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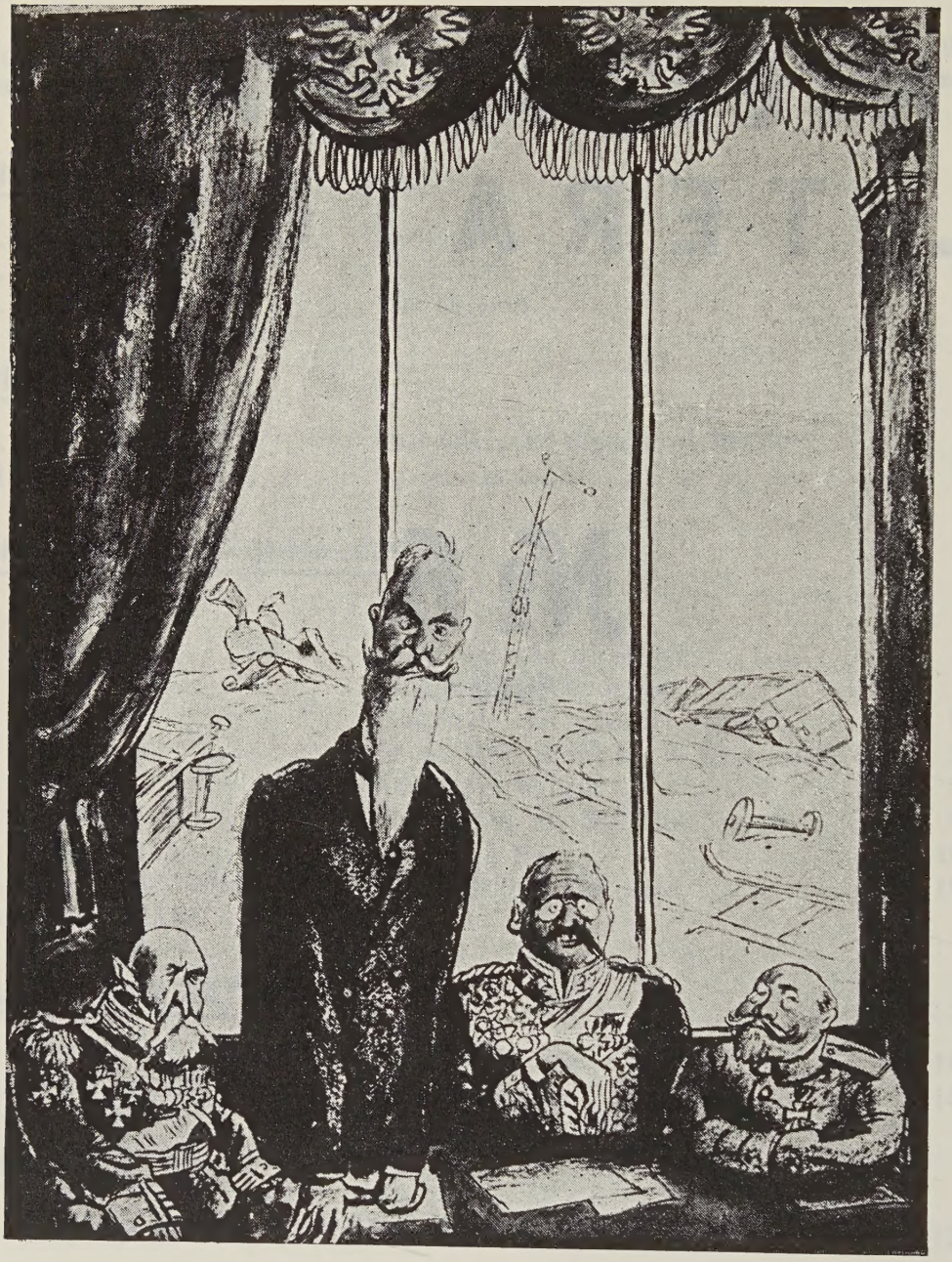
INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE

№ 6

1936

Distributors in the USSR: Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR October 25th, Moscow. Distributors in Great Britain: — Martin Lawrence, Ltd., 2 Parton Street, London. W. C. I. Distributors in the U. S. A. International Publishers, 381 Fourth Avenue, New York, U. S. A.

Address all communications to Box 850, Moscow, USSR



Tsarist Ministers and the Collapse of Transportation *By the Kukriniksi*

A. Afinogenov

Remote

A Soviet Play in Three Acts

CHARACTERS:

Koryushko, Aleksei Efimovich—station master at Dalyokoye[1] siding aged 52.
Lyubov Semyonovna—his wife, aged 46.
Zhenya—their daughter, aged 15.
Bolshev, Lavrenti Petrovich—linesman, aged 26.
Glasha—his wife, aged 22.
Makarov, Ivan Makarovich—Glasha's father, switchman, aged 56.
Tomilin, Gennadi Mironovich—telegraph operator, aged 33.
Tonkikh, Vlas Filippovich—second switchman, aged 48.
Malko, Matvei Ilyich—corps commander, aged 48.
Vera Nikolayevna—his wife, aged 43.
Sulin—porter of the drawing room car, aged 30.
Time: August, our time.

ACT I

Scene: *The railway track. A station platform and a neat cottage with a sign: "Siding Dalyokoye, 6782 km. from Moscow, 2250 km. from Vladivostok." Back of the cottage is the taiga. It is early morning. On the track, alongside the platform stands a solitary drawing-room car. The windows are drawn with curtains. Silence.*

At the telegraph desk Koryushko *is dictating a telegram to* Gennadi.

Koryushko: D. Trans-Baikal. Drawing-room car number 943 uncoupled from Moscow express because of broken rim, stop. Send up reserve locomotive with rims and repair crew immediately by authorization of N. . . Go to bed, Gennadi Mironych, it's time for me to go on duty.

Gennadi: You go on duty at seven and it's now only half past five. And besides, I won't go to bed anyway, with such doings.

Koryushko: Yes, some doings all right. Take a telegram, Gennadi Mironych: D.N. We confirm receipt of line chief's authorization for immediate dispatch of reserve locomotive. . . Well, let me tell you, the porter and I, we clicked off telegrams at a whirlwind rate. And the authorization has already come through.

Gennadi: I'm terrifically excited. What do you suppose it's from?

II

Zhenya pulls back the curtain of another window and pokes her head out sleepily.

Zhenya (She sees the car, rubs her eyes, looks again and begins to shout): Father, father!

Koryushko: What? Zhenya? It's you, is it? (*He deposits the telegrams on Gennadi's desk and strolls over to Zhenya's window.*) Go to sleep. Go to sleep.

Zhenya: Where's mother?

[1] Dalyokoye, the title of the play in Russian, meaning remote.

Koryushko: In the taiga, hunting. She's been gone since evening.

Zhenya: And what's that?

Koryushko: It's a car, Zhenya, a drawing-room car. It was uncoupled because the rims broke. You go to sleep.

Zhenya: Who's traveling in it?

Koryushko: An army man . . . on his way from Khabarovsk to Moscow. We know all there is to know. Go back to sleep, you need all your strength, you lost weight in town. Going to school is no easy matter, my dear.

III

Zhenya: An army man! From Khabarovsk! That means he's a leader! Aha!

Koryushko: Sh! Sh! Zhenya!

Zhenya: Well, at last I'm going to see a real live leader. We'll fix that right away.

Koryushko: Zhenya, my love! (*But Zhenya has already vanished, drawing the window curtains.*)

Gennadi: I'm going to go shave and put on my uniform, Aleksei Efimovich.

Koryushko: Go ahead, and when you've finished I'll do the same. I've already got a crop of stubble.

IV

Exit Gennadi. Koryushko *strolls along the platform. The telegraph apparatus begins to click and he rushes over to the receiver. Enter* Makarov *from the right. He climbs on to the platform and walks past the drawing-room car in silence rolling a cigarette.*

Koryushko: Some happenings, Ivan Makarych, old boy! Not one passenger train ever stopped here and then, all of a sudden, a drawing-room car!

Makarov: Are they asleep?

Koryushko: I've only seen the porter . . . a nice fellow I can tell you. A fast worker. (*Enter* Zhenya, *running.*)

Zhenya: Well I've thought it all out. This is how: the station will report to the leader on its achievements. We'll get everything ready, just like a demonstration and wait till he comes out. Then you'll take one step forward—like this (*she demonstrates*) . . . one-two, one-two and begin your report.

Koryushko: No, I object, why should I be the one? Let the young men speak up; Gennadi Mironych or Ivan Makarovich: he's our vanguard, a Party candidate.

Zhenya: Makarov scarcely ever says more than seven words in twenty-four hours. Practice it and you'll get the idea. Pretend I'm the leader. I come out of the car (*stands on the footboard of the car*) you come over to me, don't be bashful and don't slouch.

Koryushko (*touching his visor*): Dear comrade, on behalf of everybody . . . I can't do it, I don't know how. You'd better do it instead, especially since you're a student at the railway technical school.

Zhenya: You make me laugh, father. After the report I'll come over and ask him to speak on the Red Army and our present tasks.

Koryushko: Maybe there's no point in it? Maybe he won't appear?

Zhenya: Of course he'll appear! And afterwards we'll post a guard of honor. Although that's only done at funerals, I believe. And Makarov will hold a meeting of the Party group with him, seeing how he's the only Party man and so far has never been able to organize a Party meeting. See? It all works out fine! And Glasha will invite him to dinner.

Makarov: Glasha doesn't feel much like eating.

Zhenya: What's wrong?

Makarov: Lavrenti has definitely made up his mind to leave.

Koryushko: He's leaving is he? You don't say so! Why of course, he wants to become a hero and there's no chance for that in the taiga. Our life is too restricted.

Zhenya: So he yearns for Moscow! So he wants to have his name in the papers! So he's bored at the siding! Tell me, what sort of heroism is it to desert a wife and child! I despise him.

Makarov: His wife is my daughter. His son is my grandson. We'll manage without him.

V

Enter Gennadi, who has shaved and changed his clothes.

Gennadi: Your turn to go, Aleksei Efimovich.

Zhenya: Go ahead father and put on your dress coat. And hurry up or there will be a mess if the masses are left leaderless.

(*Exit* Koryushko)

VI

Zhenya: I can hardly wait! (*tries to peek through the window*). No, I can't see a thing. I say, Gennadi! Do you suppose he's young?

Gennadi: I'm all excited. I'm terribly excited, Zhenya.

(*The apparatus clicks.* Gennadi *rushes to the receiver.*)

Zhenya: What sort of a present should we make him? I've got it. We'll give him mother's bearskin. She killed the bear with her own hands. That'll make a real present.

VII

(*Enter* Vlas *on the right, bulky of stature and ill-kempt.*)

Vlas: Waiting for the chief, eh? When thou dinest with a potentate be thou not tempted by his tasty viands—for the food is a snare.

Zhenya: We're in for a bit of priest's chatter.

Vlas: I was never a priest, I was a sectarian, a Seventh Day Adventist. And now I'm a switchman.

Zhenya: Hush, you psalm singer, what did you come around for, anyway?

Vlas: To unmask.

Gennadi: You'd have done better if you'd gone and washed up, Vlas Filippich.

Vlas: Vanity. My boots have served their allotted time, and my clothes are untidy. But those who unmask are well beloved. Give me a cigarette, Gennadi.

Gennadi: I don't smoke.

Vlas: That is common knowledge.

Zhenya: Go away. We've arranged everything and you're only in the way. You tell him, Ivan Makarich.

Makarov: Let him stay.

Vlas: Verily I say let me stay! Four years have I waited for this opportunity. The powers that be have come in a car and I shall speak with them.

Gennadi: Vlas Filippovich. . .

Vlas: Hold your tongue, you guitar!

Gennadi: My guitar has nothing to do with it.

Vlas (*sings in falsetto*):

We played this song
The whole day long
On the accordion.

Zhenya: Why the antics, Vlas Filippich? It's rather strange in an old fellow.

Vlas: I'm soul sick, little virgin.

Zhenya: I'll ask you not to call me by that silly name.

Vlas: So you are a sinner?

Zhenya: I'm a Komsomol, thank you.

Vlas: Well, can't Komsomols be virgins?

Zhenya: Don't bother me with your mysticism.

Vlas: You go to school. We live in the taiga and there's no one to teach us! That's why Lavrenti is going away. (*To* Makarov) So your son-in-law's going away, Ivan? He's leaving his wife in the lurch. No matter, she'll find others. Gennadi sings to her on his guitar very tenderly.

Gennadi: I wish busybodies would keep their mouths shut! It's nobody's business. (*Bangs the window of the telegraph office.*)

Makarov: Talk.

Vlas: Yes, gossip.

VIII

Enter Koryushko, *shaved, attired in a white watered silk coat.*

Koryushko: Good morning, Vlas Filippovich, a splendid day, I can tell you.

Zhenya: Father, tell him he can't do such things, he wants to elbow in ahead of everybody.

Koryushko: He's only joking, Zhenya. But, I say, you might have tidied up a bit for the occasion, old boy.

Vlas: I don't own a coat, let alone a silk one.

Koryushko: Well, I've had this one eighteen summers. Made in Harbin—it gets softer every year.

Zhenya: Turn around once more. It seems all right. Salute! Hey! There's a rip under the arm!

Koryushko (*looking round*): So there is, along the seam. I'll sew it up in a jiffy.

Vlas: Sewing's a woman's job.

Koryushko: Hardly! Lyuba hasn't the time. She's a busy woman; with her hunting in the taiga she's got no time for us. A real trump, she is! I darn my own socks, and I'm pretty good at it, I can tell you.

IX

The door of the drawing-room car opens. Everyone steps back with a start.

Sulin (*who is carrying a bucket*): Hello, comrades.

Koryushko (*coming forward*): Glad to see you. We already know each other, so to speak (*stretches out his hand, remembers the rip and brings his arm down close to his side, crooking his elbow*). I'm sorry, a slight mishap! Sleep well?

Sulin: They slept fine. I would like some water, Comrade Koryushko. . . It's time to start the samovar.

Koryushko: Water? We'll get you some right away. Take the bucket, Vlas Filippovich.

Vlas (*to Sulin*): Do not exalt thyself in the presence of the leader; do not sit in the seats of the mighty.

Zhenya (*in a whisper*): You old devil!

Vlas: Far better it were if thou wert told, "Come hither, higher," than if thou wert humbled before one of high rank whom thine eyes had beheld. (*Exit jangling the bucket.*)

X

Koryushko (*to Sulin*): He's a bit queer, you see.

Zhenya: What's your name?

Sulin: My name is Sulin. What's yours?

Zhenya: I'm Zhenya. I study at the technical school in Sretensk and belong to the Leninist Komsomol. Membership card number 00-15-23.

Sulin: Tell me, where can one get food around here?

Zhenya: We've got some bear meat sausage, would you like it?

Sulin: Maybe I could find milk and vegetables.

Koryushko: Makarov has a cow and a vegetable garden, he'll give you some.

Sulin: Sell us some milk, comrade.

Makarov: I can let you have some, but I don't sell it. (*Exit*)

Koryushko: He'll bring it to you; he'll bring you everything you need, don't worry. A splendid day, I can tell you. Of course we're out in the wilds here, completely isolated. You'll find it a bit dull. A locomotive has already been despatched, however, and we hope by tomorrow we can send you on your way.

Zhenya: Who's traveling with you? Don't nudge me, father. A leader?

Sulin: Comrade Malko, Matvei Ilyich, corps commander of the Special Far-Eastern Army.

XI

Enter Gennadi

Gennadi: Here are telegrams for you . . . and your chief . . . three of them. Sign the receipt.

Zhenya: Three telegrams? First rate! Who else besides?

Sulin: His wife's with him—Vera Nikolayevna.

Zhenya (*in a whisper*): We'll have a report on women's work. Is the car his own private car?

Sulin: The car, Miss Curiosity, belongs to the commander of the Far Eastern Army.

Zhenya: Oh-h! Will Comrade Malko be getting up soon?

Sulin: He's up now.

Koryushko: I say, Gennadi Mironych, you play the host; I've got to mend that rip. (*Runs towards the house, encounters* Vlas, *who is carrying the bucket.*)

XII

Vlas: Running . . . Ye all live in haste, to no avail.

Koryushko (*to* Vlas *in an undertone*): Vlas Filippovich, I ask you as a favor not to do any sermonizing today. I must insist on it. You might work yourself injury.

Vlas: As it is I am injured from head to toe. Take the water and drink to contentment.

XIII

Enter Lavrenti. Zhenya *draws him aside and explains what's what to him.*

Sulin: Thanks, citizen.

Vlas: Tell your chief that there is a former sectarian, a Seventh Day Adventist, Vlas Tonkikh, at the siding and that the said Vlas wishes to ask several questions regarding the existence of the world and of life, and requests that he not refuse.

Sulin: I shall transmit the request.

Lavrenti (*comes over*): Comrade Sulin? I'm Lavrenti Bolshev, railway linesman, a former Red Army man in the Special Far-Eastern Army. Comrade Malko naturally does not remember me, but I remember him very well. Especially during the last maneuvers, when our regiment distinguished itself during the fording of the Bureya. I'd like to talk with the Comrade Commander.

Sulin (*shakes Lavrenti's hand*): I shall be sure to inform him—but he's not allowed to overdo, so there can't be any long talks.

Zhenya: But how about the speech?

Sulin: What speech?

Zhenya: We wanted him to speak on the Red Army.

Sulin: Don't even suggest it. I ask you personally not to. He's not well and he's very tired. (*Disappears into the car.*)

XIV

Zhenya: Well, I suppose we'll have to cancel the speech. But we'll go ahead with our report just the same. (*Going to the window.*) Ready father?

Koryushko (*through the window*): I can't find a needle.

Zhenya: I'm asking you about the report.

Koryushko: Right away, Zhenya, I'll be out in a jiffy.

Zhenya (*to Lavrenti*): What's he like? Is he young? Is he severe? Is he tall? Is he blond?

Lavrenti: Greyish. Shoulders—this size! Hale and hearty. I saw him many times. He's of working class origin, a gunsmith, he was, in a Tula factory. He's a real hero.

Zhenya: Decorated how many times?

Lavrenti: Decorated twice. He distinguished himself in the Civil War. What times those were! What names! Budyenny, Kotovski, Klim. . .

Gennadi: What Klim?

Lavrenti: There's only one Klim—Voroshilov. A great man.

Gennadi: Siemens was also a great man. So were Hughes, Bodeau and Morse.

Lavrenti: Were they Bolsheviks?

Gennadi: They were inventors, they invented the telegraph.

Lavrenti: Who invented the guitar?

Gennadi: Mavry.

Lavrenti: Go and join Mavry, you with your telegraph operators! The idea of comparing Morse with Budyenny!

Gennadi: Why not!

Lavrenti: A vulgar instrument. It makes people sentimental. You can make an impression on other men's wives with it but not on leaders.

Gennadi: I wouldn't even answer such rudeness.

Vlas: No, no, don't you turn the other cheek. Stand up for yourself. Admit you are madly in love with Glasha and challenge him for her hand.

Gennadi: Comrade Tonkikh, I'll ask you to keep out of this! I don't intend to argue, and if everyone——(*Exit rapidly.*)

XV

Vlas: Ha—Ha! I love seeing people get angry! I enjoy making them angry! Frank exposure is better than concealed love.

Zhenya: God, how tiresome he is. Go away immediately! Do you hear! (Vlas *steps back towards the car.*) Go away, you!(*Stepping back further,* Vlas *grabs hold of the hand rail.* Zhenya *tries to drag him off.*)

XVI

The car door opens, and Matvei *steps out. He is short, heavy-set, with thick grey hair and a large head on broad shoulders.*

In a fright Zhenya *lets go of* Vlas, *rushes to the house and climbs in through the window.*

Vlas (*steps back from the car*): Ahem!

Lavrenti *approaches, stands at attention before* Matvei *and salutes.*

Matvei: Hello, Comrade Bolshev! What's going on here, setting-up exercises?

Lavrenti: A slight disagreement involving resort to physical arguments.

Matvei: Any casualties?

Vlas: Suffering is the mother of virtue.

Matvei: I suppose you're the Seventh Day Adventist.

Vlas: I broke with God six years ago.

Matvei: Do you often recall the past?

Vlas: No, I remember nought either of what has been or of what is yet to come.

Matvei: What was it you wanted to ask me?

Vlas: Why is it that men fear death?

Matvei: Hm. . . .

Lavrenti: Don't pay any attention to such chatter, Comrade Commander.

XVII

Enter Koryushko *followed by* Zhenya.

Koryushko (*salutes, pressing his elbow to his side*): Comrade Commander, allow me to report on the state and work of Dalyokoye siding.

Matvei (*shaking hands*): Who am I for you to make a report to me?

Koryushko: You are, so to speak, our beloved guest. Of course this is just the wilds here. Our duties are small . . . maybe it's not worth bothering with.

Zhenya: No, no! Supposing they are small, what of it?

Matvei: That's right, Zhenya.

Zhenya: How do you happen to know I'm Zhenya?

Matvei: I can tell by your eyes.

Zhenya: We wish to convey to you our greetings and through you to the entire Red Army. Please don't refuse. We're so glad the car broke down. . . I mean, of course, we aren't. . . But we consider ourselves a part of the Far Eastern Army.

Matvei: I understand. (*He straightens up, his tone becomes sterner.*) Give your report, Comrade Station-master.

Koryushko (*flustered*): During the last half year Dalyokoye siding has fulfilled all the tasks assigned to it. No shipments of goods were delayed. There were no absentees and only one instance when it was necessary to take measures of discipline. (Malko *turns towards* Vlas.) That's right. But afterward he made up for it. There were no accidents. You can inspect the condition of the station and switch equipment personally. We are ready for defence.

Lavrenti: And that also applies to the track section, Comrade Commander.

Koryushko: The siding is fighting for the banner of the Trans-Baikal line.

Matvei: Are you hoping to win it?

Koryushko: Our siding is so insignificant that it isn't likely. . . Nevertheless, however. . .

Matvei: I accept your report with satisfaction. I note, however, an inclination to underestimate the importance of the siding and of your own work. We have no sidings that are insignificant.

Zhenya: Aha, what did I tell you, Lavrenti?

Matvei (*turns to* Lavrenti): Is that the trouble with you too?

Lavrenti: No . . . I have personal reasons. Would you care to inspect the building and the grounds, Comrade Commander?

Matvei: Let's go!

XVIII

Vera *appears in the doorway of the car. She is wearing a simple house dress. Her hair, which is almost completely white, sets off her remarkably young looking face. Behind her stands* Sulin.

Vera: Matvei! Breakfast is ready.

Matvei: I'm coming. Listen, while we're making the inspection, you arrange a breakfast in the open, for everybody. You don't object, do you, chief?

Koryushko: The next train's at eleven twenty-eight. Plenty of time. You help out, Zhenya, go fetch cups and chairs. The table-cloth is in the lower left hand drawer . . . the jam. . .

Matvei: No allow me to be the host.

Koryushko: No, excuse me, but I can't agree to that. I am overjoyed at having you as our own beloved guest. You understood everything, Zhenya?

Zhenya: I should say I did!

Exit on the left Matvei, Koryushko *and* Lavrenti *followed by* Vlas.

XIX

Zhenya: Let's introduce ourselves. . . (*shakes hands with* Vera). You must give us a talk on women's work. We have a very serious problem. Lavrenti—you saw him? The one with the curly hair—is leaving his wife, who has a babe-in-arms. What should be done about it?

Vera: Doesn't he love her any more?

Zhenya: He says that his family stunts his development.

Sulin: Comrade Zhenya, is there a small table to be had?

Zhenya: There's everything, a table, chairs, and cups. I'll pass them out. You carry them and Vera Nikolayevna will arrange them; all by the conveyor method. (*Goes into the house, hands furniture, dishes and a table-cloth through the window.* Sulin *passes them on to* Vera.)

Vera (setting the table): How old are you, Zhenya?

Zhenya: Already sixteen . . . a member of the Leninist Komsomol. All the others here are non-Party, except for Makarov.

Vera: How about Lavrenti?

Zhenya: It's a year and a half since he came back from the army, but nevertheless he's non-Party. It's pretty queer! All in all he's a bit of an anarchist. "I find the taiga boring," he says, "in obscurity, I want to go to Moscow." As I see it people in Moscow ought rather to come here, to the Far East.

Vera: We'll discuss the matter.

Zhenya: But why are you going to Moscow?

Vera: At the summons of the People's Commissar.

Zhenya: To be decorated again?

Vera: No, not for that.

Zhenya: I understand, it's confidential. What do you yourself do? Housework?

Vera: No, I teach at a Party school.

Zhenya: On your vacation, then? What's the matter with your husband?

Vera: Over-exhaustion, simply.

Zhenya: You ask the Makarovs for some of their roots. Glasha dries different herbs and uses them for medicinal purposes.

XX

Enter Glasha *with a basket, followed by* Makarov *carrying a bottle of milk.*

Zhenya (*jumps through the window*): Glasha give them some of your herbs, you know the ones I mean.

Vera: Hello, Glasha! Where's the baby?

Glasha: Asleep. Here, have some food. (*Sets the basket down by* Vera. Makarov *sets the bottle of milk on the table.*)

Zhenya: We're all going to eat. (*Opens the basket.)* Buns, beets. . . (*to* Vera) Glasha uses her own recipes. She mixes in herbs and something else besides, and the result is delicious!

Vera: Have you a daughter, Glasha?

Glasha: No, a son, Petka.

Vera: Let me hold him a bit, I love babies.

Glasha: You don't have one of your own?

Vera: I never was that lucky.

Glasha: There's worry written on your face, as well as expectation.

Vera: No. It's simply that I, er . . . didn't sleep well. Is the table set, Zhenya? Sulin, bring the samovar. A splendid breakfast. (*To* Makarov) Your daughter's a bit of a mindreader, isn't she?

Makarov: She has her own eyes for people.

XXI

Enter Gennadi.

Gennadi: Telegrams . . . two of them . . . sign here. Allow me to introduce myself! (*Mumbles his name.*)

Vera: Excuse me, I didn't catch it.

Gennadi *mumbles.*

Vera: What?

Gennadi: I'm rattled.

Zhenya: He plays the guitar and sings to his own accompaniment.

Gennadi: No, the guitar has got nothing to do with it. Excuse me! (*Wants to leave.*)

XXII

Enter Matvei, Koryushko, Lavrenti *and* Vlas.

Koryushko: (*introducing* Gennadi): Meet our radio enthusiast. He took a correspondence course in radio technology. He dreams of catching signals from Mars. He listens in on Japanese stations and studies Japanese grammar. What's the Japanese for locomotive, Gennadi Mironych?

Gennadi: "Kisya."

Matvei (shaking hands): An affectionate people, the Japanese. They call a locomotive "Kisya," and they regard Manchuria as a sort of house-cat.

Koryushko: Matvei Ilyich, allow me to introduce, Ivan Makarych, Glasha.

Matvei (*looking at* Glasha): What eyes! (*to* Makarov) Am I right in saying her mother was a Yakut?

Makarov: Yes. She died three years ago.

Matvei: You've got a pretty wife, Lavrenti. (*To* Glasha) Were you ever in Khabarovsk?

Glasha: I was in Nerchinsk once.

Matvei: Your face is familiar. Do you remember her, Vera?

Vera: No.

Matvei: I've got it! You've some brothers?

Glasha: Two of them, Red Army men.

Matvei: Sulin, go get the paper (*exit* Sulin). The Makarov brothers, of course. (*To* Makarov) Your sons won first place in the shooting contests. They were awarded watches. They both have slant eyes, like Glasha's. Handsome. Did you receive a copy of the army paper?

Makarov: No, I didn't.

Matvei: Yes, we beat the mail, getting here. (Sulin *brings him the paper.*) Did you see this?

Makarov: No, I didn't.

Matvei: They published their pictures. (*Everyone clusters around and looks.*) Good boys, those sons of your, Ivan Makarych. Real Far Easterners.

Makarov: They look it. . . . (*Laughs suddenly*)

Zhenya: Ha—ha—ha! Makarov is laughing! Makarov is laughing!

(*Everybody laughs.*)

Matvei: Sulin, get out a bottle, we'll have a toast.

Koryushko: Excuse me, Matvei Ilyich! I understand, of course, everyone's in good spirits and all that, but if you don't mind I ask you to postpone it till evening, because when we're on duty. . . It's one of our rules. That's what we disciplined Vlas Filippovich for.

Matvei: Postpone it till evening, Sulin.

Vera: We'll drink tea to Makarov's health.

Zhenya: Take your seats, comrades, in orderly fashion. (*They find seats.*) You sit next to Comrade Malko, Glasha. See that he's taken care of. You sit with Vera Nikolayevna, Lavrenti. (*In a whisper to* Vera) He's the one . . . Father got left out.

Koryushko: I'll stand, I'll stand. Go ahead and eat the rest of you. I don't like sitting down.

Matvei: Move up closer, Glasha. Sit down, there's room. Sit down, Aleksei Efimovich! (Koryushko *sits down.*) Go to it!

Zhenya (*stands up*): Dear comrades. . . .

Koryushko: Go ahead, daughter.

Zhenya: We have here in our midst at Dalyokoye, a leader of the Red Army and we must. . . .

Matvei: Stop where you are. Here's the way it is, comrade. Chance is an individual case of necessity, as they say in educated books. We happened to stop here by chance but I for one am very glad of the chance.

Vera: I endorse that!

Zhenya: So do we!

Matvei: Here's what I have to say: you live in a remote place. But it's no matter of chance that I met Makarov here. And your good work here is also not a matter of chance. It's because you are firmly linked to the whole country, and live for its interests. And for those of us who love their jobs, who see this mighty link of labor, distance makes no difference.

Vlas: In the old days people also loved their jobs.

Zhenya (*in a whisper*): You devil!

Makarov (*raises his hand and then stands up*): In the old days. . . I turned switches. . . .

Vlas: And now?

Makarov: And now I'm in charge of all the switch equipment. Is that a difference? (*Sits down.*)

Zhenya: That's right!

Vera: We should like to hear from Comrade Lavrenti. . .

Lavrenti: Why me in particular?

Zhenya: Yes, yes.

Vera: Do you agree with Matvei?

(Lavrenti *keeps silent.*)

Vera: There, see?

Zhenya: He doesn't agree.

Lavrenti: He's partly right but all the same not entirely right.

Vlas: True.

Lavrenti: Shut up, you sectarian deacon. There's no united front between the two of us. Comrade Commander, they've all been baiting me. They called me deserter and the like. And now you come and say distance makes no difference. It does make a difference, Comrade Commander! In the old days, maybe, it was all the same as long as you could keep alive, but now life's utterly changed. You can't just vegetate in the taiga like a bloody spruce when all around people are performing deeds of heroism. We rescued the Chelyuskinites, we fly to the stratosphere, break all kinds of records without hardly trying . . . we build canals, Dnieprostroi, Uralmash. Everyone wants to be a hero but I have to sit by and go sour just because there's no one to write about us. No one can take notice of us. That's the trouble. Don't interrupt, Zhenya. If only I could prevent a collision, say, or bring the siding out of a slump. But there's no opportunity even for that. Everything runs along smoothly. I can't go on living like that . . . In the army I had a taste of everything.

Matvei: And how would you like to live?

Lavrenti: I want to be where things are moving, to work among people and show my abilities.

Zhenya: He's itching to be decorated.

Lavrenti: Yes. Our commander has decorations. . . He's a distinguished hero, he stands in the public eye. I too want to stand in the public eye, I want the working class to be proud of me and to be written up in the papers.

Zhenya: Tell him where to get off, Glasha! "In the papers!"

Glasha: Lavrenti has got to go. He's just got to. I cramp his style. I ruin his life. I realize it myself. Don't try to hold him, let him go. He's got to become a hero. I beg you to let him go. (*Silence*)

Koryushko: That's what we have to contend with here at the siding.

XXIII

Enter Lyuba, *tall, husky and dishevelled, with a gun and a sack slung over her shoulder.*

Koryushko: Lyubov Semyonova . . . we've been having a bite to eat in your absence. . . Here, allow me to make introductions: my wife, so to speak.

Lyuba: A regular party! How do you do! I'm a bit tired, take my sack off for me. . . . (Koryushko *removes her sack*) For God's sake!

Koryushko: Not God but guests.

Lyuba: Guests are welcome. You're in the army, I take it? What do you think of this little gun of mine. Seven years I've hunted with it.

Matvei (*takes the gun*): Hm . . . Sulin, get out. my automatic. (*Exit* Sulin) Your gun's just fair.

Lyuba: I brought down a bear with it. Do you understand? That's your wife, I imagine. How do you do? Pour me something hot! So you don't approve of my little gun? Too bad!

Matvei: In such matters we're old friends. I'd long been wondering when I might meet a real hunter. What do you shoot?

Lyuba: We shoot woodcocks, grouse. We make pitfalls for sable, in winter we go squirrel hunting. The neighborhood is rich in game. (*To* Koryushko) Did you show him my sables? You didn't get around to it? Slow poke!

Matvei: Let's try our luck today. We could wander about till evening. Perhaps you're too tired?

Lyuba: You make me laugh! We start in an hour. I'll show you some hunting! Have you got some boots?

Matvei: I'll find boots. That's a stroke of luck! (Sulin *brings a rifle.*) Now's your turn to tell me what you think.

Lyuba (*takes the rifle and examines it*): Not bad . . . not bad . . . Neat workmanship (*takes aim*).

Zhenya: Mother!

Koryushko: Lyuba Semyonova, you really oughtn't.

Lyuba (*shoots, looks upwards*): Ha! (*exit*).

Vlas (*looks upwards*):

Freely flits the little gnat
Upwards through the boundless blue
Then it bumps its forehead flat
You will bump your forehead too.

Matvei: You compose poetry on the side?

Vlas: No, that's from a book someone on the express threw away. I read it. (Lyuba *returns with a dead bird.*)

Lyuba: It can bring down anything on the wing! Some little rifle! (*Examines it.*)

Matvei: Did you make much of a kill? (*Tries to look into the bag.*)

Lyuba: Leave that bag alone. It's not yours. What a rifle!

Vlas (*picks up the bird*): Dead. A moment ago it could fly and then: snuffed

out! No one is informed of the hour of his doom. That's why people flit around and fret and hunt for better places. If they knew . . . the time and place where they will be gathered to earth.

Matvei: What would happen?

Vlas: Why then they wouldn't look for laurels, they wouldn't worry about wisdom and heroism.

Matvei: They'd get drunk?

Vlas: Heh, heh! They'd have one whale of a lark and let everybody know about it.

Vera (*to* Gennadi): Don't you play the guitar?

Gennadi: Why the idea! Only alone, for my own amusement.

Vera: Please play for us!

Zhenya: And don't even argue.

Gennadi: No, I can't, I can't.

Glasha: Go ahead, Gennadi, for the company.

Gennadi: I'm not much good at it. (*But* Zhenya *is already dragging him off to get his guitar.*)

Lyuba: Well, it's a fine rifle, all right! (*Hands it back to* Malko.) A gun like that is worth your right hand. Hang on to it! (*Gets up, turns to her husband.*) Come on, we've got work to do. Take the bag. (*To* Matvei) We'll be starting in an hour.

(*Exit with* Koryushko.)

XXIV

Vera: Matvei!

Matvei (*startled from his reverie*): Huh?

Vera: Here are telegrams for you.

Matvei: Oh yes, telegrams. I haven't even answered those that came this morning yet. (*Reads, writes answers.*) I accepted them and then forgot to answer them. (*To* Lavrenti) So you intend to leave, do you? Well, well. You're afraid of dying in obscurity, are you? Well, well.

Vlas: How senseless. It were better to eat a handful of meal in quietude than a whole loaf in travail, for indeed men die in the taiga but in Moscow too they do not escape the hand of death. They do not escape.

Vera: What's happened to the guitar player?

Makarov (*he has been reading the paper the whole time, and now again breaks into a hearty laugh*): They're my sons, Glasha. (*He stands up and bows to* Matvei) I thank you till the end of my days on their account.

Matvei (*shakes his hand*): To the end, Ivan Makarych, to the very end.

XXV

Enter Zhenya, *followed by* Gennadi *with his guitar.*

Vera: Come on, comrade.

Gennadi: I'm flustered. (*He picks a chord*). I don't know how to begin. All the songs have gone out of my head. I'm flustered.

Vera: Give us something cheerful.

Gennadi: You want something cheerful, well—(*He closes his eyes, strums on the strings and begins to sing. But he scarcely sings at all, he recites the words rapidly and expressively, occasionally singing the ends of the lines; all in an uneven, rather husky voice. Sometimes he shouts, sometimes he whispers, at other times he simply strums on the guitar. All the listeners are silent.*

including Lavrenti, *who watches* Gennadi *the whole time from the corner of his eyes.*)

The country's growing by degrees
And, comrades, time is growing too.
And as we're building we ourselves
Are gathering life's day.

But, comrades, youth is waning fast
Receding backwards down the stair,
And as its parting gift has tinged
My hair with streaks of grey.

It goes to others light of heart,
And I have scarce yet realized
That like a swallow on the wing
One cannot cling to youth.

That each day unaccounted for
We waste away unutilized
That day, oh comrades, in our lives
Is like a hair turned grey.

I bid goodbye, goodbye to youth
Here at the crossing of the ways
We take our leave beloved one
In friendship let us part.

