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THE STORMY PETREL *Drawing by Wm. Gropper in the Daily Worker*

Maxim Gorky

The Song of the Stormy Petrel

Over dull grey wastes of water
winds are massing darkening storm-clouds.
There 'twixt clouds and surging sea-waves
proudly soars the Stormy Petrel,
darting sheer like jet-black lightning.
Now he skims the foam with wing-tip,
now—an arrow shooting cloudward,—
he cries boldly—clouds hear gladness
in that cry so fierce and daring.
In that crying—thirst for tempest!
Might of anger, flame of passion,
certainty of final triumph
hear the stormclouds in that crying.
Sea-gulls moan in fear of tempest—
moan and whirl above the waters
fain to bury deep their terror
underneath the surging billows.
And the grebes, too, moan in panic,—
They, denied the joys of battle,
fear the raucous blast of thunder.
Foolish penguins hide fat bodies
timidly behind the cliff-crags . . .
And alone the Stormy Petrel
soars in freedom, proud and dauntless
over foaming grey sea waters.
Ever darker, ever lower
sink the clouds down to the sea-waves,
billows wail, toss ever higher
crests to meet the breaking thunder.
Thunder crashes. White with fury
waves are wrangling with the storm-wind.
But the wind in hatred seizes
herds of waves in ruthless clutches
crashes them against the cliff-crags
shatters solid emerald masses
into foamy dust and spraylets.
Prouder cries the Stormy Petrel,
darting sheer like jet-black lightning,
pierces arrow-like the storm clouds,

grazes sea-foam with his pinions.
Now he hovers like a demon,—
black and dauntless tempest-demon,—
he is mocking, he is sobbing. . . .
He is mocking at the storm-clouds
from sheer gladness he is sobbing.
In the thunder,—wary demon,—
Growing weariness he senses.
He is sure, no cloud will ever
hide the sun, no cloud ever.
Winds are whining . . . thunder crashing . . .
Blue with flame the clouds are blazing
over dark abysmal waters.
Sea-waves catch swift darts of lightning
quench them in their deeps unfathomed.
Just like writhing fiery serpents,
swift reflections of those lightnings,
disappear into the sea-depths.
Storm! The storm will soon come bursting!
Cries the dauntless Petrel soaring
twixt the sea-roar and the lightning;
cries the harbinger of triumph:
Let it break with greater fury!

1901

Translated from the Russian by R. Magidoff and Herbert Marshall

F I C T I O N

Nicolai Virta

Loneliness[1]

Book 1

Rebellion

Cold, foulness, furtive whispering; the town of Tambov; autumn, 1917 . . .

The wind drove the clots of wet snow about, tore the placards from the walls and the revolving advertisement stands; the scraps of paper soared into the air like birds. Howling and whistling wildly, the wind had its way in the streets, and the electric lamps it set swinging shed a fitful yellow light over the pools, the bare boughs of the trees, the wet iron roofs. Drain-pipes gurgled, telephone poles hummed. And the snow kept falling and falling; the clinging mess covered the roads and sidewalks with a thick layer.

The town looked wild and deserted, the railway station was empty and dead. Only from the engine house and the railway repair shop came the clang of iron, and flames lit up the smoke-grimed windows.

Flotsky Street was an abyss of gloom. Here, down by the river, it was still colder, and a cruel wind swept in from the woods. The lamps had gone out.

A high fence and a small garden divided the big two-storied green house of Fedorov, the lawyer, from the road. The shutters were tightly closed; not a gleam of light could be seen. All was dead and silent, as if the lawyer's family had been in bed for hours. But that meant nothing, for the people in this house were not in the habit of going to bed early.

The master was not at home. On the plush couch in the drawing room a man sat waiting for him.

The man was small and lean. His thick lips were pale, his sunken eyes full of malice. There were deep hollows at his temples. His hands were narrow and white, his clothes half military: a tunic, riding breeches, and neat high boots. He sat there in silence, staring fixedly. The maid passed him twice, but he never even glanced at her.

It was a habit of his. Alexander Stepanovitch Antonov had spent ten years of penal servitude in Siberia. Quick-tempered and savage, he had been sent to the punishment cells more than once. And each time he had sat like that—his hands resting on his knees, his unseeing eyes fixed on a single point. And his thoughts were of some terrible thing, and he sighed heavily from time to time—sighs that ended in groans . . .

Of what was he thinking now? Of life as it was today? Of the people he had met in faraway Siberia? Of days gone by?

In the Siberian prison there had been a man named Peter Tokmakov, with whom Alexander Stepanovitch had been friendly for three years. They had

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[1] This novel will be given in four parts. The next three will appear in subsequent issues. The novel has been slightly abridged.

both been sentenced in Tambov on the same day for the same affair. The lean and sallow Peter had never cared for talking himself, but had always listened attentively, wrinkling his high, bony forehead and opening his eyes wide, while an argument was going on. Often of a night Peter would scold his friend for his wildness and his violent hatred of people. Alexander Stepanovitch only snorted.

"The revolution will come," Tokmakov said, "and you'll have to go to Kirsanov and what will you bring with you? Will you bring a lot of sense? What have you learned?"

"You and your revolution!" Antonov jeered. "We'll pass out three times over before it comes. I'm sick of all this gab, Petka! I don't believe in it, so shut up!"

Peter shook Antonov fiercely, hissing out:

"Then why did you get into this mess, if you don't believe in it, if you have doubts?"

Antonov made no reply. . . . What reply could he make to his dear friend Petka? More than once he had asked himself how he had got into "this mess," how he could have thrown up the quiet, calm life of a teacher in a country school to join the Social Revolutionaries, to live in a state of constant alarm, to wait for someone or other, and lie in ambush at dawn, shaking with fear and cold. . . .

He had never understood the programs and regulations, never read them properly, never thought about them. On the other hand, how many books and tales of adventures he had read, and after these, how alluring had seemed the road of the fighting group of the Social-Revolutionaries, the expropriations, sharp-shooting, raids!

"Why did I go into it, why, why?" he asked himself, and found no answer. It must have been simply that his blood had gone afire at that tempestuous age. He had longed for rebellion, for a gay and reckless life.

But the fever passed. Once he was caught, and in the cold, damp cell his blood cooled. Antonov realized that the game was up and that now he would have to pay for it. . . .

A dull grey morning, the day of reckoning had arrived. A bald-headed judge asked him:

"Why did you rob and kill? In the name of what? Who are you?"

Antonov could not reply, stammered and then muttered some wild rubbish.

"What party do you belong to?" the judge's harsh voice inquired.

"What party? The Social-Revolutionary Party."

For that they gave him twelve years.

Why did I get into this mess? he wondered.

Peter Tokmakov was sent to another prison. Antonov remained alone. His eyes sunk still deeper, he became even less talkative. But he had not forgotten his friend's words. He ceased to avoid discussions; he sat and listened and from the fragments of other men's thoughts began to weave his own dreams.

Once in the wintertime, after work, a man who slept on a neighboring bunk sat down beside Antonov. He was a worker from the Putilov Works in St. Petersburg. A Bolshevik. Putilovets, as both the political prisoners and criminals called him, was small and lean but uncommonly muscular. His hands were extraordinarily strong; if he gripped your palm, you would howl with agony, if he struck you a light blow, a bruise remained.

"I sometimes hurt myself," he said chucking. "Say I want to catch a fly

and I slap myself on the forehead—everything turns black before my eyes."

Antonov respected him as he respected every strong man. Furthermore, Putilovets was honest, straightforward, and his opinion carried weight with his comrades. Even the prison authorities were cautious with him.

"Well, what's up with you? You never open your mouth."

