. She and her assistants watered my plantation as well as their own. But of course it wasn't done gratis. We had a regular account. 'Tit for tat.' I, on my part, did much to help her fight the moths on her plot. I have a method of my own: building a fire at night; the moth is attracted to the fire and is, of course, burnt. You can't imagine how much unpleasantness this has caused me! They said: You are only frightening the moths away, not burning them. They will all come back but our beets will be ruined. But I was persistent. I built the fires, burnt all the moths, and the beets weren't the least bit harmed."

"But where did you get this idea of burning the moths on the fire?"

"Oh well, when I was once riding at night in a Ford belonging to the District Party Committee, I noticed clouds of moths flying over the street lamps. That immediately gave me the idea. . . ."

In connection with that I recalled how in Magnitka in 1931, a group of masons were trying to master all the latest innovations in laying stones with greater speed and ease.

Hearing the word "Magnitka" Maria Demchenko smiled brightly and excitedly.

"Why, were you in Magnitka?"

"Yes."
"In what year?"
"In '31."
"I was there too. Worked as a mason!"
"In which section?"
"In the sixth."
"So was I in the sixth."
"You don't say!"

The famous sixth section. The famous competition with Charkov, So that's what it is. That's where Maria Demchenko got her resourcefulness, her observant eye, her labor discipline!

She went through a good proletarian communist school, this tenacious, persistent, persevering Ukrainian girl!

She was finishing her story.

"Then the hoeing started. Of course everyone hardly slept. For seventeen days no one left the camp. There was digging by camp fire. We would go to sleep at three in the morning and rise with the dawn. Mother would bring me fritters. I am very fond of our fritters fried in oil, you know. Five o'clock in the evening we dug out the last beet. Already people surrounded us. You should have seen the excitement. From all over people came walking, running, riding. There were just mobs of them! Two moving picture machines were working. At eight o'clock the last truckload of my beets left for the sugar refinery. We all waited. There at the refinery they were weighing my beets. It was still unknown as to how many there were. Will it reach 500 or will it not? You can imagine how nervous I felt. And then, an hour later, the telephone suddenly rings, a call from the refinery; they already have 500, the rest were still being weighed. And simultaneously there appeared in the camp, tables, lamps, wine, beer, fried chickens, butter, fritters, ham—everything your heart desired—a real feast. And of course, an orchestra from the sugar refinery. Dancing.

"Then David Burda, my brigadier, drank the first toast to me. He said:

"'I drink this toast to Maria Demchenko because she firmly stood by her communist word given to our own beloved Comrade Stalin! Hurrah!'

"Well, what happened after that is difficult to describe.

"An airplane suddenly appeared with the reporters of the *Kiev News* and landed on our airdrome. We already know that if an airplane appears, we have to build a fire on our airdrome—because invariably they were our visitors.

"I danced all night, although I was terribly tired after the seventeen days' work. And all night I was ladling wine straight out of the pail, passing it to all my friends and acquaintances, and guests, and musicians, and everyone else that was there. Too bad you weren't there, you would have enjoyed it. Then they put me in a car—and off to Moscow. But a person must rest some time. Well, I thought to myself, I'll rest in the train. But—no luck. An artist was traveling. As soon as he saw me, he began to draw my portrait. And if you please, he was drawing until we reached Moscow. And in Moscow—again." And Maria Demchenko smiled with her pleasant, cross little smile, showing small straight teeth, of which one was gold.

Translated by Rae Bunim

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C O N T E N T S

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