O friends of mine and comrades dear,
We still are young and gay
And we shall still be happy though
Our hair is streaked with grey.

Matvei (*after a short pause*): Well! That was fine, I tell you. Thank you, Gennadi.

Gennadi: So you don't think it's too bad?

Matvei: First rate! First rate, Gennadi! Go ahead and play some more. Give us something with a bit of melancholy this time, something that'll bring tears to our eyes.

Gennadi (*he again shuts his eyes, thinks for a moment, strums the opening chords and starts singing*):

There's no one understands me
With whom my troubles I can share.
There's no one I feel sorry for
And no one knows my loving care

Sasha, dearest friend of mine,
I never can forget you,
And till death has closed my eyes
I always shall regret you.

Then will my clear eyes close
With a clean linen band
My pale form they will swath
And lay in clean white sand.

(Vera *listens tensely and nervously.* Gennadi *is himself absorbed in his singing. Suddenly, on the last words,* Vera *gets up and hurries into the car. Everyone looks around.* Gennadi *opens his eyes, looks after her and breaks off in the middle of a word.*)

Matvei: Well? . . . Go on, Gennadi, go on. . .

Curtain

ACT II

Scene: *A grass covered clearing by the railway track in the taiga. Not far off the semaphore of the siding is visible. Dusk is coming on. From the direction of the siding song is heard. With the last words of the song enter* Vera, Glasha, *and* Zhenya *walking arm in arm in step, carrying baskets laden with food and dishes.*

Song:

And they linger like a legend
Like beckoning lights ablaze
The nights we stormed Spasska
And the Volochayev days.

Glasha: Here! (*stops*) This is where they entered the taiga, this is where they'll come out.

Vera: Is there a trail here? (*looks*) I don't see any.

Glasha: A twig got in the tall young fellow's way—he hacked it off. And he had a smoke (*she picks up a match*). And Lyuba put it out. She was walking behind. It's been a dry summer and the taiga catches fire easily. Last year the taiga burned a long way off and you could smell the smoke from here.

Zhenya: Glasha is something of a sorceress. She can read all the signs in the taiga.

Vera: Who taught you?

Glasha: My eyes taught me. I've got Yakut eyes. Come on, let's build a bonfire to chase the midges off. We'll boil some *salamata.*

Vera: A bonfire! We must have a bonfire. Come on, girls, let's all gather fuel! One, two, three! (*They run off in different directions within sight of each other and gather twigs, pine cones and moss.*) We'll wait for them here.

Zhenya (*getting out the dishes and the food*): It's such fun I can scarcely believe it.

Vera: You must come to visit us in Moscow. I'll leave you the address.

Zhenya: Absolutely! All I need is a place to sleep at night. In the daytime I shall wander through the streets and have a look at everything. And first of all I'll go to the mausoleum on the Red Square and wait for my turn to go through it. I'll go through seven times in a row.

Glasha: Lavrusha will be coming for me.

Zhenya: I hate your Lavrusha.

Glasha: Don't be angry at him, please don't. What sort of a life does he live with me? All he hears is talk of the taiga and of Petka. In Moscow he can become a hero.

Vera: It'll be hard to be alone without your husband.

Glasha: But I'll be left with my son.

Vera: You've got a lovely son!

Glasha: The best of all. When he grows up he'll fly. Highest of all. He'll start reading books and become the cleverest of all.

Vera: Do you like books?

Glasha: I read all about Chapayev. I enjoyed it immensely. Only the book ends wrong. The hero gets drowned! Why should the hero drown?

Vera: That's what actually happened.

Glasha: No, you're wrong, As I see it he only pretended, he reached bottom and then crawled along the bottom to the other shore. And there the Reds met him and gave him a horse. And then he wheeled round and started back. The Whites saw the dead man coming back, brandishing his sword, and fell on their knees. And so of course we carried the day completely. That's the sort of ending that occurred to me!

Vera: No, Glasha. We sometimes have to die for victory.

Glasha: Let the Whites do the dying. But our Red commanders must go on living.

Vera: If only it were so! What other books have you read?

Glasha: Arithmetic. Gennadi's been teaching me.

Zhenya: Multiply twenty-eight by thirty-two.

Glasha (*moves her lips and counts on her fingers*): Eight hundred and ninety six. I wish I had a book on how trees live and herbs, and about animals too. And besides, I'd like a book that tells why there are fewer and fewer stars.

Vera: Who told you there are fewer and fewer?

Glasha: They're always falling, so there must be fewer.

Vera: You certainly ought to study. I'll send you books and writing pads and everything. But it'll be hard for you alone.

Glasha: If only you would send them. I've got a Yakut rug made of skins. I'll give it to you. You'll sell it in Moscow and use the money to buy the books.

Zhenya: We'll read them together. And when I go to Sretensk I'll raise the question of patronage over you, in an organized way. We'll form a brigade; I'll be chairman, and take charge of you. And then, we'll show Lavrenti where to get off.

Glasha: Lavrenti is Petka's father. Maybe when Petka grows up he'll start telling me where to get off.

Zhenya: Prejudices.

Glasha (*stirs the pot*): My mother and father celebrated their wedding, there's prejudice for you. At the wedding feast my Yakut grandfather ate a pood of beef and a tub of lard. Everyone overate so that mother might live in plenty. That's prejudice for you. But it's no prejudice to respect your parents. I love children and I respect my father; he was a partisan in Kolchak's time.

Vera: I feel at home with you girls.

Zhenya: It's really amazing, like we'd known each other a hundred years. Vera Nikolayevna, stay on with us for at least a week.

Vera: Impossible, Zhenya.

Zhenya: Promise you'll come back in a year. We'll let you go then.

Vera: In a year.

Zhenya: Next summer. We'll spruce up the siding, whitewash it and put out banners.

Glasha: Petka will have learned to walk.

Zhenya: We'll build a huge bonfire.

Glasha: What's the matter, Vera Nikolayevna? What's the matter? Why don't you turn around? Tell me.

Zhenya: What's wrong?

Vera: I'm sorry.

Glasha: You won't come back in a year?

Vera: No, we won't come back.

Zhenya: Why?

Vera: Because of Matvei Ilyich. . . He doesn't know the truth. He thinks it's over-exhaustion. The army commander provided the car, and ordered him—the People's Commissar summoned him—to Moscow. The commander-in-chief and the People's Commissar know everything. Matvei is seriously ill, girls, incurably ill. He has sarcoma of the lungs. He doesn't know it. In three months' time. . .

Glasha: He'll die?

(Vera *hangs her head.*)

Zhenya: Oh—oh—oh . . . (*Gasps for breath, momentarily paralysed. The silence is broken only by the wind in the pine tree tops.*)

Glasha: But don't you . . . there's no need to. . . Let me pet you a little. There, there! (*She sings slowly and softly.*)

The hawk soars over the steppe
The fish swims in Baikal
Pine trees hem the path.
Go over the steppe to the taiga
Go through the taiga to the station,
Oh mortal sorrow of mine.

My mother died, but I didn't cry. I wandered through the taiga two whole days. I sang melancholy songs to get the lump out of my throat. When you're left alone come back here. I'll be alone too, I'll expect you. Your hair's turned grey from grief.

Zhenya (*suddenly jumps up*): Matvei Ilyich! Matvei Ilyich! (*Rushes off into the darkness*).

Vera: Zhenya! Zhenya! You mustn't, dear! Wait! (*Runs after her.*)

II

Glasha (*gazing after them*): She was perfectly calm when we came to the clearing.

Gennadi (*softly*): Glasha. . . (*turns around.*) Glasha! (*He deposits a box he is carrying on the ground and comes over to the bonfire.*) Good evening, Glafira Ivanovna!

Glasha (*gives him a puzzled look*): Why are you here?

Gennadi: See what I've brought: It's either now or never, because tomorrow Matvei Ilyich is leaving. Let him put in the deciding word. I'm terrifically excited. (*He opens the box, fusses about muttering, but puts it together.*) It still requires perfecting, of course, but all the same. . . A crystal receiving set constructed on a new principle. Five years I worked on it. And now I hope it's the right thing for machine tractor stations and collective farms, also for the Red Army.

The Radio (*silence, a barely audible crackle, distant voices*): Chita, Chita . . . comrades, young voters. . . Irkutsk. . . Irkutsk. . . The size of the future airdrome. . . Novossibirsk. . . Sverdlovsk. . . Moscow. . . Moscow. . .

Gennadi: Aha! Did you hear that, Glasha?

The Radio: A new type of passenger automobile. . . *Die Kommunistische revoluzion und proletarische diktatur*. . . (*faint music*).

Gennadi: Did you hear? Did you hear, Glasha? Six thousand kilometres away! Don't sulk, Glasha dear! After Lavrenti leaves we'll read books together. No, no, you sit quiet and listen to me. I know perfectly well you don't love me. Just don't say "No" and I'll be happy. You're my unattainable happiness. More unattainable than Mars. I don't know what it is I want to say. I'm in a hurry, I must talk to you and hold your hand. Only don't say "No!" Source of my joy and sorrow!

Glasha: You mustn't, Gennadi Mironovich!

Gennadi: I mustn't? I mustn't? I know it myself. I'll shut up again, now, for a long time. (*He gives the radio dial a violent twist.*)

The Radio: Khabarovsk. . . Khabarovsk . . . concert being given by artists of the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre at the House of the Red Army.

Gennadi: How can I cheer you up? Soothe you a bit? Would you like me to fetch my guitar?

Glasha: Why must people die? In Khabarovsk and everywhere else.

Gennadi: Why? Is someone of yours?

Glasha: Not someone of mine only.

III

(*Enter* Lavrenti.)

Gennadi: Lavrenti Petrovich!

Lavrenti: That's my name all right. (*Points to the radio*) Does it work?

Gennadi: Well, we got Moscow and Khabarovsk on it. (*Turns it off.*)

Lavrenti: Quite a distance. You deserve a prize.

Gennadi: How's the work on the car?

Lavrenti: They've nearly finished. Why the bonfire?

Gennadi: We're waiting for Matvei Ilyich to get back from hunting.

Lavrenti: What a man! He grilled me. What sort of trails are there in the taiga? Where does the Shila fall into the Argun? Where does the Argun fall into the Amur, and where do the rivers flow from? Can one reach the boundary through the taiga, and are there any badgers and how are they trapped? He had me sweating. "You don't know your own locality," he said. "You live like a blind man." He showed me the map—one siding is indicated there and all around are signs and streaks, each of them with a special meaning. A fighter, he said, must first of all familiarize himself with the neighborhood.

Gennadi: Geography . . . science. . .

Lavrenti: Why are you silent, Glasha? Maybe I'm in the way?

Gennadi: No, no, quite the contrary. (*Silence*)

Glasha: What else did he say?

Lavrenti: He wanted to know what books I read. Books about heroes and about the class struggle, I told him. I even read about Cicero, I said, but I no sooner read a book, than I promptly forget the contents. At this point he again started to chide me.

Gennadi: Some hero! (*Stands up.*) Incidentally the literal translation of Cicero is—beans.

Lavrenti: Who was Cicero?

Gennadi: A Roman. (*Exit*)

IV

Lavrenti: Glasha, there's something I want to say.

Glasha: Speak up.

Lavrenti: Glasha, dear! It's true, I'm swayed by a moment's influence, that I'm too susceptible. But there's no other way out for me than to leave. It's all very well for him to talk: he puts his wife on a car, today Chita, tomorrow Khabarovsk. So I should drag along my wife and Petka. But having a family cramps me, Glasha. It's like a hump on my back at present I settled down too soon, I hadn't planned on it. I thought I'd be reconciled, that I'd calm down. I'm dying to go to Moscow. But I must go alone, Glasha.

Glasha: Go ahead, my dear. We'd already decided you would.

Lavrenti: I'm leaving tomorrow.

Glasha: Tomorrow. . .

Lavrenti: You don't want me to?

Glasha: Go ahead.

Lavrenti: Glasha, my darling! I love you as much as ever. More than ever, in fact. Only a man must be free to go about, unimpinged. Otherwise life isn't worth a penny.

Glasha: You don't value life.

Lavrenti: What's the good of it to me, if it means fetters and chains? I wouldn't have it as a gift!

Glasha: Then give your share to Matvei Ilyich. He needs life more than you do!

Lavrenti: His own share's enough.

Glasha: In three months Matvei Ilyich will be dead.

Lavrenti: Stop joking, Glafira!

Glasha: He himself doesn't know it, and he musn't be told.

Lavrenti: Glasha! Don't cast aspersions!

Glasha: He's going to die. Vera Nikolayevna said so.

Lavrenti: Gla. . . Matvei Ilyich. . . Comrade Malko?

V

(*Enter* Vera, *leading a silent* Zhenya.)

Vera: Aren't they back yet? Let's all call together. Mat—ve—e—i! Mat—ve—e—i! No answer. (*Silence*)

Glasha: They're coming, the twigs are rustling.

Vera: What a wife you have, Lavrenti! She sees and hears everything. You should help her to study.

Lavrenti: What? Study? How should I help? I need help myself.

Vera: You worry about yourself an awful lot. It's always: "me, myself and I." Get fuel Zhenya. (*Gathers brushwood together with Zhenya and throws it on the fire*). Is the *salamata* ready?

Glasha: I'm cooking it.

Vera: Have you eaten it Zhenya? Is it good?

Zhenya: I want to go home.

Vera: What do you intend to do in Moscow, Lavrenti?

Lavrenti: I don't know.

VI

(*Enter* Matvei, Gennadi, Lyuba *and* Sulin.)

Matvei: Moonlight and a bonfire! What a life, comrades! Go get your guitar, Gennadi. It can't be expressed! How does the song go? (*sings*)

Can any of us find a name
For what set many hearts aflame?
My father warned me to beware
Of eyes of blue and coal-black hair.

Gennadi: I'll get the guitar, Matvei Ilyich, and we'll sing all night! Only. . . (*looks at the radio*) Oh well, we'll find time for that later, somehow. (*Exit*)

Matvei: Come over to the bonfire, women, meet the hunters! Dish out the *salamata,* Glasha.

Glasha: It's all ready. Sit down, everybody. (*Pours the* salamata *into cups.*)

Matvei: What a day we had, Vera dear! How many did you bag, Lyubov Semyonovna?

Lyuba (*counts the contents of her bag*): Four grouse and three ducks.

Matvei: How many have we got, Sulin?

Sulin: Six ducks and six grouse.

Matvei: What places we saw, Vera! Get out the wine, Sulin! (*Pours himself a glass and passes the bottle to Lyuba.*) If only we could stay on with you and go hunting everyday.

Lyuba: Do stay! I'll scare up a bear, a wild boar and a roe.

Matvei: Here's to friendship, Lyubov Semyonova.

Lyuba: Here's looking at you! (*They drink.*)

Matvei: You don't object, do you Vera? (*Kisses* Lyuba) Well! We got to seal the bond! Take my Winchester, Lyubov Semyona! Take it, take it!

Lyuba: Oh—oh! Your rifle! That's an awful lot! (*Seizes the rifle.*) Won't they take it away from me, though? They might come and take it away from me after you're gone.

Matvei: Once I've made you a present of it, no one will take it away from you. Did you see the inscription: "To dear Matvei, comrade on the hunt." It's of more use to you here. There aren't any bears in Moscow. You give me the one you've had for the last seven years in exchange.

Lyuba: But what'll I do without my fowling piece.

Matvei: You say you need your fowling piece? Well, keep it too, then.

Lyuba: I bow to the ground before you, Matvei.

Matvei: As before Ivan the Terrible.

Lyuba (*sits down by the fire, cleans her gun*): Feed the guests, Zhenya. Play the hostess—your mother's too busy.

Vera: Go to it, hunters!

Matvei: A blessed country!

Lyuba: The best place on earth! When God finished creating the world he gathered together the remaining seed into one handful and cast it downwards. This handful fell beyond Lake Baikal and so the flora and wild animals hereabouts seem to have come from all parts of the world. That's how it happened.

Zhenya: Again talk about God! It's so childishly preposterous!

Lyuba: It's all just a story Zhenya.

Matvei: Good stuff, that *salamata,* Glasha.

Glasha: Gennadi Mironych has invented a radio. Take it along to Moscow with you. Give it to the right person so that the collective farmers and the Red Army'll get the benefit of it.

Matvei: Where's the radio? Is that it? Sulin!

(Sulin *turns it on, tunes in. A throaty voice comes over the air, faint music*)

Matvei: Where's that from?

Sulin: Japan, Matvei Ilyich. Yokohama, I should judge.

(Everybody listens in silence to a Japanese military march.)

Matvei: Yokohama, well we aren't going to give this country up to anyone. We're going to live here ourselves and hunt on it ourselves. Am I right, Zhenya?

Zhenya (*jumps up*): I must go home . . . right away . . . right away . . . *(runs off).*

VII

Vera: Zhenya, dear.

Lyuba: She'll come back. Today's St. Ilya's day.

Matvei: The day's two hours shorter.

Lyuba: Swifts are flying. Thunder and lightning. The wood demon had to sew himself a coat in a hurry. He was sitting and sewing at night beneath a pine tree when Ilya thundered. Lightning flashed, the wood demon stuck the needle into the coat and said to the lightning: "Why do you flash so seldom?" Ilya became angry at the demon and aimed a thunderbolt at him —it blasted the tree into bits but the demon got away.

Vera: I'm going off to bed, Matvei. Don't be long.

Matvei: It's the air here, Vera. It makes one sleepy. Pine tree sleepiness. Go ahead, I shan't be long. (*Exit* Vera.)

VIII

Matvei: Lyubov Semyona, it seems you're going to have a sable farm to look after. Glasha and I conceived the plan of raising sables here at Dalyokoye. We'll set aside a preserve, put up a fence and keep the proper natural surroundings. Lyuba will be the manager. Of course the war department hasn't taken a sudden interest in sables, but I shall take action as member of the Territorial Executive Committee.

Glasha: I wrote to the paper asking why they trap sables when it would be better to let them live and multiply.

Lavrenti: You really wrote to the paper? When?

Glasha: While you were in the army. They didn't answer.

Matvei: Sulin!

Sulin: I've made a note of it.

Matvei: And besides that, on the trail Lyubov Semyonova and I had an argument.

Lyuba: There isn't any, I tell you, I've panned all the streams. There isn't any.

Matvei: You didn't do a good job of it. How about it, Glasha? Is there gold in the district?

Lyuba: There isn't!

Matvei: There is!

Lyuba: Glasha has no way of knowing.

Glasha: There must be gold.

Matvei: Take this down, Sulin! Commission Glafira Makarova to prospect for gold. Have we got a pair of canvas boots? Give her yours, Sulin. Have a trenching tool sent from the nearest depot. Keep in touch by telegraph.

Sulin: Lavrenti could help you, but the chap is leaving tomorrow. Did you know about it, Glasha?

Glasha: We'll manage without him.

Lyuba: Oh you will, will you! Tomorrow. He'll soon be on his way and

his wife'll have to get along alone. Are you sorry to lose your husband, Glafira?

Glasha: We'll find gold.

Lyuba: You silly!

(Enter Koryushko, *followed at a distance by* Vlas.)

IX

Koryushko: Allow me to report, Matvei Ilyich, that the work of repairing the drawing-room car is finished. It can leave with the morning express if we receive orders from DN. I should like a word with Comrade Sulin.

Matvei: Sulin will attend to everything. Sit down.

Koryushko: Delighted! Only you see the Vladivostok express is passing through and Gennadi Mironych was delayed on that account. Excuse me! I've got to speak to Lyubov Semyonova on a family matter. *(Draws her aside.)* Made up your mind?

Lyuba: Don't you interfere, Alyusha!

Koryushko: But I can't. I must tell everything.

Lyuba: Let's go home! *(aloud)* Thanks for the treat! Goodbye. Carry the haul, Alyusha!

Koryushko (sighing): Good appetite and pleasant dreams.

(Exit Koryushko, Lyuba *and* Sulin *carrying the radio set.)*

X

Vlas (coming forward): Dead birds, dying embers of the fire. Everything dies and crumbles to dust.

Lavrenti: Shut up, you deacon.

Vlas: I'm no deacon, but a Seventh Day Adventist! And I've come to argue, Lavrenti, and let those in authority judge us.

Lavrenti: I don't want to waste my breath!

Vlas: Just as always! For lack of arguments, because he can't answer me.

Matvei: Do you mean to say a former Red Army man can't answer a deacon? I don't believe it. Speak up, Vlas Filippovich!

Vlas: Hearken to the voice of the wise, Lavrenti, and tell me what is the point of wisdom? I was a deacon fifteen years. I read the evangel, great wisdom! Then I became a heretic, I stood eight years of persecution by the old government. I roamed the earth from end to end. I was exiled. And then, when the atheists took power, and God stood for it, I spat in his beard and repudiated him. I repudiated everything! I became a switchman. I go around like a fool. I don't believe in anything. For the sage dies the same as the idiot. So what is the point of erudition? And why all the pother?

Lavrenti: It's better to live a year like a human being than ten years like a swine. We must fight for a better life for the toilers.

Vlas: In days to come both the struggle and wisdom will be forgotten.

Lavrenti: Lenin won't be forgotten!

Vlas: The same old answer! But nevertheless try to refute my unbelief the way you formerly refuted God.

Lavrenti: Anyone who doesn't believe in our cause is a class enemy, and our answer to our enemies is quite explicit.

Vlas: Through the cannon's mouth? You use death to frighten them? But isn't death the metamorphosis of matter from one form to another, as the materialists teach? Instead of being a deacon I become a mushroom . . .

Lavrenti: A toadstool!

Vlas: Even a toadstool, if you like, but why try to frighten me with death? It's because you yourselves don't feel matter and are afraid of death!

Matvei: We're not afraid of death but we don't want to die.

Vlas: But the early Christians wanted to! They went calmly to the lions. For they believed in life in heaven, in another life.

Matvei: Because they were denied life on earth. So they fooled themselves.

Vlas: And I also say they fooled themselves. But they believed in it. And I fooled myself for many years, and I lived peacefully. But when I realized that there's nothing in heaven but empty space I was overcome with anguish. I'm afraid to die, I'm afraid of becoming a mushroom or an earthworm.

Matvei: Not a very cheerful prospect—a worm gets walked on easily.

Vlas: You'll get walked on too.

Matvei: No, I'll go right on living after death. And not beyond the stars, either, but right here on earth, in people's memories, in my work.

Vlas: We know all about your work! Armed battalions race past the siding, to fight against Japan.

Matvei: Japan will fight against us. The Japanese are imperialists.

Vlas: And what are you?

Matvei: We? Why we're in the special Far Eastern.

Vlas: All the same you've got to die. For where there's war there's death.

Matvei: If necessary we'll face death.

Vlas: What for?

Matvei: Why because we're building our own happiness here on earth, you see, and we must defend our territory and our happiness.

Vlas: But suppose you're killed.

Matvei: Well, Lavrenti will remain, Glasha, Petka . . .

Vlas: What's that to you? You won't be there!

Matvei: Well: supposing I "won't be there." Tomorrow I won't be at the siding either. But the sable farm will be organized and Glasha will find gold. And the more I succeed in doing on earth for the happiness of those who are my close friends the longer I shall live.

Vlas: Have you many close friends?

Matvei: Plenty. The workers of the entire world . . . My country . . . My Party . . . our children. Their life is my life. I'll go on living through them. Only not through three persons but through millions. Your God's got a long way to go to catch up with me.

Vlas: I have no close friends, I have no children; in fact I have nobody. I don't need anyone besides myself. I want to live for the good of my own eyes. And I won't even bat an eyelash if everything else goes to hell.

Matvei: Do you know why you are afraid of death, deacon? You live alone like a mushroom and like a mushroom you'll rot away, crumble to dust and nothingness!

Vlas: And you're afraid too, and so are you. You only talk bravely as long as death isn't before your eyes.

Lavrenti (jumps up): I'll smash your face in, you damned sectarian.

Vlas: Anyone can be brave in words. But I'd like to see your face when the old bearded fellow with a scythe stands before you.

Matvei: Well, look at me, deacon. Have a good look. Do you see me?

Vlas: Well what?

Matvei: In three months I'll be dead!

(A noise that swells to a roar drowns the cries that escape Glasha *and* Lavrenti. *The shadow of the Vladivostok express flashes past. The roar fades away till only the rhythm of the trucks on the joints is audible. Silence.)*

Matvei: (gets up): Let's go home.

Curtain.

ACT III

Scene: *Corridor of the drawing-room car. Doors open off, leading to a compartment and to the platform. Through the car windows the siding is visible.*

(Matvei *sits finishing his shaving.* Koryushko *stands before him.*)

Matvei: Sit down! Do sit down!

Koryushko: Please don't bother, I prefer standing. You sent for me, Matvei Ilyich?

Matvei: I sent for you, Aleksei Efimovich. Sit down, I tell you! *(He hunts on the table and finds a piece of paper.)* I've written a small testimonial on the work of the siding. Speaking plainly, it's a good testimonial! (*Hands over the testimonial.)*

Koryushko (having sat down, he rises): I'm very glad! In the name of the toiling masses of the siding . . .

Matvei: How soon are we to be coupled on?

Koryushko: In half an hour, Matvei Ilyich. You made me so happy . . . so happy . . . I got excited. I'd expected a reprimand or something and got a testimonial instead. Of course, we live in the taiga, unimportant and uninteresting people.

Matvei (*severely*): Comrade station master, I'll take back my testimonial if you talk like that.

Koryushko: Listen! I'm touched to the heart by your consideration and cordiality. Don't forget, Matvei Ilyich, to tell your comrades in Moscow that you stopped off at Dalyokoye siding and found that everything there was ship-shape. Soviet railwaymen. You needn't mention our names. Simply pass on the word that Dalyokoye siding is linked with the whole land.

Matvei (stands up, shakes hands): I'll tell them, Aleksei Efimovich, I surely shall.

Koryushko: I thank you. Excuse me for interrupting your dressing. I feel honored. *(Moves towards the exit.)*

Matvei: Isn't there something else you wanted to say to me?

Koryushko: Something else? What, for example?

Matvei: I'm only asking. Maybe you do have something you want to ask?

Koryushko: I? No! How did you guess?

Matvei: I can tell by the way you walk. Well, out with it: I'll help in any way I can.

Koryushko: You'll help?

Matvei: I'll help.

Koryushko: Since you made a hit with her *(whisper),* try to influence Lyubov Semyonova. Only in such a way that she won't know it comes from me. Do you understand? We've had a disagreement.

Matvei: I'm listening.

Koryushko: This spring Lyuba discovered gold bearing sand. And she keeps it a secret. She goes out as though to hunt and pans gold dust on the

quiet. I've told her we ought to report the find to the government. But she won't allow it. She pans and pans and stowes away. What for? Influence her Matvei Ilyich. Especially since she has unusual respect for you.

II

(*Enter* Lyuba.)

Koryushko: Lyubov Semyonova has come to pay you a call. Fine! I'll be off. The Forty-one will be calling soon. *(Exit)*

Lyuba: Here (*pulls out a fowl*) I shot it at dawn with the rifle you gave me. I bagged more fowl than you can eat from here to Moscow. Clean shooting!

Matvei: And what about the sable farm? Did you write?

Lyuba: I sat all night (*hands him a paper*). My hand is more accustomed to hunting than to writing. Can you make it out?

Matvei: We'll make it out somehow. Sit down, Lyubov Semyonova, *(finishes shaving)*.

Lyuba: Wait a minute! (*Pulls out a sable skin.*) Give this to Vera Nikolayevna. Sable for a coat collar, in return for your rifle.

Matvei: But that's for Vera!

Lyuba: For her. As for you *(looks around, closes the door to the platform)*, Matvei Ilyich, you're a fine chap, I realized what a fine chap you are while we were in the taiga together. Zhenya tells me you're ill.

Matvei: Zhenya?

Lyuba: She told me as a secret. The Moscow doctors won't cure you. Go away to the warm countries. They'll cure you there. Take this so you'll have money for the trip. Sell the bag and go away.

Matvei (*weighs the bag in hand*): Pretty heavy.

Lyuba: There's dust in it. Gold dust. I know a stream. I go there on the quiet and pan. Take it.

Matvei: So that's it! *(Hands the bag back to Lyuba.)* If it's necessary they'll send me to the warm countries. They'll find the money somehow. Ours isn't a poor country. But I thank you just the same for your good intentions. As it turns out, our toast to friendship was no idle gesture. Keep the bag and help Glasha with her prospecting.

Lyuba: Prospecting? You're a smart one!

Matvei: We've got to be smart.

Lyuba: What's the point of prospecting? Will you get anything out of the gold?

Matvei: Will you get anything out of the sable farm?

Lyuba: I'll do it for love of animals. But if we discover gold they'll come out here with machinery, they'll raise a racket and it'll mean goodbye to the silence of the taiga.

Matvei: It'll mean goodbye to backwardness too. It's high time, Lyubov Semyonova, high time!

Lyuba: Alyusha keeps me awake nights; make it available to the common good, he says. He too has found a word for it, "the common good!"

III

(*Enter* Vlas.)

Vlas: Teach me how to live. Show me . . .

Lyuba: Well, have you been drinking?

Vlas: I've drunk the cup of sorrow, not vodka.

Matvei: Sit down. (*to Lyuba*) So we understand each other, don't we?

Lyuba: I guess we do. Listen, why don't you take it?

Matvei: I don't need it. What would I do with it? *(Takes out a box and hands it to her.)* Cartridges for the Winchester. Sulin will keep you supplied regularly.

Lyuba: Will you be coming out to say goodbye.

Matvei: I most certainly will.

(Exit Lyuba).

IV

Matvei (looking out of the window): Isn't she from the Amur district?

Vlas: That's right, a fisherman's daughter.

Matvei: The taiga is stirring before the rain, and you can smell the pines. Beautiful late summer weather.

Vlas: I came to rehabilitate myself before you, to repent to the fullness of my heart.

Matvei: "Cunning is the human heart before all else and exceeding corrupt."

Vlas: Isn't that from the prophet Jeremiah?

Matvei: That's right.

Vlas: Maybe you are angry with me for what I said last night about Japan and the liberties I took. The truth is, I wasn't quite myself. I poured myself a tumbler to screw my courage, and there you are.

Matvei: "Woe unto them who till late at night inflame themselves with wine," warned Isiah.

Vlas: Ha—Ha! True! You yourself see how it is. My words could be used against me after you're gone. Makarov especially has long been looking for a chance. Forget my idle words.

Matvei: "On judgement day shall every man be called to answer for the idle words he hath uttered."

Vlas: How should I take that, as coming from Matthew or from you?

Matvei: My name is also Matthew.

Vlas: Where did you learn all that?

Matvei: A long time ago I worked on the anti-religious front, and I used to quote the bible.

Vlas: Everything's in your line.

Matvei: We've got to know the bible.

Vlas: I know it too. One time I was reciting the Psalter by rote at a merchant's funeral service. Suddenly I looked and saw a fly crawling on the dead man's nose. It made me feel so ticklish that I got the giggles, and couldn't stop. So I pretended I was sobbing and nobody suspected it. They praised my tenderness of feeling, my sensitivity. Yes, I could sing in the opera and become famous. I could become a great singer. What should a non-believer like me do in life? Tell me.

Matvei: Buy a razor and shave yourself. It'll be your salvation.

Vlas: You have humbled and crushed me.

Matvei: "Blessed are the humble."

Vlas: How about last night, Matvei Ilyich? All I ask is that you trust me to turn switches.

V

(Enter Makarov, Glasha, Lavrenti. Lavrenti *is carrying a packed suitcase.)*

Matvei (greeting the arrivals): How about it, Ivan Makarych? Can he be trusted with the switches?

Makarov: He cannot.

Vlas: I return good for evil. You don't need to get angry.

Makarov: You haven't yet seen me when I'm angry. (*To* Matvei) He renounced God but he doesn't believe in us. All of which means he's empty. And you can fill an empty man full of anything you like including gun powder and poison. You can't trust an empty man.

Vlas: But supposing I regret my own emptiness? Supposing I myself am looking for a new faith, and have, perhaps, already found it—what then? If I prostrate myself before the strong and place my spirit in his hands? He is my prophet! In death he defies mortality, and through him I shall be saved. Ha?

Matvei: Sit down, my dear guests! My wife has a headache but she'll be up soon. You make yourself at home, Lavrenti. Well, Vlas Filippovich, I guess that ends our talk.

Vlas: I shall try to measure up to the shadow of your greatness! *(Gets up, bows to the ground and goes out.)*

VI

Makarov: It's true that it will *only* be the shadow. Three days ago a wayfarer passed through here, an old fellow on foot. Vlas Filippovich called him over to the switch booth and had a heart to heart talk with him. He asked him how to reach the Argun through the taiga. And couldn't one go down the Argun by boat to the Amur, and wasn't there a foreign country beyond the Amur, and were there sectarians there.

Glasha: We had a meeting last night, Matvei Ilyich. A special meeting in connection with . . .

Makarov: In connection with your departure.

Glasha: We kept minutes. Not all of us will be called on to fight the Japanese at close quarters. But we must take on definite obligations. We must train ourselves to be guides in the taiga, and also to keep a sharp eye on any chance wanderers. *(Reads)* "Comrade Makarov will share his experience in partisan warfare on enemy territory, and we will also organize a circle to study Japanese . . ."

Makarov: Under Gennadi's instruction.

Glasha: Please keep this copy. And check up yourself in a few months on whether we've fulfilled it. So that the place of one departing fighter . . .

Matvei (stands up straight): I thank you for your confidence, comrades and friends! Not all of us will live to see the event. But those who do live to see it . . .

Glasha: We'll live to see it! We most certainly will! Kolchak himself sentenced my father to death for partisan activity. They caught him, tied his hands behind him and shot him, along with six of his comrades. For one whole day he lay in the snow, wounded. Mother found him, thawed him out and he came back to life. The bullet is still in him. You can feel it.

Makarov: I'll load my rifle with that bullet and plant it right in the forehead of a White general. So there's no dying before a hundred.

Matvei: Partisan stock, bred in the taiga, sturdy as an oak. Do a bit of shooting on my account too, Ivan Makarych. I shall keep in personal touch

with you, comrades. *(Takes the paper.)* Only who'll replace Lavrenti at the siding?

Glasha: I'm taking his place, Matvei Ilyich. From today on I'm listed as one of the staff.

Matvei: You were turning over the section?

Lavrenti: No, we walked in silence.

Matvei: Were you bidding each other goodbye?

Lavrenti: We were thinking.

Matvei: Well, it's never too late to begin thinking. Lyubov Semyonova will help you out, Glasha. She's discovered a stream with gold deposits.

Lavrenti: What do you mean? Why she argued with you?

Matvei: That was only in fun.

Glasha: I'd guessed it from her boots. Her boots are caked with stream clay.

Matvei (*gets out a camera and its accessories. To* Glasha): Do you know how to take pictures?

Glasha: Gennadi knows how.

Matvei: Have him teach you. Take it. No. You can't refuse. Learn how to take pictures; photograph the siding, photograph Petka, paste the snapshots in the album and send them to me. And I'll show them to him. *(Points to* Lavrenti.)

Glasha: I'll send them. Let me have a snapshot of you, with your autograph on it.

Matvei: Agreed! *(Hunts for a snapshot, finds it and autographs it.)* We've been together twenty-four hours and become friends for life. It's because we have common aims and interests. That is what makes us strong, my friends, that is what makes us invincible. I appoint Comrade Makarov as my proxy to carry on the daily work of check-up and of training you "non-Party" people in the Party spirit.

Makarov: I shall try to justify my title of Party candidate to the best of my ability. Of course, I'm only one here, we can't have a meeting. But all the same we read the paper aloud. Do you have any interesting books?

Matvei: Absolutely! (*Removes all the books from the shelf, stacks them and hands them over.)* Read them and don't forget your friend.

Glasha: I've brought you a Chinese root extract. Drink one drop a day. The Chinese crawl through the taiga on their stomachs to find it. Try it.

Matvei: Thank you, Glasha! (*Reads what he has written on the snapshot.*) "We all are working for a common goal—Communism. It shapes our thoughts and we live for its sake to the last second of our final hour." And when death comes we'll die alive. How's that?

(Glasha *goes over to him, looks him in the eyes, kisses him and goes out.*)

Matvei: Hm, hm! I must ask you to step out, my friends. I'll come out on the platform in a moment.

(*Exit* Makarov *and* Lavrenti *in silence.*)

VII

Matvei (alone): Hm, hm! *(Paces back and forth with long strides.)* Hm! "Through the field ride the Cossacks, ride the Red Army heroes . . ." So there we are, Comrade Malko.

(Enter Zhenya.)

Zhenya: Good morning, Matvei Ilyich. Where's Vera Nikolayevna? (*Wants to leave.*)

Matvei: Where are you going? Is it a confidential matter?

Zhenya: Nothing at all. That is, I wanted to say goodbye.

Matvei: Why only to Vera?

Zhenya: To you too, of course.

Matvei: Sit down, then. (Zhenya *sits down obediently.*) What are your secrets with Vera?

Zhenya: Why what do you mean?

Matvei: I know.

Zhenya: What do you know?

Matvei: I know everything.