"I'm not given to gabbing," Antonov replied sharply. He was in a bad humor and his head ached.

"And where's the sense in it anyway? It's like dropping a bucket into an empty well. You stick to your opinion, the fellow in the glasses to his—Menshevik, Bolshevik, Social Revolutionary—and when it comes to the test it's nothing but rubbish."

"Have you ever heard of a fellow who answers to the name of Lenin?"

"Yes."

"Well, and I've heard him speak, and read him too. There's no comparison between him and these drivellers. Do you follow?"

Antonov made a gesture of contempt. Putilovets smoked a pungent brand of tobacco, and lilac smoke wreathed over the bunks.

"Still looking for truth, are you?" said Antonov maliciously. "Well, there are as many kinds of truth as there are people here. You can argue till you're hoarse, and think about putting the Tsar to death, but he's still alive and not even thinking of dying. He'll outlive us all yet."

"You don't say so?"

"Sure as fate!"

"Now will he really?"

"It's nothing to laugh at. The Tsar is power, my lad! He's got these—look—our fetters," and Antonov clanked his iron chains. "And you can only invent different words. No good knocking your head against a brick wall."

"Tell us how you'd set about it, though. Go on," Putilovets urged with a sidelong glance at Antonov.

"I'd have tried another way. I'd have got hold of some grenades and revolvers and wiped the whole gang of tsars and under-tsars off the face of the map."

"Well, young fellow, Lenin says something else. You've got to do things another way."

"Oh, yes, two members should form three committees, I suppose you mean? Reading proclamations in study circles in the woods?"

"Wait a minute, my lad. In 1898 there were only about eight fellows among us in the works who went to study circles—in the woods, as you say. And in 1905 there were more than 200. And what people? Not like you, I can tell you. Take me, for instance," Putilovets took off his glasses and polished them. "I'm fifty and I learned to read and write at thirty-eight. See? I don't sit like you, longing for daylight. I study. Perhaps I'll come in useful some day. You should listen to what's going on around you, young fellow. Our voices are heard in every place now. So there was some point in the woods and committees, after all!"

"Oh, I'm fed up with you, granddad." Antonov broke in. "I've been listening to you people for six years, you're all just a lot of gabby-guts, it makes me sick to listen to you! I can't see a gleam of light anywhere. We'll all peg out here. . . ."

And Antonov flung himself down on the hard, stinking mattress.

And then, suddenly, it came! The road to his homeland was a path of flowers, songs, red flags, exultant faces wet with tears. At a charity ball in

Tambov, Antonov sold bits of his fetters. Fat fingers, loaded with rings fumbled in well-filled notecases, and flung ten ruble notes to their "brothers" —the soldiers.

Antonov was a hero in those days. Glory turned his head.

"This is the stuff," he thought. "We've suffered and borne our troubles patiently, and won through to happiness!"

He saw his comrades rise in the world and become ministers and vice-ministers, and seize the jobs that were best paid and most prominent. These prison comrades of yesterday grew rounder and rosier, began to walk in a more leisurely fashion. Some even developed paunches; others took to speaking in a different way. They could not say a word simply—it was solemnity, triumph and grandeur.

Friends who had not yet been able to get hold of a big job still recognized one, of course, but spoke in a condescending tone. They never had any time to spare, were always in a hurry, and affairs of state pressed on them.

Others were quite unrecognizable. Devil knew how it was—a fellow who had worn civilian clothes all his life would suddenly appear in a tunic, riding breeches, boots and a revolver at his belt. He might be a general? A colonel? —or a chief commissar?

The party organ was in a state of perpetual exultation. "We, the Social Revolutionary Party"—"We, the true knights of the Revolution,"—"The free and victorious legions of Russia"—"freedom"—"power"—"land"—and then —"hurrah, hurrah"—endless "hurrahs."

The noise and glitter set Antonov all atremble. "Oho!" he thought. "So we've burst through to life at last! I can't fail to become commissar of the whole province of Tambov. And then I'll move on to Petrograd. To command, to be known by everybody—then I'll get famous!"

Suddenly all these dreams were shattered. Antonov was appointed assistant to the chief of the militia of the second ward of Tambov.

This was a mockery! They were ridiculing him! The talkers were to the fore everywhere, at the top both in the provinces and in St. Petersburg, while for ordinary common folk like Antonov the militia was good enough. That was power enough, for him—beating up thieves.

Today Bulatov, chief of the province militia and a member of the Social Revolutionary committee, had ordered Antonov to meet him at the house of Fedorov the lawyer—for what reason, Antonov was not informed. He had been waiting for his superior for a whole hour now. It was very still in the lawyer's house, a mouse could be heard scratching underneath the floor, outside the window—there was only the snow and the wind. . . .

The clock on the wall ticked monotonously, drearily. Dreary thoughts passed through his head.

The doorbell rang twice, angrily. The doors creaked in the hall, where people were taking off their outdoor garments with puffings and grunting. Antonov smoothed down his hair and gave a tug to his tunic.

The lawyer, a bearded figure, imposing and immaculately dressed, passed through the drawing-room, greeting his guest as he went.

"I'll be with you in a minute, this very minute!"

A stocky man, Bulatov, followed the master of the house into the room. Bulatov was accompanied by a man whom Antonov did not know; he was tall, with greying hair, beetling brows and a long moustache that drooped in Cossack fashion.

"Alexander Stepanovitch," said Bulatov, introducing them, "this is Peter

Ivanovitch Storojev, the District Commissar. Lives in Dvoriki. Remember him? He's one of us and a man of consequence."

"Come over to my place sometime!" said Storojev quietly and impressively. "You'll always be sure of a welcome."

"Well, now, Peter Ivanovitch," Bulatov turned to Storojev again. "The Bolsheviks have seized power in St. Petersburg. That's a fact. We've got to be ready for anything. You're a prominent man in your district, you ought to go about the countryside and strengthen our connection with the people there. You remember all those we talked about? That's right. Tell them—from the committee—that they've got to be ready."

"All right," Storojev agreed quietly. "I think I'll see the lawyer now. I've come about a bit of land. I've got to see about the title deed. I bought the land by the lake—from the local landowner."

Bulatov gave a chuckle. "Why are you in such a hurry, Peter Ivanovitch? It'll be yours in any case."

"That's true, it should be ours. But still, this is safer; if the money's paid it's all perfectly legal."

Storojev held out his hand, first to Bulatov and then to Antonov.

"Come over and see us, it's very nice out at our place."

Bulatov and Antonov were left alone. The chief lit a short pipe, threw away the match, went over to the couch and sat down.

"Do you know why I made this appointment with you here, Alexander? This morning there was a meeting of the committee. You've been given an important job to do. You're to go to Kirsanov as superintendent of the county militia. Are you pleased?"

Antonov said nothing, but the color mounted to his cheeks.

"Everything's gone to pot," Bulatov went on. "The Bolsheviks are the bosses now in Petersburg and Moscow. Judging by the rumors that are going about, we'll all be under their thumb tomorrow. There are instructions to hold ourselves in readiness and collect reserves. See? They're all your friends in Kirsanov. Do you know Peter Tokmakov?"

"You bet I do," Antonov replied with a grim chuckle.

"Well, we're sending him to you. Then there'll be Loshchilin, Zuyev, Yegor Ishin, Plujnikov and Davydov—you're all from the same place, aren't you?"

Antonov nodded.

"Send them to the larger villages," Bulatov ordered. "Find some people and make them look for reliable people. Collect arms and keep your eye on them. Get ready; we'll let you know of any new developments. And see here, Alexander, if you do your best, we'll give you a great deal in return. You understand? You can do as you like there—we give you a free hand. Only don't make a slip. If you live with wolves you've got to howl like a wolf, and when the time comes to grab them by the throat, grab and make sure you don't miss your aim."