Zhenya: You know, Matvei Ilyich? As a member of the Leninist Komsomol I swear, Matvei Ilyich, I make a Komsomol pledge to remain at my post and do my duty. We shall not waver, Matvei Ilyich, when the enemy crosses the frontier. Dear Matvei Ilyich. Use my blood for a transfusion! Please do! Take me to Moscow with you. Take my blood, Matvei Ilyich.

Matvei: So that's what it is! Who told you? Who told you, Zhenya? Your eyes are honest. Who told you, child?

Zhenya: Matvei Ilyich, we Komsomols . . .

Matvei: Was it Glasha? (Zhenya *shakes her head.*) Lavrenti? (*the same motion*) Vlas? (*again the same motion*).

Zhenya: Don't ask me! Don't ask me, Matvei Ilyich!

Matvei (*goes over and draws her to him, stroking her*): And save your blood. You need that young blood of yours!

(*Enter* Vera. Zhenya *sees her, jerks herself free and wants to say something, but takes fright, starts to cry and runs off-stage.*)

VIII

(Matvei *and* Vera *look at each other in silence.*)

Vera: What's wrong with her?

Matvei (*severely*): Who gave you the right to deceive me?

Vera: Why Matvei!

Matvei: Who gave you the right to exhibit lack of confidence in me? Have I ceased being a Red Army commander? Am I already a squeezed-out lemon which can be disregarded?

Vera: What's the matter with you, Matvei? What are you talking about?

Matvei: Why didn't you tell me the truth?

Vera: Did Zhenya?

Matvei: You and Sulin and the commander-in-chief and this car . . . a fine combination! You quietly bundled me off to Moscow, with orders. "It'll sour him, he'll become depressed if he finds out," you thought. You doubted me. You stopped being comrades and became conspirators.

Vera: Dearest, that wasn't our intention. We never thought that.

Matvei: What did you think? Did you think the hopelessness of the case would scare me? But even if I'm ill I'm still a Bolshevik. And I don't admit hopelessness. I don't admit it.

Vera: Of course, of course, Matvei!

Matvei: Who told you my case is hopeless? The doctor? Couldn't he be mistaken? If he couldn't there would be no point in dragging me to Moscow, but you're taking me there. That means you do have hope! That means you think: "Maybe he might live after all." And if there's even a glimmer of hope why should we fold our hands? Is that what we teach our fighters in the Red Army? We've got to fight for that hope, devil take

it! Fight and not temporize piously to the effect that we'll die just the same like Vlas. You put me in the same category with Vlas! (*Enter* Sulin) . . . I'm busy!!! (Sulin *darts out.*)

Vera: Matvei! We wanted . . . we wanted you to go on working like a Red Army commander till the last day.

Matvei: I'll make a fight for life. I'll turn all the institutes in Moscow inside out. I'll try all the doctors and all the experiments! And I'd rather die under the surgeon's knife undergoing some bold experiment, in a glorious struggle for life, than fold my hands in despair and resignation! Do you understand?

Vera: Yes, Matvei. That's why we're going. We still have time and we still have hope.

Matvei: That's right! Come here. Look at me. Did I give you a good scare?

Vera: Matvei . . . Matvei . . . (*nestles close to him*).

Matvei: Things will be better now. Especially since I knew everything the whole time anyway.

Vera: You knew? When?

Matvei: In Vladivostok. I made the doctor tell me the truth.

Vera: And never a word to me!

Matvei: I doubted you. I reproach myself for it!

Vera: My dearest! It's the first time I've seen you act like that. Well, now I'm again with you. There's no need to pretend. And I don't have to hide my tears. In fact there won't be any more tears, my darling!

Matvei (*hugs her tightly*): Dalyokoye siding . . . We might have passed it by. It turned out to be very near, and the people here like our dearest friends. The taiga stirs. The demon is sewing himself a coat. And Ilya sends a thunderbolt; he rushes off, he rushes off with the coat, Vera dear!

IX

(*Enter* Sulin, *carrying a box, followed by* Gennadi *with his guitar and* Lavrenti.)

Sulin: Everything's settled. We'll get it there safely. I expect we'll have to call Comrade Tomilin to Moscow for detailed negotiations. (*Deposits the radio on the table and sets it up.)*

Matvei: What's that? Yes, Gennadi, you'd better prepare yourself a substitute.

Gennadi: Zhenya has agreed in case anything comes up. She already receives by ear excellently. Comrade Sulin praised the set-up very highly.

Matvei: Yes, yes. Is the guitar also going to Moscow?

Gennadi: I wanted to give that to you Matvei Ilyich, as a parting gift, if you'll let me.

Matvei: I'll even insist upon it! What's doing, Sulin?

Sulin: The train will be here in five minutes.

Matvei: Give us a rousing send off, my friend. Play something cheerful, that'll make one feel like living!

Gennadi: All right. (*Quickly finds the tune, cocking his head he begins to sing, as always half reciting the words, in an expressive and original manner.*)

On the harness straps the noisy sleighbells play
Telling artlessly the tale of what took place.
As the troika rolls on swiftly snowflakes fly
And they swirl like silver powder in your face.

Not a single star shines in the heavens dark,
You can scarcely see the flickering lanterns' glow
And the pleasant sound keeps ringing in your ears
And your heart is fully free from care and woe.

And my soul is borne aloft on wings of dream.
Let the pale-faced choruses recede from sight,
For beneath black lashes with a velvet sheen
Loving eyes shine on me through the dark of night.

Oh ye artless friendly sleighbells hush your peal
Merry chattering confederates of love,
By your silence you shall craftily conceal
All the tender cherished secrets of my heart.

Clear the way, move over or I'll run you down.
I am filled with overwhelming will to live,
And I shall not yield the road to anyone.
I can love and hate but seldom can forgive.

Matvei: That's right!

(Gennadi *stops and leans back. There is an instant's silence. Suddenly the roar of an approaching train is heard, and then a whistle, the screech of brakes as the train comes to a stop.*)

Gennadi: The forty-one. They'll couple you on right away.

Matvei: Let's go out on the platform. They've called us. Come on, Vera.

(*Exit* Matvei, Vera *and* Sulin.)

X

Gennadi (*to* Lavrenti): Lavrenti Petrovich, I wish you . . . I would like to wish you success, Lavrenti Petrovich. (*Shake hands.*) And let me say frankly that I don't envy you. I feel sorry for you, Lavrenti Petrovich. (*Exit*)

(*Voices are heard through the window, goodbyes.*)

XI

Lyuba *rushes in. She is holding a large bouquet of autumn leaves. Looking around, she lays the bouquet on the table;* (*she sees* Lavrenti): Why do you sit there, you loose end? You might at least go kiss Petka goodbye.

XII

Glasha: You're here are you? I thought you'd come out. Goodbye, dear! Write when you feel like it. Don't you worry about me, I've found the thing I want to do.

Lavrenti: And if I should return, would you take me back?

Glasha: As a father you'll always be welcome.

Lavrenti: But as a husband?

Glasha: I don't know. I won't promise anything.

XIII

(*The car jolts as it is coupled on.* Glasha *embraces* Lavrenti. *Enter* Matvei *and* Vera. Glasha *rushes out.*)

Lavrenti (*leans towards the window, and then moves nervously about the car*): Are we leaving, Comrade Commander?

Matvei: We're leaving, Comrade Bolshev.

Lavrenti: I was a linesman, Comrade Commander. They trusted me with the safety of millions of the people's money. I guarded every spike, so that the trains should pass safe and sound. It's a long way from here to the border, but even here there are suspicious characters prowling about.

Matvei: Glasha has sharp eyes.

Lavrenti: She's been assigned to prospect for gold, Matvei Ilyich. And the only thing that ails me is my own discontent, like Vlas, and I don't deserve anything. And you respect Lyuba Koryushko more than you do me, and she can even shoot better than I can. Of course one should strive to get ahead, to be famous and all that, but not this way, by leaving one's place and one's job . . .

Matvei: What are you driving at? I don't follow you.

Lavrenti: It all came to me last night. Only I was ashamed to back out. I want to be like you, Comrade Commander. I want to live your life.

(*The car starts moving.*)

Lavrenti: I want to be like you, Comrade Malko . . . here at home at the siding. (*Throws the suitcase through the window and rushes out.*)

(*The faces of those remaining at the siding slowly glide past the windows. They wave their hands and caps.*)

Koryushko (*runs along the platform*): Matvei Ilyich! Thank you! I can't tell how really glad . . . (*His voice is lost as the train gathers speed.*)

Matvei (*sees the bouquet and holds it up*): Lavrenti remained behind, Vera. People live and learn. And we still have a while to live, my darling!

Curtain.

Gustav Regler

Seed Time

From a Novel of the German Peasant War

This is the story of Joss Fritz the agitator, the Black Forest peasant, who in 1500 was the terror of Alsace, the Marsh land and the Breis country, often betrayed and often struck down only to rise up again, a shrewd fanatic, who understood the language of the people, an organizer who was far sighted enough to win over all the suffering classes for the cause of the Bundschuh. A model conspirator, as Engels called him.

In 1493 the young Joss must realize how strong the enemy are. An attempt on the life of a feudal oppressor makes a short interlude during the hours of defeat in which the book begins, but very soon brings the leader into exile. Joss Fritz escapes his pursuers by joining an army under Maximilian against the Turks. All fine words about crusading evaporate in the horrors of war. Fritz takes refuge in admiration for the emperor; the new illusion is soon dispersed; on the place of execution in Basle, where he sees his friend hacked to pieces, Joss remembers his mission and goes back to the peasants. A runaway priest, friend of the vagabond, a madman accompanies him everywhere. Years of recruiting follow: a passionate wrestling with the stupidity of the oppressed: a winter of catastrophes, a summer of horrors. The scourge of the interdict sweeps through the land. The defence is slowly organized. At last the forlorn troop has been armed, the first Bundschuh flag begins to fly which many years later leads the peasants of Germany to the greatest insurrection they have ever made. Again treachery prevails, but immediately Joss Fritz begins the fight again. This brings us to the year 1502.

This autumn brought a brief respite, for people again heard the vesper bells at evening and were awakened early of a Sunday morning by the clamor of iron voices from the belfries. How gladly would they have brought their Martinmas geese to the priest's house, if only their farms had not been so hard hit! Let us say the truth: the peasants could not show such gladness as had filled their hearts on that first Sunday. Poverty kills even the joys of a holiday, trouble strangles thanksgiving, and if we have read certain of the records aright, there were plenty of peasants in those days who openly confessed that a mass did not seem worth so much worry to them. A whiff of incense, a lot of singing in a strange tongue—what was that in comparison with the many hard-earned pennies that now had to be given as before, without resistance?

Such peasants, no doubt, had heard about those new fangled folk who were saying that the people must understand the singing in church, must talk to their god in their own language.

In Joehlingen a priest raised his powerful voice against such heresy; he was a noble exception. The others felt themselves secure on the vantage ground of their chancels. The communion table seemed to them like an insuperable ditch, keeping all murmurs at a safe distance. The Latin language fostered their stupid pride, and clothed in the many colored vestments of ecclesiastical ritual, they thought it quite unnecessary to answer the questions of the ill-clad. The enjoyment of fat living prevented any qualms of anxiety, greed made them blind, and if some turbulent fellow approached too close so that his complaint reached even their ears, they did not hesitate to send an order to the provost for him to be taken to task.

But at that time leaflets were circulating through the land, on which the verse was written: *Why do we need the monkish life? We can all pray when we've a mind to and go to church when we're inclined to.*

The parish priest of Joehlingen flourished one of these leaflets over the heads of his flock.

"Can ye smell the stink of hell that the paper giveth off? There I have thee by the ear, little fiend," said he, and pinched the sheet as though it were a schoolboy. "Why dost not whine? Hast thou lost the power of speech, now that I have dragged thee here into the Lord's presence? Thou wouldst slink into the houses like an odor of spring flowers, but thou art nought but a fart—a wretched, pestilent thing. Why dost thou scratch the people when they do not itch?" He held the crumpled sheet before his eyes, as though trying to read it: " 'We would divide up one with another.' I would fain laugh: Divide up, and tomorow John will again have more than Jacob. Divide up one with another—and wanton like the cat with the mice together. And it might be, thou wouldst laugh up thy sleeve when the claws stuck in our flesh. A fine thing were it for the fools that no one should requite their wickedness. But thou art deceived in my children. Only knaves and idlers repeat thy crooked babbling by rote." He quoted again: " 'And let no peasant pay money at all for Christ hath given his life for all'—ho—ho! hark to the hobbling little foul fiend! He takes the Lord's name in his slimy mouth. Speaketh as though in prayer, and yet is nought but a belch from a poisonous belly. Thou dost seem right lean and pious, but thou art fat and crammed with filth, and fouler than gallows wood." He read again: " 'We want to govern ourselves at last'—there hath the villain shown his cloven foot! He would heap abuse on the servants of the Lord, and left to himself, would play the devil here, spit in the tabernacle of God and befoul his backside before the altar of Our Blessed Lady!"

His face was puce with rage; he crumpled the paper in his fist and leaned forward over the edge of the pulpit.

"I know well that his messengers do slink around in your midst. They do wail and cry with loud lament, as though in hunger and hardship they went. But I tell ye: let the Devil have his way and 'twere easy to please him any day. For what will they give ye, when they have taken the Lord away from ye? What would become of your plowland, when the ox throweth off his yoke, when the horse shaketh his collar from his neck, when the peasant runneth from his plow—shall such sluggard and good-for-nothing then come and plow your land?! He will sow ye tares and reap ye clods. He will pour sloth into your veins. The fruit will dry up on the trees, and the root rot in the plowland. The grass will burn on the stalk, and the vine wither on the stem. The children will raise their hands against ye, and the dog will seize his own master by the leg. Who then are these gentry, who cease not to pester your ears? Have they ever set hand upon a plow? Do they know how to spread dung over the fields? Hath one of them ever milked a cow or taken a calf from its mother's womb? Have ye met them as ye trod the furrows in the sweat of your labor? Are their hands horny with toil as yours are? Where are the children whose bread they must earn? Who gave them the money to cover these pestilent leaflets so neatly with their lying hieroglyphs? Are they then from these parts, and do they boast maybe that a Bruchrain peasant woman bore them?"

The parish listened with mouths agape. Near the door stood a group of *Bundschuh* peasants.[1] They were almost the only ones present who kept their eyes fixed steadfastly on the face of the raging priest. "It were hard

[1] Members of a peasant league in the German peasant war: their emblem was a shoe.

to deny that we were born here," some of them were thinking. "Where hast thou come from, then?" one of them said in an undertone. A woman turned round on him indignantly. The peasant looked her in the face with flaming defiance: "Tell him then, an ye will!" The woman quailed beneath his look, and quickly turned her head round again towards the priest, who had decided to conclude his sermon with a dramatic gesture.

He stretched his hand, with the crumpled paper in it, far out over the congregation: "Then let all who think good to join the Devil's company know what will befall them. And when the wrath of God breaketh over all, and the cattle and the children go hungry, and the Lord doth not relent, however loud all may wail and lament till the wicked be cast out, then shall the cry of the hungry strangle them, then shall the repentance that cometh too late choke them, and they shall be swallowed up alive by the flames of Hell, even as Corah and his wicked brethren were swallowed up."

He swung back his arm and flung the crumpled pamphlet that had so enraged him down into the middle of the nave. Those who stood there backed away in terror, and quickly left a circle free around the white ball of paper. The priest, however, seized the candle that burned beside his missal, and came down from the pulpit.

"Thou'lt burn nought but the paper," thought the Bundschuh peasants. They were deeply moved when they saw the priest bend down in the middle of the church, as though smoking out some reptile with gestures of loathing and vengeance. "Get thee behind me, Satan!" he cried, as the tiny flame flickered like a will-o-the-wisp on the flag-stones beneath him.

Did the priest guess that there were a good dozen men standing in the congregation whom he had fired anew with the tiny flame of his auto-da-fé? Did he suddenly feel on his neck the hand of an avenger who could no longer be daunted with bell, book and candle? He turned somewhat abruptly, surveyed the people around him, and then went quickly back to the altar. It was as if he could not feel himself secure till he had wrapped his chasuble round his shoulders again.

In the background one of the Bundschuh peasants strode out of the church without making the least obeisance. It was just at the moment when the priest raised his hands over the congregation to give them all his blessing.

Then came a winter such as had not been known for years past. The people shivered in the churches as if they could hear the last trumpet blowing on doomsday. All through the night the winds howled like ravening beasts. Crowding close together in bed helped but little, for the cold air whistled through the cracks in the rickety hovels and consumed all warm vapors. In the day time men had to turn their backs half round against the wind; their lungs refused to draw in their icy breath. Children who tried playing out-of-doors came running back to their mothers with numb fingers and weeping eyes, terrified by the unwanted rancor of the weather. Women sat coughing beside their spinning wheels and thought that the whirring spindle could run a race with the weather. But they soon lay down with fever in their eyes. And everywhere the peasants lacked clothing for the day and blankets for the night; everywhere they lacked shoes and firewood.

The cattle bellowed above the howling of the wind. Wolves were found in the barns, where they had sought nothing but warmth. There was not

enough straw to stop up the holes in the stables. Chickens were found lying beneath their perches, frozen to death. Tom-tits and sparrows fought desperately for the few remaining holes in the roofs, and crept away beneath the chimney tiles, wherever smoke was still to be seen. Martens and weasels appeared in the peasants' huts, crouched trembling and alert before the astonished people, and their boldness was a grim witness to the terrors of the wilderness from which these shy marauders had fled. Stags and does would suddenly make their appearance in the farmyards.

Uneasy lest they lose the future pleasures of the chase, some of the lords commanded their villeins to give the fallow deer shelter in the stables, till the bad weather was over. In Neudorf this prudent provision led to a murder.

A peasant had discovered too late how deep the frost had bitten into the ground. He was now hacking at the mound of earth which lay like a slab of granite over his store of potatoes. Twice the haft of his mattock had broken clean in two. The bitter wind whipped tears from his eyes. The grey earth lay there before him, still and motionless, and refused to yield up the food he had entrusted to it. He stood there as if before a grave, and he struck the mound as a murderer strikes his victim who will not die; he struck with anguish in his heart, and the more desperate he became, the more angrily did the mattock smite the ruthless earth.

At this moment a messenger arrived from the lord of the manor, and told him of the order. Stags or does that showed themselves in the farms were to be caught, fed and kept in warm stables. At first the peasant understood nothing. He wiped the tears from his eyes. The messenger, who was wearing a thick sheepskin coat, was in a hurry. "On pain of death," he added. Then the peasant understood—understood, and lost his senses in an instant. The mattock whistled through the air and buried itself in the messenger's skull. The bloodstained tool was still lying beside the corpse when they found it. The sheepskin was found on the peasant's back a couple of days later. During the first night the murderer must have wandered about unsheltered, and on the following day he found a barn in which to hide his head. But on the next night sleep must have tempted him into sitting down for a little. He had the dreamy smile of a frozen man still on his lips. His grave—in a far off church yard—had to be chiselled out with sharp iron. The elements did not relent for an instant.

If anything could have diminished the terror of those days, it was the thought of the mild spring and the harvest of the coming year. But this dream, too, was crushed by the cruel cold. Peasants who ventured out to the vineyards came back in terror and dismay. All the vines were frozen, any vintage was out of the question for years to come. And the winds continued to howl over the comfortless land.

At last snow fell. It was like a friendly counterpane covering up the hard earth and absorbing the worst of the cold. But the white counterpane grew thicker and thicker. No one could venture out-of-doors; the hamlets were soon buried deep, as though a white wall had been erected round them, cutting them off forever from the outer world. The night bells that were meant to guide straying messengers and travelers on their way rang out through the whirlwind of snowflakes, as if coming from far off mountains. Soon the roofs of wretched cotters' hovels began to fall in beneath the weight of the snow. Carts were stranded together with man and horse in the snow drifts of forest rides. The people's helplessness grew greater from

hour to hour, and the man who had at length made up his mind to undertake a journey to the next village knew only one thing for certain—that death lay lurking in the woods. One could almost understand the robbers who in those days spared none who trespassed on their preserves.

When the cold began, Joss was staying in the castle of the knight with whom he had taken refuge several months before. He heard that the bad weather had its good side also, for the bailiffs showed no desire to leave their houses and collect the taxes that were still due. Perhaps they could guess what perilous tempers they would come up against in the unheated peasants' hovels. Joss could see the peasants as though they were standing there before him—their desperation, which they found so hard to put into words, the senseless gestures with which they walked through the stables and tried to calm the bellowing cattle, the dull eyes peeping from the cracks of muffled peep holes. He saw them lying awake beside their wives in the windswept nights. He knew they were thinking of the last judgment, he knew how bitter misery had made them, he knew them all—their doubts and waverings, but also their longings and their steadfast faith. What did they think about the Bundschuh? Could their faith withstand this frost? Joss sat in the knight's chimney corner with the chess board before him, lost in thought. The wind rattled against the leaded windows. The knight thought out every move with exaggerated slowness, considering that the game required this. Now's the time for something to happen, thought Joss. Any good-for-nothing idler can stir up trouble against the lords. Unmasking the priests is as easy as hitching up your trousers. But to be present when heaven itself starts playing the fool—that's more than any of them have been through yet. And we can strike hard at all three if we take the field now.

His new resolve made him feverish with excitement. The game of chess was coming to an end. Joss let his host win, not without giving him a hard game. He would have his revenge tomorrow. By the way, could he send a messenger down to the village that evening? It had just occurred to him that he wanted to have a talk with the peasant Ratz, with whom he had business to discuss.The knight was still pondering over the chessboard. "If you had castled earlier, you would have kept your castle free, and then my queen could not have barred your path. To be sure, you may have the messenger. Aye, checkmate."

Next morning Joss had a talk with Ratz. All those in league with them, he told his fellow conspirator—who was not a little surprised to find himself suddenly standing face to face with Joss within the castle walls—were to be informed at once. While the bad weather lasted, they should make use of it in every village by calling together all Bundschuh peasants in a well heated room. Each one must be questioned about the plight he was in. "During these weeks no Bundschuh peasants must suffer more than the next." Joss gave detailed advice. It was not a case of plotting a rebellion; it was a case of steering a ship through a storm—a ship whose crew on the further shore (on the shore of the next spring, it may be, said Joss) would have to fight a battle. "And may the scurf grow on our heads if we do not prove in this bitter frost that even before the victory is won, we stand together. For nought else hast thou sworn, and I too and all others."

The League stood the test. Never before had so much readiness to lend help been seen in the Bruchrain. When a falling house had to be shored up, all the League men in the village were on the spot at the first call.

The villages in which the League was especially strong had been the first to shovel away the snow from their roads and houses.

They had long given up fetching a doctor from the town, but now, when severe and painful sicknesses began as a result of the cold, they brought cordials and blankets and food to the homes of the sick people, the memory of their vow burned like a fire in the breast of each. They were proud that Joss had thought of them, and they approved his command, which did them honor. Their native greed had long been choked out of them by misery, and now a sense of joy in giving awakened within them, which robbed the deadly winter of a good part of its terrors.

"The peppermint tea does not make the soul warm, nevertheless," said Martin. He had been living in the town up till now, with a baker who belonged to the League. They had pulled the big family table into the bake house, and had all taken up their quarters there, with all the children, before the warm gaping mouth of the oven. "We must bring fuel of another kind into the houses." He threw the beech log he had picked up back on the wood-pile, and rose: "Thanks to you, brother, I must go back to the village. And whomsoever I shall send you, be he ever so ragged and wretched, entertain him in the name of God's justice."

"You would go forth in this weather?"

"I will ride faster than the winds, so I shall come betimes."

From that day on, the ring of axes and the rasp of saws was to be heard at night time in all the woods round about the freezing villages. "There is wood enough there to turn ten winters into summer," Martin encouraged them.

The cold came to their aid at first. The verderers kept to their rooms in the bailiwicks, for their fires were kept going day and night, and the guards whom the rattle of a passing wood cart brought to their windows in the night time had no desire to go forth into the icy darkness and make too searching enquiries. And even when the order came to stop the illicit wood cutting at all costs, there were plenty of serving men whose souls were so touched by the frost that they had not the heart to arrest peasants for fetching a little fuel in this murderous cold.

By now whole villages were out in the woods, no longer waiting for night fall to begin their work.

There is a kind of misery that makes people courageous, if indifference to danger may be called courage. The wood cutter of this winter of 1501, who hewed down the trees with chattering teeth, burning their feet in a desperate effort to keep their blood in circulation, possessed the grim determination of the animal that leaps upon its hunter. They no longer feared the hangman, for death was close upon them in any case. They trusted to the axes in their hands, but they rated the danger too low, none the less.

Martin saw it coming, however, even before they found a peasant executed on the spot by the verderer. But this peasant, whom the others passed by with a fleeting glance—his head was lying in a great pool of blood—gave Martin the impulse to speak with them openly.

It was senseless, he said, to act on your own. They were only to be feared when they stood together. He gave exact instructions on how to conduct the wood felling. He reminded the waverers once again that nothing must be stolen. Stolen goods must be taken back. The woods where they

felled the trees had always been part of the common land. He spoke as though the point at issue were not the plight of the freezing villagers and the warm soup they were needing, but a crusade for old established rights.

During these days the verderers heard the splitting of chips and the ting-tang of axes in many different places. If they ran off in one direction with gasping breath and aching lungs, they would find a felled oak-tree, but no peasants in sight. At the same moment a new clang of axes would beckon them away in another direction. Arriving at the spot, they would again find nothing but the felled trees. And returning again to the scene of the first crime, they would find the tree no longer there. And before the furious verderers had time to look around them, the ring of axes again sent them chasing off northward. And the same game began all over again. Seated of an evening with his comrades around a four cornered fireplace, whose thick smoke betrayed the freshness of the wood, Martin liked comparing this game with the story of the hedgehog and the hare, which he had heard from a Frisian peasant lad. Roaring with laughter, he struck himself exultingly on the thighs. The peasants laughed too, the women above all showed Martin how much they approved his ideas. And the wind howled merrily around the walls: clouds of smoke belched once more from the chimneys, and at the glowing fire beneath, Martin won over the women, too, to the side of the League.

Meanwhile he did not forget his friends. The beggars had fled to the town as soon as they could. The compact mass of houses ringed about with a rampart always seemed a safer refuge than the open country. Town air maketh a man free, says a proverb of that time, and with the rise of the burgher class this had even become a law. By every imaginable device the beggars smuggled themselves in behind the city walls, at whose gates the winds rattled in vain, but they had been mistaken in their belief that the burghers' houses, though they crowded ever so close together, offered more warmth to poor vagabonds. They were less hospitable than the hovels of the poorest peasants, and beneath the bridge and in the colonnades of the market place frosty death stole upon the sleepers still more swiftly and stealthily than among the heaps of straw in the barns they had forsaken.

The best of the beggars Martin sent with a recommendation to the houses of Bundschuh comrades and told them the secret mark and the watchword. He was sure that none of them would repay him with treachery for saving their lives, and indeed the traitor of the spring of 1503 was not from among their number. He told them of monasteries where they could obtain furs; he sent them to burgomasters who had decided to hand out charity soup. "Ye have a right to all, for all that is yours hath been kept from ye." In Bruchsal he set them on to demand sheepskins in the churches. It was just before the first Sunday in Advent. From the pulpits the priests were reading the text from the Gospel according to St. Luke, Chaper XXI, and it sounded as though made for this day:

"In those days Jesus spake unto his disciple, saying, There shall be signs in the sky, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken . . ."

The believers listened to these gloomy threats, but their cold lips scarcely murmured a prayer. Nevertheless, the beggars waiting at the door

raked in more pennies than usual from the uneasy congregation. Did the alms they gave put more courage into their hearts?

During evening service they all gathered at the back of the nave, which in the glimmer of candles and the fumes of incense offered an agreeable contrast to the empty streets where the wind cut to the very bone. "O come, O come, Emanuel!" sang the congregation; the breath could be seen rising from all mouths, and there was little faith in the voices. With unseemly haste the priest concluded his prayers and vanished from the altar, as though afraid of the frosty deity that kept him praying so long upon ice-cold steps. He was called back again by the church warden, who informed him in great excitement that, when locking up the church, he had found beggars asleep on all the benches.

The beggars did not budge when the priest admonished them to leave the building. Only one of them declared that "God could not object if his children for once slept better than the child Jesus in the manger of Bethlehem."

"Ye would fain rob and steal, nought else," stormed the priest, and wrapped his fur lined coat more closely around his shoulders. He had them seized one by one and turned out-of-doors.

Next morning an old one-legged beggar was lying there beneath the sacred carving of the three kings, frozen stiff. The whole town of Bruchsal heard about it. Despite the ferocious cold, hundreds of people followed the coffin to the grave. The priest hastily opened a soup kitchen for the poor, but he had to close it again just as quickly, for on the very day when he had pompously praised his own goodness from the pulpit, hundreds of beggars appeared before the door where the bell hung, pulled the cord as though it were an alarm bell, and held out their bowls before the window hatch. Martin had collected as many of them as he could find and sent them off to the good hearted father. On top of his act of brutality, the priest now had to disclose the fact that only fright had induced him to good deeds.

And so, in these days of discontent, laughter made itself heard again in the houses of the townspeople, and Martin gained many new enemies of the church. None of them turned away a beggar from their doors during this December, and at many tables men spoke of the day when each would call the other his brother.

But the winter continued without a ray of sunlight. The winds blew on unflagging over the Bruchrain. In the bailiwicks and verderers' lodges, the hounds were taken indoors, where they crouched gratefully beneath the cages of the falcons, for whose sake the fires were kept blazing day and night. The crows had vanished from the gallows; there were no more men's carcases to devour; even the headsman's sword seemed to be frozen into desuetude, and the provost did not venture out into the cold. But the dungeons were crammed with rebel peasants, beggars and soldiers who had been caught marauding.

Almost at the same time Joss and Martin had thought of the plight of these unfortunates. Martin came in great agitation to the castle where he knew his friend to be lodging. "I sit by the hearth down there in Weingarten, one readeth from the Bible, of Herod's whore and of John the Baptist doth he read, and suddenly the thought runneth like a sword through my heart. O Joss, we never do enough, we always forget the work that is to be done next."

They sat long beneath the pall of terrible imaginings, and felt their impotence in the howling of the wind and in the silence.

"Thy friend Lawrence is without?" asked Joss. Martin shook his head. "I am thinking only of the prisoners," he answered. Better were it for them that they had been slaughtered like sheep, he was thinking. The beasts of the forest can run before the wind, were it only to run to their death. But these men sit in iron fetters and draw death into their hearts slowly with every breath. Death rises from the ground floor, stealing up their legs, death creeps upon them from the walls. They sleep no more, but lie in fever. And they cannot even swing their hands around their shoulders, they can only run their heads against the wall. They perish in the dark, hearing, as they die, their neighbor screaming in delirium. And throughout the countryside there are thousands who never think of them, who lie snuggled in their beds—aye, and blow their hands and shiver when the last log burns away on the fire. I blame them not, thought he, but the others—doth nobody think of these others?

"At least we must make a beginning." Joss' voice broke the silence. "I am thinking of Dieffenborn, where the tower standeth without the castle."

Two days later two carts loaded with hay drove into the bailiwick of Dieffenborn. As the peasants were carefully lifting down the trusses of hay and laying them in a corner of the courtyard a window opened in the gentry's wing of the building, somebody poked out his head into the falling darkness and asked what was being brought so late. The village was sending its hay to the castle, replied the peasants. "A pretty mess of dirt must be there indeed, if ye bring it at this hour. Wait. I will come down." The bailiff!

He came out of the house in a thick coat, spurs jingling and a bunch of keys dangling from his belt. The peasants showed him the trusses of hay, looming like shapeless phantoms in the dark yard. He walked around them with glances of distrust, poked at them with his whip, plucked out a handful of hay and sniffed at it. "Open it up," he commanded, and himself tugged at the cord. They were now standing in the midst of the hay trusses, out of sight of the house. Trembling one of the peasants undid the cord, while another stepped behind the bailiff.

What happened next, Martin always enjoyed recounting to his friends during the hardships of the ensuing months, whenever they grew tired or impatient.

"It was high time for us all to creep out of our shells, for towards the end we had indeed begun to chew hay like the hares of the field. Notwithstanding the icy wind without, my whole body was boiling with heat. But I was recompensed for my pains by the silly frightened face of the bailiff, who in good sooth did cross himself when he saw me crawling out of my nest. But we had already seized him by the scruff of the neck. The peasant behind him pushed him toward me, and then he plunged his snout in the hay. He could make no sound, save that he did let a fart in his terror. All was done very quietly; we took away his bunch of keys and went off to the tower with caution. Ye must know that we had previously let the other field mice jump out of their trusses. Ten remained beside the heaps of hay to guard the bailiff, whose arms we had bound fast. He was a good hostage, if any alarm were given. Ye know that we did find nought but frozen corpses, save for the one man whom we dragged out yet living. But he alone

rewarded us our journey. Is it not worth the pains to save any who falleth into their clutches?"

Again and again Martin had to tell his comrades the tale, till winter had passed and summer come and the Bruchrain was visited by a new and dreadul affliction.

The spring of the year 1502 was like a brief dreamland of mild weather, in which the frozen souls of the people sunned themselves for a space, before being plunged onto the hot glow of merciless summer drought.

No thunderstorms disturbed the haymaking; the first rich crop of hay was carted safely home; the first May butter showed golden yellow on the peasants' tables. But the second crop was burned up so that it was scarcely worth the mowing. In vain did the peasants scan the evening sky to find any change in the line of the sunset. Not a cloud on the horizon. Nothing for months on end but the cruel glaring sun.

The turnip leaves lay limp and drooping on the ground, and the peasants who pulled out a plant to test its size took fright when they saw how wretchedly small it was. The trees that had survived the frost turned autumn yellow, and shook down their tiny pistils as though they knew there was not enough sap in them to clothe the core in fruit. The corn grew so low that children overtopped the ears by a head. The oat grass withered in the windless day.

In desperation the peasants fought against the new affliction. From the brooks, where the water was sinking lower and lower, they carried water to their kitchen gardens, but what good did a few pails of water do the fevered earth!

Joss had been grateful for the brief respite of spring. He found that the relief seemed like a gift to him. But who was the giver? He looked at the priests, who delivered their Easter sermons as though the frozen men of last winter had reappeared in church and the newly risen god had known nothing about the horrors of the previous months. How quickly the frightened soul grew calm again! Joss rode through the mild May weather with the gentle kindness of a convalescent. In such a spring one needed someone to thank, one had scruples about hating. On these evenings, full of the song of birds and the smiles of people freed from danger, one could not kill —and yet could not forget that there were a thousand throats that waited cutting, the sooner the better, and a thousand fat bellies—that seemed made to be pierced by peasant pikes. Strange remission! One could find no hot words; the winter had frozen them to ice; the spring did not thaw them. And the peasant enjoyed his good fortune. A threadbare fortune, it is true, but one that could not be grudged him.

He talked with the peasants. While they sat outside their huts, the swallows above their heads were building their nests beneath the eaves.

Then came the hot weather. Waking in the morning, Joss saw the same hard sun rise in the sky day after day, week after week. It will not last long, he said to comfort himself, but he felt doubt in his whole being. A terrible doubt, that was to change the face of his god for him. After this summer he never looked at a crucifix again—but more of that later!

Martin came again to see Joss in the castle of the knight, who had joined the League in the meantime. He was covered with dust from head to foot, his clothes were in tatters, his hair was cropped close around his skull as though he had had the scurvy. He would not talk till wine was set on the table before him. He drank long, smiled to himself, mumbled

some as though he were alone in the room, then fell silent again. Joss did not press him; he knew his friend would talk when the time came.

They sat there in the shabby gentility of the knight's room. The thick walls gave coolness. A man can live here, thought Martin, and took another draught of wine. He hesitated to speak the truth which he had come to tell. But at last the silence began to weigh on him; he rose, went over to the window, and said with his face turned away:

"These plagues of Egypt will soon be too much for me. Wine is ten good pennies dearer than before. What will come of all this skinning and fleecing? Are we to rise in revolt against heaven too, Joss?"

"We are not here to solve riddles. We have not long to wait now. In Bruchsal the League numbers four hundred men and women. There are soldiers among them. A burgomaster, too. The time is in a fever, but it will burn itself back to health . . ."

Martin heard the numbers, the confidence in Joss' voice, saw his steadfast eyes, without a flicker of doubt in them, but that did not affect him at this moment. "They are hardly cured of their chilblains," he said, "and already fever heat hath seized them by the throat. Wouldst thou have them go to battle with their tongues hanging out?"

"They will find enough to slake their thirst in the monastery cellars."

"Such a cellar have I found for myself," said Martin, and wondered why Joss did not flare up at this. "In Dertzingen cloister canst thou find me now, where I keep the books for the Dominican monks. I can give thee lodging there at any time." He had gone to the door. He feared a serious parting, for he did not want that. "Understand me aright, Joss, there is one thing alone that doth drive me into this corner, where I draw in my claws and have no heart to fight on. It is when He beginneth to act foully and play the tyrant. And this summer is scurvy work of his. Moreover, it were vain to set men on when all their brains are burned out. Such a sun as this drieth up the sap of rebellion. No peasant is fain to storm empty barns. The monasteries must have full garners and the peasant his belly full. I must creep away into a quiet refuge. I can no other."

Joss stood long in thought when his friend had gone, watching from the castle turret from which he had seen him ride away over the draw-bridge. Outside the leaded windows the midday sun blazed down. The dazzling shimmer of the air made the outlines of the fields in the valley tremble, as though wincing beneath the sun's rays, which in these months were like a darting pain of which a man had rather not speak.

Joss flung open the window and looked for the sun. He could not see it, and shut the window again. Martin had brought a new question into this room—one that could not be driven out again so easily. He had named the lord of the sun. Joss paced rapidly about the room, like a commander faced with a new situation in battle. Martin was right. Who sent this glowing ball and forgot the sheltering clouds? From whose hand had this white disc of torture flown? From the hand of him who had charge of heaven and earth. But why did he not take it back again and end the senseless torment?

Joss halted suddenly before a small crucifix hanging on one of the shutters. He gazed with cold eyes at the silver body of the redeemer: Wilst thou drive them to despair? Dost thou think they will not be ripe till thou hast dried them up to the very bone? They are ripe already! They will come when I call them.

Joss seized hold of the crucifix. "That is not needful!" said he aloud. "There is no sense in that. What wouldst thou have? They will be like the earth—their souls will be seared and cracked, their blood will be thick as slime. Vermin will breed in their thoughts, and they will run like the brooks."

He turned round abruptly. He had thought that someone was standing behind him. He let go of the crucifix, and gazed down into the abyss beneath the window. Was it then this man on the cross whom he meant? Was there not, perhaps, looking behind him, some other being, mighty and terrible?

Martin had crept away before this terrible one. But Joss now went forth to find him. Half an hour after Martin, he left the castle. He was setting out on a perilous ride. He rode in search of his faith—or perhaps of his doubt; but in any case he sought the traces of this terrible god in the pitiless draught . . .

Coming to Weingarten, he encountered a procession of death at the very entrance to the village. Fat pigs, their bodies swollen and red, some already black but most of them still breathing, lay piled up on a farm cart. The cart halted at every house—the people were expecting it—and the peasant dragged the bulky carcase of a half-dead pig out through the stable-door. The women stood dismayed on their door-steps, crumpling their aprons in their hands. The groaning animal was heaved on top of the others; the cart rambled on a little farther, then stopped again.

Joss did not need to ask who the driver of the cart was. He saw the carrion-pit to which the carcases were being driven. While it was yet summer, the peasants' winter bacon was being hauled off to burial. "What sayest thou to that?" he asked, and noted for the first time that he did not know in what direction to address the question. He had not lifted his head towards the sun, he had bowed it towards the cart with its load of stinking carcases, as though the knacker who held the reins were the god whom he sought—driving his wagon of corpses through the countryside.

The peasants saw the knight on his horse halted in the village street. They picked up straw from the ground and wiped their hands. An acrid smell of decay hung over the hot street. Then all went dumbly back into their hovels again. The heavy cart rattled out of the village. Joss could have believed it to be a phantom, conjured up by the heat. But then, as he rode on he heard the choking sobs of a woman coming from one of the huts. Soon after he reached the church. Dismounting, he tied up his horse to the churchyard railing, and strode into the cool musty interior. The bright light from without showed up the colors and gold of the images glaringly; the sanctuary lamp glowed before the snow-white altar. Joss had hardly advanced four steps, when he turned sharp round again, abruptly and apologetically, like a man who realizes his mistake. The gentle light of the church did not enrage him, it was simply too alien, too far removed from his thoughts. Who was it said that god is everywhere and omnipresent? You could find him in the afflictions of the peasants, in the ruin of the fields, but not here, in this quiet sanctuary. "Or doth anyone here know what is happening outside?" He shouted the words out loud in this empty painted room; then turned swiftly about, as he had done before, in response to a soft rustle behind him—an erring and too credulous Christian.

Then he rode on past the dried-up swamplands towards Germersheim. His horse had long been wincing from the bites of countless flies; he himself bore the yellow sting of a blow-fly on his face since midday. Now the tormenting insects closed like a cloud round man and horse. He vainly tried to defend himself; the greedy black beasts enswathed his hands, thrust at his eyes, sucked at neck and ears. The poison of the stings reached the veins and made them burn as though whipped with rods. Sweat flowed from every pore, attracting fresh swarms of bloodthirsty insects. At length the horse took fright and went off at a gallop. Joss kept his seat, but it became a mad chase across country, a devil's ride, for the swarms of flies at first stuck obstinately to the horse's wounds and the man's hands.

So they came to Germersheim, jumped the rail that barred the entrance to the village, and were glad when their tormentors at last forsook them and flew off to find fresh food in the houses. One would think I was to be punished, thought Joss, and tied up his horse at the window of the inn. He laughed, wiped the blood from his swollen face, and put his hand on the door-latch. The door was locked. He shouted, knocked at the window. No answer. He went to the next house; it was locked too. He looked down the street; not a soul was around. At last he heard animals bellowing from a nearby stable—cows and oxen. Paying no heed to the restless champing of his mount, he went off to the stable. He found three cows and a calf standing before an empty manger. He shouted, but only a mocking echo resounded from the rafters. He broke in the window of the house, and entered. The silence was choking him now. As he stepped in, plump rats scuttled away on all sides, ran squealing to find a refuge. He trod one underfoot, the others found a hole beneath the bed. Joss was growing accustomed to the semi-darkness of the room; he smelt an odour of decay, a spasm of nausea took him by the throat, but something held him there as though spellbound. He approached closer to the bed from which the rats had jumped down, and flung back the blanket. A stench of pestilence rose up like a cloud around him. Joss coughed, spat, but he still held the blanket in his hand. He stood rivetted to the spot with horror. In the half-light he saw the corpse of a young girl lying there. The child's eyes were staring at the ceiling, her white body was covered with tell-tale patches, her thin arms clutched at her knees which were drawn up to her chin, and her toes showed the holes that the rats had nibbled. Joss let the blanket slowly down again; he knew that the disease was now upon his hands. He climbed out through the window as if in a stupor, looked dazedly round the yard, walked with heavy steps down the village street, which was still void of people, and not until then did he seem to awake from his trance. He gazed at his hands. "So that is what thou art," he muttered. "A disease." And, having uttered these scornful words, he went round all the peasants' houses, opening the doors by force. He found only corpses; enveloped in their stench, they crouched by the stoves, lay beside the beds and in them (the long-tailed black guzzlers were all around), or they stood leaning against a wood-pile or in a cupboard, where some desperate hope had prompted them to take refuge. One dead man Joss recognized as a Bundschuh peasant; he found him lying on the way to his stable; an axe was still clutched in his cold fist. Joss bent down and closed his comrade's eyelids. The axe on the ground glinted in the sun. "Wouldst thou have taken thy cattle with thee? Or didst thou try to strike Him dead himself?"

Joss pulled down a horse-cloth from a ladder and laid it carefully over the body.

"He is laying desolate my villages. There were thirty-five members of the League in Germersheim. Can there be any hidden meaning it that?"

Once again his glance had lifted from the deserted village to the sun, but as his eyes turned away from its dazzling crown, he felt still more angrily, wrathfully, that it was senseless to address them. Man was impotent in the icy wind of winter, impotent in the flaming oven of this summer. An invisible being was raging over the land with frost and heat, with pestilence and swarming rats. He was poisonous and greedy as the flies, he was cowardly and gluttonous as the rats, squealing in the dark and elusive as the wind, merciless and far-away, like that glowing yellow ball yonder. Joss had lost his former power of denunciation. Everything he had thought before about the gluttony of the monks, the insolence of the landlords, the venality of the emperor, the avarice of the pope—what was left of all these wrathful thoughts in the face of these peasants' corpses? No landlord had strangled them, no bloody feud, no villein's labor, no grasping pope, no warlike king. This affliction—Joss had not found a single house without the stench of corpses in it—seemed an acquittal for the lords of the land and an accusation against that other, whom Joss had hitherto honored and acknowledged as the lord of all.

He left the village, after he had bathed some of the dying with water and promised them further aid in the evening. Before each of the crouching corpses, whose bowels had gushed out in their last agony, Joss seemed to be confronted with a fresh token of the terrible god whom he had set forth to seek, and who now showed himself in his uttermost cruelty. Torn between defiance and entreaty, between bitter resignation and the faint hope of uncomprehension, he realized at last that he was confronted by someone who did not want to be understood. Or must he be regarded every day differently? . . .

As he crossed a field swarming with mice, he came upon a child, all red and inflamed, sitting by itself and crying pitifully, and once again he had the feeling of deliberate madness in all that was taking place around him. He took the child on his horse and brought it to the next village. He went from house to house; no one answered him, no one took the child. He saw how all faces were dry with malice, how all eyes had the glare of fever in them—like those of desperate murderers. He admonished them in the name of God's justice, but they slammed their doors without a word. Cold scorn in a single gesture. Joss went to all the houses. The child on his arm suddenly gasped for breath, gave a woeful cry, beat its fist feebly against Joss' jerkin, then let its head hang back with dilated eyes. Joss watched the little face gradually change color. In its change of hue he again saw his secret antagonist. He raised its head quite close to his face, listened to the rustle of death, and said: "Why didst thou give it breath? Why didst thou not settle sooner on these eyes? Why was it made to suffer a whole winter long? Art not afraid to enter this little body? Is there no shame in thee, then? This child was surely guiltless, and none dost thou punish with this death. Why, then, dost thou ever design new evil? Ah, now art thou vanished again!"

The child's face grew yellow and still. Joss gazed at it a little while longer, then pressed the dead face against his jerkin and rode off to the

churchyard. He could not find the gravediggers. Had they fled from overmuch work? The church door was standing ajar. Joss looked at it mistrustfully, then picked up the child and entered. Before the high altar he laid it down beneath the cross of the tabernacle. The little body seemed to stretch itself out; the stiffness of death was in its limbs. A strange sacrifice on the dark altar! Joss took a step back; it occurred to him that he must say a prayer. No, not "Our Father." He laughed scornfully. "Hail, Mary, full of grace," he began. The madonna had not yet lost her hold over him. He felt this now as he prayed, full of agitation. "Blessed art thou among women," he prayed on, and thought to himself that she would never prove as hard-hearted as He. "And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." Nor he either, nor he either, he cried as he prayed, and looked at the child lying on the altar. He would not have been surprised if it had suddenly rolled off and been dashed to pieces on the steps. He believed his antagonist capable of any brutal act.

"Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and in the hour of our death: amen." A wave of soft childish feeling swept over him; on the plank of the altar niche he had caught sight of an image of Mary, and with the closing words of the prayer had turned towards her. He saw the madonna holding on her lap a lusty boy who was reaching out his hand for a ball, saw the soft smile on her lips. "Didst thou not clench thy fists when they took him from thee?" The dimpled chin seemed to nod; Joss raised his hand with a limp wavering gesture and pointed to the altar. The sunlight fell on the stone madonna and child—the cruel deathly light of the fields—and it lay on the round unwrinkled forehead of Mary with a tender sheen, quickened the fat fingers of the boy, gleamed with sensuous animating light on the bare thighs of this well-cared-for baby. We should have prayed more to them, thought Joss, and, as so often happened, the new idea struck him in its full significance before he had time to think it out completely. It was not too late. She could hear it today, she would hear it tomorrow. She knew what it meant—to suffer and not to understand. She would remember. She would not brook another Golgotha. She would prove stronger than the other. He halted. "Than who? Than who?" he cried.

His new resolve came like a mountain torrent rushing into a dry watercourse. It swept along with it the whole fruitless tangle of his thoughts. Joss paid no heed to what this flood might carry away. He left the church in a fever of happiness that came so suddenly that it could not but be assailed by the old doubts before evening.

He rode back to the cholera-infested village in a mood of dogged intolerance; here he would begin his crusade. But the last survivors, though their sad eyes lit up when they saw him coming in accordance with his promise, listened to his plan with weariness and without belief. Did he speak with too great passion? Did they note that he was rather seeking a foundation for himself than help for all? He no longer understood their thoughts, could not rise to patient persuasion. He decided to go and see Martin.

"We must go in procession through the fields with all the saints and the Mother of God. I am come to seek thy help once again."

They were sitting in the monastery garden of Dertzingen. Shady trees kept the sun from the mossy arbor—a walk to which Martin had conducted his friend. A spring was bubbling beside the wall close by.

"I did not wish to disturb thee, but that is a question which I can lay before thee alone."

"I am right glad thou art come," said Martin: he wore the habit of a lay brother. "But first I will fetch something to drink."

He acted as though he were the abbot and had sway over a hundred barrels.

"Wait, what need is there of that?" Joss was impatient. The unsolved problems seemed to be choking him. But Martin had already vanished between the trees.

It is easy to pray to God here, though Joss, gazing at the green square of the garden. Flowers growing thick as children's heads in school, a running spring that withstood the heat, a roof of shade as cool as a cellar, and no buzz of tormenting insects. There was so little sign here of him without, of the tyrant and terrorizer, that one could hold one's breviary before one's eyes and need never awake.

A monk was pacing the arbor-walk with whispering lips. They pray, they believe, thought Joss. They walk in the shelter of these walls and have no ordeals to withstand. An easy faith!

Martin came back with two bottles and a goblet. Joss was surprised at the assurance with which Martin moved about the place. How had he gained admission so quickly?

"I know what thou art thinking. But firstly, I am well suited to this place, and secondly the abbot hath long had a liking for me. I tell him tales of my journeyings in the world; he is a sick man, he lieth in his wheeled chair, hateth all the brethren here and doth receive me out of spite. Moreover I do keep their books, that the bishop's heart may be set at rest. He receiveth only the half of what is due. Not in vain did I learn to drive my quill as a youth. But what folly am I babbling! Come, drink and tell thy tale. Art merrier since thy ride through these plague-stricken villages?"

Joss drank. Now that he was on an intimate footing with Martin, he felt calmer. He knew he would not leave the monastery without clearing his brain, too.

"Dost thou know why he rageth? Out there, I would say. Here it is as if he had passed ye by."

Martin noted the scornful look. "He hath never been here," he said. "And when I had lived long enough to observe that, the thought did come to me one day that he is nowhere."

Joss passed over this godless innuendo; he was not yet ready for this final realization. "We must repay him in kind," he said, "we must force him to stay his hand. Martin, hitherto I have stirred up men to rebellion. But now I would rouse the saints to revolt. He cannot but be ashamed when they go through the fields and see naught but ruin and desolation. I will fetch them out from all the churches. So truly as my father did follow the plow all his life long, till the day when he first drove the knacker's cart, I shall not spare his saints the sight of what he hath wrought . . . What maketh that shorn priest here?"

Joss had sprung up, red with indignation. Another monk had appeared from the shady depths of the arbor walk. He heard Joss' angry words, glanced across with marked dignity at the two men, and turned about.

Martin clapped Joss on the thighs. "Spoil not my lodging for me! After all, they are my hosts." But he laughed heartily, none the less. Joss him-

self realized that he had quite forgotten where he was sitting. He calmed himself with a smile. "And what sayest thou to my proposal?" he asked.

Martin clicked his tongue in confusion and stretched out his hand for the wine again. What if I tell thee now, he was thinking, that even thy saints will not fill the springs with water nor knock the spigot from the barrel of heaven? What if I tell thee that even thy madonna will not hold her mantle over your fiery ball? If I tell thee that our brethren can expect nought more from begging, but only from taking, thou wilt answer me, and aright, that in this drought a man can take nought by force. Thou'lt weep for rage and be like a child, and yet thou hast more strength and sap in thee than I—the unbelieving brute.

Martin felt the same lump in his throat as when he had spoken to the peasant lad outside the brothel. He quickly drained a goblet of wine. I had rather spoken to thee of rebellion, he thought. But the mummery must have more power in it than I had supposed.

"I must ride this day to three bailiwicks, to examine the books. So can I say the word to our Bundschuh brethren that they may demand processions of the priests in all places."

He threw out the suggestion in a dry tone.

"Though thou dost expect nought to come of it?" asked Joss unexpectedly.

"Why, who saith that?"

"Thy look. Thy being here. The holiday thou art taking. Thy work among these sly rogues. Deny it not! I know that thou dost love the peasants. But today a man must do more: he must hate all who torment them. And we must not shrink before Him either. He hath need of enemies, and I am his enemy from this day forth. I shall remain so till he doth smile again upon our flag, till I can honestly say again: yours is God's justice! I shall see thee before that day, I shall see thee sooner than thou dost think, so it seemeth to me."

He vanished so quickly that Martin could not say a word in farewell.

He can take no other path, he thought uneasily, with that vague sense of pride in his friend which he still cherished.

Over the beeches of the monastery garden, breaking the stillness, came the soft music of the vesper bell.

Now he will have reached the highway and be praying to the madonna, he thought, and saw his friend before him still. We have not emptied so much as one bottle.

Did Joss indeed want a miracle to happen?

He wanted rain. At the cost of any humiliation—rain, rain, rain! He spoke of nothing else in the days that preceded the Sunday of the procession. The people's misery had gripped him. All Bruchrain seemed to him like his own family, and he would fain have believed himself able to procure the aid of a powerful kinsman who would remedy the plight of his people at one strike. He was everywhere—even spoke with the priests in some cases, in others set men on against the vacillating clergy, recounted quaint legends and convinced hundreds that the days of miracles were not past. He won over just as many by faith as by his doubt. In the evenings, seated before their houses, they spoke of the coming Sunday. Martin, who had indeed ridden out into the countryside, found himself confronted with such a fever of expectation that he deemed it best to lend a hand at the

last minute. He hinted that if the intended procession failed of its objects, the principal reason would be that the priests were such scurvy brethren God had no cause to grant these potbellied gentry any further favors. They were even said to be the cause of all plagues themselves.

Sunday came, and by midday it was like an inferno. But after vespers, when the Magnificat had been sung, the congregations took their stand outside the churches, awaiting the sacrament or the caskets containing holy relics. The priests appeared in the church porches, sheltered by canopies and surrounded by acolytes clad in red and white surplices. Some shrank back from the glowing shimmer of heat outside, but the dumbly waiting ranks of people drew them forth into the open. Behind them came the images of the saints, rocking to and fro above the heads of the bearers. Joss had told his comrades to insist on the images of saints being in the procession and, wherever possible, to seize and carry them themselves. There was no singing as yet. The prayer leaders began softly repeating their texts. Without turning right or left, the processions made straight for the fields.

One or two priests, good masters of ceremonies, halted for a moment or two as they passed the village wells, but the peasants paid no heed to this subtle gesture. Were they not going to open a far mightier spring? What was this small black water-hole when compared to the floodgates of heaven, to open which they had marched out into this glowing oven of heat?

As they reached the fields, the noise of praying swelled louder. There lay the withered fruits; searing hands were now passing over the ears of corn. The meadows were drying up and the grazing cow's mouth would bite only dust. The trees drooped their boughs like dying arms. As the peasants passed by all this ruin in the closed ranks of the procession, the horror of it struck them afresh with full force. They turned their gaze towards the golden sun of the monstrance, that was to vanquish the great sun of heaven. They cried aloud now. As though rousing the game in the forest, they shouted to awaken the god of the monstrance, the carved wooden images and the patron saint whose bones the priest kept holding out over the fields.

Joss, who was taking part in the procession from the then populous village of Untergrombach, heard the shouts and felt strong among so many comrades. Their meekness now had a note of challenge in it. He would not have been surprised had one of them taken his cross bow and shot in rage at the heavens above. Joss trudged on as if among a warlike host; the carved images floating over all were like banners. "Hail, Mary, full of grace," chanted Joss as he went. He saw the madonna in her white mantle and blue petticoat soaring at the head of the procession, and exulted in the thought that the tender lady approved the peasants' march.

Suddenly some of them began to dance. Joss sensed the movement even before he saw it; the procession slackened, and, while the priest with his canopy went on, the peasants stopped to shout their prayers to those seized by the wild frenzy of the dance. The men bearing the sacred images turned around too. Joss saw the madonna's radiant face turn towards him. He stepped from the ranks and ran forward along the ditch by the roadside.

A circle had formed around the leaping dancers. Joss recognized some Bundschuh peasants, who stood there earnest and silent, holding the staffs of the sacred images. What could they expect to come of this foolery? The sound of praying from the rear of the crowd grew louder, more frenzied. The dancers stamped their feet on the ground. Joss now caught

sight of some of his comrades among them. He clutched his burning forehead. Did they hope to tread springs of water out of the ground? Had they forgotten which way to address their prayers?

The carved saints gazed down, stupid and unmoved. The canopy with the priest beneath moved on alone across the fields.

"Our father which art in heaven," wailed the crowd.

The dancers now tore the belts from their loins. The circle around them widened in alarm and horror. The buckles and thongs whistled through the air, as though the rain could be whipped on like horses. Then the men began beating one another.

They beat each other as the wind whips the clouds, they beat each other as the servants of Pilate scourged Christ. Foam spattered from their lips. "Evangeli! Evangeli!" they cried. Joss stood with his hat in his hand; the burning hoop that ringed his head seemed to draw closer. He stared fixedly at the image bearers, slowly lifted his gaze to the saints themselves, looked up at the sky, which remained without a cloud, and heard Martin's words again through the prayers and groans and cracking of belts: "Such a sun as this drieth up the sap of rebellion." He debated whether he should rush in and part them. A fog hovered before his fevered eyes. In the fields the priest trudged on without his parish. Why did they not strike him? Why did they not batter in the full swelling barrel?

All of a sudden, the church man seemed to take alarm. Joss saw how he urged on the men who carried the canopy. He still held the monstrance reverently before his face, but his feet were hurrying beneath his gown, and soon he was running rather than walking—a stumbling coward who did not trust in the god he held in his hands.

The procession was in disorder. The sacrament had run off home. The saints stood still. And, one after another of the dancers fell down in the road, twitching in convulsions, fingers clawing at their belts.

Joss cast one last look up at the sky. His pulses were pounding like hammers. He no longer understood what he had wanted. The blue white dome above the fields remained without a cloud. That alone he could still understand, while the beating of his heart flagged more and more. He could already feel a chill creeping over his face. Night was what he longed for now—deep, black night.

Meanwhile the peasants moved on, making a circuit to avoid the dancers, who had fallen fainting in the roadway. One of them struck up a song. "Praise to the redeemer," he sang senselessly with dusty throat.

Joss reeled. The burning hoop around his forehead seemed to drop off; it was as though his skull was bursting apart.

He gazed at the heap of dumb, twitching bodies on the high road. A useless harvest lay there in the dust. And the sky closed above them like a white metal dome.

We shall open other flood gates, then, thought Joss. And an unearthly spite took hold of him. I shall make it rain. It shall rain red, and the whole harvest shall be ours.

He looked across the fields towards Grombach castle. He saw streams of blood flowing down the hill side. Not only the sun was on fire. Flames leapt from the battlements.

We shall answer with fire from beneath. Soon. And it shall rain as it has never rained before in this land.

Translated from the German by H. Scott

Henry K. Drzewiecki

The Thieves

A Polish Short Story

Kuras went in and the jailer shut the door behind him with a clang. It was dark in the cell. Below the grated window, near the wooden bunk, two men were squatting on the floor. Felek the Tar was sitting on the bunk, his forehead bandaged with a handkerchief. He rose quickly.

"Kuras!"

They shook hands as if they hadn't seen each other for a long time.

"Did they maul you?" asked Kuras, in a tone of mingled sympathy and apprehension, catching his breath.

"Bah, idiot!" said Felek the Tar with impatience. "And what are you doing here?" he added after a moment's reflection.

Kuras blushed with shame. His arrest was hard to account for. It bore no connection to the "trade."

"I came to the gate to find out if you needed anything."

"Idiot! You haven't let learned how to behave. So now both of us are locked up for the same job when otherwise I would have been the only one."

He nudged Kuras, as though to cheer him up.

"Don't let it rankle you, though. There isn't a single thief in existence who hasn't been in jail. It's the trade," he laughingly remarked.

His bandaged forehead made his massive chin seem harder and his small feminine mouth look larger than ordinarily.

"But you got banged up?" Kuras asked sympathetically.

The thief shrugged his shoulders indulgently.

"Get educated, don't act ignorant. I use the handkerchief for a towel and hang it on my head to dry," he explained gaily.

Kuras regarded him admiringly. From time to time he asked himself whether is was good for him to be in with Tar. The dark grimy cell and the coming and going of the policemen near the door did not trouble him. He was very grateful to Felek the Tar, as on the day the latter had told him he could be useful. The job Felek the Tar had given him had meant a square meal at a tavern. And what did it matter if he was the accomplice of a thief? And what did it matter if Felek spat on the dress of a passing woman and if Kuras went up to her and said politely: "Pardon me, madam, some hoodlum has spat on your dress." The woman would deposit her satchel or her package on the sidewalk and Felek would grab it and make off.

What was the difference after all! Kuras had long discarded his apprehensions regarding his parents and his neighbors who would say: Kuras is a thief! He didn't want to go hungry. When there would be work he could always go back to his trade as a tinsmith. After all it wasn't stealing, it was only helping out a little.

One of the men sitting on the floor got up and went over to the bed. He was tall, with brown hair and wore horn-rimmed spectacles.

"Would you kindly give me a light?" he asked Tar.

He took a match and again sat down by his neighbor.

"Who are those fellows?" Kuras queried.

"They're politicals," said Tar disdainfully. "Imbeciles."

The politicals squatted on the floor, their backs to the wall, their knees resting against the bunk. They conversed in low tones. They paid no attention to the thieves.

"The one with the glasses is most likely a consumptive," said Kuras, "and the old fellow is doubtless a chauffeur, he wears a leather jacket."

An official summoned Felek to appear before the investigating magistrate.

Left alone Kuras sat down on the bed near the politicals. They broke off their discussion and regarded him carefully. He met their gazes and shifted his eyes in embarrassment. He wanted to talk to them. Finally he thought of a question.

"Are you a chauffeur, sir?" he ventured.

"Yes," came the answer.

Kuras felt pleased with his own mental acumen.

"And both you gentlemen are politicals?"

"Yes."

"Involved in the same case?"

"No!" they answered curtly, in unison.

"I thought . . ." Kuras muttered, intimidated by the curtness of the answer.

The return of Felek the Tar put an end to the disagreeable situation. The thief drew Kuras into a corner.

"You shouldn't have come here. The agent who arrested you saw you with me. I've just been up for identification. The woman said she didn't recognize me."

"That's good," said Kuras happily.

"Dumbness! And what if she recognizes you?"

"I'll say I wasn't there."

"And the policeman will say he saw us with the suitcase."

The indentification justified Felek the Tar's forebodings. The woman and the policeman both recognized Kuras.

Kuras returned grief stricken. Only then he began to feel all the stifling oppressiveness of the prison. He sat down by the politicals. Felek came over quickly, he was irritated.

"Well?"

"They recognized me," groaned Kuras.

The chauffeur gave a comprehending nod.

Kuras made a despairing gesture. His feelings of gratitude for Felek the Tar mingled with his fear of prison. Tar was his only support.

"Listen," said Tar, breaking in on his thoughts, "you will declare to the judge that you did the stealing. I'll send you food packages in prison. And you'll say you don't know me. For you it'll only mean three months while I'd get a year. You haven't got a record yet. You aren't a professional thief, the judge'll believe you. I'll send you parcels, on my honor as a thief."

Kuras did not understand. He looked at Tar with his clear childish eyes.

"Well, this is what you tell the judge: 'I don't know him. I stole the suitcase and the policeman only thought he saw someone else.' The judge will believe you. I'll look after you like a good thief, I'll send you sausage and tobacco."

By now not only the prison and the police were against Kuras, but Felek the Tar as well.

"So you want to get out, go free, and leave me here?" His gratitude vanished, giving way to fear. The assurance of a way of earning a livelihood also vanished.

"I believe you; you'll send me parcels, but you'll take on another assistant while I'm in prison. So you won't have any use for me afterwards."

Felek didn't give Kuras time for reflection.

"It'll be all right, you'll stay here for a bit, you won't be badly off and every thief will respect you, because you know how to be a good comrade."

The camaraderie of thieves seemed incongruous to Kuras. He shielded himself from Felek the Tar's persuasions as from an invisible attack.

"You're an old thief, for you prison doesn't matter much. You know how to adjust yourself to prison, you told me. If you're a good comrade you can tell the judge I happened along by accident, that I saw you spit on the woman's dress and that you stole the suitcase.

Felek the Tar opened his feminine mouth, revealing huge yellow teeth.

"Ha! So that's how you show your gratitude, is it!"

"And why not?" said Kuras offendedly. "Why not? If you want to put me in prison I'd rather starve on the outside. I'm no thief, I'm merely a worker out of a job. Maybe I'll find work. You're a thief, being in prison is a part of your business. Your girl friend will get you a lawyer."

"I'll get you a lawyer, too," Felek cut in.

"But what's the good of a lawyer if I have to say to the judge that I stole," Kuras shouted, almost in tears. "Once I've declared I'm guilty, ten lawyers can't help me!"

They argued at the top of their voices without worrying about the politicals.

"Not at all," said Felek, "the lawyer can help you just the same, because you might get a year and the lawyer will get it reduced to three months."

"But I'll have to be in prison for three months! And what for? What did I get out of it? A meal. And how about you? Look here," he said, indicating the politicals, "why are they here? For their politics. For big things. They aren't like us. Let them judge the matter," he said, pleased with the idea.

"Idiot!" answered Felek. "They've nothing in common with us. The politicals know nothing about the affairs of thieves."

"Not at all, they'll understand just because they are politicals," Kuras persisted.

"They won't understand. They can't understand, because you've got to know the trade. All they know is politics. And if you want a decision well and good, you shall have it. When we're in the common cell I'll ask the old thieves to judge."

"If you ask the old thieves I'll ask someone too," said Kuras excitedly. "Thieves will stick up for each other."

But Felek pressed his argument.

"We'll both ask. They'll be fair. The old fellows are very wise. They've seen a lot of the world. But if it should enter your head to disobey the decision I can tell you honestly, I wouldn't like to be in your skin for it won't be worth a penny."

Kuras was ready to agree to the thieves' decision. Felek's threat frightened him.

"I'm not a thief, I'm a worker out of a job."

In irritation Felek tore the handkerchief from his face and wrung it so hard that water ran out of it.

"You're no worker, you're a thief, and a poor one at that," he said angrily, stamping his feet.

Their harsh angry voices resounded against the low ceiling. The politicals stirred uneasily, ready to intervene in case of violence.

"No, no, I'm a worker out of a job! I'm a worker," Kuras repeated incessantly.

Felek didn't want to waste a moment's time. Any instant he expected the door to open and Kuras to be summoned before the investigating magistrate, while he, the veteran thief, had not yet succeeded in persuading this imbecile. He cut short the argument. Kuras stepped backward, expecting a blow. Felek passed him by and went up to the politicals.

"Tell us which of us is right, gentlemen. Did you hear everything?"

The chauffeur made a negative gesture, he looked as though he were playing for time.

"And you, Kriger," he said, turning to the other, "did you hear?"

"No, I didn't."

The thief gave them a suspicious look and began to tell them all his troubles. Kuras tried to take part in the conversation, but Felek brushed him aside.

"I'm doing the talking!"

Kuras lunged over to the bunks as though he wanted to fling himself on the politicals and pierce them with his ideas. "Politicals! And they listen to a thief," he muttered between clenched teeth. It occurred to him that he shouldn't allow the thief to talk, but that he, Kuras, should speak up.

"They won't listen to an unemployed worker," he said, almost in tears. "There's no justice anywhere."

The political prisoners were standing, their impassive faces unresponsive to the appeal of the thief, who gesticulated violently.

Kriger whispered something to the chauffeur.

"What are they whispering?" he wondered to himself in discouragement. Why didn't they say it aloud? A plot was being hatched against him. The same thought occurred to Felek. He broke the silence and turning to Kuras, sarcastically remarked:

"Well, you go talk to the politicals."

"And what if I don't want to talk," Kuras declared. "I don't want to talk. I don't need any advice. I've made up my mind. I won't say anything to the judges."

Felek tried to intimidate him.

"That's fine, we'll both be in prison. I'll tell the judges that I stole and you stole along with me.." And he wound the handkerchief around his head with an air of decision.

"So that's your code of honor as a thief," Kuras said sarcastically. "I'm a worker, and my code of honor is quite different."

"A worker," chided Felek, "a tramp who sleeps under bridges! A worker always has something you can steal. He's at least got a few patches. But what have you got? Pht!" He blew into the hollow of his hand.

The chauffeur turned to Kuras.

"Where did you work?"

"I'm a tinsmith by trade, but I also know something about locks. I worked in a shop on Karolkov Street. I'm a good worker," he said with feeling.

"How long have you been without a job?" Kriger asked.

"Two years, already," he answered, hanging his head.

They did not call him "mister" as was their habit when talking to thieves, they were against Felek, then.

"Believe me, gentlemen, you are politicals, what if I did go with him a couple of times? It was only because I was very hungry and not because I wanted to steal," he explained feverishly.

"We believe you, we believe you," the political prisoners replied with animation.

After an interval of silence the chauffeur asked him:

"Did you join the union?"

Kuras' ears flushed, but he told the truth.

"No, the foreman wouldn't allow it."

Meanwhile Felek came over to him and listened to the conversation, which had been conducted in what seemed to him a foreign language. He waited impatiently for the proper moment to put in a word. He had not lost hope.

"Had I met with politicals earlier," said Kuras, thinking aloud, "why-maybe now. . . ."

"Doubtless," the chauffeur concurred, completing the unfinished sentence.

"Doubtless," interrupted Felek, "by now he'd be in prison with you."

"There's a difference between being in prison and being in prison!"

"Oh, indeed!" the thief answered insolently. "Are you any better than we are? We both have to eat from the same bucket!"

"Yes, yes, that's true. There's no difference when you're in prison, only you're here on account of your business, and we're here for political reasons, that's the difference. And the bucket's the same."

"Let's drop the matter," said the chauffeur with a frown. "Enough of that."

Kuras' teeth were chattering with anger. So the politicals didn't want to defend someone who wasn't one of them. He clenched his fist. What a good-for-nothing Felek was, it was on his account that the consumptive did not want to discuss any further. . . .

Felek made his finger joints crackle, he did not know what to do about Kuras. He wanted to start a row with the politicals, but in such a way that Kuras would be on his side. But the politicals had no mind to fight, as Felek was fully aware. Finally, if he jumped on them what would happen? That louse Kuras would be likely to go to their defence and that was precisely what he didn't want.

Kriger mechanically blew on the lenses of his spectacles, wiped them on his coat lining and again blew.

"Listen," said the chauffeur, breaking in on Kriger's reverie, "did you know Fajecki?"

"Who was imprisoned last winter at Mokotow? Yes, I knew him. Last autumn he was in the Centralna prison. He's short of statute and bald, isn't he? At first they put him in with the criminals, but later they moved him in with us."

"Why do you mumble so?" the chauffeur said impatiently.

Kriger bit his lips in irritation. Hadn't he mentioned the fact that he had tuberculosis of the throat?

"Speak louder! I can't hear a thing," the chauffeur insisted pitilessly. "Spit before you speak!"

Kriger jerked his head angrily. The chauffeur made a friendly understanding gesture.

"I've already told you what's the matter with me," Kriger remarked offendedly. But suddenly he understood that his narrative was for the thieves to hear, and he related distinctly, in a tone that was audible throughout the cell.

"On Christmas eve this chap Fajecki got together with several fellows who were also unemployed. . . . They didn't want to starve. . . ."

Kuras, who was walking up and down stopped and leaned against the wall.

". . . All of them, there were about twenty people, including the women

went to a municipal store. They went in as soon as they saw there were no customers and told the manager, 'We've come to get food for the holiday.' Without a word, Fajecki grabbed a sack of flour, another helped him, a third took a ham, another a sack of grain and all of them ran off down the street."

Kuras' cheeks turned purple.

"Didn't the manager call for help?" he asked.

"Yes, but it was too late, everyone had already escaped."

"So Fajecki. . . ."

Kriger wanted to correct him but kept silent at a sign from the chauffeur.

". . . . Why he must have had enough flour for a month, eh?" Kuras put in with animation.

"No," said Kriger, "they agreed to divide up everything equally, and all would have gone all right, but when everything had been divided up, at somebody's lodgings . . ."

"They stole!" sneered Felek. "That makes them thieves!"

One might have thought that the thief was not listening, and that he was dozing, his head wrapped in the handkerchief lolled against his chest.

"Don't you bother us!" said Kuras, jumping up. "You know they aren't talking to you."

The thief frowned.

"They aren't talking to you either," he said calmly.

Kuras stepped back but he didn't want to concede the point.

"They aren't talking to me, but I won't allow them to be bothered," and he strolled over to the opposite wall.

Affected by his own recital Kriger felt his legs wobble under him. He was full of admiration for his old comrade.

"When he went out," Kriger continued, "Fajecki forgot to clean the back of his coat which was white with flour. They recognized him and arrested him; the manager indentified him as the one who had committed the theft."

"What happened to the others?" Kuras asked in alarm.

"Nothing. Fajecki didn't give anyone away. During the trial too, he showed plenty of courage."

"I've known lots of people like Fajecki, unemployed who were arrested for the same sort of thing, so many you couldn't keep track. They're a good element," the chauffeur concluded.

"And how do you treat them, gentlemen, as politicals or as criminals?" Felek asked sarcastically.