"I'll do my best," Antonov ground out. "Don't you worry. I'm no fool."

"Well, now, the next thing. Tonight, there's a little job to be done, but—it's got to be done very, very neatly. In the yard of the town hall there are no end of rifles. They must be taken out tonight, tomorrow will be too late. We'll send them off to you—in your new place you can hide them somewhere. I've spoken to Leonov, who's in charge of the guard. He'll send men. You're all to meet at your place at two in the morning."

Their host entered the room at that moment; and a delicate perfume pervaded the apartment.

"Well, now I'm free at last—and at your service! Masha, refreshments!"

"Oh, dear no, no refreshments for us today. You know what—let me introduce you, and then we can talk business."

"No, really, we can't," Bulatov protested. But the maid was bringing in a tray with a bottle and some food. "Look at this. It's from our own private store! For our favorite guests only," the host boomed. "One glass each, have one glass, at least."

Bulatov talked while the host and Antonov listened. The gist of the talk was that Mr. Fedorov and Alexander Stepanovitch ought to trust each other from this time on, and that all the instructions received from Fedorov by Antonov should be unfailingly carried out. And, to make it safer, Fedorov was to be Gorsky, not Fedorov, to Antonov for the future.

Having gulped down a fourth glass to cheer them on the way, the visitors went out to put on their street clothes.

"Is he somebody?" Fedorov whispered, delaying Bulatov for a moment as they went out.

"This chap? Oh-ho! A character! A downright desperate fellow! The sort that would march up to the cannon's mouth! We keep a tight rein on him; he'll come in useful yet. We're sending him to Kirsanov now as superintendent of the militia. Every convenience for him there: honor and authority. Reserves, man, we're preparing our reserves!"

Bulatov gave a deep, baying laugh. In the hall Fedorov drew Antonov aside and asked:

"So you're going to Kirsanov? Would you be interested in doing a little business in connection with, say, meat, butter and eggs?"

"I can always get you five score eggs," Antonov said with a chuckle.

"He-he—I'll need them by the thousand, see. . . . Anyhow, I'll be seeing you again, I'll drop in or send someone."

"Always glad to see you," replied Antonov, thinking to himself: "What a crook!"

. . . Next morning the Bolsheviks announced that a large quantity of rifles had been removed from the yard of the town hall by some unknown person or persons. There were hot words exchanged at meetings, the newspapers were unsparing in their criticism of the political opponents, and party factions appointed one commission after another to look into the matter.

The commission appointed by the municipal council was attended by Bulatov, Antonov and a Bolshevik representative. It sat for three days, questioning watchmen, railway employees, and militia in vain. The rifles had vanished without a trace.

"It is a question whether these unlucky rifles ever existed at all," was the comment of the Social Revolutionary paper that published the report of the commission. "Does not this look like a Bolshevik fabrication and may there not be some sinister purpose behind it?"

Antonov left for Kirsanov a week later. It was wet November weather. The town was as silent as ever; the wind scoured through the streets; armed patrols roamed about. The Bolsheviks were in power.

To the south of the province of Tambov, down among the marshes and streams, the remote village of Treskino hides from the world. Even before the first revolution the rich peasants of Treskino had been mixed up with the Social Revolutionaries.

More than once had Antonov hidden from his pursuers in the thicket near

Treskino; he knew every path, every curve of the River Lopatinka, every islet in the lakes, every moujik in the village. The Treskino moujiks knew Antonov, too, and had helped him more than once when danger threatened.

It was here, then, in a safe spot in the Treskino meadows, that he gathered the deserters who were roaming about the countryside.

July swam hazily over the world. The days were sultry. The ears of the rye were growing heavier, the scent of apples came from the gardens.

Gadflies danced madly above the River Lopatinka. The air was suffocating and hot. On the right bank of the river people had been gathering since morning.

With furtive glances about, men in short wadded coats, in long military overcoats, men who had not, apparently, washed for some time—crept out from among the bushes and, seeing others who resembled themselves, joined them.

In the meadow at mid-day there were about 2,000 hungry, ill-humored people armed with anything they had been able to lay their hands on.

When the sun was beginning to sink in the west, a group of horsemen forded the Lopatinka. The dripping horses bore their riders—Antonov's "band" of about 40 men—to the juicy grass of the bank.

The whole company were dressed alike in leather jackets, red riding breeches and red caps.

All the riders except Antonov, Tokmakov and Ishin dismounted. The deserters surrounded Antonov's troopers, fingering their jackets, stroking the cruppers of their mounts, admiring their rifles, making little clucking sounds of approval with their tongues, swearing ecstatically.

Alexander Stepanovitch Antonov scrutinized this collection of brutalized vagabonds who had hidden like rats in holes from both Red and White Guards and were ready to do anything for the sake of food and "moonshine" vodka.

"A bit raw, aren't they?" Ishin whispered to Antonov. "They'll lead you the devil's own dance yet," and he burst out laughing.

"Will you talk to them?" said Antonov, turning to Tokmakov, who was glowering sulkily at the crowd.

"Better let Yegorka do that, he's an old hand at jawing. Go and prate to the rabble a bit, Yegor. They'll understand you best."

"Now then," Ishin ground out, his face quivering, "I'll cut out that tongue of yours one of these days."

"Come on, start!" shouted a lean, unshaven fellow in a tattered Austrian overcoat. "Those bastards the generals give us a good bawler!"

The deserters shouted and fooled around. They knew why Antonov had collected them here, they had heard of him and guessed that the new leader stood in need of men.

Ishin, trying to control his restive horse, began to speak. He gave a good sprinkling of jokes and puns, and did not spare obscenities; the crowd of filthy unkempt people scratched themselves and laughed heartily.

A little apart from the crowd, a thick-lipped young fellow and a bearded peasant sat under a bush. The young man searched busily in his shirt for lice while he listened to Ishin's speech.

"You're a one!" he observed, as he fumbled in the tattered garments that stank of perspiration.

"We're as lousy as sin, and a basin of cabbage soup with mutton in it wouldn't do us any harm, I'm thinking. Only—will they fool us, by God? What do you think, Piatrukha? Just look at the fellow's mug—red as blood.

I bet he can put away a bit! How d'you look at it, Piatrukha? Listen, he's promising us red breeches and leather jackets. And—God blast your soul to hell—we'll fight for him! Ho-ho, my boys! Hurrah!" roared the fellow, waving his lousy shirt. And they all joined in with one voice.

Ishin burst out laughing and shouted something in Antonov's ear; the latter frowned. When the excitement had died down, Antonov ordered all ex-officers and non-commissioned officers to step forward; there proved to be a dozen of them. Antonov and Tokmakov rode up to them while Ishin continued to reply to the deserters' queries. The others of Antonov's company sorted the deserters into groups and made out lists.

"Antonov and I—I'm chairman of the Provincial Committee of the Union of the Toiling Peasantry," said Tokmakov, addressing the group of officers, "have been instructed by the Tambov Committee of the Social Revolutionary Party to announce a rebellion against the Soviet Government. You have the choice of these two things: either you're against the Communists and with us, or you'll die off somewhere in the woods. Well?"

The officers said nothing. Tokmakov and Antonov waited, their horses fidgeting restlessly, while the shadows lengthened in the meadow.

The silence was broken at length by a man with greying hair and a scar across his cheek. The overcoat he wore was clean.

"May I ask," he said, "what you intend to fight with? The Bolsheviks have arms, men and stores. And in this rabble there are no more than three rifles to a hundred snotty-noses."

"We've got ten thousand carbines, revolvers, cartridges and machine-guns hidden in the lakes and woods," replied Antonov. "We know well that you can't catch hold of fire with your bare hands. We'll have plenty of men. The good, solid farmer is being fleeced. The Communists are ruining him, he'll soon cry out. The good solid farmer will follow me, and that's where our stores will come from."

"But *will* he follow you? That's the question," the greyhaired man persisted.

"He has nowhere else to go. We're his party," Tokmakov observed.

"Ah, well, I'll take a chance. Shake hands," said the greyhaired man. "I'd take the side of the devil as long as it's against the Reds."

"You've got a grudge against them, have you?" Tokmakov asked, and his eyes gleamed.

"Yes, I have."

"That's a regular wolf!" Tokmakov whispered to Antonov. "What shall we call you?" he asked the grey-haired man.

"Yakov Vassilievitch Safirov. I'm a corporal, was decorated with the Order of St. George. I'm in hiding now because I wiped out a commissar in a fit of temper."

"I appoint you commander of my first regiment," said Antonov. "We'll be seeing each other again tonight. Peter, chat a bit longer to the folks here while I go over to the village."

Then he galloped away across the Lopatinka.

Ivan Storojev, a peasant of Dvoriki, had three sons, Simon, Peter and Sergei. The eldest, Simon, had been in dire want ever since he had started on his own. He was unlucky. Although quiet and hard-working, although he toiled day and night in the fields and the yard, grew lean and gloomy, strained every sinew at his work—still want held him as if in a vice.

The youngest, Sergei, was called up for military service, and got into the

navy. When the property was divided up between them the front half of the hut and two sheep fell to Sergei's share. The sailor handed them over to the care of his brother Peter, saying as he went away: "We'll figure it out later."

Peter was the only one who did well. People said: "Peter Ivanovitch has all the luck. He's been able to make luck turn for him; he's got a head on his shoulders, that fellow."

He married Praskovia Vassyanina although her family were beggars. And he made no mistake.

Praskovia had innumerable brothers and sisters. Some of them cleaned the cow-sheds for Peter Ivanovitch; others looked after his horses when they were grazing at night; a third group nursed his children; a fourth did odd jobs both heavy and light. It was mutually profitable: the bellies of the Vassyanin children were kept well-filled with Storojev's soup, while their toil kept Peter Ivanovitch's barns full to bursting. Storojev himself worked fiercely, like fury; he was up betimes and late to bed. And he was greedy, with a calculating, tenacious greed.

On Sundays and holidays Peter Ivanovitch went to the market at Griasnoye, trading in wool, onions, cucumbers and flax. If he had no goods of his own to sell, he bought them up from his neighbors, making a small profit.

In addition to this Peter Ivanovitch was fond of lending seed, flour or even a horse to the quiet, submissive folk of the village. Afterwards these quiet folk would labor in Storojev's fields and garden in payment of their debt, and even make low obeisance to him and call him their benefactor. "We'd starve if it wasn't for you taking pity on us."

Storojev did not hoard his money. He preferred to lend it out. He put away every kopek, every ruble, and ran his farm with machinery, special breeds of horses and cows. People gasped with admiration.

Long had Storojev been eyeing the fat acres around Lake Lebyaji. Splendid land! He was calculating that soon he would be able to leave the village, build a large farmhouse, plant a garden and a grove of silver birches around it, build stables and barns and out-houses, and garner the heavy rye, golden oats and brown buckwheat into his barns.

It was a very suitable piece of land and it tempted him, drew him.

"Water for the horses and cattle would be just a stone's throw from me," he was thinking. "No fear of drought; there's no better soil than this for gardens, for cabbage or carrots."

He often drove over and gazed down from the mound upon the coveted acres spreading below him.

He knew every boundary here, had already decided where and what to sow, where to put up the fences for the beasts and their watering place. Land. His father's life and that of *his* father and grandfather before him had been spent on the land, and they had all clung tenaciously to every inch of it.

"We belong to the land," he used to say to his neighbors. "It's land that fills our bellies. Whoever has land has strength. If I had a thousand *dessyatin* of land I'd be a king."

He often saw them in his dreams—those thousands of dessyatins—a limitless plain of loam threaded by streams, dotted with groves of trees, fat, fruitful land—and himself the owner of it. He, Peter Ivanovitch Storojev strode over it and the boundary of this sun-bathed land was far out of sight.

Land: the crumbling clods that he loved to scoop up with his hands, pressing them between his fingers, smelling and even tasting it: bitter, close soil. It contained everything—honor, wealth, power.

"Everything changes, and drifts away," Storojev argued. "People come and go. But land never dies in the hands of a good farmer—it lives—forever. . . . There's nothing dearer than land."

He wanted to plough more of it, seize more, squeeze it tight in his hands, guard it from people with a strong fence, keep fierce dogs to watch it night and day, dogs that would tear in pieces anyone who dared to encroach on his land, his strength.

He ought to have more sons who would settle on more land and own it, so that all the folk would look up to them and respect them for their strength.

He was greedy, covetous of land. Often he would go to his neighbors' land and, sighing enviously, think to himself:

"Ah, if only I had this. If only I owned more land. Only let me set foot on it firmly like a master! Then I would really be someone. Then all the moujiks would look up to me, and all the local officials would cringe before me."

Peter Ivanovitch despised them all—the peasants for their stupidity, the authorities for their covetousness. He was fond of listening to what Sergei had to say when he came home from sea. Sergei brought his brother forbidden books which Peter read and interpreted after his own fashion. In a quiet spot in the garden in the daytime, he would have long talks with the sailor about the Tsar. He had decided in his own mind that this stupid fellow, the Tsar, would have to clear out and hand over the power to strong, calculating men like himself.

War only irritated Storojev. During the Russo-Japanese War he had hides his wife's brother, the drunkard Adrian, for two years from conscription, and had only laughed maliciously at the news of his country's defeat. In 1914 he had no faith in victory.

He welcomed the revolution.

In May 1917, he went to Tambov and returned with a red ribbon in his coat and the rank of "district commissar." He joined the Social Revolutionary Party. It suited him.

"This is the party for moujiks," he said. "It'll stand up for us, for the capable farmers."

He drove to meetings and conferences, learned to speak and to listen, to make promises and go back on them.

But all these new cares and anxieties did not prevent Storojev from thinking of his own affairs.

While people were still speaking of the revolution in a whisper, Storojev drove over to the landowner in the neighboring village, frightened him out of his wits, flattered and threatened him and bought twenty dessyatin of land by Lake Lebyaji for a mere song.

It was a prosperous year for Storojev. There was such a crop of rye and oats that the barns were ready to burst with abundance of grain. The cows had calved, the calves were flourishing, he had blooded stallions for his mares, and his pigs were fattening well.

That autumn Peter Ivanovitch was elected to the Constituent Assembly. He paid another visit to Tambov and to the Social Revolutionaries, saw a great many people and remembered a great many.

Storojev looked much younger when he returned to Dvoriki. The title deed for the Dake Lebyaji property was in his pocket; Fedorov had contrived the whole thing, it had all been done in a legal way. His dream had come true.

There were rumors about the Bolsheviks, and a new revolution, but Storojev paid no attention to them. The year had been such a successful one. He strutted about the village, with an important smile on his face, shook hands

with the moujiks and began a conversation with, "We're for the Russian peasant, you know."

Storojev ordered the peasants not to do any damage to the landowner's estates. He saved the squire from a great deal of unpleasantness and helped his old friend, Philip the forester, when the peasants wanted to set fire to his house in revenge for his greed and harshness.