"As politicals," the chauffeur replied.

"As political thieves, eh?" Felek sneered.

The cell door opened noisily.

"Kriger!"

"Here."

"Jozwicki."

"Here."

"Gather your things."

"We're off to the prison, goodbye, gentlemen."

Kriger made a move as though he wanted to run after the two men, as though he wanted to detain them. But he went back to the wall.

Some prostitutes made noise in the corridor as they passed. It was quiet inside the cell.

"Well, old man," the thief said to Kuras ingratiatingly, "listen to me . . ."

Kuras kept silent.

"I'm speaking to you," Felek the Tar said in a rasping voice, "for the last time! Do you accept? I'll send you parcels."

"No!"

"No?" Felek repeated with a start. "No?" and he sneered, trying to make Kuras get angry. "You'll never make a good thief. I was mistaken. You're a rotter, you're not a man."

"I'm not a rotter," Kuras shouted emphatically.

"Aren't you?" Felek jumped up and drew Kuras towards him. "So you will make the declaration to the judge." He snatched the handkerchief from his forehead, flung it on the bed and happily seized Kuras' hand.

"I won't make the declaration."

Felek stopped short, frowning. He was worn out from the struggle.

Kuras took a deep breath.

"I'm, I'm going to be a political."

Felek spat at Kuras' feet and stretched out on the cot, his face to the wall.

REPORTAGE

Manuel D. Benavides

The Barracks Square of Pelaio

From The Spanish Book This Is How the Revolution Happened

Everywhere in the desert, whether in Algeria, or Asturias, they use the same methods. They bury people in the sand, leaving their heads exposed to the sun like cabbages and pour water on them from time to time in order to keep them alive and prolong the agony. They build fires at both ends of a tunnel where revolutionaries are hiding in order to suffocate them with smoke. They bury the Riffs alive. All the imperialists resort to the same measures when it is a question of colonizing a "savage country" and teaching its population the "blessings of civilization."

Everything happens according to plan. The captains of the "Benemerita," in Asturias operated under the leadership of Doval but in accordance with instructions issued from Madrid.

In Madrid they asked:

"Where are the arms hidden?"

In Asturias they asked two questions:

"Where are the arms and where is the money?"

After the atrocities of the Tercio[1] and the regular divisions the prisoners were in no condition to reply. Indeed their replies had little effect on their fate.

They were shot in batches and individually, in squares and courtyards. When the cell door opened before the prisoner he cast a weary glance around him without betraying the least surprise. Death was an accustomed phenomenon. The murderers did not know the value of human life and regarded the people they killed as so much cattle.

"Do you know any of them?"

"It seems to me I know that one," the prisoner answers. He didn't always manage to complete the thought, for often as not a bullet struck him in the back of the head before he had time.

Sometimes the shooting acquired the character of a sport. Much merriment was aroused by the chauffeur from the "Benemerita" who deftly "speeded" his victims on their way with the help of an automatic revolver.

Placing his hands behind his back the chauffeur stopped in front of the door from where the prisoner issued.

"Come closer."

The prisoner approached diffidently. When he was right next to him the chauffeur squatted down, placed the revolver's muzzle between the prisoner's legs and discharged the whole chamber.

"You're some shot," the others cried in delight.

Not one bullet missed its target.

When they arrested Teodomiro Menendez, the chauffeur asked the captain:

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[1] The Foreign Legion.

"Will we shoot him, too, captain?"

"Yes, and shoot him in the rear so he'll jump."

The arrests began the day after General Lopez Ochoa occupied Oviedo. Gendarme patrols were despatched to the districts occupied by African troops. The legionnaires and the regular troops assisted the work of the gendarmes. Thus in the district of San Pedro de los Arcos and in the neighborhood of the Veda factory the gendarmes had almost nothing to do. Nevertheless the colonial troops did not have an opportunity to finish the work. They were transferred to another sector. Furthermore the legionnaires were attracted by the centre of town whose wealth was far above the modest circumstances of the inhabitants of the outlying districts. After the resistance of the forces that held the northern part of the town had been broken and several dozens of houses had been destroyed and their inhabitants either shot or put to the sword the colonial troops left the cleaning up to the gendarmes.

They knocked on the locked doors of wretched dwellings. It was sufficient if one worker lived in the house.

"Are there socialists here?"

But it was not always necessary to ask this question; in many cases the gendarmes knew the political views of the inhabitants or their membership in the trade union ahead of time.

The Losa family, the father aged fifty-eight, the mother fifty-four, lived in the Punarin district. The old people and their daughters lived on the first floor. The four sons lived on the second floor. The door cracked under heavy knocking.

"Who's there?"

"Gendarmes."

One of the daughters opened the door.

"Everybody out of here!"

The four sons came down from the floor above.

"Hands up!"

They instituted a search and found a red shirt belonging to the youngest son.

"Communists!" announced one of the gendarmes.

They herded the old man and the four sons to the Punarin barracks.

"What were you doing on the fifth? Where were you on the sixth?" they asked.

"I know you," the corporal told the old man. "In my opinion you are capable of anything. You're a contemptible person."

The old man threw back his shoulders.

"I've been a socialist for forty years and I've always been a law abiding citizen."

The old man and his sons were locked in a cell. In the morning they were handcuffed and sent under an escort of fourteen to the Pelaio barracks. Soldiers of the legion and of the regular detachments surrounded them with threatening looks.

"Well, now you'll never get out of here alive. You'll all be slaughtered."

The bayonet of one of the legionnaires scratched the chest of the youngest brother.

In the barracks a court martial was in session. All five were led to the secretariat. In the room, which was cluttered with tables, cognac bottles

and typewriters a captain of the "Benemerita" and two lieutenants confronted them. Captain Nio Telio, turned to Lisardo Losa:

"You are the chauffeur of the 'Advance?' "

"Yes," answered Lisardo Losa accompaning his answer with a gesture of his manacled hands.

"Stand over there!"

The captain motioned to the opposite wall. Old man Losa followed his son with his eyes.

"What's your trade?"

"I'm a stone cutter," answered Luis Losa.

"Search him!"

The search yielded a pawn-broker's ticket, some tobacco and a letter from his fiancee. They read the letter. The girl, who lived in Madrid, had written:

"You've completely forgotten me all because you are too busy with politics."

"So you're busy with politics!" exclaimed the captain. "Well, and you over there, are these your children?"

The old man nodded.

"You may go. Two's enough for one family."

They removed the handcuffs from the two younger sons.

"Get out I told you! Or maybe you'd like to share their fate?"

The father clutched his two remaining sons. They returned home together. "Two's enough for one family!" the captain had said. The old man's heart was breaking. The captain's words had a sinister sound.

"Where are my children?" the mother asked.

"Lisardo and Luis remained in the barracks. I only brought back these two."

The mother was worried. She felt they were concealing something. Regardless of how great the misfortune might be they should not hide the truth from her. She asked what had happened.

"They held us all night in a cell at the Punarin barracks," said the third son. "And in the morning they sent us to the Pelaio barracks."

"Well, what happened?"

The old man kept silent. What could he say in reply to his wife's question? It was no crime to work as a chauffeur of the "Advance" or to be a stone-cutter.

Since morning there had been the sound of shots coming from the barracks. Now they had stopped. Time dragged slowly.

The mother closed her eyes, straining to catch every sound. She clutched at her bosom. Silence, then suddenly a rifle volley tore the old woman's heartstrings.

"My children!"

Buckets of water were poured on the prisoners to force them to quit their cells, but nevertheless no one was willing to leave voluntarily. The prisoners had to be dragged out into the square or the yard by force. They screamed and held back.

Word circulated through the villages of the siege of San Lazaro and Temderiny Bacha, of the murders at San Pedro de Los Arcos and the shootings in the barracks of Pelaio . . . Three months later in the cemetery they found the bodies of three girl revolutionaries killed by colonial soldiers.

The "victors" peddled watches and chains from jewelry shops on the streets of Oviedo just as at Trubi they sold the foodstuffs taken from the cooperatives. From the houses which they carried by storm, for lack of anything better they carried off bottles of eau-de-cologne and neckties.

The inhabitants fled. The towns Mierez, Turon and Laviana were empty. On October 17 nine-tenths of the inhabitants of Oloniego abandoned their houses. Only five or six old men remained in Mansaneda. People fled to the mountains or abroad. After the occupation of Oviedo, General Ochoa began a systematic destruction of the People's Houses. The furniture was set on fire, rifle butts were used to demolish radios and motion picture projectors. The furniture from the People's House in Laviana was loaded onto a truck.

"The furniture is in a good condition. It just suits me," said one of the senior officers.

The "fame" of Ochoa was somewhat dimmed by the arrival of the ministers in Asturias.

The minister of war, Don Diego Hidalgo, was accompanied by General Franko. Several months previously Ochoa had met him at the military maneuvers which took place under his leadership and now he again ran into him in Asturias.

Franko was the minister of war's aide. Both the generals rode through the street of Oviedo and were applauded. Although Franko was not the "victor" of Oviedo he like Ochoa received the title of "favorite son of the city." The generals eyed each other jealously. In Ochoa's presence the ministers and the Asturian reactionaries congratulated those who were most active in suppressing the uprising. And it became perfectly plain that the greater the bloodshed the greater the ovation.

On the streets the ministers encountered the corpses of miners. They were not the least surprised by this. Perhaps they even thought that there were not enough corpses? Then as though nothing unusual had happened they returned to Madrid, and within a few weeks' time Doval was appointed chief of police of Asturias. It was as though he had been deliberately designed for the job of quenching the last embers of revolt, and weeding revolutionary sentiments root and branch from the hearts of the Asturians.

After Doval's appointment the tactics of repression were changed. The shootings continued, but they stopped killing people on the barrack square of Pelaio. The rifles were set to work on the roadsides and in the mountains. Doval had a different approach. It consisted in crippling the miners, breaking their arms and legs, smashing their ribs and fracturing their skulls with rifle butts. The miners were stripped to the skin, beaten and thrown in the water, pulled out and beaten again. In the Oviedo barracks, in the Las Adoratrices monastery and the town jails of the coal area, prisoners were executed after terrible tortures.

Bodies were no longer to be seen in the barrack square of Pelaio and the chauffeur from the "Benemerita" no longer emptied the chamber of his revolver into prisoners' groins.

Twenty-four from Carbaina

Vindictiveness is a cruel feeling which romantics inherit from the ancient classics. The destruction of a foe who stands in your way may be called tactics. But cruel blind retribution can only be characterized as a lapse into animal savagery.

When Lieutenant Alonzo Nart, the brother of the captain killed at Sama.

entered the coal district along with the troops he was seized with a thirst for vengeance.

"For each of our dead," said Lieutenant Nart, "two hundred of you shall perish."

When attacking the barracks the miners had always proposed surrender to the enemy and they had always spared the lives of their prisoners.

"Two hundred!" said Lieutenant Nart.

The news of this reached Madrid.

"Lieutenant Nart demands two hundred revolutionaries in requital for every slain gendarme."

"A reasonable demand," was the reply from Madrid. "Give Lieutenant Nart our regards and provide him with all the necessary assistance."

But to the troops under the lieutenant's command such a number seemed excessive. What would they do with so many corpses?

And this explains the change in tactics which Doval decided upon. "If we can't kill all the revolutionaries," he argued, "we can at least put them out of commission. We'll have to break the miners' hips so that they'll no longer be able to wield a pick-axe and a crippled worker is no longer a revolutionary."

But it turned out that Doval had miscalculated. Several shifts were organized for the work of beating up the miners. The process lasted for three whole hours. It would seem that this was sufficient time to beat a man to death but human vitality is amazing. There were miners who endured the torture.

Indeed, Doval did not succeed in fully carrying his tactical plan and it was found necessary to recall him from Asturias.

The lieutenant was prepared to shoot all the revolutionaries who had been active in Sama. How many thousands of them were there? He had decided to exact payment for his brother's death. "Exact payment" was his own way of putting it. He pondered how he should go about it. The lieutenant had no hopes of arresting all of them. Some were in hiding, others had perished.

"Do you know them?" he asked those gendarmes who remained alive in Sama. The gendarmes could not state their exact number. One said one thing, another another. In Sama, Oscura, Sianio de Santa Anna and Sotrondio they arrested a number of people and put them in a jail improvised for the purpose in a former convent.

Nart drew up the list of prisoners and thought out a plan of action.

Several gendarmes scouted in the neighborhood of Sama. They were reconnoitering the locality.

"We've found a suitable place. Would you care to look it over, lieutenant?"

The place turned out to be the slag heap of the Roselion mine near Death Lode on the road from Felgera to Carbaina. A house stood twenty metres from the slag heap and facing it across the river was another house. After examining the location the gendarmes went to the houses.

"Who lives here?"

"We do, senor."

No one but old men and women.

The gendarmes started digging a ditch in the slag heap. They worked hard, inspired by the presence of the lieutenant.

They excavated a broad long deep ditch. The coal-dust got in their

throats and made them cough. The three-cornered hats of the gendarmes loomed dark against the black soil.

"Deeper!" ordered the lieutenant.

Guns were stacked beside the ditch. The gendarmes worked in shifts. The ditch grew deeper but it still was not deep enough for the lieutenant.

The day dragged on with intolerable slowness. The lieutenant was uneasy, he was seized with impatience. He went to the convent where the prisoners were held in order to make sure they were still in their places. Apparently he feared they might escape and thus foil his plan for vengeance. No, the prisoners could not escape. Anyone who ran through the streets of Sama was a doomed man. If he walked in leisurely fashion but was not dressed like a gentleman or didn't at least wear a felt hat he was also a doomed man. The lieutenant became convinced that the prisoners could not escape. They were in his power, they belonged to him.

A large truck, license number 08999, was commissioned in order to transfer to Oviedo prisoners who could not be housed.

"We'll send half of them today and send the remainder up in a few days." The truck was transformed into a huge coffin.

"There's room for from twenty to twenty-five people." They drew up a list of twenty-four names chosen at random at the indication of the gendarmes who had made the arrests. Not one of the prisoners was examined. They were not interested in either their lives, their ages or their pasts. Out of the twenty-four only three belonged to the parties which had organized the revolutionary movement. Two were boys of barely sixteen.

"Those youngsters are the most pernicious," remarked the sergeant, "spawn of the devil himself."

On October 25, at 2:45 a.m. truck number 08999 with its motor switched off and its lights out stood in front of the monastery awaiting its load of twenty-four human beings.

"Not one shot; in ten minutes everything will be over."

In the nocturnal darkness a sharp chill made your face tingle. The frosty air bore promise of good weather. The day would be clear and sunny. Everything took place in complete silence. The gendarmes acted with the secrecy of kidnappers. Twenty-four handcuffed prisoners were somehow squeezed into the truck with the prodding of rifle butts. The prisoners hunched their shoulders trying to shield their ears from the morning cold.

They switched on the engine and turned on the light. Truck number 08999, which in the time of the uprising had served to transport revolutionaries, continued to fulfill its function.

Afterwards . . . .

Here is the account of what happened.

"We put them down at the Roselion mine; making them climb out one by one we tied them together with a rope so that none of the blows might be wasted.

" 'Are you going to kill us?' asked one of the twenty-four.

"Everything happened quickly. It seems almost incredible that one could make such fast work of so many people. We rushed on them with knives. At the first instant they were paralyzed with horror and surprise. Some of them collapsed immediately and were silent. Others screamed horribly.

" 'Twist the rope round their throats,' ordered the sergeant. I shot one in the back of the neck. Several other shots were fired.

" 'Don't shoot, only slash,' shouted the sergeant, 'and cut out the tongues of those who scream.'

"They choked those who screamed with the rope. I was somehow blinded and struck out furiously, seeking only to drown the cries. The blade of my knife cleaved through the flesh. Several gendarmes used their bayonets. One speared a boy with such force that he lost his balance and fell on top of his victim.

"It was horrible for us. The shrieks of the dying made us frantic. I don't know, but maybe we wouldn't have killed all of them if they hadn't screamed. We couldn't hear our own voices.

" 'I lost my knife,' one of the gendarmes related, 'and stepped to one side in order to hunt for it; failing to find it I came back with a piece of rail and began striking the falling bodies right and left without looking.'

"One of the twenty-four went down on his knees shrieking: 'I'm a Catholic. I believe in God! I believe in God.' The knives jabbed into human stomachs with a sickening crunch like grapes in a wine press.

"Our hands grew tired of slashing. We were cutting up corpses. There was no longer a single groan to be heard, but the screams were still ringing in our ears.

" 'Enough,' said the sergeant. 'Now remove the handcuffs and the rope.' The hot bodies were steaming. It was a welter of legs, arms and bodies. You had to be careful that none were alive to tell the tale. They were all dead however.

"A gendarme who had lost his knife found it in the chest of one of the twenty-four. Placing his heel on the corpse he wrenched it free with an effort.

"We threw them into the ditch and covered them with earth.

" 'Didn't one of them say that he believed in God?' shouted one of us, and bursting into sobs threw himself into the truck.

" 'His nerves have gone to pieces,' said the sergeant. 'Take a good look, to see if there's light in the windows anywhere.'

"The tightly shut houses were plunged in darkness.

"We climbed into the truck. The return trip was a nightmare. We rode silently. Only the one whose nerves had gone to pieces was crying. The sergeant had to call him down.

" 'I'm terribly thirsty. I want a drink,' I said.

"It turned out that everyone was thirsty. Licking one's mouth and lips didn't help. Everyone's throat was parched.

"The sergeant lit a cigar lighter and, raising his hands to his face, removed a bloody particle of flesh with his fingers. It was the eyelid of one of the twenty-four. You could tell by the lashes.

" 'What filth!' said the sergeant.

"He raised the light to his face, illuminating one side of it. 'Wipe my ear off.'

"At 3:30 we returned to Sama."

On October 25 the general staff issued to the press the following bulletin which was a resume of reports received between 3:00 o'clock on the 23rd and 5:00 o'clock on the 25th.

"The First and Second Divisions—situation unchanged. The Border Guard has been reinforced including the guard at the place where several individuals were detained, leaders of the movement in Andalusia.

"The Eighth Division—military operation of the forces concentrated in Asturias may be regarded as terminated. In the future the activity of the troops will mainly consist of supporting the gendarmes and the police for the purposes of ensuring that the disarming of the rebels shall continue

without interference. Every attempt to resist the above activities will be ruthlessly put down. Weather favorable. Sickness among the troops almost negligible."

The shrieks of those who were slaughtered at dawn on October 25th had reached the houses near the slag heap.

The women awoke.

"Do you hear that."

"I do."

"The poor wretches are being murdered."

The woman hid her head. In an instant the shrieks died down but the echo continued to keep them alive.

"Do you hear?"

"It's all over. They've killed our children."

The houses awoke in a panic. Fear stalked the stairs. The neighbors questioned each other. Everyone had heard the shrieks. Cautiously, looking around carefully they approached the mine.

"Come on, let's have a look." They examined the ground. The ditch that had been there the previous day was filled in.

"Nothing here."

"Maybe over there . . ."

Circling round they examined the earth but they ventured no further. What might lie hidden beneath the coal? Blood sinks into the black soil of the mine; red stains are turned into black. The mineral absorbs blood.

The gendarmes had gone back to town. The local inhabitants grew bolder. Doors began to open.

"What happened?"

"Nobody knows. There's been a massacre."

When a spark falls on the dry grass a small flame sticks out a snake-like head and licks the ends of the stubble; it flickers; mounts higher, grows, dies down, revives again, conceals itself and lo, where there was only one flame a second appears; where there were two, four.

Everywhere along the road mothers congregated. They rushed to the slag heap and began to dig the ground which still retained footprints. They didn't have to dig long. The bodies lay beneath a thin coating of earth. The horrible news spread through the village. Mothers ran out of their houses. Women from Sotrondio and Oscura, from Sianio de Santa Anna and Felgera came rushing over. Gendarmes appeared at the mine.

The narrative of the crime at Carbaina continues.

"We dug them up at night and carried them to Oviedo, but they refused to accept the bodies at the cemetery, demanding either a medical certificate of death or an order from the military authorities.

"We had to get rid of them somehow.

"So the truck headed for Valdesoto and there, in the local cemetery we finally buried the twenty-four victims of the Carbaina massacre."

On October 29th and 30th the mothers again came to the Roselion mine. The ditch was empty. The mothers dug the earth with their fingers, looking for the corpses but all they found was a cap, some shreds of clothing and a bloody iron bar with strands of hair stuck to it.

The women from the entire district of Langreo rushed to Sama.

At Torre de Abacho they were met by storm troopers.

"Murderers!"

The storm troops opened fire on the crowd.

One of the mothers remained at the slag heap in order to examine the ground for some souvenir of her son. She dug into the coal-dust searching: "Here's a button; no, it isn't. A shoelace; no, it isn't. A piece of skin with light brown hair; no, it isn't." She poked the earth with a stick and ran her fingers through it. Nothing, not even a fingernail.

At last she came across three fingers severed close to the palm. "My son," the woman suddenly ejaculated. She recognized them. They were fingers of her son, a miner's fingers with thick nails and rough grey skin. Having wrapped them up carefully in a handkerchief she stuffed the find into her bodice. She then seized a fistful of earth and brought it to her mouth. The earth of the Roselion mine had become sweet.

The women ran on, pursued by the storm troops.

Through the November nights mothers from Sotrondio, Oscura, Sianio de Santa Anna and Felgera stood guard by the convent of Sama to keep the gendarmes from slaying their arrested sons on the slag heap.

The Three in Number Sixty

Honor in silence the fighters of Asturias. We shall shake off the yoke of terror and we shall remember. Day by day we shall fan the flame of the October memories renewing the fire of hope and promise. Spain is bound forever to this great date. We have no past. History dates from October 1934, from that fearful month.

Before you die, comrades, tell us . . . .

People cry in mortal agony, they fear the darkness. At night the accustomed prison silence is shattered by the shrieks of the dying. There are three workers in cell number sixty. They have been exhausted by horrible torture. All feeling has been drained from their exhausted and enfeebled bodies.

They soon will die.

Let us listen to the thoughts of these three who are dying dry-eyed.

"With the lamp in your teeth you crawl along the tunnel. Twenty degrees . . . Thirty . . . The lower down you go the higher the temperature. Your sweat mingles with the coal. You spit out black saliva."

The voice of the man speaking breaks off. The end of a broken rib presses against his lung membrane.

"The engineer said we had to dig six hundred tons. A few years before that, coal gas exploded in 'Death Lode.' It burned for a whole month, there was a cave-in, fourteen killed. You crawl along and you think to yourself: Wherever my lamp goes I can also go. Because the engineer is absolute boss. You have to risk your hide for a couple of duros. 'Death Lode' can of course be made to yield six hundred tons but first the tunnel should be strengthened and only then should the coal be mined.

"Suddenly a noise reaches you. Zip! as though someone were tearing canvas. You stop in your tracks; you hug the floor and the walls. We miners well know the meaning of that Zip!

"You listen to the earth. The earth grumbles at you and then grows quieter and sounds as if it were pouring through the mouth of a sandbox. It is dark in the mine! your eyes see nothing beyond the ring of light shed by the lamp. In the distance lumps of rock break loose and come rolling your way. The pick-axe and pneumatic hammer fall from your hands. All the miners listen intently. There is a sudden deafening roar, as though a hundred machine-guns were all shooting at once . . . The miners refuse to seek safety in flight; in the face of mortal danger they form

a chain and reinforce the walls. When the danger is over, you lose all taste for life until you get out of that hell. And only when you reach the surface does the desire to live return. You run your fingers over your own body, examine your hands and the world seems as small to you as Death Lode."

The miner lapsed into silence, choking with the blood from his injured lung. Wiping his mouth with the palm of his hand he leaned wearily on the shoulders of a cellmate.

"The same thing happened this time too. There was an explosion of coal gas; the mine clogged up with earth. Some of us perished; the others formed a chain."

The three prisoners thought of their own lot. They had perished in the cave-in.

The miner stretched out his legs; his sides heaved to the accompaniment of his hoarse breathing; he had a ruptured bladder.

Another had had his tongue torn out and he made blurting efforts to say something.

The cries continued unabated day and night. The cries of those who wanted to end their suffering turned to frantic wails. Seized with a frenzy, prisoners who had been driven insane hurled themselves from the third story to the flagstones of the prison court. Others, crouching in the recesses of their cells sought solace in tears. But the worst cries of all issued from the lips of those who died dry-eyed, and these cries were heard by no one.

The inmates of cell number sixty were dry-eyed; their tears dried up the morning they were led to the special investigating cabinet. The captain in command had ordered:

"Bring in the prisoner."

One of the three entered the cabinet.

"Where's the money?" asked the captain.

"I don't know."

"You'll regret your lie."

The captain turned the prisoner over to the gendarmes. Shrieks of agony and horror were shortly heard.

"Bring in the second."

The first was already a doomed man. In cell number sixty he had already lapsed into the silence of the death agony.

"Where's the money?" the captain asked the second prisoner.

"What money?"

"The money you stole, you vermin."

The captain pushed him to the wall, but suddenly his menacing attitude turned to one of surprise. The captain carefully scrutinized the second prisoner who was tall of stature, broad chested, with powerful legs and arms.

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-five."

"What do you weigh?"

"Ninety-seven kilos."

"How tall are you?"

"One metre and eighty centimetres."

"Chest measurement?"

"One hundred and twelve."

The captain emitted a sly laugh. The fellow knew his age, his weight and measurements perfectly well . . . but he didn't know where the money was. The captain laughed uproariously. The prisoner was at a loss to understand

the cause of the merriment which seemed quite out of keeping with the questions.

"Call in one more shift," the captain ordered. "Five additional people."

Five gendarmes appeared.

The sly smile again played on the captain's lips and, winking at the gendarmes he asked the prisoner:

"How old are you?"

"I've already told you once."

"Well, repeat it for their benefit, for the benefit of the comrades of those whom you killed in Sama . . . How old are you?"

"Twenty-five."

"What do you weigh?"

"Ninety-seven kilos."

"How tall are you?"

"One metre and eighty centimetres."

"Chest measurement?"

"One hundred and twelve."

The captain smiled, the gendarmes snickered. The passing pedestrians, hearing the merriment thought to themselves: "And yet people still say that they torture in Oviedo!"

"Keep it in mind. Twenty-five years old, weighs ninety-seven kilos, one metre eighty centimetres tall and a chest measurement of one hundred and twelve. Yet he doesn't know where the money is. We'll see if he'll tell you. Don't lay off till you find out."

The five gendarmes led the prisoner away, having manacled him.

Soon from beyond the wall there came a noise like the rat-tat of a machine. An hour passed in this fashion.

"Well?" the captain asked.

"He didn't even open his mouth."

The rat-tat of the machine was resumed. Another hour passed.

"Well, how about it?"

"We can't get anything out of him."

"Well, if he doesn't talk I guess he doesn't need his tongue."

The machine ceased, and the air recoiled like living flesh from the shriek which rent it. They brought the man in to the captain and poured a bucket of water over him.

"How old are you?" the captain asked once again.

The prisoner, who slouched over on the bench, straightened up, toppled forward and, gazing at the gendarmes spat out a mouthful of blood and emitted an inarticulate cry.

"U-u-ul!"

"Bring in the third."

In cell number sixty the first and second already lay dying.

"Where are the rifles?" they asked the third prisoner.

And they gave him fifteen minutes to think it over, standing him with his face to the wall where a crucifix was hanging.

"Look at it and try to think," they advised him.

This quarter of an hour was necessary that the gendarmes might rest up, after having beaten two of the prisoners to death.

The last of the three forgot the question about the weapons. The gendarmes undertook to remind him. They beat him until they ruptured his bladder.

The three inmates lay in cell number sixty lighting the oncoming darkness with the last flicker of their death agony.

They crawled close to one another in order to be together and by their conversation feel to the end the strand which linked them.

"Mine gas exploded in the shaft and a cave-in occurred," gasped one of the dying. "Some perished, others formed a chain."

"They formed a chain," repeated the third.

And the second, who was tongueless, said by gesture:

"They formed a chain."

For the three who languished in cell number sixty, the October uprising sounded like an unfinished symphony. The final chord had not been played, but this did not detract from its greatness or its glory. The revolution was and is.

"Dinner," shouted the jailer.

With an effort—his voice failed with his body—one of the three said:

"Eat it yourself. We're on our way already."

Their thoughts became tangled, their eyes no longer saw. The cell walls receded . . . They no longer heard the prison noises. Fear and alarm subsided. . . Together with the prison walls the echoes of sound receded into the distance.

Illumined by the light of fires flickering in the distance through the gloom of night, the three dying men in cell number sixty concentrated on how to become free once again.

Let silence prevail that the sleep of the three who die dry-eyed may be undisturbed.

The second sufferer embraced his two comrades. He too wanted to say something to his friends. . . . He placed their heads on his knees and leaning over them said in sign language:

"First we must blaze the way, blast the mountain, dig up all the roots. stamp down the earth."

He was talking to himself and to his two comrades.

"Use all your forces till the road is entirely smooth. . . . and beyond the road is our world. In order to reach it we must work unceasingly. . . . Just as at Trubia, at Felgera, at Turona . . . in October . . . steadfastly. Keep your courage, boys! The engineer called for six hundred tons . . . but for ourselves we'll raise the quota to two thousand. . . . Are you hungry? Be patient for a bit. . . . We must finish the road, continue the journey to our world . . . and when the road is ready you will call your wife and tell her: 'Send forth our son, his father has paved the way for him.' Do you understand what I mean? It was our task to continue the road."

The prison walls recede and disappear. . . . The thoughts of the second of those who died dry-eyed are broken off, like the October symphony.

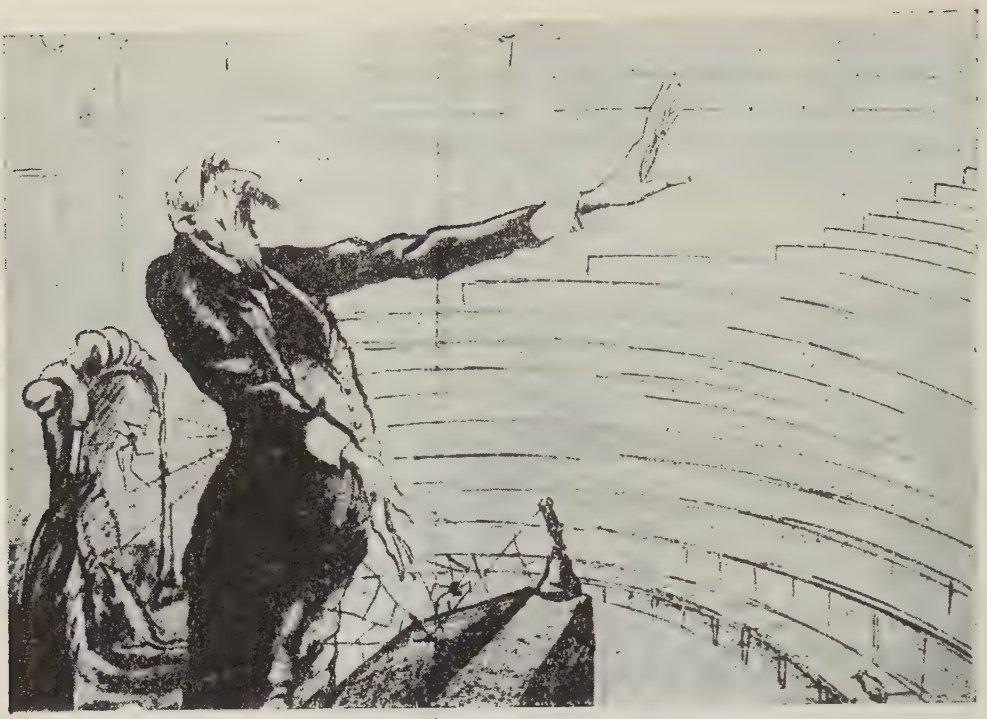
The first voices of the morning wake the prison aisles with the roll-call. "Eight in number thirty, five in number forty-five . . . six in number fifty-five . . . followed each time by three bangs: the bolt, the door and then the bolt . . . "Four in number fifty-nine."

The jailer opens the last door on the aisle, looks in and unseeing, calls: "Three in number sixty. . . ."

SOVIET CARTOONS BY KUKRINIKSI (Kuprianov, Krylov, Sokolov)

From their New Book "The History of the Civil War"

General Polovtez, Gotz and Avksentiev



Menshevik Chkheidze

General Alexeyev

Provisional Government at Work

Kerensky and the Women's Battalion

Two Generals

A DISCUSSION on FORMALISM

The grandiose economic advance of the Soviet Union has brought an extraordinary cultural growth of the peoples of the Union.

Questions of literature and art now interest deeply tens of millions of people.

Tricks for trickery's sake, conjuring with words, in order to conceal—but with little success—poverty of thought, anti-artistic twisting designed for the refined taste of the "elect few," imitation of the epoch of Decadence (with its baneful influence on art) and so on are angrily repelled by the people which is striving to master all the treasures of world culture.

The struggle against formalism and naturalism in literature and art which has been widely developed in recent months is attracting the attention of every citizen of the Soviet land.

Workers, collective farmers and the other toilers of the Soviet land wish to work and enjoy their leisure in splendid and formally perfect buildings, to delight in brilliant and genuinely worthwhile pictures, to listen to fine music and read highly artistic productions. That is precisely why the newspaper *Pravda*, expressing the *lawful* demands of the master—the people—published a series of problem articles on questions of architecture, painting, music and literature.

These articles aroused a wide response among architects, writers, artists and musicians.

In the land of the Soviets it is hardly likely that there can be found maniacs ready to write books designed for their mistresses alone or to erect buildings in which only a select few could take pleasure . . .

The greatest joy of each Soviet writer, artist and musician is the consciousness that he creates for millions, for the whole people of his country.

The people presents extraordinarily high demands to the art and literature of the country which has the most perfect social system.

The people does not want substitutes for art.

Educated on the productions of Dante, Shakespeare, Pushkin, Balzac, on the creations of Leonardo da Vinci and Rembrandt, on the music of Beethoven and Mozart, following with love the creative work of the best modern writers and artists of the West and of America, the Soviet people demands from its writers, artists and musicians majestic simplicity, majestic richness of content, the boldness and perfection of beauty which we see in the creations of all the really great artists of humanity.

For *narodnost*[1] *and simplicity* in art and literature!

This means that before the men of letters and art there stands a most difficult and at the same time most honorable task, because *simplicity* (and not simplification) is the highest stage of mastery.

We are printing a number of documents: *Pravda* articles, speeches of well-known Soviet writers during the discussion and so on, in order to help our American and English readers to understand the important movements taking place at present in the literature and art of the Soviet land.

Chaos Instead of Music

The Opera Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District

With the general growth of culture in our country there has also been a growth in the demand for good music. Nowhere and never before have composers had such grateful audiences. The masses are waiting for good songs and also for good instrumental works and good operas.

Some theatres offer the new, culturally evolved, Soviet public Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District,* as a novelty and an achievement. Obliging musical critics praise the opera to the skies and create

[1] *Narodnost* literally means "folk-ness." In this case it is to be understood as "the saturation of professional art and literature with the forms and contents of folk art."

a resounding reputation for it. Instead of practical and serious criticism, which might help him in his future work, the young composer hears nothing but enthusiastic compliments.

From the very first moment the audience is deafened by a purposely harsh and discordant stream of sounds. Fragments of melody, the rudiments of a musical phrase, are drowned, torn to pieces and disappear in a rumbling, grating, screeching din. It is difficult enough to follow such music, to remember it is impossible.

Thus it is practically throughout the entire opera. On the stage, singing is replaced by screeching. If the composer happens to strike a simple melody that can be understood, he immediately, as though alarmed at such a calamity, plunges back into his musical uproar which at times becomes a veritable cacophony of sound. Instead of the suggestiveness which the music lover expects he is given a furious rhythm. This musical din is supposed to represent passion.

All this is not due to lack of talent on the part of the composer, nor to his inability to express simple and powerful emotions in music. We have here music that is deliberately "turned inside out" so as not to be in the slightest degree reminiscent of classical opera music, so as not to have anything in common with symphonic harmonies or the plain language of music which can be understood by all. We have here music which is built up on the same principle of negating opera according to which leftist art rejects in the theatre simplicity, realism, comprehensible symbols and the natural sound of the voice. We have here a transference to opera, to music, of the most undesireable features of Meyerholdism magnified several times. We are given leftist chaos instead of natural, human music. The power that good music has of seizing the imagination of the masses is sacrificed to strained petty bourgeois, formalistic efforts and pretensions to originality by means of cheap eccentricity. It is a silly game that may end very badly.

The danger of such a tendency in Soviet music is perfectly clear. Leftist distortion in opera is produced by the same cause as leftist distortion in painting, poetry, teaching and science. Petty bourgeois innovation leads to a divorce from true art, true science and true literature.

The composer of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* had to borrow the nervous, convulsive hysterical music of jazz in order to lend "passion" to his heroes.

At a time when Soviet criticism, including musical criticism is declaring its allegiance to socialist realism, in this creation of Shostakovich we are presented with the crudest naturalism of the stage. With an utter lack of variety everyone in the opera, both merchants and the people, are presented in the guise of beasts. The predatory merchant's wife who has won her way to wealth and power by murder is presented as a kind of victim of bourgeois society. Leskov's story has a meaning read into it which it does not possess in the original.

All this is crude, primitive and vulgar. The music croaks and hoots and snorts and pants in order to represent love scenes as naturally as possible. And "love" in its most vulgar form is daubed all over the opera. The merchant's double bed is the central point on the stage. On it all the "problems" are solved. In the same crude naturalistic style a death from poisoning and a flogging are shown almost on the very stage.

It is obvious that the composer has not made it his purpose to inquire into what Soviet audiences are seeking and waiting for in music. He would seem to have purposely muddled up his music and confused all the harmo-

nies so that his music might only appeal to formalist esthetes who have lost all healthy taste. He has completely ignored the demand of Soviet culture to drive out what is primitive and ugly from every corner of Soviet life. This glorification of merchant class lasciviousness has been described by some critics as a satire. But there can be no question of satire here. The author uses all the means at his disposal and his power of musical and dramatic expression to attract the sympathy of the public for the coarse and vulgar aims and actions of the merchant's wife Katherine Izmailov.

Lady Macbeth is popular among bourgeois audiences abroad. Is it not perhaps because the opera is so confused and so entirely free of political tendency that it is praised by the bourgeois public? Is it not perhaps because it titillates the depraved tastes of bourgeois audiences with its witching, clamorous, neurasthenic music?

Our theatres have taken no little pains to produce Shostakovich's opera well. Actors have shown considerable talent in surmounting the screeching din of the orchestra. They have tried to make up for the melodic poverty of the opera with dramatic acting. But unfortunately this has made its crude naturalistic features stand out all the more blatantly. The talented acting that has been shown calls for recognition and the wasted efforts for regret.

(Pravda, *January 28, 1936*)

Architectural Cacophony

In the last few years we have witnessed a definite renaissance in Soviet architecture and a determined struggle for high technical and artistic quality in our buildings. In this struggle it was of prime importance to overcome vulgar simplification and its distortion of Soviet architectural style. The new buildings which have appeared on the streets of our cities within the last years are, from the point of view of design and comfort, a far cry from the earlier lifeless and dreary "box-houses." The increasing development of architectural skill and young and talented architects as well as the ardent desire to create works of architecture which are worthy of our great epoch are reflected in the Moscow subway which is one of the best examples of real Soviet architecture.

But even today there is a great deal of irresponsibility and hack-work in our architectural practice. The revolting oversimplification, the complete disregard of man's most immediate needs, the attempts to cover up the absence of any intelligent content with a false exterior polish, the unprincipled mixture of the most varied and entirely unrelated forms, which have been mechanically copied from different architectural monuments of the past—these characteristics are still evident in many projects and buildings.

For example, let us consider a large apartment house on Pokrovka 37 (Moscow) which was recently opened for occupancy. Aside from the confused mixture of styles in the elevation and the indifferent attitude to the architectural aspect of a large Soviet apartment house, not one of the apartments has a kitchen. And this is called an "innovation!" This is a result of the "left" trend to implant an artificial communal life.

It was the original intention of the designers to have the communal kitchen and dining room in an adjoining building—Mashkov St. No. 15. (The

house was built by the Moscow Apartment House Construction Bureau, designs by Engineer Znamenski, elevations by Engineer Snekarev.) The harm resulting from the liquidation of individual kitchens in this arbitrary manner became obvious to the builders only when the construction was almost finished. It was therefore necessary to instal gas-ranges in the bathrooms of fifty apartments and in the remaining apartments—in one of the rooms. And this so-called "left-idea" was carried out with the blessing of the Architectural Planning and Building Commission of the Moscow Soviet.

Some of the builders who came to grief were quite original in their understanding of the application of our architectural heritage. They unceremoniously and mechanically imitated different examples of classic architecture and as mechanically and unscrupulously muddled the most varied architectural forms.

Not long ago, the building of the Commissariat of Light Industry on Gorki Street was remodelled and enlarged. The old cheerless elevations of this large box-house disfigured the street. But why did Architect Tikhonov find it necessary to "embellish" the elevation of the building with pretentious and false architectural attributes?

The enormous columns that have been attached to the elevation facing the side street are without meaning and are unrelated to the composition of the whole building. The architect mechanically applied the forms of the Italian Palace of the 16th Century. Thus a Soviet building looks like a gloomy "public institution." It is plain that this kind of mechanical and tasteless application of forms and details that have been chosen accidentally from old architectural monuments has nothing in common with the critical adaptation and application of the best examples of classic architecture.

What is even worse is the imitation of the classic when it takes on the character of a confused muddle of different architectural motifs. An original example of this kind of architectural cacophony is a large apartment house which was recently built on the Leningrad Highway No. 92-96. The designer of the building, Architect Efimovich, uses different styles which are entirely unrelated, his only concern being to create a "richer" and more "elegant" elevation. Architect Efimovich and others like him who manufacture "sacharine beauty" are harmful because they lead to middle class mediocrity and inculcate a taste for ostentation.

The harmful pursuit of middle class ornamentation and cheap effects is in line with the pseudo-revolutionary "faddism" which petty-bourgeois formalists in architecture are attempting to introduce. Undoubtedly the most zealous of them is Architect K. Melnikov, who "became famous" with his ugly Club of the Communards on Stromink. Many Moscovites and tourists who find themselves in this section of the capitol, shrug their shoulders in surprise at the spectacle of concrete swellings which cover the main elevation and which have been cunningly utilized for the balconies of the auditorium. The fact that this monstrous elevation incredibly complicated and increased the cost of construction and disfigured the exterior does not trouble the architect in the least. His chief aim—to pull a trick, to make the building "awfully original"—was achieved. And only this is necessary to "faddists" like Melnikov.

The same kind of miserable trickery and wilful disregard of the elementary requirements of good planning distinguishes Melnikov's design of a building of the Commissariat of Heavy Industry on Red Square. Melnikov's project (fortunately it remains only a project) has 16 sub-cellars, open

stairways leading direct from the Square to the 41st floor and similar acrobatics. (The building was designed for 57 floors.) Melnikov and his coworkers (N. Khokhrakov, B. Lebedev, I. Trankviliski) understand architecture to be an unprincipled creation of forms which permits an architect to exercise his whims as much as he wants.

The epigoni of Western European constructivism see in materials and construction the only source of artistic expression of architecture. A typical example is the building of the Commissariat of Light Industry on Kirov Avenue (designed by Corbusier). In this building, a schematic use of form and a baring of construction and materials reduce the building to a queer heap of concrete, steel and glass.

Soviet architecture does not serve a narrow circle of "clients," but is for the millions of workers in both city and country. Not only does the appearance of our cities depend on the quality of architecture, but also on the growth of culture in our everyday life. That is why it is necessary to weed out very firmly from our architectural practice anything false, unprincipled, no matter how camouflaged.

The products of architecture, that is, buildings, can be remodelled only in very rare cases, and only at a great cost and expenditure of labor. Therefore, in architecture it is necessary to be particularly vigilant and exacting.

Translated from Pravda *by S. Schwartz*

V. Kirpotin

Simplicity, Art and the People

Pushkin lamented the fact that his poetry met with no response among the people and that the number of educated people of his time who knew him was exceedingly small. Nekrassov could only dream of the time when the people would "carry off Belinski and Gogol from the market place."

Present day writers are very much more fortunate than their great predecessors. The people, now that they have triumphed, follow the work of Soviet artists with affection, and make their demands to workers in literature and other forms of art. The fact that the people are looking to literature creates an obligation.

The working class has developed, it has led the peasantry into a socialist way of life. The people have changed, they have become more mature, and with the change in the foundations of the people's life literature must also change. What is of no use to the people cannot be of any esthetic importance. Those who lack the desire to sink their hearts and minds in the life of the people will be smitten with artistic impotency. Olesha and Babel have been unable to make their artistic work part of the new life of the people, and we have no cause to be gladdened by their latest books. The people are grateful to an artist for his former services, but the life of art cannot come to a standstill any more than the life of the people can come to a standstill. Those who are not willing to go the way everyone else is going must yield their place to others.

What it is that the people want? They want to see their true life imaged in art. Consciousness of social defects and of weakness, unwillingness to take part in the arduous task of refashioning the world, have conjured up in art phantoms of an unreal, non existent universe. Blok's drunkard, dissatisfied with his sordid surroundings, found his truth at the bottom of a wineglass, where strange eyes shone, blue and unfathomless, unlike anything on this earth.

The cold and arid Brusov declared earthly reality to be a vast desolation:

I fashioned in deep meditation
A world in which nature was fair,
Before which to a vast desolation
Plains, waters and mountains compare.

The workers and collective farmers, a regenerated socialist people, morally healthy men and women in full possession of their faculties, wish to see themselves in art, wish to see in art a world that belongs to them, a world that they themselves have created.

When Chernishevsky proclaimed that life was greater than art he did not mean to belittle art. As a representative of the lower orders of the people who were just awakening, he pointed out the illusory aim of idealist esthetics and in opposition to it brought forward life as the aim and object of art. The proletariat who for the first time in the history of the world have created an order giving freedom, security and enlightenment to all, and the collective farm peasantry, who, for the first time in the history of the world, have put an end to the idiocy of village life, people of the lower orders who have become complete and equal individuals, want art to find at length the words that are necessary to conceive in esthetic form the deeds and the doers of the new world. And after all, in this country in which the proletariat has triumphed, the life of people in factory and mill has not yet found expression in literature as, for example, the civil war has in *Chapayev* and collectivisation in *Soil Upturned*. And *Chapayev* and *Soil Upturned* themselves are by no means the highest possible achievements of Soviet art. The people do not want those who do not play the chief part in their life, wavering, ruminating intellectuals, to be the chief figures in their art.

There is revolutionary fervor among the people. With the most ardent enthusiasm, with passionate zeal, with the most profound conviction, they storm one stronghold after another. The people have no use for apathetic art, for works that are only the result of knowing how to ply the literary trade. They do not like the gloominess of Lidin, Lapin, Khatsrevin and others. They like Nikolai Ostrovski, who had the same attitude to his literary task as communists have to their work whatever it may be. As one of the vanguard of the proletariat, as a man of ideas with warm blood in his veins, he won the hearts of the millions in a way that is beyond the power of men for whom literature is but a trade.

The people have an aim in their struggle. Their aim is the people—a happy, communist life for the people.

The people, as the great Stalin teaches us, want literature to help them to root up the last remnants of the mentality of propertied individuals. The people want the survivals of the past to be exposed to public shame in contemporary literature, just as Gogol and Shchedrin held up for public derision the hog's snout of tsarist Russia. The people want literature to help them formulate morals and human relationships in the new communist world, to

give them examples to emulate, just as at one time literature gave the youth of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie the Byronic hero, and the youth of the revolutionary rank and file Rakhmetov. One cannot emulate what is ugly, deformed, purposely distorted and expressed in verbal trickery. One can only emulate what is natural, spontaneous and lucid, what is noble, heroic and simple.

Simplicity does not mean simplification or primitiveness, nor does it mean mere lifeless outline. The people seek virile simplicity fraught with meaning and containing within it all the fullness of life with its modulations and transitions, a simplicity which shows life in the process of revolutionary development. Artistic simplicity comes of mastering both the content in all its fullness and the art of form, as a means of expressing that content.

Simplicity is not easy. Pushkin evolved a simple manner for verse and prose by taking in the life with which he was surrounded with encyclopaedic thoroughness, by attaining the level of enlightenment of his time, and by studying and transcending past and contemporary literary schools. Simplicity is not easy. The works of Lenin and Stalin are simple because they are the summit of human thought and are addressed to the people. But the fact that simplicity is difficult cannot be taken as an excuse for repudiating simplicity. Artificiality, buffoonery, trying to be original, muddleheadedness are of course easy enough. Literary artifices invariably serve the purpose of concealing the fact that there is nothing there. But a literature that is worthy of its people, that is addressed to the millions, that is willing and able to reach the people with intelligent ideas, strong feelings and real depth of content—such a literature will be able to clothe itself in a simple, imaginative form.

Formalists despise content and preach an "involved form." They are only a hindrance to the artist who is striving to express the new life of his day in art. Formalism is anti-popular, anti-democratic. It is hostile to truth.

But naturalism is also incapable of expressing the meaning and richness of life. Naturalism is a slave to detail, to what is trivial, and misses the meaning of the whole. One variety of naturalism is what one may call the "folk style" which was laughed at by the great democrats and socialists of the sixties. Dobroliubov ridiculed writers who thought that they were not getting close to the people in their books unless they made their characters speak in a broad country dialect. Let us admit it straight away, such a "folk style" still finds its way into some of our literature.

Then does the striving for popular appeal and simplicity merely mean a return to the old realist literature and nothing more? Certainly not. The root causes of the revival and growth of literature lie in the very heart of the people's life. It is not the accumulation of self sufficient literary traditions or professional habits, but changes in the people's life that explain in the last resort the changes in subject matter, imagery and style of art.

Soviet literature, the literature of socialist realism is a new literature, both in content and ideas. New content and new ideas require for their expression a new form. The old realism arose in another social context, on a basis of another view of the world and it had another system of imagery.

Gorki introduced something new into the history of literature both as regards the subject matter of his works and the quality of his realism. His *My Childhood* and other books go to the very heart of social relationships and the morals of a society based on private property. That is why Gorki was able to express with such remarkable force his hatred of the falsehood of the old world and his hopes of a better future for mankind. Gorki creates indi-

vidual characters, relying on his understanding of the essential nature of society as a whole, and conceiving them with the revolutionary development of society as a background.

Socialism creates, for the first time in history, the conditions necessary for a harmonious synthesis of the social and the personal. Our concern is for the human being, the human being is our end and we have no intention of denying the value of his personal life. But for the Soviet citizen his social and political life are by no means a dull appendage to his personal life.

The citizen of a socialist state lives within a group, his destiny is decided by the destiny of his group. In the same way the success of the common cause depends on the public spirit and activity of each member of the group. We do not divorce the public from the private. What a man is in his social life depends to a greater or lesser extent on his personal behavior. One cannot imagine Furmanov, Fadeyev and Sholokhov presenting the characters of Chapayev, Levinson, Melekhov and the old man Shchukar by merely depicting their "private" life.

At the same time the proletarian, socialist group is not made up of standard units devoid of individuality. It is made up of personalities, characters. Without the knack of character drawing and the ability to show people's psychological make up, no work of art can be produced which will satisfy the popular demand. The extraordinary success of the film *Chapayev* from the artistic point of view was due to the skilful organic synthesis of the larger social processes with a delineation of individual characters. That is something new in the history of art and in the imaginative structure of art itself.

A new imaginative structure involves a change in the theme and in the other elements of artistic form. The new features of Soviet literature do not require that the plot shall be discarded as, for example, Ehrenburg supposes. We need the kind of plot which will combine a portrayal of the people's life with a portrayal of the individual life story of separate men and women.

The shortcomings and weaknesses of such books as *Hydrocentral* by Shaginyan and *The Rape of Europa* by Fedin are not due to the authors' fondness for plot, but to the mechanical combination of a broad social content with the authors' customary thematic structure which is only suitable for telling the life story of an individualistic hero.

Like all great things, what is new in art can be discovered by very many different artistic means. Set standards are dull and are fatal to art. Very different paths were followed by Demyan Bedny and Mayakovski in their search for simplicity and popular appeal. Very different are the ways in which Sholokhov, Fadeyev and Panferov present the social and individual before their readers and it is each in their own way that Leonov, Tolstoi and Fedin seek out new modes of expression.

We have only to bear in mind that with literature developing on new lines the reading masses will not fail to criticize its shortcomings, to judge the degree of perfection of the works they are offered and openly to condemn what is bad.

The people demand a new, socialist art.

The Party and the people do not call upon art to give a repetition of what has been done in the past. They set art new and great tasks which can only be performed through the manysided and varied efforts of artists. All that is new is difficult and the tasks with which Soviet art is faced are perfectly realizable, for the conditions necessary for their realization are presented by life itself.

I. Babel

Those Who Work for a New Culture

What has brought us together here, comrades, is a revolt of the readers, an uprising of the reading public.

The significance of this movement goes far beyond individual cases. One may or may not agree with the methods occasionally used by our critics to belabor some comrades, but I for one must say they deserve the punishment.

Here we have a revitalized people, 170 million strong, the great majority of which has become literate only during the past decade or two. Tens of millions of new readers have appeared who cannot very well begin with Proust and Joyce. It is easy to fall into error in trying to direct this momentous, unheard-of movement—a great historical responsibility rests upon editors and critics. I hold no brief for them. The tangle our critics are now engaged in unravelling is partly for their own doing, partly as sudden as some atmospheric disturbances. But this is of minor importance. What is important is that a people of 170 million is building a new culture, is creating a new society and this people tells us it has not enough books and that the few books it has are—poor ones. We cannot overestimate the importance of this nor the obligations this imposes upon us. That is why I think it behooves us to turn this meeting into a production conference.

We speak a great deal of talented people that mean well, know how to work and do so. Good intentions have been amply expressed at all our literary conferences but not only the way to hell—the way to our literature also is paved with good intentions. We have had no little recognition from the Soviet government too. It is a question now however whether the Soviet government will recognize all those that recognize it.

What must we do to improve our craftsmanship and how shall we do it? This is the question each one of us must put himself.

Let me take the instance of Comrade Babel—an instance I know best. I find it difficult here not to join the chorus of disapproval of Comrade Babel.

I am reproached with publishing too little. In my early youth I published a few short stories which were favorably received and then I went into retirement for seven years. Then I came out again—but it developed that I lost the taste for what I was doing and a perfectly lawful desire arose in me to do something different.

I cannot associate the feeling of dissatisfaction with my work which overcame me with the word "mistake." A mistake in literature is—the writer himself. Louis once said, "My kingdom, it is—I." So one has to adopt radical measures.

When I began to write I aimed to say things tersely and precisely—I thought I had found my own way of expressing thoughts and feeling. Later I cooled to this idea and was convinced that one should write smoothly, at length, with classical coolness and calmness. So I satisfied this craving, withdrew into seclusion and spoiled enough paper to satisfy a graphomaniac.

With all my failings there is one I think I should retain. It is that I believe one should censor one's own work previously not afterwards. So having written something I let it rest awhile and when I read afresh, I confess, I did not know myself: Dull, longwinded, lacking in force—in a word—uninteresting. Then, for the n'th time I decided to go out into the world—I covered thousands of miles, saw a multitude of people and their doings.. I thought something like this—events of world reaching importance are taking place, people

unlike any ever seen before are being born, extraordinary things are becoming everyday realities—mere facts are astounding enough nowadays.

And so I tried to relate these facts. I wrote—laid it aside—reread it and found it—uninteresting.

It was getting serious. The time had come for revision and decision. And I realized that my first efforts were for a sort of special objectivity, to substitute form and craft for that which then—was myself. My second inner conviction was that this land of Soviets will do talking for me, that what is happening in our days is so amazing that I really don't have to do anything—the facts will speak for themselves. One only has to relate them accurately and something astounding, something that would interest the whole world will result. But—it didn't. What I produced was not interesting. I finally realized that a book is—the world seen through man. In that scheme of mine man had disappeared—he had gone away from himself. It was necessary to come back to him. As a man of letters I could fall back upon nothing but my emotions, my ambitions and inclinations. Exceptional conscientiousness to oneself is essential under our conditions of high responsibility.

Thus I came to the conviction that in order to write well I must indulge my emotions, dreams, innermost cravings to their limit, give them full voice, say to myself with all my energy that I live, and, cleansing myself, must proceed full speed—only then will it become apparent whether I mean business or not, whether I will produce the goods. And then, comrades, for the first time in many years, I felt at ease in my work and enjoyed all its charm. Only by being myself and developing all the force of sincerity within my abilities and emotions could I withstand my own examination. Is my nature, my work, that which I wish to convey and to which I want to draw people—part and parcel of the structure of that Socialist culture for which I am a laborer? This is what the examination amounts to. Am I a representative of those new people of our land that view the scene passionately, thirst and demand the new, the tense, powerful word?

I answered these questions by determining to continue my labors more persistently, more lucidly than heretofore. In order not to land among those with "good intentions" I shall not elaborate on this. My work shall talk . . . I am determined that you shall not have long to wait for it.

There can be no good literature if a gathering of men of letters does not turn out to be one of strong, powerful, passionate and diverse natures. But united in one aim, in a passionate ardour for Socialist construction, they are bound to create a new Socialist culture.

Translated from the Russian by S. D. Kogan

Yuri Olesha

About Formalism

I have to admit that when I read the article on *Chaos Instead of Music,* which discusses Shostakovich, I was disconcerted. My first feeling was one of protest. I thought: It's not true. You can't say anything against Shostakovich; he is something exceptional in our art. That article gave my mind a nasty jolt. I had always been fond of Shostakovich's music. I had heard his symphony, his ballet suite *Bolt,* his pianoforte, and liked them.

I know Shostakovich personally, and he always gave me the impression of being an unusual person. A genuine artist, there is something about him that fascinates one. His is a personality that attracts one, whose attention one wishes to win.

When I care for an artist I joyfully pay homage to him, I joyfully succumb to the power of his personality. The relations which used to exist between the masters of the past have always seemed to me to be worth emulating. It is a great thing when an artist fully aware of his own worth does not consider it humiliating to recognize and even exaggerate the worth of another.

There is a passage in the letters of Michelangelo which I like. He writes to Benvenuto Cellini: "My great Benvenuto, I have seen a bust which is your work. It is marvelous, like everything you create. But it seems to me that you have not placed it properly. If it were correctly illuminated, it would appear even more marvelous."

The severe appraisal of one artist by another, coupled with the ability to admire one another was to be found among the great masters of the past: Gogol and Pushkin; Balzac and Stendhal; Belinski, running round with Nekrassov one night to the young Dostoyevsky, all masters of the renaissance.

When I admire an artist, I am always inclined to exaggerate his merits and forgive all his faults, as if I believed he could not be wrong.

That was exactly my attitude toward Shostakovich. Whenever I wrote anything new, Shostakovich's opinion of it always carried great weight with me, and when Shostakovich's new productions appeared I always praised them enthusiastically. Then I suddenly read that Shostakovich's opera is a cacophony of sound "instead of music." This statement was made by *Pravda*, i.e., the voice of the Communist Party. What about my attitude to Shostakovich now? If I am enthusiastic about him and *Pravda* says that his opera is mere cacophony, then either I am wrong or *Pravda* is wrong.

The article in *Pravda* deals with a question of principle. It is the opinion of the Communist Party; either I am wrong or the Party is wrong. The line of least resistance would have been to say to oneself: "I am not wrong" and mentally reject *Pravda's* opinion. In other words, by keeping to the conviction that in the case in question the Party had not spoken correctly, I would have granted the possibility that the Party was wrong.

What would have been the result? There would have been very serious psychological consequences.

The whole framework of our social life is very closely knit together, comrades. In the life and activity of our State, nothing moves and develops independently. All portions of the design are knit together, are interdependent and subordinated to a single line: consideration and untiring, passionate thought for the good of the people, thought as to how things may benefit them. This is the general line of the Party. If I am not in agreement with this line, in any particular context, the whole complex framework of the life about which I think and write falls to pieces for me personally. If I do not agree with the articles in *Pravda* about art then I must cease to care for a great deal in this life which seems to me fascinating. For example, the fact that a young worker brought about a revolution in the production of coal in a single night and became world-famous. Or that Litvinov goes to Geneva and makes speeches which influence the fate of Europe. Or that Soviet sharpshooters have a tournament with Americans and come out winners, or that Stalin's answers to Roy Howard are quoted with enthusiastic respect in the world press.

If I do not agree with the articles in *Pravda* about art, I have no right to

experience patriotic pleasure in apprehending these marvelous things, in apprehending the aroma of novelty, triumph, success which means so much to me and which show that the Soviet Union has its own distinctive life, that of a great power.

If I do not agree with the Party in a single point, the whole picture of life must be dimmed for me, because all parts, all details of this picture are bound together and arise one out of the other, therefore, there must not be a single false line anywhere.

That is why I agree and say that in this matter, the matter of art, the Party is as always right. And it is from this point of view that I begin to think of Shostakovich's music. I continue to enjoy it. But I begin to recollect that in certain places it always seemed to me somewhat . . . it is difficult to get the right word . . . somewhat contemptuous. Contemptuous of whom? Of me.

This young man is very gifted, very individualistic, very aloof. That point is clear to all. In his walk, in his way of smoking, in his raised shoulders. Someone has remarked that Shostakovich is a second Mozart. The general conception of Mozart has been somewhat distorted by his biographers, but the true Mozart, if we remember Pushkin's picture of him, was a radiant character.

Outwardly genius may show itself in two ways: in radiance of character such as Mozart's or in contemptuous aloofness, as in the case of Shostakovich. This contempt for the "mob" also gives rise to a number of peculiarities in Shostakovich's music—those obscurities and caprices which may be of use to him but only humiliate us.

Those are the caprices which are born of his contempt, and are described by *Pravda* as cacophony and affectation. Melody is the very best thing that an artist can extract from the world. I ask Shostakovich to give me melody and he breaks it up, for what purpose no one can say, and I feel humiliated. But on the other hand when clear and bewitching melody flows from those very fingers, then the young Shostakovich, sitting at the piano in his evening suit and with tousled hair, becomes an embodiment of that radiance which is so dear to men and for which men so love true artists.

Comrades, let us make no secret about it; we often write for one another. The praise of someone we consider a conoisseur is often dearer to us than that of our audience or our readers.

The roots of this attitude lie in the idea which still persists among us that the people do not understand anything and that taste is possessed by only a small group. The time when literary people and writers took responsibility upon themselves for the people's taste is also to blame for this belief. I have in mind the RAPP period.

During this period, we became aloof, we reacted to RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) by turning in upon ourselves and forming cliques. To our minds the people, the masses became burdensome to us, thanks to the RAPP deviations.

I am convinced that many errors on the part of musicians have arisen from their practice of writing for one another, or—as I shall later mention—according to what they see composers doing in the West.

Shostakovich appears to me to be an extremely fertile composer for whom artistic creation is easy. Lavish and copious in production, he would write exactly the sort of music the people need. And I realized that what *Pravda* attacked him for was this contemptuous attitude and aloofness.

In our country there is no such thing as artists' shattered reputations. Our country has a remarkable characteristic, our very own Soviet character-

istic, which is new and daring. When an artist pleases the people he is promoted to a very high position. When the young Babochkin, in the role of Chapayev, pleased the people he was given the title of People's Artist contrary to all rules and traditions.

And if any of those musicians who are now being taken to task—Shostakovich, Knipper, Shebalin—write an opera such as the people need they will also be promoted and awarded honors.

There is no individualistic life in this country; people see the truth here.

The whole point is that in our country the leaders are motivated by a single thought, the thought of the people. The interests of the people are dearer to our leaders than the interests of a polished over-refined art which sometimes seems pleasing to us but which in the last resort is but an echo of the decadence of art in the West.

Comrades, as I read the articles in *Pravda* (I make a sharp distinction between these articles and the bureaucratic distortions and clumsy efforts to say the right thing against which *Pravda* itself has to fight) somewhere at the back of my mind, among the associations that rose up, I heard the voice of one whose authority remains firm for me, especially in all matters relating to art. It seemed to me that Leo Tolstoi would have subscribed to those articles. I am not going to attempt to draw a parallel between the spirit of Tolstoi and the spirit of those builders of socialism who rule our land. They are two entirely opposite things. But his burning, passionate love for the people, his desire to put an end to their sufferings, his hatred for the rich, for social injustice, his contempt for so-called "authorities" and for all falsehood were traits which bring the great Russian writer close to the leaders of our great fatherland.

I remember a passage in "What Is Art," wherein Tolstoi levels a bitter, merciless, cutting criticism against the French poets of the time, Baudelaire, Verlaine and others. His chief criticism is that they lack clarity and thought and cannot be understood by the people.

After reading this essay I do not cease to like Baudelaire and Verlaine; but nevertheless I felt the immense truth of what Tolstoi says. Similarly after reading the *Pravda* articles I do not give up liking Shostakovich, but I feel the immense truth of these articles.

Art which is not for the people cannot be great art. I recall Mayakovski's intense desire to be approved by the people, his platform, his talks to factory audiences, his careful attention to the opinion of his readers. With his great intelligence and highly developed mind, Mayakovski (the source of whose art is to be found somewhere in French painting, in cubism) towered head and shoulders above his contemporaries. He realized that satisfying oneself verbally with mysterious, fantastic half-expressed emotions like Baudelaire's and Verlaine's meant nothing, that the greatest fame is that bestowed by the people.

The conviction that art which can be understood by the people must lack certain qualities—delicacy, refinement and completeness of form—is again refuted by the case of Tolstoi, himself. Having made up his mind to serve only the people with his art, towards the end of his life he produced works which in beauty of form surpassed his previous ones: *What Men Live By, Divine and Human, The False Coupon.* There are occasions when contemporaries do not understand artists owing to their complexity, but this failure to understand has nothing in common with the impatience felt when presented with formal artifices. Beethoven was not immediately understood. One music critic glancing over one of his scores said: "I don't see how that can be

performed." But that is an obscurity of a different sort, and formalists have no right to make claims on this account.

The *Pravda* articles were taken by many as a rejection of artistry, as an attack on artistry. But after all man cannot think except in images. All songs and sayings are in imagery and not formalistic. There is always thought and feeling behind these images.

One could go on giving examples for ever: Marx's, Engels', Lenin's, Stalin's metaphorical language. "Export of revolution is nonsense," said Stalin. That is metaphorical language.

The difference between artistry and formalism lies in the fact that formalism is created out of the void, and artistry develops when an idea is powerful but naked and requires clothing. When the idea has been well thought out, the words come running along of their own accord like children. There is a tremendous difference between verbal flourishes and metaphors. When the idea has been well thought out, all the necessary words, sufficient words, will come to mind.

There could be no better example of this fact than that which science gives us. Consider the way scientists express themselves. Scientists can be least of all suspected of wishing to express themselves in fine language. But when a scientist wishes to present any fact, metaphors come of their own accord. An engineer and not a poet invented the term "fatigue of metals," an anatomist and not an artist pointed out the similarity between the ear and a shell and gave the Adam's apple its name. This is not formalism but real artistry. These descriptions arose as a result of an accurate account of facts, as a result of the mastery of ideas.

In one of my stories there is a passage where I speak of a dog that runs into a dark corridor from a place that is brightly lit by sunlight. I wrote: the dog was enveloped by the protuberance. When I read this story to Mayakovski he asked: "What on earth is a protuberance?"

I began to explain, "It is a ring of flame that appears around the sun during an eclipse."

"Then you ought to have written," roared Mayakovski, "that the dog was enveloped in the ring of flame which scientists stupidly call the protuberance." (*Laughter, applause.*)

Mayakovski thus found me guilty of formalism, for after all how can one permit in a story a word that requires special explanation, especially one used incorrectly, because the protuberance is not a ring of flame at all, but a flaming whirlwind of gases, and the ring about which I was thinking is called the sun's corona. It would be still more stupid to say that the dog had been enveloped by the sun's corona!

That is an example of pure formalism. It is my opinion that many composers, writers, painters, and actors in working on their productions somewhere in their minds are on a level with the West. It sometimes seems to us that there is an international art independent of politics. When we speak of art, we sometimes forget that there are in the world two irreconcilable social systems, that the class war exists, that the difference between our country and Europe is immense, not only in the economic and political system but in spirit, in ideas—that is to say in the very things which art expresses. We forget that the artist of the West and the artist of this socialist land of ours expresses different ideas and that there is more essential difference between them than between economists and soldiers, because the artist not only defines what has taken place but also conjectures what will occur, foretells the future.

We Soviet artists in discriminating between cause and effect, are not only

giving a picture of our world but are recording the destiny of our world, which is quite different from that of Europe. At the same time, some of us think that there is a peaceful league of friendship between poets and artists, a fellowship of art, and that all artists in America and Europe are children of peace in the midst of wars, diplomacy, acts of state, political murders and so forth. We like to think that in art the world is indivisible, that empires may come and go but art remains. Again I repeat, it seems to us that artists have a workshop of their own apart from the world and that it is always the same. It sometimes appears to us that in the world all is vanity, and that we, the artists, know what is most important of all. And what is most important of all is that everything comes and goes, that men die and are born.

Heretofore we have always wanted to win approval in the West. The great conductor Toscanini performs Shostakovich's symphony. The young Soviet composer is happy to think that this great conductor of the West recognizes his talent. The fact that Stravinsky is recognized in the West, let us say, is of particular significance to us. People have had a strange respect for Chaliapin because he was Russian and became famous in Europe. When our books are translated in the West, this gratifies our vanity and we do not think about who reads us, how they read us and what is their attitude toward what they read.

Previously, we have regarded Western art as the foremost art of the time. A very important point is forgotten—that the great idea which gave birth to the great art of the West is already dead. The idea is there no longer. Even Spengler, an enemy, an ideologist of fascism, declares this to be true. He says there can be no more great Western music, that there is nothing left for composers but to amuse themselves with bizarre combinations of sound. And our composers in keeping abreast of the West think that these combinations of sound represent the world's most advanced art, and introduce them into their works. That is to say they create what is described by *Pravda* as cacophony and mere effects. Hitherto, it has been a matter of importance to our painters how Picasso draws, to our architects how Corbusier builds, to our authors how Joyce writes. Meanwhile, people have arisen in the West who are turning away from Western art. These people are looking to us.

The highly sensitive, intelligent, inspired Malraux roams around the world and each time returns to us. He is more refined than all our formalists, he has more delicate discernment, he has seen more and knows more, yet in his innermost mind, the mind of a real artist, he sees that the idea of the West is dead and he knows that what is new is to be found here. Such a man as he, who regards such a great artist, such a king among artists in his own way as Picasso as already dead, will hardly find imitators, and eclectics like our formalists interesting.

When you read Western writers, you are suddenly confronted with the following fact: the thought with which these writers are chiefly concerned is that of death. It is beginning to appear that mankind never feared death as much as it does today. Perhaps in the middle ages—but in the middle ages people believed in God, in the after-life, and then the thought of death and fear of death took on more impressive, more musical forms. Nowadays, the artist of the West does not believe in God, and the thought of death, of all living things being doomed, leads him to deny that life has any meaning at all. There are artists who yearn for the beauty and the values which have been lost to the world—Hemingway, for instance—and there are other artists —like Joyce—who with impelling force destroy the very possibility of the existence of beauty. Joyce in his analysis, in his long-drawn-out, undialec-

tical und unconstructive analysis reduces everything to physiology, to the bodily functions, to bad smells, etc.—that is to say to everything we call crude naturalism.

We know that the fear of death arises because the old society is dying. Bourgeois Europe, not all the artists of the West know about it. And it seems to them that the death theme is the only theme for contemporary mankind.

Now some of us turn our eyes to this death-fearing West. . . . The artists of the West have no creative idea. They play about with form. Instead of Beethoven's mighty conversations with God, with destiny and with death, there is nothing left but bizarre combinations, disintegration of a fabric, interest in what is strange, occult, mad.

Some of us transfer this to our soil, and naturally the people whose essence in our day is growth and youth do not understand what it is all about, what it is for, and where it comes from.

Comrades, it has been said that there is a certain lack of clarity in *Pravda's* formulations as to what is formalism and what is naturalism. For me the article talks about ideas, about the idea of the West and our idea, a different approach to the world and reality, to questions of life and death.

In order to explain these terms, I shall again turn to Joyce. He is a writer of whom people have a very high opinion in the West. And it is quite true he writes very well, he writes with genius if you like. I know passages of his work. I have often asked people who know his work well about him, and have asked them to quote from him. The example of Joyce makes it possible to raise the question as to what, after all, is an artist. Comrades, an artist is first and foremost a constructive and not a destructive person; an artist creates a world, his own delightful world. The artist should say to men, "Yes, yes, yes," but Joyce says: "No, no, no," "All is bad upon earth"—says Joyce. Consequently all his genius is of no use to me. Consequently, although Gorki interests me less than Joyce as far as form is concerned, I know nevertheless, that Gorki who has all his life spoken about man in search of truth, who has been building the scintillating sphere of his own world and saying to man: "Yes, yes, man! there is a proud ring about that"—is for me a great writer while what Joyce is and what he is driving at I cannot say.

In order to understand what is formalism and what is naturalism, and why they are hostile to us, I will give an example from Joyce. He has written, "Cheese is the corpse of milk." You see, comrades, how terrible that is. The writer of the West has seen death in milk. He has said that milk may be dead. . . . Milk. "Cheese is the corpse of milk." Was that well said? It was well said; it was absolutely true. But we do not want that kind of truth. We want neither naturalism nor formal conceits; we want artistic, dialectical truth. And from the point of view of that truth, milk can never be a corpse. It flows from the mother's breast into the child's mouth, and it can therefore never die.

Translated from the Russian by N. Goold-Verschoyle

Ivan Katayev

The Art of the Socialist People

Near Moscow in a rest home at Golitsino there is at present living the Oirot poet Pavel Kuchiyak. Pavel is his baptismal name. At birth he was called Itkulak, which means Dogs-ears.

His two elder brothers had died in babyhood. They had been stolen by evil spirits. And so the parents decided to deceive the spirits by masquerading the third child as a dog so that the spirits should not take him away. They devised this name for him, Itkulak, and stuck tufts of dog's skin in the lobes of his ears. Putting him to sleep in a little pit dug out in the earth near the hearth—which took the place of a cradle for the children of the Altai—they swaddled the infant in a dog's skin.