It was December when Storojev heard of the Revolution. In January he started out to attend the Constituent Assembly, but returned quickly: the Bolsheviks had scattered it.

And in February his troubles began. . . . Sergei came home and demanded his front half of the house and his sheep. It did not matter so much about the sheep—what were a couple of sheep to Peter Ivanovitch?—but the sailor took things into his own hands and stirred up the poor and the soldiers.

Peter Ivanovitch had grown used to the house and looked upon it as his own. He had forgotten to brand his brother's sheep, so how was he to distinguish them from his own? And he was by no means ready to hand over the power to the sailor and his comrades.

When his brother mentioned the land by the lake, Peter Ivanovitch flew into a rage.

"What, I'm to give up my land? To whom? What for?"

But they took away half of Storojev's flock of sheep, three horses, the grain out of his barns, deprived him of his arms, tore up the paper that declared him "District Commissar."

The young Vassyanins refused to work. Only a boy called Lenka remained and worked for him as he had always done. He had been brought to Storojev as a child, his mother had bowed down to the ground before the farmer and begged him to have pity on her poverty and take her son as a farm laborer.

Storojev had no love for the rabble from Fool's End—as the street was called where the poorest of the peasants lived their wretched lives—but he took a fancy to the boy, who was bright and quick-eyed, and obviously full of mischief. Storojev hesitated, seemed inclined to refuse stubbornly but finally agreed to take him.

Lenka's mother set up three candles for Peter Ivanovitch in the church, out of gratitude.

Storojev beat Lenka unmercifully for the least thing. Lenka caught it even when he was not guilty, if he merely happened to get in his master's way when he was out of temper. The boys used to call Lenka the "whipped boy" until one day he fought a huge boy named Sashka Chirikin, five years older than himself, and smashed his jaw. Lenka grew up in the family like a sixth son.

Storojev cared for none of his sons as much as the youngest, Kolka.

The elder boys all found work on the farm, where each earned the bread his father gave him. They took after their father, they were big, silent, capable lads and good workers. Each had quick, malicious eyes and grasping, greedy hands.

"Give me more sons, mother," said Peter Ivanovitch to his wife. "Ah, how fat and round you are. . . . Bear me more sons—to work for me. We won't die of hunger in our old age. One of them will give us a corner somewhere."

Praskovia always had her babies very quickly, with a sort of menacing haste.

"They fly out of you like bullets," Peter Ivanovitch said, laughing. "Well, you must have a rare strong inside, mother."

But Kolka's birth was a difficult one. Praskovia lay there blue in the face, her eyes wide open, her lips twitching convulsively, her body writhing in dreadful agony.

Whether it was that Peter Ivanovitch's heart failed him this time, while the beads of sweat stood out on his high forehead, or that something within him trembled for his wife—but at all events, when Kolka with a piercing cry sprang from his mother's womb into the light of the cold, sparkling December day, Storojev forgot to utter the usual words about a new worker for the farm.

For the first time real paternal joy filled his heart.

Peter Ivanovitch was usually grim and silent at home. Only Kolka with his blue eyes and serene laughter gladdened his father's silent days. At times he would clamber on to his father's knees, and with a clumsy caressing hand tickle his cheeks and choke with laughter when his father tickled him with his thick, black beard.

He was like a kitten—soft and caressing and leisurely. He would go up to his father, and stand with head thrown back. One could never tire of gazing down into those blue eyes, as serene and still as a woodland lake, unruffled by wind or storm, where only the sun shone and the topmost branches of the trees nodded their green manes.

For some reason or other Kolka loved the young farmhand best of all. And Lenka loved Kolka, played with him, taught him to ride. At four years old the little lad could grip the horse's mane and ride by himself. And the horse seemed to understand who it was that gripped his sides with small, frail legs.

Perhaps it was because he was aware of this love of theirs, that Storojev did not throw Lenka out when it was known that his brother, Listrat, had gone over to the Bolsheviks.

Lenka stayed where he was as if nothing had happened; all was as it had been. He worked enough for three as usual, was as gay as ever, lounged about the streets at night and chased the girls behind haystacks.

Storojev knew of Lenka's prowess, and raising a warning finger said: "Aye, they'll thrash you yet, you son of a bitch, because of the women."

"Who'll thrash me?" Lenka laughed. "The girls come after me themselves."

Lenka laughed heartily, but Peter Ivanovitch spat viciously and walked away, growling.

"Young rascal, a downright scamp; up to any mischief!"

After the misfortune of the autumn Peter Ivanovitch threw the care of the farm on to the shoulders of his brother-in-law Adrian, and young Lenka.

Grey-haired Adrian muttered to himself all day long. Lenka went about the yard singing, and Peter Ivanovitch sat indoors on a bench in the corner nearest the door. His heavy palms laid on the table, he read and conned the bible, seeking for condemnation of the new ways.

"Here's what the prophet says," he said. "They shall rule for the space of eighteen months and then Prince Michael will come and drive them out. There's Michael for you. He may be a Romanov, he may be a degenerate, but, devil take him, he'll be better than my own brother Sergei."

He went nowhere except to church, never spoke to his brothers, was cross and surly with his sons.

And with the exception of Kolka, no one loved him.

Storojev had a long, private talk in the barn with a messenger. Late

at night he saw him off by the back way. Then he roused Lenka and ordered him to have the horses in the early morning.

"Where are we going?"

"To the moon," Storojev retorted. "Your business is to get the horses ready and mine is to plan where we're going."

"Ill-tempered old cuss," said Lenka to himself. "Goes about chewing the rag—that's all he knows how to do. Grey-headed old devil!"

Lenka thought with regret of how Listrat had wanted to take him along to Tsaritsin with him. Lenka had not felt inclined to go: he was used to the village and to Peter Ivanovitch, used to walking out with the girls till late at night, and climbing into the priest's orchard to shake the apple trees and afterwards creep on all fours in the grass in search of the ripe, juicy fruit. Lenka had refused to go to the town with his brother because he hated to leave the village. But Lenka had another reason for not wishing to go—his sweetheart lived in Griasnoye. She had a long plait of light hair and was called Natasha.

Formerly Lenka had often gone to Griasnoye, with Storojev and occasionally alone, on market days.

The boy had taken a fancy to this girl, but his courting had been in vain. She did not mind walking out with him and listening to the accordion. She even let him put his arm around her waist, and she liked kissing, but she would never sit behind the haystacks with him. She knew how to look after herself.

"What sort of a match are you for me," she said to Lenka. "What good are you? Have you got money or property? You're only Storojev's farm hand—and what am I to do—be his cook or what? Go and find someone else, my lad!"

Yet she loved him, damn it, he knew she loved him. But she was stubborn, and bold, and had a sharp tongue. He could not but think of her, he had not strength enough to forget her. Lenka sighed and was angry with himself yet could not forget her. No matter how bad the weather and how bad the roads he tramped in to Griasnoye to see Natasha.

A fine rain was falling next morning; the sky was covered with leaden clouds. It was cold out in the fields. The wind arose, the fields were deserted, over the stubble the daws were squabbling noisily.

Storojev sat huddled in his overcoat in the carriage. On the box Lenka was crooning a wordless song and thinking about Natasha. It was a long time since he had seen her, five months or so—not since Storojev had ceased going in on market days. Lenka had missed his sweetheart sorely, and Natasha herself had sent to ask: "Why don't you come to see me? Have you found someone else?"

"Someone else"—indeed? It was of Natasha alone that Lenka thought day and night. Yet he could never get away to Griasnoye. That was the worst of a farmhand's life. Now at last he would see his sweetheart, for the road led through Griasnoye. His master's destination was unknown to Lenka, but that did not worry him. They would be obliged to stop in Griasnoye to feed the horses.

Just before they reached Griasnoye, the mild rain of the morning became a downpour. They were wet to the skin when they arrived in the village. As usual, they called at the priest's.

After a talk with the priest, Storojev ordered Lenka to saddle a horse. Three hours later he rode on farther and Lenka stayed behind in Griasnoye.

The rain was still falling. Lenka looked on with amusement as Storojev scrambled awkwardly into the saddle. The mare cantered down the road, splashing the slush about.

Lenka chuckled to himself and went in to his supper. Two hours later, having fed the grey stallion, Lenka stepped outside the gate. Away at the end of the village an accordion whined and a squeaky voice could be heard singing. Lenka looked up at the sky across which torn, smoky clouds were racing. Now the moon hid behind them, now it swam out again and shed a ghastly light over the thatched roofs, the muddy road, the trees that were wearily casting off their garb. Lenka took out a comb, gave a twist to his curly hair, tilted his cap at a devilish angle and set out in the direction from which the singing came: Natasha would be sure to be there.

He reached the end of the street; on some logs before a solitary cottage sat a group of boys and girls. In the centre of the group the accordion player sat with the air of one conscious of his importance. Resting his head on the instrument, he played a "suffering" tune, while Natasha sang the refrain in a deep voice:

What a shame, what a shame!
From every man three poods of grain.
What a shame and who's to blame?
The soldier's at the moujik again!

In order not to interrupt Natasha's singing, Lenka sat down, unobserved by her, beside the lads, offered them his tobacco, accepted sunflower seeds in return, and listened to the talk of the people around him. . . . A fellow in a tanned leather coat was telling them in an undertone about Antonov.

"Wears red breeches and a red cap, and rides an Arab horse."

"Is he a general or what?" came a voice out of the darkness.

"He's no general, he's just an ordinary jail-bird who was sent to Siberia for highway robbery."

"Well, and what about him?"

"Rides an Arab horse," the speaker continued, "and goes about calling up the moujiks. 'I'm all out for you,' he says."

"Ah, to the devil with 'em. . . . They're all out for our grain, that's what it is!"

"M—yes," the young man continued, paying no attention to the malicious retort. "Rides about asking the peasants to join his side. Then he gives them thoroughbreds to ride and goes out to fight the Communists."

"Listen, do you know Petrukha from the new village? Well, he's joined Antonov, too. He cleared out and nothing more's been heard of him," said a little boy.

"What, he's gone?"

"Yes. Took a horse and rode away."

No one spoke. The accordion played on—a desperate tune; the singers were competing among themselves.

"M—yes," the lad in the tanned coat drawled out at last. "Well, let's stroll through the village, boys, why should we sit here like this?"

"It's muddy."

"Well, what about the mud! We won't drown! Hey, girls!" he shouted, "Come along for a walk round the village!"

The girls got up, the accordion player put himself at the head of the procession, and thus, with songs and laughter, they all set out through the quiet streets.

Lenka went up to Natalia and plucked her by the sleeve of her closely buttoned jacket. The girl turned and gave a soft little laugh.

... Now the torment of waiting was over, the dreary days were past, and he was here beside her, her own dear lad, her longed-for sweetheart. She had not seen him for five months! She pressed close to him, slipped away from the crowd and drew him back to the haystacks.

"My love," she whispered, embracing him. "Lenka, my dearest, how I've been longing for you. I thought you'd forgotten me, given me up and you didn't want to see me any more." She laid her head on Lenka's breast.

It was growing light when they parted. A rosy streak was visible far away on the horizon. The earth was steaming, and the wet grass bent under the weight of yesterday's raindrops.

"Well, what about it?" Lenka asked, as he kissed Natasha for the last time. "What shall we do in the future?"

"I'd go to the end of the earth with you, Lenka, dearest.... I'll beg Father to take you for a son-in-law and maybe he'll agree. And if not—then—I'll go and work for Storojev, too, so as to be with you. Let me go home now, Lenka. No, you mustn't, Lenka.... Let me go.... love...."

At midday Lenka went to see her father, Frol Bayev, and talked to him. Frol looked at Lenka appraisingly, as a farmer looks at a young bull before buying him. Lenka turned red and breathed unevenly, blew his nose, and carefully avoided looking at Natasha. When she had left the room, Frol said:

"I live in a poor way; a cow and a horse and a good-looking daughter—that's all I have." He laughed, exposing his bad teeth. "But she's a grand girl! I'll wring your neck, you young rogue, if you do her a dirty trick. Well, have her then, if you want her. It's hard enough for me to carry on the farm work, so you can do it now."

So they came to an agreement. The wedding was to be in six months' time.

Four days later, at dinner time, Peter Ivanovitch came back. Until his arrival Lenka never left Natasha's side. The Griasnoye boys threatened more than once to break his ribs.

"Look at that son of a bitch," they called after him in the street. "You'd think they hadn't any girls of their own, where he lives—coming after ours."

"Bash his head in for him and then perhaps he won't be so keen on coming."

"I'll bash yours in for you," Lenka snarled back. "I'll give you such a thrashing you won't need to send for the priest—just run and order your coffin!"

Master and man left Griasnoye for home towards evening. Storojev placed in the carriage a heavy roll he had dragged with him and covered it carefully with straw. But Lenka caught a glimpse of its contents, and what he saw made him spit violently for they were books and proclamations printed in big, black letters. When they had gone three versts or so, Lenka turned to his master and said:

"I'm getting married, Peter Ivanovitch."

"Oh!" said Peter Ivanovitch, astonished. "And what sort of a countess, I wonder, has hooked in a good-for-nothing scamp like you?"

"Natasha Bayeva," Lenka answered proudly. "A tip-top girl!"

"The girl may be tip-top but she's got a fool for a match! A nice time to marry, this! We're going to fight first, Lenka, and then you can get married if you like. See? Get the girls out of your head. These are terrible times,

there's a war on. We've got to fight—else we'll be ruined, ruined for good and all!"

Peter Ivanovitch huddled down in his coat and said no more. Neither did Lenka. His spirits suddenly went down.

Choking down the tears that rose like a lump in his throat, he bawled to the horses: "Now then, you! Stir yourselves, can't you?"

From this time on Storojev knew no peace day or night. He announced in the village soviet that he was employed by a Petrograd office in connection with the purchase of horses. He showed a certificate from Gorsky, who was in charge of the Tambov branch office (and had been given this paper by Antonov). On this pretext he absented himself for weeks on end, travelling about the district. Lenka frequently went with him. Sometimes Lenka was sent alone to deliver some letter to unknown people, receiving from them in return notes or strange messages to be delivered to Storojev by word of mouth —messages such as "It's raining and the blacksmith's forging," or "The bird has flown, catch it in the river."

Once Storojev was nearly caught. There must have been a screw loose somewhere or other, something snapped and the Cheka went for Storojev's friends right and left. Warned of his danger, he escaped.

For a fortnight he roamed about the country, keeping himself alive with game he caught and covering his tracks with infinite pains. While he was living thus, in a mud hut among the bushes, winter set in.

Often, when the weather was bad and he had to lie low in the hut, Storojev would laugh grimly to himself as he remembered how cleverly he had tricked the Communists. He lived on his hatred of all men, and placed all his hopes in the forces that Antonov was collecting.

It rained for several days without ceasing, the hut grew very damp. One day Storojev woke up wet through and found the floor under water. He tried in vain to light a fire; the damp aspen wood hissed, smoked and went out. He could not get warm, his teeth chattered, his legs ached and so did his head.