The spirits were tricked, young Kuchiyak survived.

Kuchiyak's father was a *kan* and a *shaman,* that is to say, a conjuror and an artist; religion in the Altai more successfully than anywhere else feigned to be an art. This was a talented and half-mad man who, it seems, was actually a seeker for truth, now in shamanism, now in orthodox Christianity, now in Burkhanism. In the end he saw a vision of three Burkhanist horsemen on white horses, he went after them into the hills and there after a month his body, torn to bits by beasts and birds, was found.

And his son, Kuchiyak the younger, Itkulak Pavel, graduated from the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow. He is now thirty-eight years of age.

It happened that I and some comrades last summer made a journey of three thousand kilometers on horseback in the Altai with him, and it seems to me that I got to know him and understand him.

This is a man of exceptional giftedness—without any discount for poverty, backwardness and so on. In his Oirotia he embodies in himself practically all the arts. He is there the only member of the Union of Soviet Writers, a poet, a prose-writer, dramatist, critic, preceptor of young poets, folklorist, theatrical producer, he is an actor, musician, mastering all the national instruments and a singer who carries in his amazing memory all the songs and all the melodies of his native land.

But before all and above all, Kuchiyak is a national rhapsodist-story-teller, and at the same time a poet who publishes his verses in printed form.

While we journeyed he related to us story after story, at the campfire at night, on foot and in the saddle; he sang *bilina* after *bilina.*[1] And we soon understood that Kuchiyak bears in himself a tremendous and precious load of the poetic wealth of his ancient nationality. And this wealth is not petrified in him, but lives, flourishes and constantly grows.

The people know him.

We watched: wherever Kuchiyak appeared, in the most outlying boundary post, in the most far-distant and solitary aul, everywhere faces turned to him, and on the faces at once appeared smiles, people bowed to him and offered the pipe and the cup of *chegen.*[2] And with his first word, all around at once became lively, merriment broke out, a spiritual uplift and a special tensity of expectation.

And Kuchiyak knows his country. He has journeyed through its valleys and across its passes as a hunter and fisher, as a journalist, as a traveling-*Yurta*[3] agitator, as a worker of the *aimash* (district) Party committee, because he is not only a poet and actor, but also a simple citizen and builder of his country. What has he not done in Oirotia! Once—true, not for long—he had even to be the women's organizer of the district, and among the local population he was called *ai-baba,* that is, the District Woman.

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[1] A folk story in verse.

[2] Sour milk.

[3] Hut used for library and other cultural purposes.

Let me take one of his tales. It has just been written down. Kuchiyak heard it from his mother's father, over a quarter of a century ago and has preserved it in his powerful memory. Certainly there is much in it also of the contemporary Kuchiyak, the Oirot literary man of the 1930's. We are present, as it were, at the secret birth of a new civilization: under our eyes national oral literature becomes printed literature.

I will speak later about the conventionality of means of expression in popular creative work, and of what the city writer is to do who wishes to draw from these sources. Here I wish only to point out that the outer conventionality of the Altaian national epos, just like that of all other peoples, is infinitely far from the polished and infertile complexity of city bourgeois literature in the period of its final degeneracy.

There, with the people, fantasy, but here manneredness. There, childishly happy play of the imagination, here senile, tired, inarticulate mumbling. There, through all the patterns there always gleams the clear, realistic, prophetic, popular mind, here there is before us an impotent consciousness which is guttering out. In a word, the one phenomenon is distinguished from the other as dawn, although it may sometimes be misty, from the last rays of evening.

I have told of Pavel Kuchiyak in order to approach the question of the vital task of the Russian Soviet writer. Is it possible for the Soviet writer whose attitude to his calling is serious, not to include in his creative consciousness the picture of one of the small peoples in the family of the Union, a people emerging from obscurity upon the highway of history, and creating its own and our general culture.

Without this conception it seems to me it is impossible to think, to understand, to write. But it cannot be achieved on the side, at secondhand, it is good skimming newspapers and books, all the more as this sort of book is in the main bad. It is necessary that such a picture should get into the blood of the artist, circulate with it in his veins and take part in the work of the imagination. For this it is necessary to find it and to apprehend it only on one's own . . .

To get to know even one of the small peoples and make friends with it... But is it really possible to get along without knowledge of one of the *great* nationalities, without another, if it be but one, of the Union constellation besides that to which you yourself belong . . .

I will speak of myself. If I had not in the past two years got to know—so far, admittedly, very hurriedly and incompletely—one of the great Transcaucasian cultures—the tremendous, ancient and eternally vital Armenian culture—I could count myself spiritually a very poor person. Only thus did I understand and feel as it is necessary to feel, *what our Union is,* what a grandiose and complicated mass it is not only geographically, but historically. This occurred when I looked upon it from Ararat, immersed at once in the past of Armenia and in its present brilliant and noisy day.

You have to see for yourself the Ararat lowlands, so like all the glorious ancestral plains of Asia, look upon this splendid legendary mountain, and know that there beyond it, at a distance of some three hundred kilometers, begins the great Dvureche, the cradle of European civilization—you must yourself see the cuneiform inscriptions of the Urartian kings, on the sunlit incandescent stones of the banks of Lake Sevan, in order once more to glance towards the north and, mentally jumping to feel the grandeur of the Soviet Union.

Never will I forget one evening—my first evening in Erivan. With some

comrades I went to the Armenian opera. *Faust* was played in a very tidy and careful production.

In the scene of the Auerbach inn there passed before us choristers made up as German blondes—all was assiduously German—curls, hoopskirts and pale tortured Faust himself. But at times the immodest beam of a spotlight would catch the women's faces, and then suddenly there would glitter flaming black and indubitably Armenian eyes such as no greasepaint will hide, and right away the spirit became merry and sweet. And in the entr'act, as is the custom there, we went out into the street, and I once more saw the straight vista of the Abovyan Prospect capital and above it Ararat, ashen-pale, cutting into the evening sky—it seemed to be closer and to be arising out of the very city. There at once arose the shade of Gounod and in front of us walked old Goethe himself. And thoughts of him fused themselves with the sensation of the present and neighboring places of this cradle of "Faustian humanity," and then for the first time I reflected: why, this is our Union!

Such experiences and all the others that arrived gradually in a new country, in the given case the Armenian state, labor, art, and chiefly, certainly, people—with the special and unique features of national characteristics—all this later, when it sinks into the memory and settles down, gives a completely new view of our modern world *in all its volume,* as if I had looked upon it (only do not misunderstand me) from a neighboring planet—I would say, a stereoscopic view, making everything stand out in greater relief and immeasurably enrichened.

And once more, as in the case of Kuchiyak, very much is to be gained from an acquaintance with a master of the culture of the brother-people which is opening out before you. So was it with me in Armenia in the case of Agish Charents and his *Land of Naira.* This is a sharp, mournful and manly mind, of which there are few in literary Moscow, and he is a splendid conductor to the past and through it also to the present of the Armenian people.

What is to be done with this tremendous spiritual acquisition which one brings with one from a distant country of the Union? Certainly not to write fussy newspaper sketches as we all have had to do. In any case, to write not only sketches, even good ones.

My thought leads to the following: all the wealth of new ideas, sensations, facts drawn from the culture of a brother nationality should serve the writer as a constant nutritive source of thought and creation; and this wealth must continually be developed, verified, deepened in continual companionship and cooperation with this culture. Without this we will not build up a *folk literature* such as is equitably being placed in opposition to formalism and which before everything must be understood as a literature of the *peoples.*

There are passing majestic years, I would call them the years of the first acquaintance of peoples which formerly fell in love without seeing each other and asserted this love in mutual struggle. You know what splendid series of events I have in view. And so they meet—Oirot and Armenian, and sometimes the honor falls to us to introduce them to each other—White Russian meets Kalmik, Lopar and Moldavian. And not merely at congresses—for the artist perhaps that is not the main thing—but at the factory conveyor, in the reception room of the trust, at a health resort and finally in the family: as man and wife. . .

And these years are passing. Other years are approaching—other, still

better, more grandiose, and the artist will grudge to lose sight of that which he saw when he was even two years younger.

I have in view roughly that which Romain Rolland called the union of the souls of the people—an idea which is unfolded in *Jean Christophe*. But there stand side by side Frenchman and German, and we know that terrible forces have dragged them apart from each other—the wall between them becomes ever darker, ever more blank. But in our country there are united not only the souls of the peoples—they have united their hands in common labor, all their ideas, anxieties and festivals. Why do the poets keep silent about this? Or are they engaged with the private state of their soul? But after all, that of which I speak is also an important element in the state of the soul—for those for whom it is necessary.

The first characteristic of a great folk art, which we do not yet have, must be its many-peopledness, all-Unionness—in its very soul, in the general tendency of idea, and partly in content too.

II

But we are Russian literary men, we live and toil in the Russian Socialist Republic. And this, it seems to me, we also must not forget for one minute. True, even here when we think of our fatherland, our fatherland in the narrowest sense of the word, of this northern plain of forest and field, we must not lose sight of how greatly it has changed its aspect in this respect too.

There was the Kazan district, and there was the Vyatka district. The former Russian intellectual could not conceive that there might be anything Russian: Kazan and Vyatka, and what was there in common between them . . .

Not so long ago I was in these districts, and I saw there the country of the Mari people—they were formerly called the Cheremis, and, in the eyes of the all-Russian philistine, they were in no sense a people. And I got to know this nationality hidden in the forests, a life-abounding, fervent nationality (they are cousins of the Hungarians in blood and speech), historically a leader and participant of all the peasant revolts on the Volga, now a people full of cultural conceptions.

One has only to see the Mari dance—there is in it so much militant energy, fire, and manly daring that it might rival any Caucasian dance. You watch and you think: this people will yet give witness of itself.

And thus all the peoples that live in the RSFSR on the middle reaches of the Volga, the general spectacle of them, bringing as it were the gifts of their cultures to the main channel of the glorious Russian river—this is also a serious and moving thing, and the image of these peoples again and again breaks down the old conception: Russia.

But there is a Russian republic, and there is the great Russian people with its heroic revolutionary past, the people which first led the other peoples of the tottering empire to the storm of the old world.

Russian art exists, it lives in its national form, and before it, in friendship and cooperation with the creation of all other peoples, stands an unheard-of development. These simple things have to be said, because not so long ago in the world of literature there could be found people who would have denounced such an observation as a manifestation of Slavophilism, *narodnichestvo*[1] and

[1] *Narodnichestvo*—The system of views of the Narodniki, who were Russian revolutionaries of the 19th century. They advocated a "purely Russian socialism" based on the specificities of Russian peasant life, particularly the peasant commune.

Russopyatstvo [1] or who would have let fly still stronger words. By the way, these people hated not only Russian art. Their system of views, if it can be called such, was somewhat wider.

In October 1932 at one of the plenary meetings of the organizational committee of the Union of Soviet Writers I had to mention these people in my speech under a somewhat different aspect, in connection with their propaganda of non-principled technicism and narrow practicality. I then said in part:

"These narrowly practical moods are accompanied by an aversion to the Bolshevik underground activity before the Revolution, the Civil War, all that bears upon it in any degree from the past of our country in its geographical boundaries. These tendencies live a pulverized life in different separate elements, but they exist, it is not difficult to come across them, and socialist art will yet have to cross swords with them."

Yes, I have known some clever young men who agreed to take notice of the socialist revolution only from the day of the appearance in the USSR of foreign engineers. All that had gone before was for them too Russian, too Asiatic—it repelled them and they turned up their noses.

And of course it goes without saying that these "Westerners" and "civilizers" had no patience with Russian art. "Cheap prints for peasants!" they said. "Mitroshka with the balalaika, *laptem shi khlebali*![2] . . . now in Europe! . . . Now in America! . . ."

And neither Europe nor America, of course, had they ever seen with their own eyes, and their conceptions of these countries were in the main derived from the windows of Torgsin.[3]

I make the premise that the Soviet artist, along with other important qualities, must cultivate in himself—of course with sense and reasonableness—a warm and active love, a filial attachment to his own native national culture. And that includes the Russian—Russian culture in its best, most progressive and durable manifestations. This will not only not hinder but *will help* him really and deeply to understand, appraise and apprehend the creative work of other peoples.

Both here in Moscow and in the brother republics there are still possible outbursts, and sometimes more—the hidden vegetation of lowbrow, bourgeois nationalism in the sphere of culture—it is clear what resistance must be offered by us to rubbishy ideas and moods of this sort.

But he who is indifferent to the deep artistic life of the wide masses of his own people, to its mastery, to its ancient dreams and hopes which found their outlet and refuge in art, to its costume if that be beautiful and expedient, to the tenor and aspect of its life in which there are always sweet, needful and good features, he who does not see and does not know all this *cannot be a genuine internationalist in cultural matters*. He will come to the International with empty hands and a cold heart, will create nothing himself and will only confuse and hinder others.

It seems to me that many of the evils in our Soviet art, including those about which we are arguing at present—formalism, cacophony, paucity

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[1] *Russopyatstvo*—an idealization of all the specificities of old Russian life, including the worst and least civilized—simply because they were Russian.

[2] To sup cabbage soup with bast shoes—a Russian saying which sums up the worst features of the old peasant life and indicates its "idiocy" (for bast shoes would let even the thickest cabbage soup trickle through on to the lap of any muzhik foolish enough to try such a way of dining).

[3] A Soviet organization (recently dissolved) for trade with foreigners living in the USSR.

of ideas and feelings, empty soundingness, the absence of great conceptions, of severe composition and so on—in a certain degree—I do not say fully—arise out of the reason mentioned.

Not a few people have developed among us, who, having a pretty hopeless and at times altogether rubbishy social root (and this of course is the main thing) have no national root at all—I mean of course only in the cultural sense.

This is a strange, boring and futile sort of people. They have never had connections with a single people, they do not know a single language properly, they do not know—and this is a reliable sign—a single song except stupid drawingroom ballads and gramophone melodies.

What then can they possibly create?

No, comrades, we have had enough of this sort of thing. We must as quickly as possible clear out of all the arts such hopeless "cosmopolitans", renegades, this faded bohemia. And we Soviet, Russian literary men must once more and in a new way fall in love with the Russian language, Russian nature, Russian songs, and all the fine and original things that there are in our people—and that is not a little.

Moreover, I think that each of us needs to find in his native land some special home, some sort of lifelong attachment, find one such serious and spiritually kin phenomenon in life—and with it to maintain a vital connection, never lose sight of it. For me, this is Palekh.

For me personally, Palekh is important not so much by reason of its production, even those of the first dozen of the senior masters, although in my opinion this is the best that we have at present in Soviet graphic art—what for me is important is how Palekh, this extraordinary cultural phenomenon, all of it, with its past and its tremendous possibilities greatly exceeding present achievements, is situated, how it stands among a sea of collective farms in the old Vladimir-Shuiski lands, in a ring of the Ivanovo factories. This extraordinary outburst of art—not only graphic art—which has shaken an ancient village and the neighboring villages and altered their fate and aspect, is amazing. Amazing too is the spectacle of hundreds of village people drawn into not artistic industry, but real art, to our calling, comrades.

And there, perhaps only there, will you find the atmosphere of manly comradeship and cooperation in art, of a tremendous, tensely working collective of artists which has not only preserved its connections with the people, with its collective farm parents and children, but is itself an indivisible part of the collective farm family—and how important all that is!

It is a pleasure to breathe this atmosphere, to enter into it and break away, if even for a week, from literary Moscow. Palekh calms you, impregnates you with thoughts and takes away the grime from your soul.

All of them there are sharp-witted, have fine clear minds, genuine characters—they are not muzhiks in bast shoes, as some people imagine they are, but men strong in body and soul, experienced, thoughtful masters!

And what songs they sing there....

How after this can you fail to consider Palekh as a home of the Soviet artist, how fail to aspire towards it, to yearn for it!

I have already noted at the beginning the question: what is the professional city writer to do with the treasures of mass folk art? Whence is he to draw, what precisely is he to choose?

After all, this is a mass art, as I have already pointed out, almost always decorative, ornamental, often coded in the terms of ancient traditions, full

of unclear rudiments—it is in the main *multi-conventional* in its methods of expression, whether this be a drawing, a sculpture, a *bilina,* or still more, if it is embroidery or painting on wood or clay. But we know that in the objects of genuine folk art there always burns realistic significance, and often the most conventional form unfolds this significance in the most perfect and decisive manner—it is necessary only to be able to see and understand.

So what is the professional to interest himself in, the exterior, the envelope or the significance? Such is the question put by some people, and although this question is certainly absurd in its very foundation, none the less it does in a way bring us to the problem.

We all remember the dead and stuffy period of pseudofolk stylization in the art of the Russian capitalist city—it still makes itself felt at times. I have in mind all the varieties of pseudo-Slav motifs, The stylizers took only the exterior things from folk art, and very often not the first class things of this order, gave themselves up to the attractions of the mysterious conventionality which I have mentioned, and departed into darkness and inarticulateness.

Let us hope that this period will not repeat itself among us—and indeed there would seem to be no great danger of this.

But there is another side of the question. Quite recently I was discussing this theme with a certain critic, and he said roughly the following: "We must take only the content from the productions of folk art, but the form is in the most part primitive and is of no use to a great artist."

It would follow, comrades, if you were to believe this critic, that folk art is something like a nut: you swallow the kernel, but throw away the primitive shell.

I will not demonstrate at present that the form of the production of folk art is by no means primitive, but complicated and of a high level. And indeed it is not understandable how in primitive forms there can live a content, the reality, wisdom, importance and significance of which this critic recognizes.

For me one thing is perfectly clear: a thoughtful artist, severe in his demands upon himself, cannot with such analytical fastidiousness, approach the phenomena of folk art. Yes, and is it really possible to separate form and content, tear them to shreds and weigh them separately on the scales of professorial dogmatism? For, after all, they are always an esthetic whole, in them there is the living nature of the master, in them there is nature and the epoch, expressed in each curve of the production.

The creative art of the people is a free and unceasing stream, and the Soviet artist needs to dive into it boldly, without fearing momentarily to get beyond his depth or catch an ideological chill. At present this is important as never it was, there is no need of warning signs and boundaries, because this path is the straightest and most correct. Let the artist remember, let him experience in all his soul the significance and the harmony and the color and the flourishes of the ornament. If in his head there is a general poetic idea—the selection and arrangement will come in good time, they cannot fail to come.

III

There stands before us the most serious revaluation of criteria in art, a tremendous alteration of scales, a verification of reputations by deeds, and of authorities by life. The great wave of mass folk creation in all its

manifestations, both previously known and completely new, which is passing just now throughout the country, is but the first breaker. How all this will unfold and develop tomorrow, what will happen in five or ten years is difficult at present to envisage, although the direction of development may be guessed before hand.

We must prepare ourselves for these changes. We know that professional art will continue to exist for a long time yet, and the art of the masses will move, grow and perfect itself alongside the former. But the joyful advance of the peoples will with each year make itself more and more felt, and certainly not only in the sphere of the graphic arts.

So what? Not to move backwards in front of these noisy columns, and not to stand still, pretending that nothing has happened.

Is it not clear that we must move forward to greet them, help them and in greater degree imitate them, reviewing the essence and the form of our work so that later when the battalions of the professionals finally dissolve and intermix with the innumerable armies of the masters and past-masters of the people, our ranks should not seem excessively thin. Without disputing priority and future rights, professional art and mass art must gradually tend to each other.

I have only half succeeded in unfolding my understanding of these important words: *folk art.* Is it necessary to explain that I continually understand by these words not only art addressed to the people, directed to it and accessible to it, but beyond that—and this in my opinion is more important—art arising from the people and expressing it, and also created by itself without the participation of professional intermediaries; in the latter case I have frequently added the term: *mass.*

And certainly the conception of folk art as it now develops before us is much wider, more complicated and more flexible than I have been able to show in my efforts to review it so far only from three sides. Yes, this art must be both many-peopled, international in spirit and national in form and mass by the number of its creators. But there is still a fourth boundary to the problem, and perhaps the most important.

We remember that in pre-revolutionary literature the word *people* was frequently a synonym for *peasantry.* Nowadays we understand it differently, much more widely. Does this mean that from the formula *folk art* there disappears this peasant hue?

The specific hue certainly vanishes. But of course our collective farm peasantry in an immeasurably greater degree than before will be and is already becoming both the subject and the object and the direct creator of this art. It is master of the greater resources of folk lore; in the villages and hamlets there are scattered the most considerable collectives of folk artists and masters of the various crafts which ornament life; thence comes one of the mighty streams of artistic amateur activity. In the nearest historical perspective the collective farm peasantry is numerically the most grandiose human mass, incessantly sending the companies of its representatives into culture and art.

Who knows, perhaps this numerical majority in these spheres of people of agricultural labor carried out in the environment of living nature—which always favors the development of artistic activity—perhaps this circumstance for some period will give to socialist art a special tint and tendency. Let us not guess. It is more important for us to establish that folk art is and will be in considerable degree *also the art of the collective farm village.*

But after all, in a much greater degree it is and will remain the art of the socialist city, of the factory, of the working class.

I have no opportunity at all to dwell at present on the question of working class folklore and the artistic activity of the proletariat of the factories, mines and quarries. The splendid accumulations of this kind of art are almost not utilized by our authors. It is necessary that the genuine *voice of the workers* should ring out in a multiplicity of our books and songs—both in the literal and in the widest and most important sense. That we should begin to speak of the most important man of our times—the simple, the small man, who has become the greatest of the great, who walks in step with the rank and file, of the unnoticed man who is marked by all, and of him who is marked by the artist alone.

And that all this should be genuine; learned and not guessed, found and not devised, that it should arise from the heart of the writer, and that it should enter the heart straightly and roughly from unspoiled, wise and honorable laboring men.

And here we certainly will not establish any norms or proportions: so much to express in art the soul of the proletariat, so much for the collective farm peasantry. There is no point in this.

Only let our art, our literature, become *democratic,* in spirit, in tune, ideals, sympathies, links, in idea, design, syntax, lexicon, in every movement of thought and feeling. And then we may be at ease; in it the miner and the train conductor and the cook will find their expression.

Let our art become *socialist in content,* that is, let it engage itself with the creation in poetic images of the reality of the new recreated society, with its labors, ideas and dreams, and not backward and arbitrary guesses about it, still less small-scale emotions and miserable ideas inherited from the epoch of bourgeois decay. But in order to do this, it must become the art of the *great socialist democracy.*

And that is the fourth, the most necessary facet of Soviet folk art as I understand it.

IV

There is not and ought not to be at present any more important and general scale than this which imperiously separates in two all the present personnel of our art.

For long now in reading a book or seeing a play or film I have striven first of all to decide: does there breathe in this production the live will, the passion and the dreams of our democracy? Has it arisen straight from the sea of reality, so that there is still upon it the foam and the salt of the waves that brought it hither? Was it dictated directly by the course of history and the desires of the masses, and not by the superficial and temporary conceptions of the author? Do we see in it the sorrow and the mirth of the laboring man of our days, and not necessarily the rank and file—let it be the commander, the scientist, and the leader—because in our democracy there is no upper and lower, no surface and lining, it is united, and all that is important is that the artist should see man whole in volume and in time, and not merely in the cross-section of current affairs and campaigns. In a word, is there in the given production a live and always realistic, incorruptible and critical Bolshevist spirit? . . .

If there is all this, or even a good portion—all, all can be forgiven the production and its author. Both insufficient stylistic weight and unpolished phrasing—when, of course, these do not hide the truth and the significance. And its insufficient armor of philosophical and esthetic culture. . . .

And the first sign, the concentrated expression of all the enumerated great and good qualities is for me always the emanation of *strength* coming from the given production—strength in the direct sense—that very *kraft* with the name of which Romain Rolland entitled his best-loved hero. I try to find whether the given thing has been created by strength of spirit, by manly attack, by concentrated tensity, by that which in its highest expression and quality Rolland heard in the storm of Beethoven's will, and which is often present in the world not in such masses, not so greatly and fully—in portions, in different degrees?

If it is so, then it is a victory—although the perfection be yet uneven. If only there is strength, if there is powder in the horn, then perfection does not matter!

And in our days I prefer this strength to elegance, inasmuch as they unfortunately still frequently are not in harmony, and one has to choose between them. So much the more do I prefer it to anemic refinement, imported stylistic chic, or the sportive play of the journalistic mind.

In literature they are still not numerous—men of spiritual strength and courage, workers of the healthy, realistic folk art, bound by blood to the interest of Soviet democracy, and young artists, defenders of this direction.

The future historian will note in his annals that suggestive alteration in the affairs of art, the beginning of which took place in the spring of 1936. Approximately from this moment—the historian will write—in Soviet art there began a most serious reestimation of values.

V

I wish to name a few writers, a few productions, which in my view from different aspects and in completely different degrees approach somewhat to the aim I have marked. This is not a list, but simply a number of names taken as examples in order to make my thoughts clear. And I say frankly: this is *my* selection, this is that direction in prose which I consider the most necessary. Because I consider that we, apart from, so to speak, our general ownerly interestedness in the growth of all Soviet literature, including all writers in the least useful and gifted, may, yes, and must, have each of us his own line of selection, his own feeling of artistic nearness to *only a few*.

I pass on to authors and books.

I will read this page which you all know—it is known also to millions of people—and will read two paragraphs in order to recall it to you:

"Grigori half turned to the company:

"'Sabres out! Charge! After me, boys!' Lightly grasping his sabre, he was the first to cry: 'Hurraaaah!' and, experiencing a familiar, shivering lightness in his whole body, he let his horse go; the reins, firmly grasped in his left hand, trembled, the blade lifted above his head whistlingly cut the current of the onrushing breeze.

"A huge white cloud that the spring wind had rolled up covered the sun for a minute and, overtaking Grigori, cast a seemingly slow-moving grey shade upon the hillock. Grigori shifted his glance from the nearing houses of Klimovka to this shadow which was slipping over the still moist soil of the hillock, to the brightly golden, joyful strip of light which was flying away somewhere ahead. Suddenly he had an inexplicable and unreasoning desire to overtake the light that was running over the earth. Spurring on his horse, Grigori let it go at full speed and began to come close to the uncertain boundary separating light from shade. A few seconds of desperate riding and then the outstretched head of the horse was scattered with the seed of flaming beams; its reddish hair suddenly flared out with a fierce, shooting brilliance. At the moment when Gregori leaped over the imperceptible margin of the cloudy shade shots slowly rang out from the lane."

Comrades, that is splendidly written—that, and the whole succeeding scene when Grigori, having hewed down four Red Army men near the gun carriage,

throws himself on the earth as if exhausted and shouts: "Who've I hacked down?"

This passage of Sholokhov's, like many others, is splendid, strong and new, particularly and specially because a simple man of the people, a peasant, a Cossack, feels and acts in a very complicated way with all the fullness of the complexity of life.

We may make comparisons: this is a complexity of the same order of experience as, let us say, that of Prince Andrei on the field of Austerlitz when he sees the sky, that of the St. Petersburg student Raskolnikov, that of Lieutenant Glan. I am not comparing here mastery, not the strength of the authors' intellects, which is not the point—and certainly in these examples they are all different. What I wish to point out is that Sholokhov's characters (not all) are written on the principle of complexity. Many other Soviet writers have not been able and are at present unable to depict people of the laboring classes with such volume, with such a live mixture of feelings, with momentary sensations, with unusual motives, as did the masters of the nineteenth century with people of their classes. Our writers in the main are not able to do this because they do not know the people of their classes or do not understand them.

Sholokhov knows and understands. More than that: he loves his environment as well.

And I will add: the motives of human actions in Sholokhov are complicated, but they are seen truly and clearly, they correspond to circumstances, to the setting of the story; the reader has not to guess why Grigori raced after the shadow of the cloud, why he flung himself on the ground, he knows why. Sholokhov is a realist. But take Vsevolod Ivanov in the *Secret of Secrets*: a man suddenly sits down in a puddle. Why does he sit down? Nobody knows. He just sits down. Roughly in the same way do his people act in *Fakir* and in *The Twenty Young Fellows*.

But after all, I have taken only one page of *And Quiet Flows the Don*. All that I have said is but a thousandth part of what might be and needs to be said of Sholokhov. Yes, his books are read by millions, but why are they not publicly considered and criticized as they should be? To the good luck of all of us, and of history, there has suddenly, as it were, burst into flame and become illuminated a large area of the life of the people in the years of the first round of wars and revolutions. This is a tremendous capital of facts; further, it is built into an artistic system, from it may be drawn many new ideas, historical, philosophical, esthetic conceptions. This has not been done. Our criticism is not able to draw such productions into the currency of Party and Soviet thought; evidently such books are simply too much for our critics. But how important this would be!

That manly strength, that very *kraft* of which I spoke is characteristic of Mikhail Sholokhov in exceptional degree. The spirit of his creative work is deeply dramatic, his attachment to, his passion for Cossack folk art, their songs, is generally known, and the charm of the folk mind and inspiration lives in his books. I have said that in the presence of these qualities much may be forgiven a writer. With readiness, with love, does one forgive Sholokhov his defects and shortcomings. But it is one thing to forgive, another to wish for something higher and better, and to contrast the available with the best that could be desired.

I do not consider expedient the habit of announcing one production or another to be the ceiling of art. Sometimes in literature there suddenly arise such ceilings that people bump their heads on them in the gloom. It is simply

not time yet in the nineteenth year of the Revolution to do such things. We have only one main criterion: the grandeur of the social reconstruction of the new world we have built—it is on this scale that we must measure the greatest phenomena of art. This does not mean that we will greet only giants, and indeed there are not so many giants to be seen around—valuable too are the small and the average manifestations of talent, of democratism, of realism, of humanism—all that draws towards this scale of values. But it is necessary to distinguish the great from the small and the average, and we still frequently mix them up and take one for the other.

I am not a critic to examine in detail Sholokhov's shortcomings, although certainly this should be done by someone. We all know that the chief of them —if this may be counted a shortcoming and not a measure of the present growth of the writer—is the isolation of the world of his cultural conceptions, the limitedness of the volume of his artistic thinking. Sholokhov feels nature as a whole, and that is what makes him a serious artist, but the matter stands something like this, that in the sphere of nature he accommodates not humanity, but only his own Cossack Don, and if we were to draw a map of the Sholokhov universe, the Don would flow right down its axis as did the Nile in the world as conceived by the ancient Egyptians. I have in view a limitedness not of theme, but of ideas, and it seems to me that the writer himself in solitude, however heroic may be his will, cannot and will not be able to break it down. But he will doubtless do so in alliance with time, with the whole country, which will ceaselessly grow in height and open to its artists ever wider horizons in history and on the surface of the earth.

Sholokhov is genuinely young—not with that advertised youthfulness which, for example, some of our lately recruited poets bear upon their brows like a cockade—he is young deeply and for long, like all our culture, and without getting old will mature along with it. In this he is to be contrasted to certain of our writers who have been old and feeble in spirit from birth, although some of them made their debut at the beginning of the first Five-Year Plan.

Sholokhov is the only one of us who, as it seems to me, lives in the right way, and sometimes it seems to me that he alone works in place of all of us. Along with the multitude of his readers, I experience towards him no other feelings than those of respect, gratitude and continual interest.

Unfortunately, I cannot deal here even in such a hurried way with the works of other writers who are important for me. I shall have to recall them only, although they deserve more and although I would wish to respond to their voices in a different way.

I will name Fadeyev and the third part of his *The Last of the Udegei*. The farewell scene between Pyotr Surkov and his half-drunk mother and the finish of the book with the singing of *Transvaal* and the arrival of the coffins, like much in the book, arises from a sensation of direct affinity with democracy fighting for its happiness.

Along with Fadeyev, not in development and qualifications, but in a certain inner relationship, I would place the much less well-known Vasili Grosman. This young writer, a chemical engineer by previous profession, has come to art from the depth of our unprospected Soviet life and by his memories; his apperceptions and his views in principle completely arises from that life. He is full of sympathies and condemnation, knows what he wants, what to attain from reality. And he has something to say about that reality.

This is our own Soviet man.

I will name still another of the most experienced masters of our prose—

Alexei Tolstoi, whose work stands in no need of my recommendations. I will simply note in connection with my theme that this writer who is far from being proletarian by origin, has turned out to be by far more close to the people, democratic, acceptable to the Soviet reader, than many who on account of their proletarian origin have been especially reared in the literary *pensions*.

It remains for me but to mention Mikhail Prishvin, a sharp-sighted, cunning, and obstinate investigator of the standard-bearers of human labor and thought who are bringing back human society to nature, whence it arose, and whither it will return with triumph in the already distinguishable future.

Closing this circle of prose writers, I must again emphasize that not in the choice of names, or in the amount that I have said of each, should there be seen any attempts, as it were, to weigh them up and compare them—that is by no means my business. In my conception the writers I have named, like some others whom I have not named, form precisely a circle and are not to be considered as standing in rank and as to be estimated in the order of their numbers.

VI

As far back as October 1932, speaking of our "Westerners," I wrote the following:

"In company with this, there is often a much more widespread phenomenon which is already of a purely literary kind, but has also deep social roots.

"I have in view artistic snobbery: cold foppery of phrase, cunning but worthless aphorism, effective metaphors, formal innovation for innovation's sake, esthetic super-complexity, writing in the style of Proust, Joyce or Dos Passos, without a serious penetration into these genuinely interesting seekings, but exclusively for the sake of the fashion and for startling public opinion.

"This snobbery finds protection in our newspaper offices and publishing houses; some of our editors and critics in recent times have been strongly attracted by strong and bitter flavors; they wish to show that they also are not ordinary people, also have their ideas in specific questions of art. All the more as our snobs have learned to cover with esthetic veneer not only bouquets and the terraces of villas, but also flourmills if necessary, and blast furnaces, and socialist competition, and anything you like. Their success frequently is justified only by the general exhaustion from the heavy weight of dreary and blind waste-paper production in which we have been inundated during the last two years."

Further, I pointed out two examples "which may serve as symbols of another and splendid tendency in the development of artistic culture," the life and work of Maxim Gorki and Romain Rolland. And finally I emphasized: "Democracy of creative work is the highest triumph, indulgence of the tastes of the metropolitan bohemia is a matter for despair."

I need add but little to that previous characterization of formalism or snobbery, as I then perhaps not quite accurately called it—but little, because from that time formalism has invented nothing new. It has changed perhaps only in this sense, that it has become more insipid, boring, and epigonistic.

But I would like here to deal with these circumstances which if they do not give rise to formalist soullessness and soillessness, do at any rate support them.

And here, it is necessary to pronounce the vital word: *indifference*.

Unshakeable, eternal, Buddist indifference to everything on earth that does not directly concern the given writer. One can hesitate only on one point: are they indifferent because they know nothing and do not wish to know, or is it because they do not know anything that they are indifferent? But really in fact, they know nothing, neither the country, nor its people, not one class or social strata, neither technique nor one of the sciences, nor

Moscow, nor Europe, nor the sister arts, and certainly not the books of their comrades.

Here arises the old cursed question: what must one do in order to get to know the country, its life and people? Again they ask—shall we journey with brigades, make contracts with trusts, run around the factories? . . . Both those who have got nothing out of that kind of thing and those who in general are too lazy to try it, answer with one voice: there's no need to run around, you can think everything up out of your head. And without fail they add: after all, there's Leo Tolstoi, who sat himself down in Yasnaya Polyana, wrote out of himself and about himself, and it came off.

Oh, splendid, useful, all-accommodating Leo Tolstoi.

Certainly it does not matter that Tolstoi, the artillery lieutenant, went through Sevastopol, made a long journey abroad, worked as an arbitrator, then during the famine, worked as a census statistician, taught children in school—all this does not deserve attention, but it is much more pleasant to remember how he drank tea on the terrace. . . . But after all, Tolstoi, who was really linked with his class and environment from birth, was educated in a society which altered with great slowness, when it was possible by means of two or three symptoms to establish the essence and aspect of phenomena.

But how a man can guess at our swiftly changing reality and then devise a literary semblance of it—this, it seems to me, has been fully shown by the sorrowful example of two of Ehrenburg's novels.

No, you cannot guess at our reality, you can only know. And if you do not know, beware of writing; it is a vicious thing to bring a substitute to people who are longing for genuine artistic food. . . .

Tolstoi was recently called in as an ally by Yuri Olesha. He was right in his supposition that Leo Tolstoi would certainly have found our present-day formalists, the emptiness and falsity of their art, disgusting.

But right then, listening to Olesha, I tried to continue his thought and ask myself: but how would Leo Tolstoi bear himself to Olesha, and what he is saying?

No, Tolstoi would not have put his signature to that speech!

In it there is the following passage:

"If I do not agree with the *Pravda* articles on art, I have not the right to receive patriotic satisfaction from the perception of these splendid things—from the perception of this aroma of newness, of triumph, of success, which is so pleasing to me. . . ."

Olesha should be ashamed to speak in such cavalier style of the tremendous, serious and clean phenomena of our life, the spectacle of a man who has introduced himself into the center of a world building, and there in pompous fashion measures the most important events of the times by his own height and taste, his own pleasure or displeasure, is intolerable. And the whole sense and tone of this speech, which is foppish and false in its very foundations, shows us: here speaks a literary man who has not developed in himself in these years one grain of citizenship, has not educated in himself a genuine militant public spirit: here speaks the same old non-combatant intellectual, faltering, impressionable and weak.

And how immeasurably far all this is from Tolstoi, who never accommodated himself on the side away from the general stream of the people's life, nor above it, still further from the revolutionary traditions of the working class. And, I would add—from the best national traditions of Russian public opinion, because neither Hertzen nor Dobrolyubov nor Chernishevski ever had the habit of measuring the events of their times by their own pleasure and by this means seeking truth. No, they reckoned only with social necessity,

the needs of the people, revolutionary benefit, and if it were required, sacrificed not merely the comfort of their souls.

There is no doubt that from the point of view of the demands of folk art all this is but flying smoke which for a moment dims the eyes, and it must be as quickly as possible cleared away by opening wide all the windows in the house of art.

To recall once more the circle of prose writers whom I consider the first standard-bearers of the democratic folk spirit, I should include also in this circle still another, a realist, a painter by profession, and an excellent artist—Alexander Malishkin and in just a few words remind you of one of his old stories, "The Train to the South." This thing is quite small in size, but it seems to me one of the finest in Soviet prose. A simple affair: a man is going on holiday from Moscow to the Crimea and the sea. It is in the middle of the twenties, the height of a splendid sunny summer, the calm before new storms, the slow accumulation of strength. The train goes through the fields of the Civil War, where everything has grown thick and only remnants of rusty wire in the grass and ramshackle fortifications remain. In the train there are men of the southern front, and looking through the window they see the fields of battle, experience everything all over again, and then recognize one another. This tale is full of a simple and powerful feeling—I would call it the feeling of the Revolution's movement in time—and it is the more powerful, the more charming, that it is characteristic of millions of Soviet people. Many people have experienced this: they look through the window, read the name of a quiet railroad stop, and—memory flares up. . . .

And it is such a literature not only accessible to the millions, but a literature in which there are caught and recorded for the ages the feelings of the millions that is dearer than any other, and this is the most splendid poetry, the poetry of democracy.

Translated from the Russian by H. O. Whyte

Michael Koltsov

Deceptive Ease

Among musicians, among architects, among artists, actors, and now among writers, discussion has developed on creative themes. This is a great and important movement; it will contribute a great deal; it will teach many things to many people.

Recently, however, there have been more than a few manifestations in the discussion which may pervert the essence of it. There is also a certain deceptive ease, a parading of achievements such as often occurs during drives and campaigns.

Regisseur Okhlopkov came out with a public confession in which he hurled anathemas at all his formalistic past and promised henceforth to struggle against formalists not in a half-hearted manner but to the bitter end.

Regisseur Meyerhold made a comprehensive report with the artful title *Meyerhold Against Meyerhold-ism.* So it was advertised on the boards.

In a long article that Irma Yaunzem, the singer, brought to a newspaper office, she triumphantly declared that she has been a formalist since she wore swaddling clothes. Denouncing the sins of her formalistic youth, she solemnly vowed to reform in her future creative work and to sing another tune.

Taking the floor at a meeting of the Writers' Union in Leningrad, Alexei Tolstoi, declared that his last play was "formalism of the purest water." This fact will, perhaps, amaze some persons, but they shouldn't be really astonished yet. Tolstoi has only begun; he hasn't yet swung over all the way. Let his comrades of the Leningrad Writers' Union swing him a bit more, and he will acknowledge that his *Peter I* is a formalist miscarriage. And he will propose, according to an expression accepted among Leningrad literary people, to "consider the novel non-existent."

Scarcely a day prior to this meeting, I. M. Gronsky, editor of the magazine *Novy Mir,* promised the workers of the editorial office gathered in funereal silence, that against formalists as against counter-revolutionaries all necessary measures would be taken, even to the use of physical force. The club of sectarian narrow-mindedness has been resurrected as an instrument of literary criticism, on the doorsteps of the editor of *Novy Mir.* From this point of view, Alexei Tolstoi's self-sacrifice must be considered truly touching.

In some places the struggle developing against formalism comes up, so to speak, against the question of raw material, or, in other words, against a lack of formalists.

This is especially true in the provinces. There are not many formalists in the Urals, in the Azov-Black Sea Territory, in Chuvashia. There is a shortage of them in Uzbekistan, in Armenia and even in such a large center as Baku. . . .

But for energetic individuals, of course, such difficulties cannot be a real obstacle. Energetic people act energetically—here through pressure, there through persuasion.

For example, M. Suvinsky, *Izvestia* correspondent, upbraids the Uzbek Writers Union for carrying on a discussion in which the word formalism did not figure. He wrote the following:

"Those who spoke devoted their eloquence to the most diverse questions. Some complained of the lack of friendship among poets, others urged that a history of Uzbek literature be written, still others complained about translators. The most important and stirring questions were passed by. No one said a word, for example, about formalism."

As is evident, Suvinsky himself decided for the Uzbek writers what question should stir them. The history of Uzbek literature—nonsense. Twisted translations of Uzbek books—a trifle. The Writers Union in Tashkent should, according to Suvinsky's recommendation, disregard these preoccupations and speak only of formalism.

In contrast to this, Comrade L. Subotsky, editor of *Literaturnaya Gazeta,* a cultured person of the capital, that he is, appeals in his speech to the public spirit of those citizens who up to the present have stood apart from the struggle with formalism. He politely asks L. Leonov, V. Lidin, V. Vishnevsky and even P. Yudin to put in an appearance and speak.

"It is regrettable too, that a number of our literary men have taken no part in the discussion. . . . Comrade Yudin, who keeps silent, does not want to take part in the discussion, does not even appear for it. The list of these who are silent can be lengthened to include V. Katayev and Comrade Vishnevsky, who should have discussed, say, Joyce. (Voice: He has already spoken about him.) I know as well as you that Comrade Vishnevsky is out of town, but he left after three meetings of the writers had been held."

As you see, the question is beginning to be posed among writers as if it were a matter of deviation in the Party, of opposition, of something that demands that everyone express himself, a general examination.

The well-known articles in *Pravda* on art were directed against confusion,

falsity, senselessness, distortion. They demanded that music, painting, and the cinema be accurate and comprehensible, that they possess popular appeal and realism.

In these articles, formalism was never declared to be the sole danger confronting Soviet art, as zealous pseudo-theoreticians are now trying to make out. Nor is naturalism alone concerned.

Weaknesses, inadequacies, passages out of joint, sometimes even simple illiteracy or political ignorance—indeed, there is an abundance of these faults in the works of our artists, actors, poets and film directors.

People who are not very profound thinkers are trying with much ado to divide the workers in the arts into two groups—formalists and naturalists. Since they have no time for close discrimination they shove people haphazardly into these ranks—after a time they will do this as a matter of habit. So recently in one Party committee reprimands were given even before a mistake had been made—in advance, as a preventative. . . . It is no wonder that certain writers (including Tolstoi himself) who are oppressed by this awkward procedure, are in the interests of speed appearing of their own accord for the roll-call of *Literaturnaya Gazeta,* and mollifying the zealous critics by their reasonable attitude.

But the struggle with formalism, forsooth, is not some kind of narrow, limited task. It should and must grow into a great wave of self-criticism, into a broad revision of "patented" standards and appraisals. The cultural growth of the Soviet reader and simultaneously the creation of art values by non-professionals already tower far above the low structures erected by the (sometimes spoiled) constructors of art. Yet these same structures, not so long ago, were hailed as Himalayan heights!

Are there really no writers among us in whom even under the microscope you will find neither formalism nor naturalism—and in general in whom you will find nothing at all? Neither talent, nor knowledge, nor culture, nor even a Soviet person. Is it necessary to release them and open all doors wide if the analysis shows only: "formalism—none; naturalism—none; salt—none; thoughts—one or two in the field of vision to 1,000 cubic centimeters of pure water. . . ."

A number of writers' and artists' organizations consider the discussion already closed: the formalists have been exposed and tabulated, the results have been summed up, the report written. For us—the truly great, real discussion of the burning questions of artistic creation has only begun. We are waiting and shall await from writers, artists and people of the theatre serious addresses, supported by a profound knowledge of the laws and moving impulses of their art; addresses permeated with dignity and with respect for themselves, their comrades and their art organizations; thoughtful, not formal addresses.

Only this kind of discussion, free from RAPP-ist attacks, will be of real value and will really help our art to free itself from formalism, from everything alien and imposed, confused and dead, from everything that hinders it from advancing.

THREE BRITISH CARTOONS
By James Fitton and James Holland

Art in Industry—A Self-made man

JAMES FITTON

For Charity

JAMES FITTON

God's Business

JAMES HOLLAND

HUMOR and SATIRE

A. Buchov

Terrible Revenge

For four years the artist Aortov and the poet Naiadkin lived together. They shared their boots and clothes. They worked by the same lamp removed from the staircase, and were ill with the same grippe. They tried to outdo each other in thoughtfulness only.

"Take this and cover yourself," Aortov would say, throwing the only blanket in the house to Naiadkin. "You're a poet and have to keep warm. Ovid Nazan wrote poetry only by a fire and in the sun."

"You take it," Naiadkin would argue, "you're an artist and the fine arts do not like privations. Michelangelo probably spent his whole life under a blanket. Take it."

The result was that the blanket remained on the floor, where the cat slept. This animal, a favorite of both, bore the strange name Catacomb.

It seemed as though no power on earth could part Aortov and Naiadkin.

But once—on a Thursday, after nine o'clock in the evening—a woman came into their lives. She came without even knocking at the door, attracted by the pitiful cries of the unfed Catacomb. Placing the cat under her arm, she remarked unintelligibly but sternly:

"A cat is not a cow. It is little. And has to be fed." After the door had closed behind her. Aortov remarked:

"She took our cat."

"And carried it away." added Naiadkin.

"That's impudence. I think she has beautiful eyes."

"Typical insolence. I liked her hair better."

Twenty minutes later for some reason or other Aortov sighed, left his easel and said lowering his eyes guiltily:

"I am going to see what she is doing with our unfortunate Catacomb. Perhaps she is torturing him."

"Let's go together," said Naiadkin dryly, somewhat suspicious. "Indeed, to leave our defenceless animal in the hands of a strange woman . . ."

In the corridor they should have been immediately convinced that the cat was in no serious danger. He was lapping milk out of a huge saucer with the passion of a ham vaudeville actor invited to a banquet. Nearby stood the little blonde with blue eyes.

Being the more forward of the two, Aortov immediately plunged into a conversation. He scratched behind his ear and remarked in a business-like manner, pointing his finger at Catacomb:

"A cat."

"You don't say!" the blonde sarcastically replied. "I thought it was at least a mammoth. And why don't you feed it?"

"I don't know." Aortov looked embarrassed and suddenly burst forth unexpectedly: "I don't feed him, he does."

"Who?" indignantly asked Naiadkin. "I? And who goes for the milk? I do, and he guzzles it up . . ."

"The cat?" interrupted the neighbor.

"Not the cat, he, Aortov."

"And you dare say that before . . ."

"I do. And who stole the piece of sausage the other day from the neighbor's mouse trap in the corridor? I did. And who ate it? You. . . ."

"What queer people you are," said the blonde thoughtfully. "At any rate, let's get acquainted. My name is Aniuta. I live with your neighbor at present. And I will feed your cat."

Aortov and Naiadkin, looking gloomy, entered their room. When they went to sleep Naiadkin reluctantly and grudgingly offered the blanket: "Here cover yourself. I may as well freeze."

Aortov answered quietly but distinctly: "Go to the devil. You can choke on your old blanket."

That night Catacomb slept on the commonly owned raincoat.

II

For the first time in four years, a spirit of illwill and suspicion hovered about the room of Aortov and Naiadkin. Aortov sat in the corner and gloomily made sketches of green girls looking suspiciously like Aniuta. And Naiadkin, instead of offering the usual encouragement, now remarked caustically, looking at the canvas:

"Your girl reminds me of a washwoman who was put out of a moving picture theatre for rowdyism. Try and paint her pink, and paste a label over her. At least she will look like a bottle of soda water. It'll be prettier."

Aortov, having at one time noticed something boisterous about the poetry of Naiadkin, now remarked:

"In your poetry everyone has blue eyes and light hair. That, of course, is effective, but if you ever write about horses, don't forget to make them at least pie-bald and grey-eyed."

They took turns at taking the cat out for a feeding. Whoever woke up first would take him and sit in the corridor, waiting patiently for Aniuta to emerge. Aortov bought gaudy ties that looked like a drunken sign-painter's dream. Naiadkin put on torturous collars and, waking up at night, would start shaving. In the evening he would go to meet Aniuta at school. But with all that it was an uneven battle. Aniuta for some reason showed a definite preference for Naiadkin. Aortov learned the secret when he accidentally overheard a quiet conversation in the corridor.

"I didn't sleep the whole night," Naidkin complained.

"Aortov didn't let you?" Aniuta asked.

"Aortov! Snored! And when he stopped snoring he raved."

"Raved?"

"Raved about a lamb. Must have gorged himself on radishes. He smelled like it. Like a vegetable patch were lying in bed instead of a human being."

"Poor thing," Aniuta whispered, even more sympathetically and the succulent sound of a kiss smacked against Aortov's ear.

That same evening, slightly hollow-cheeked and gloomy, Aortov quickly gathered his things together and said to Naiadkin, "I am going. You can live."

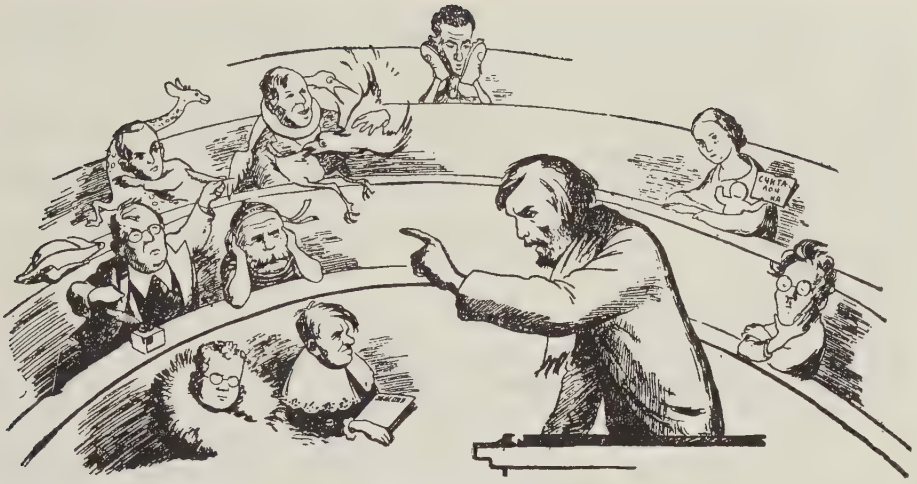
"I will," Naiadkin agreed unconcernedly.

"I will have revenge for my shattered life."

"Revenge yourself."

"You will find out what the revenge of a brush-worker means, Naiadkin."

"I will. By the way, your suspenders are under my bed. Don't forget them."



For Better Children's Books. Drawn by B. Prorokov.

"Write, write for children, but write so that even adults, when reading your book, will be so carried away, as to be reliving the glorius days of their childhood. The most important thing is, don't lecture, moralize, or write in aphorisms: adults don't like it, and the children simply detest it. They want to see a friend in you and not a teacher, they demand enjoyment and not boredom, stories and not theses." (*V. Belinski*, 1838).

Aortov went away. Forever. And the following day Naiadkin said to Aniuta: "Perhaps you'll feed the cat in my room now?"

Aniuta thought a while and answered:

"All right. You go down for the milk, while I move my things over."

Six yars passed. Naiadkin was already writing long poems about escalators and controversial articles about the future jazz. He was assigned to do slogans in verse for all the departments of the Commissariat of Forestry, and at the Writers' Congress someone was even rash enough to compare him to the late Djerdjavin and ask for his autograph.

Once, with his five-year old son Kostia in his arms, Naiadkin said to Aniuta: "How nice it is that we live on a quiet street . . . And what a lovely view from the window. How beautiful that brick wall is, flooded with the colors of sunset . . ."

"Yes, it really isn't a bad-looking little fence," agreed Aniuta. Then suddenly, with a muffled groan, she sank into a chair. "Take away the child!"

On the wall, in the colors of a roaring water-fall, yawned two freshly mounted placards. On one a violet cow resembling a truncated pyramid chased a typewriter that was dashing across a blue field. On the other two automobile tires with five hands were rolling towards a lonely chimney of the horizon.

"Those are Aortov's placards," said Naiadkin. "The scoundrel is now doing agrarian and industrial subjects. Have to close the shutters."

They began to live in semi-darkness. The sun came in only through narrow chinks. And it was through these narrow chinks that the curious eye of little Kostia saw the placards. For three days the child was quiet and did not respond to the mother's caresses.

"I am afraid of women," he said thoughtfully, "they look like tires with hands."

"Who told you that, Kostia?"

"It's drawn that way. But the cows are nice. They are broad at the bottom and narrow at the top. And without horns. Buy me a cow. I'll sleep on it."

Aniuta wept silently.

"Our son is growing up to be an idiot," she complained to her husband. "Try to do something. Buy him books."

"Very well," Naiadkin agreed gloomily and brought Kostia children's books. books.

For nearly three weeks the boy read without a stop. Then one day he said to his father, "Papa, buy me a rabbit."

"What kind of a rabbit?"

"An ordinary one. With wheels and a proboscis."

"Such rabbits don't exist. Rabbits don't have wheels."

"But it's drawn that way," sighed Kostia.

Naiadkin looked at his son's books. Sure enough, in one of them, a huge rabbit resembling an elephant made from a bicycle loomed before him. In another, a sea reminding one of gobies in tomato sauce with a corkscrew thrust in the centre. Sails were attached to the corkscrew and a gang-way. In the third book four bears were drinking tea under the following mysterious inscription: "Mania kisses auntie."

On the title page was written ominously: "Illustrated by Aortov."

Kostia was sitting in the corner and drawing a shark with three hoofs in a notebook.

"Our boy is perishing," moaned Naiadkin. "We must save him. I'll take him South. I will sell my poem, get money and leave for the South . . ."

A month later he came with a specimen copy of the poem and flopped down on the bed.

"What's the matter?" asked the frightened Aniuta. "Perhaps you were run over? Don't conceal it."

"Worse!" Naiadkin plunged his head in his hands. "Look!"

With great trepidation Aniuta looked at the paint-smelling copy.

"Why an Eskimo on the cover? You wrote about a girl from the provinces."

"This is a girl."

"Who made the cover?"

"Aortov," Naiadkin said hoarsely. "He, he . . . Let's run from the city . . . Buy yourself some summer clothes and let's run. . . ."

"I ordered a summer dress."

"You had better get it."

An hour later Aniuta returned wearing a new dress. It was of a delicate green with yellow blast-furnaces and light-blue oil towers painted all over it.

"The latest thing in materials," she said apologetically. "Mass production. A special design."

"I know," Naiadkin said with a bitter smile. "They are Aortov's designs for the cotton print industry."

And he burst into tears and began beating his head against the reproducer.

That evening there was a quiet knock at the Naiadkin door.

"Come in."

Kostia was sitting on the floor and with an idiotic laugh was drawing mountains resembling tumblers. On the wall hung the cover of the book with the picture of the girl resembling an Eskimo. And near the closed shutters, Aniuta stood like a statue decorated in green blast furnaces.

Aortov entered.

He surveyed the perishing family with a look of great satisfaction. Then in a low tone of voice he said spitefully, "I avenged myself, Naiadkin. Now you understand the power of the fine arts."

"Yes, you avenged yourself," Naiadkin admitted dully. "Take everything back. I don't need a wife in light blue oil wells. I don't need a son who draws suckling-pigs with horns. I don't need a room with closed shutters and my heroine—resembling an Eskimo. Be damned."

"I will," agreed Aortov. "Don't forget your suspenders. They're under the bed."

Naiadkin left the room quietly. But a half hour later he returned with a bundle and handed it to Aortov:

"Here is Catacomb. Take him too. Show him some models of stage sets which you made and he will begin to attack people. And in the house he will take the place of a bull dog. Goodbye."

And he left never to return.

Aortov laughed with a triumphant laugh.

Translated from the Russian by Rae Bunim

M. Zoshchenko

Our Hospitality

Speaking on the subject of politeness, hospitality is not the least important in the realm of good breeding.

And, although I had occasion to suffer from hospitality, none the less I am very glad to participate in a campaign for a polite and civil attitude towards people, in particular towards guests.

To be exact, I can't say that I suffered very much, just the same I lived through some pretty bad moments.

It all happened thus.

Last fall I went on business to some village—the village soviet—where I was obliged to spend the night. So, I put up at the home of an individual peasant.

He received me very kindly and in spite of the late hour, managed to rake up a fair supper.

The problem of a bed caused my host some perplexity.

"Marusa," he said to his wife, "where shall we put our dear guest?"

I intervened. "Don't trouble, I can sleep on the bench."

My host was of another opinion. "What, my guest on a bench? I can't allow that. Of course, my wife and I are not in the habit of giving up our bed to strangers. But you can be sure we shall arrange a suitable place."

And he looked around the room, which was dimly lighted by a small kerosene lamp. Some cotton curtains hid the grandiose bed used by the peasant and his wife. An old man was lying on the Russian oven. Behind the oven, in the corner, stood a nondescript bed on which it appeared my host's mother-in-law was sleeping.

I spoke again. "Don't put yourselves out. I shall sleep on the bench."

"You'll find the bench a very narrow and uncomfortable place," my host answered very kindly. "A bed will be much better." And he pointed to the one on which the old woman was sleeping.

"My mother-in-law sleeps there. But we can ask her to leave it, you can have the bed. You see, we know that guests should be treated with respect."

"My mother never sleeps well so that we won't be disturbing her," said my hostess.

"Yes, it won't bother her," added her husband. "Once she walked around all night and nothing could put her to sleep. What do you suppose is the matter?"

"She probably suffers from insomnia," I said. "Although it's hard to believe judging by the way she's snoring. You oughtn't to disturb her."

But my hospitable host was already trying to arouse the old woman.

"Get up, mamma," he said. "We have a customer for the bed."

He firmly pushed the old woman but she only grunted and continued to sleep.

I again urged him not to arouse her.

The peasant was beginning to get angry. "Some nights nothing will make her sleep, but now that we need the bed, she sleeps like a log. Such a funny old woman. She doesn't know what she wants."

The peasant's aged father, leaning over the oven, energetically took a hand in the matter.

He began to whistle, explaining that the old woman hated the sound of

Chronicle of Western Literature. Drawn by L. Broda. The last piece of a popular author.

whistling and that whistling always got her up. However, the whistling didn't help this time.

Then, filling his mouth with water, he suddenly sprayed the old woman. This made her jump violently out of bed and she began to yawn and cross herself.

"You were sleeping pretty soundly, mamma," said her son-in-law.

"I guess I was having a little doze," remarked the old woman.

In spite of my pleas and even my supplication, my host still insisted that I occupy the bed which had just been vacated.

"Lie down, my son," said the old woman. "Make yorself at home. I don't sleep much anyway. It's a sickness."

Then I lay down and as I was awfully tired, fell asleep at once.

Morning. A bright sun illuminates the hut. I open my eyes and stretch myself. At the sight of my bed, I am overcome with horror. It is simply impossible to describe the bed on which I was lying. One might say it was like lying on a dirt pile. Some yellow, filthy rags were under me. Some aw-

ful looking grey and soiled pillow was gently caressing my cheek. A dirty horse-blanket covered me.

The bright sun made all this very visible and it was so unattractive that I jumped out of bed like a ball.

The others were still sleeping.

On the bench, near the window, snored the sleepless owner of my bed.

I went out to wash. Then I sat down on the porch.

"How strange," I thought, "the peasant is well off. Everyone seems completely satisfied. And then this awful bed. I suppose, of course, the old woman is not a profitable or even paying member of the family, but just the same, this is too much. The devil possessed me to accept their hospitality."

I went into the hut again. The others were already up. Only the old woman dozed on the bench.

In the hut three children were making an uproar. My host's children. I wondered where they slept.

It seems two of them slept in their father's bed—at the foot. The third one, who was the oldest, slept under the bed on a mattress.

While we were drinking tea, I asked my host why he was not in the collective farm—there life was new and also not unprofitable.

He replied, "There is time enough to sign up. There is no hurry."

CHRONICLE

Ernst Ottwalt

Brown Book Balance

Here then is the final balance of some three years of Brown book production. It is a shocking account of the leveling down of German literature in the Third Empire. It is an eloquent example of what the National-Socialists are doing—in Hitler's words—to "show their cultural face to the coming centuries" as they so loudly boast. Here is a thick, stoutly bound volume of 285 pages sent out to thousands of bookshops all over Fascist Germany. In this book some 230 publishers list over 2,000 books which they consider worthy of the attention of the German reading public for Christmas 1935. And to preclude any impression that this list has been haphazardly compiled, the preface informs us that the list also includes older "worthy" books and is by no means limited to new publications.

Here in this special edition of the *German Book-dealer's Exchange (Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel)* two thousand fascist books prostitute themselves and shout in all tones and variations of poor taste their cry of "Buy us! Buy us!"

The thematic range of fascist literature is shown to be strictly limited. Barring a few cook books, several volumes on technical points of taxation and one—only one!—edition of classics, the contents of these two thousand books are exhaustively described by the following terms: war-incitement, colony-propaganda, cult of the Fuhrer (Hitler) and race mania. It is exceedingly difficult to explain how totally, completely all other themes are excluded. They simply aren't there. Even the yellow-back novels with perfectly innocent titles can be easily seen to fall into one of the above categories if one reads the publisher's note on the contents, the reviews or the blurbs. In the Third Empire the author is not even free to choose his theme, everything must be subordinated to the momentary needs of the fascist dictatorship. In this respect it is interesting to note that with all the tasks of social demagogy set before literature by the fascist government the sham realistic genre is altogether lacking. There is Alfred Karrasch's *Party Comrade* and only one more, *People of the Moor*, by an author about whom it is announced that he never got beyond common school, was an amateur boxer, is an SA man and tells of his own life.

It is not a question of just some publishers specializing in books that shamelessly, incontinently and brazenly incite to war, like the Berlin "Tradition" or Franz Schneider-Leipzig. The products of such a publishing house are characteristic. *Lancelle Battery and the White Devils; Those Who Stormed Douamont; Douamont 1916 and Now; Lice, Coalgas and Stage-horses; Armed Men; Hortmansweil Head; Kemmel; Great Battle in France; Giving Death a Ride; Serfs We Were; War in the Air of 1938; Leader of the Western Front* are the titles just one fascist publishing house, and a comparatively small one, has produced for Christmas 1935. Whatever page of the catalog one turns to, whichever publisher one finds—there are always a couple of books at least that glorify war. Even tiny provincial publishers like Kankardia of Buhl in Baden contribute their bit to the general campaign of chauvinism.

One more, a "strictly scientific" book on Japan, must be mentioned. It bears the splendid title of *The Watch on the Far East!* And the only sample illustration given shows Japanese border troops with some German sheep dogs. Because even the German sheep dog has won that world approbation which the German people and so on and so forth.

It is, of course, needless to say that along with hundreds of books about flying and submarines the catalog teems with anti-Soviet books. Even an obscure "German Doctors' Publishing House" must include, beside the *Reflections of a Gynecologist on Marriage* a book entitled *War Prisoners in Siberia* with a blurb on the "bloodthirsty cruelty of the Bolsheviks." And then the publisher modestly claims "the fully justified pretension of the book to be listed among the most valuable and scientific war books." Or, to give another example of the fantastic preparations of this war propaganda—in the small town of Dulmen in Westphalia there is a small publishing house—Winkelverlag—which specializes in Catholic prayer books and pious tracts of the style of *History of the Good Anna Katherina Emmerinck.* Here we find a book *The Soldier's Prayer. Prayers for Men in the Army* by an author who is equally proud of being "Lieutenant of the G.A." and a "member of the Society of Jesus." And Prince Georg von Sachsen, also a

Jesuit priest, has a good word for his confrere: "Fear of God leads to heroism and worthy deeds."

The background of the standard works published by Beumelburg, Dwinger, Junger, Schauwecker, who conduct their bloody business with a certain formal ability and a great deal of subtle demagogy, is made up of picture books for children, army calendars, biographies of German generals, dozens of books on the science of war and text books for recruits. In this respect it is not without interest that the works of General Ludendorff, according to publishers' advertisements, have been issued in over half a million copies. And this does not refer to his bigger works on strategy, but to smaller things he publishes himself. (One book alone —his *Destruction of the Freemasons by Revealing their Secrets* has reached the circulation of one hundred and seventy thousand!)[1]

Intimately connected with the war propaganda books are those on "borderland" problems. These problems are always a euphemism for the campaign against the Soviet Union. There is a publishing house calling itself "Grenze und Ausland" (Border and Beyond) which specializes in books exclusively of the most aggressive anti-Soviet kind. *Baltic Destinies, Heritage of Genghis Khan* are some of the titles which leave nothing to be desired for plainness. Of course, such books as *Saxons of Seven Lands, Memel Picture Book, Lost Sentry in Eastmark* and the East Prussian novel *Land Alive!* as well as dozens of other such books by different publishers are not far behind them.

It is noteworthy that, along with the propaganda for eastward expansion and a crusade against the Soviet Union, a surprising amount of pure colonial propaganda has lately been let loose. Up to recently the semblance was kept up that Hitler's repeated solemn declarations of Germany's disinterestedness in colonies were to be taken seriously. With the gradual unmasking of the political aims of the Third Empire it seems no reason is seen for keeping the ulterior aims of German imperialism under cover any longer and fascist literature has with amazing rapidity swung in line with the commands of the culture brigade of the Ministry of Propaganda. The result has been a flood of novels which can be grouped under the general title of one of the books: *When Will the Germans Come Again?* Can't you just hear the longing cry of the East African Negro who no longer wants to be exploited by English but only by German colonial robbers? The poor Negro can no longer stand the shame of being beaten with French whips but must have the old German whips again. To judge by the titles of these books it would really seem that no argument is too stupid and no lie too brazen for use in colonial propaganda.

There are, of course, nuances here too. *Heart in Suspense* describes in thrilling novel fashion "the soul-stirring drama of a German colonist." The books of the publisher Safari, who specializes on colonial propaganda, seem to be of robuster make. Here there are no soul-stirring complications but plain and simple *My Native German Southwest!* which the *German Teachers' Gazette* calls a "lovely book." The list of such titles is of considerable length.

To give a really exhaustive picture of the race mania section of this *Book-dealers Exchange Supplement* it would be necessary to reprint a vast number of titles. Nothing is lacking there. The most intimate details about those famous Old Germanic peoples about whom, as is generally conceded, so little is actually known are treated most daringly—thick volumes. Here we find one man who can write two- hundred pages on *Old Germanic Education.* There is also the professor who presents the *Old Germanic Woman at Home* to an astounded world. The most blatant hypotheses strut about in solemn "scientific" togas. Hundreds of them write about *Nordic Heroes of Prehistoric Times* as if they themselves had strangled the aurochs with bare hands. Another one has all the details pat on the behavior of a tribe of Goths during their migration over the Atlas mountains and one can almost hear the SS leader shout "Forward Ye Goths!" Even such publishers as Brockhaus, Rutten and Loening, who have seen better days, must do the bidding of the Ministry of Propaganda and contribute their bit to the general madness with such books as *German Customs* or *The Aryan Woman Through the Centuries.*

Really vast is the section of so-called "Genealogical Research." A number of publishers specialize in this type of product and they know just exactly what the Ministry of Propaganda wants. There is the "Genealogical Series" with more than a score of volumes a *Book of Genealogy* in eleven volumes, scores of *Family Tree Handbook, Endless Family Tree, My Ancestors* or *I and My Relations.* And when one tries to see the consequences of this seemingly innocent social pastime, one finds among the books of the German Doctors' Publishing House the gruesome item called *Hour of Sacrifice* about which the publisher informs us that "it shows the blessings and necessity of the law to prevent those suffering from inheritable diseases from producing offspring."

It does not require much acumen to see the connection between these publications

[1] As regards circulation generally—the biggest mentioned in this supplement is that of four hundred and forty thousand. And this record was made by the book of Felicitas Rose *Field Schoolmaster Uwe Karsten!*

and the books of war propaganda as well as the balderdash that would raise the most brainless National-Socialist official to the heights of a "Fuhrer." They all shout and spit fullmouthed solemnities of "the historic tasks," the "historical idea of the German people" and "the historic mission of Nordic thought."

And that is all. There is not much more to be found in this catalog. If one looks for familiar names, one must be content with Gerhart Hauptmann's *Epic*, a volume of verses by Ina Seidel, or *Sonnets* by Rudolf Alexander Schroeder. It seems many writers that could not bring themselves to emigrate just don't write unless they got permission to use pseudonyms.

Those few fascist writers who have achieved fame only show how rapidly they sink to the lowest literary depths. Take Felix Riemkasten who wrote *The Bonze* a few years ago—a rotten, reactionary book but still one that indicated talent. He now publishes the nonsensical *We're Building a House, Hurrah!* Then there is Otto Paust, only a year ago hailed by the *Volkischer Beobachter* as the poet of the future for his novel *People Afire*. He now publishes a thin volume of animal stories under the title *The Indirect Lion*. A man like Heinrich Hauser who wrote the *Trail to Chicago* in 1931 must now produce the "jolly booklet" *Adventures in the House on Wheels*. A number of writers whom we have not met in emigration, although they were once opposed to fascism, are hidden among the antiquarian advertisements. There is nothing to be added about them. They are not in the game, are tolerated at best and insomuch as they wished to "adapt" themselves, have failed.

The *Bookdealers' Exchange Supplement* is a terrible carricature of what German literature is in reality. It is a shocking and disgusting witness of the crimes the fascist dictatorship is committing against German culture. It is a warning to us that we must show that true German culture and literature cannot thrive where finance-capital holds its bloody orgies under the swastika.

Translated from the German by S. D. Kogan.

Two Authors

GERMANY

About Gustav Regler

Gustav Regler belongs to the generation of German writers whose spiritual outlook was determined by and bears the stamp of the material and intellectual vicissitudes of post-war Germany. He is one of that section of bourgeois youth which began to question the "justice" and the standards of a social order which seemed ever more and more in contradiction to all the life-values and ideals the young citizen had absorbed at home and at school. The search for a solution of this discord between upbringing and the confusion and strife of post-war Germany brought some of the bourgeois youth to fascism, others sought and found the way to the proletariat, to the class struggle.

This last road made it necessary to overcome many prejudices, get rid of much ideological rubbish, part with some fond illusions. An analysis of the forces of the past while acquiring a mastery of the means of expression and artistic presentation was for many bourgeois German writers the main point of application of their creative energies. In the case of Regler this was an especially difficult course inasmuch as, born in a thoroughly bourgeois family of the Saar district, he had received the strict education of a Catholic and it was a long difficult struggle to free himself of this ballast. His novel *Lost Son*, written in Germany, though publication was only made possible after emigration from there, is witness of the fact that this clarification of thought was extraordinarily beneficial to literary expression. The novel shows tremendous progress when compared to Gustav Regler's first book *Water, Blood and Blue Beans*, published in 1931.

Gustav Regler's lot was that of many German progressive writers. Shortly after the Reichstag fire he emigrated to his native Saar region where he fought energetically against the national socialists. He jumped into the fight on the Saar plebiscite with a novel, *Cross-fire*, in which the entire Saar district is to a certain extent the main hero. At present Gustav Regler is working in Paris helping organize the International Union for Defence of Culture. Born in the Saar and speaking French like a veritable Frenchman, he is particularly fitted to be the uniting link between the strong German literary emigration and the French writers. He has recently published the novel *Seed Time*, on the German peasant wars, sections of which appear in this issue.

SPAIN

Manuel D. Benavides

The socialist writer Manuel Domingo Benavides achieved wide popularity with the Spanish reading public on the basis of his first book, *The Last Pirate of the Mediterenean,* where he unmasked the leaders of the Spanish government. Here Benavides revealed the close ties of most of the political figures of Spain, and of Alexander Leroux in particular, with the multimillionaire, Juan March, notorious for his smuggling activities and for other public crimes. Appearing in the summer of 1934, that is to say on the eve of the October events, the book landed its author in the Madrid prison where he was kept for over a month. After his release Benavides emigrated to Paris. There he undertook the preparation of his second book. Benavides devoted the winter of 1934 and the summer of 1935 to gathering material, associating with Spanish emigres and examining and collecting documents. On the basis of all he had compiled, Benavides wrote his second book *This is How the Revolution Happened (La Revolucion Fue asi).*

This work suffers from many glaring inaccuracies which are partly a result of the author's enforced absence from the scene of recent events in Spain. It also evinces a certain ideological confusion, to be explained by the fact that not until recently, in the course of the struggle, did the author come over to the side of the People's Front. Today he represents the left wing of the Socialist Party. Despite its shortcoming, *This is How the Revolution Happened*, is an interesting example of the reportorial method, based on the history of the October days in Spain. Published in August 1935, the book produced a lively impression, and was literally sold out in a few days. A second edition, published secretly was partially confiscated by the police.

The excerpts which we publish are from the third part of the work.

Editor-in-chief SERGEI DINAMOV

INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE

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