Storojev realized that he was ill, that it was impossible to stay in the hut any longer: he would have to seek another shelter for the winter. He resolved to make his way to his old friend Philip the forester, whose section lay not very far from the place where Storojev was hiding.

He followed paths that were scarcely visible and led by quagmires and reedy swamps, where more than once in days gone by he had hunted with the forester. Sometimes he got stuck in the bog, fell to the cold, slippery ground, then struggled up and went on again, finding his way by a kind of sixth sense. . . .

His head ached worse than ever, he was cold and hot by turns. His head was in a muddle, he became delirious. He had almost reached the forester's cottage when his strength failed him, and he fell.

He came to himself a week later. A woman's face was bending over his. Storojev attempted to rise, but strong hands held him down in bed.

Philip Ivanovitch was an old friend of Storojev's. He had served in the same regiment as Adrian, but his father—a well-to-do farmer—had bought him out very soon. When Philip returned from the regiment, he asked for his share of the property, sold up goods and cattle and went away to a neighboring county, where he got a job as forester. He vowed he would make himself rich. Philip invented such rules and regulations as made it impossible for

anyone to steal even a twig, much less a log. Then he caught peasants red-handed and was merciless in extorting fines from everyone he caught. Tears did not move him, to complaints he turned a deaf ear. In 1917 he was nearly murdered. The peasants threatened to burn down his house.

Then it was that Storojev saved him. Storojev came over, persuaded the peasants to leave him alone, shamed them, threatened them. They shouted and talked a great deal, but a crowd does not bear malice long. They talked themselves out, and afterwards it seemed as if they had forgotten their grievances.

Until 1918 Philip lived in peace and quiet. He hid his money and sold his cattle, so that when the Bolsheviks appeared they could shake nothing out of him. When the detachment had gone, Philip bared his milk-white teeth and neighed in a deep, sly voice. Now he began to be harder than ever on the peasants.

"I'm working for the Soviets now, you bastards," he said. "And they'll show you freedom, they will!"

"Well, I suppose we're quits now, Philip and me," Storojev thought as he lay in bed.

He dozed off again into a sound, healthy slumber, such as often visited him these days. With every day he gained new strength. He could walk about the room now, and sometimes sat for long spells by the window, gazing into the dense, dark mass of the woods while quiet thoughts drifted through his mind. He did not want to remember that the frosts would soon set in. and make the swamp firm, and that he would have to leave this warm, clean room.

A damp, sticky snow was falling. Peter Ivanovitch went out into the yard and stood for a long time watching the woods dress in white; how submissively the firs accepted the heavy pall of snow on their shoulders.

Philip came back from the station at last. As they sat round the tea table that evening, Storojev said to him:

"I've got to go away, my friend. Wait, don't interrupt me. I don't want to be ruined myself and I don't want you to be, either. You may expect visitors any minute now. Advise me, will you, what to do and where to go?"

Philip sat silent for a while, smoking. Then he said, "I won't keep you back. It's high time for you to be going. We're lucky they haven't smelled you out already. Well, look here; there's a hut not very far away. I know that two fellows hid in it in the summer. They might have been deserters or—devil knows who. It's an excellent hut. Join them if they're still alive, if not, live by yourself till spring and then go where you like. I'll come and see you; there are stores in the hut, and I'll keep you supplied with cartridges. Don't worry. We'll just wait till the frosts set in properly and then we'll be off."

At last a hard frost came. The pines rang and the walls of the house crackled. Philip fitted out Storojev with felt boots, a fur coat, linen, a sack of dried bread, and a supply of cartridges for his rifle, and by dawn they were already well on their way.

Towards midday the wind rose, the noise in the trees grew harsh, the ground wind set the snow whirling in the cuttings. The horse was going over virgin snow, and sometimes plunged deep into a snowdrift. They drove all day. When it was beginning to grow dark Philip reined in the horse, went over to the trees and called Storojev to him.

"Do you see that tall pine? Make straight for it. When you reach it, turn

to the left and keep on through the hollow for about half an hour. When you come to some oak trees, go straight through them. You'll come out on the fringe, cross it and look for the hut thereabouts. It's in the fir wood."

He repeated all the landmarks and then added: "See you keep straight on, don't go to the right—that's the spot where the wolves are—traps are set for them there. Well, goodbye, and God bless you."

Storojev slung his rifle and the sack across his shoulder, kissed Philip heartily and strode into the wood without looking back. The forester stood gazing after him for a long time, then with a gesture of dismissal got into the sleigh, turned the horse's head and whipped him up.

Storojev found the tall pine, turned to the left and reached the hollow, which was overgrown with low bushes. The wind was much stronger here in this unsheltered place, it set the powdery snow whirling, and flung it in his face, cutting his cheeks and lips. The stars were shining brightly now. Suddenly Storojev heard a muffled howl.

"Wolves!" flashed through his mind. He quickened his stride. But it was hard to make headway against the wind, which made him stagger. The snow got in his eyes. At last, the dark wall of oak trees rustled before him. The wind grew quieter here. Storojev sat down on a tree stump to wipe his perspiring face, and loosen the ice from his beard and moustache. Suddenly he heard a long-drawn howl close at hand. He jumped up and ran into the oakwood. He tramped for a long time, panting, plunging up to the waist in snow, bruising himself on invisible stumps and fallen trees, struggling through prickly bushes. He could see no way out of the wood, there was not a gleam of light. On and on he stumbled, falling and getting up again, muttering curses and prayers; the vile, tenacious bushes whipped him in the face, and tore the skin till the warm blood ran down his cheeks and mingled with his perspiration. Storojev's strength was ebbing fast. He dropped the sack, buried it in the snow under an oak and, somewhat lightened now, blundered on ahead, driven by the pursuing howls. The wolves were coming nearer. Sometimes they gained on him, sometimes he seemed to see their shadows flit by close at hand, a few paces away. He would have shot at them but was afraid that the noise would give him away.

He came out on the fringe at last. It may have been the same spot of which Philip had spoken, or it may have been some other, but at all events, the oakwood had come to an end and a spacious glade flooded with moonlight lay before him. Here the wind had its way: it was sharp and cruel. Striving to warm his frozen hands with his breath, Storojev started across the glade. He looked for the fir wood, but could see no sign of it. On every side he saw nothing but old, gnarled oaks.

In the centre of the space he fell into a snow pit, and sank up to his chest; the rifle slipped off his shoulder into the snow. He was struggling out of the snow drift, when suddenly iron teeth of terrific strength closed on his left hand.

The trap! He had fallen into the wolf pit!

In vain he twisted and turned, struggling to free himself from this captivity. His feet sank deeper and deeper into the snow, his hand was caught fast in the trap. In vain he called for help. The only response was the howling of the wolves.

Storojev gave up at length. His strength left him, his voice grew hoarse. There he lay motionless, bound fast by iron and cold. The wind blew the snow over him. The cold penetrated to his heart and his blood froze. He lost

consciousness. Confused visions and faces whirled through his head: people long since dead came before his eyes; the piece of land he had bought by Lake Lebyaji—and himself standing in the fields, alone on his land. And the horror of dying in that forest, alone among the trees, the snow and the wolves came over Storojev.

He opened his eyes for the last time. The stars shone coldly overhead. . . .

In the winter of 1920 Antonov, at the head of a small detachment, galloped through a blizzard into the village of Zolotoye. He wiped out the local Communists, looted the cooperative and towards evening summoned the people to a meeting in the schoolhouse. They came reluctantly, some even had to be whipped into it.

Antonov's cavalry locked the doors and stood, arms crossed; they were strapping young fellows, fierce looking and well dressed in leather and cloth.

The Zolotoye peasants whispered among themselves asking what new army could this be. Antonov in his turn eyed the peasants with curiosity. In Kamenka and the surrounding villages where he had been putting up since the autumn, the folks had all been friends and relatives. This was the first time he had had to address utter strangers, and devil knew which way they would turn.

Yegor Ishin opened the conversation. His red shirt was open carelessly at the neck, his small, oily black eyes had a sly twinkle, his cheeks were a bright, hard red.

"Comrade Ishin of the Provincial Committee of the Union of Toiling Peasantry will speak," Antonov announced. "Are you ready to listen?"

Ishin went up to the table, put out his cigarette, looked around the noisy assembly and smiled.

"Good-day to you, moujiks!"

"Good-day, good-day," they replied.

"It's good-day all right, but the question is how good is it? Isn't that so? Aye, what an ill-humored, sulky lot you are, to be sure. I wonder why? The government's your own, isn't it? It gives you enough to eat and drink, cares for you—sends you commissars. Why aren't you satisfied?"

"Got a tongue as glib as the devil's, haven't you, young feller?" someone shouted from a corner.

"Talk sense, none of your nonsense."

From the desks in front an old man got up: he was grey and decrepit.

"What are you grinning there for?" he growled. "We don't want to look at your teeth. Tell us what you called us here for, what army you belong to, and who's your head? Do you hear me? Don't wear folks out."

The old man tapped the floor impatiently with his crutch, grunted and sat down in his place.

"Well, then, listen and I'll tell you a story. It'll be a bit more lively," and Ishin, moving the lamp aside, sat down on the edge of the table.

"Once God sent a raven a bit of cheese. . . ."

The moujiks laughed, the room grew noisy once more. Then Ishin went on:

"God, they say, helps those who help themselves. It's the same here. The raven was nearly killed all because of that bit of cheese. They threw bricks at her and nearly killed her while she was searching for the cheese, and then the cat nearly grabbed and ate the poor bird. . . . Yes, that bit of cheese cost the raven something. She sat in a tree and wondered how to set about

eating this dainty bit. And then a fox popped up from somewhere. And the fox started to palaver to her: 'Ah, what a lovely, clever bird you are, to be sure, Miss Raven, and what a true friend I am to you. From olden times, we know God has always told the fox to stand up for the raven. I've been looking for you specially to ask you if you'd like about ten more pieces or so of cheese. Just say the word and I'll fetch them here in a second!' Have you ever heard this fable, friends?"

"Oh, yes, we've heard it before all right."

"The fable's one thing, but you're telling it differently."

"Well, you know the end. The raven croaked out at the top of her voice, the cheese fell out of her beak and the fox got it. Wasn't that how it happened?"

"That's it, that's it."

"Well, then, moujiks, don't you recognize yourselves in the raven?" Ishin looked around the class room, and his face was no longer smiling and gay. The corners of the room were dark. A cloud of blue tobacco smoke hung over it. Antonov's men stood silent, rifles ready.

"I tell you what: you yourselves are the raven. Isn't it time you were reconsidering things? Isn't it time you were catching that fox and skinning it before it skins you? How much has been left you? How much did they squeeze out of you yesterday?"

"We had to take 150,000 poods to the station yesterday," the old greybeard hissed, tapping his crutch impatiently again on the floor.

"You'll take another 150,000 yet," said Antonov, speaking up suddenly. "Brothers and peasants," he cried, "come and join us! We're organizing the Union of the Toiling Peasantry—all for each, each for all is our motto. Come and get your rifles, young people, we've got plenty for you. Let's go and fight the Communists. They haven't got a firm footing yet—the Bolsheviks—we'll easily knock them out."

"Knocking them out is one thing," put in a man sitting beside the greybeard. "But the point is who'll we be setting our backs next."

"We're not going to set anyone on our backs," Ishin replied. "We're going to rule ourselves. Whatever you get from the land is yours: no dividing up is going to be done! If you want to trade—you can, if you want to keep three cows—you can, it'll be all the better for the state."

"Devil knows what you're up to, or whether there's any truth in your words! Maybe, you're one of the fox breed yourself."

"What, me? A fox?" Antonov jumped up, thumped his chest, and started to rant about his sufferings in Siberia. Saliva spurted from his lips as he talked of the people and what he felt for them.

Infected by his excited shouting, the peasants left their seats and crowded round the table talking, interrupting each other. Above the noise Ishin was bawling about the Constituent Assembly, about the Communists who had, he asserted, sold themselves to the Germans, about robberies. . . .

"I'm going to sign up with you," cried a young fellow in a cloth jacket.

"Sign me up as well."

"Give us the rifles!"

Through the uproar, random shots rang out in the street, following the rattle of a machine gun. . . . As if driven by a hurricane, people rushed to the doors. Blinded by panic, they fought and tore and cursed.

Then the church bell tolled the alarm. Through the streets galloped a body of horsemen, from what army and from where none could tell. With

great difficulty Antonov gathered his men together and escaped from Zolotoye. The Reds pursued them for about forty versts, and then, having driven them to a little village, scattered the whole company.

In Vassilievka, where the expedition was being led by Tokmakov and Safirov, it proved impossible to raise the peasants at all. Peter Tokmakov was not much of a public speaker.

Bad luck followed Antonov till February and he lost almost all his men. He was forced at last to retreat from the Kirsanov villages with 200 faithful followers.

In the spring Antonov received news from Tambov through Gorsky. It was an order from the secret committee of the Social Revolutionary Party. It said that the time had now arrived to extend the organization, that the moujik was ripe for rebellion.

The republic was fighting the kulaks. Pilsudski was advancing on Kiev. Wrangel was preparing to emerge from the Crimea. Peace had not yet been concluded with Finland, Latvia, and Esthonia. Moscow was fighting on a great many fronts.

Day and night the troops passed by; people going out to fight the generals, the atamans and bandit leaders. People wanted to eat, the soldiers and workers were waiting for bread, their children were crying for food.

The rich moujik had plenty of grain, but it was growing harder and harder to get it away from him. The name of Antonov—the "moujik's ataman"—began to be heard oftener in the villages of Tambov. His agents set rumors afloat that he was going to defend the peasantry, that he took nothing in exchange, neither horses nor bread, that he needed nothing except people. And towards springtime the moujiks began to seek out Antonov and invite him to their houses, and join his band. The first to leave the village were the peasants who had hidden their grain in pits from the Communists. They resolved to defend their grain with their rifles in their hands, and try their luck with Antonov.

And now—from Khitrovo, from Afanasievsk, Verkhotsenie, Ponsari, Pavlodarovo, Pustovalovo, the rich villages in the counties of Borisoglebsk, Kirsanov, Morshansk, Koslov and Tambov—the moujiks went to join the detachments of Antonov and his atamans. Antonov gathered his troops together in the woods, and called old friends from the villages to his side.

Once again he remembered Storojev. He was told that hunters wandering in the district had heard the howling of wolves and come upon the tracks of a man. They had found Storojev, taken him to a village and handed him over to the authorities.

The rest of the time that remained till spring Storojev spent in the prison hospital, and then in prison. He was tried and acquitted; there was no direct evidence against him. Peter Ivanovitch had managed the Antonov business very cleverly. His escape he accounted for very simply by saying that he had been afraid of the village Communists.

Storojev returned home quiet and submissive. It seemed as if he would never forget the nights spent in the forest, as if the restless days were over and, now a broken man, he had given in.

He became still more unsociable, still more silent, he spoke very seldom and gave no thought to the farm.

In April, when rumors of Antonov were rife in the village and it was said that he was marching at the head of an army against the Bolsheviks, Storojev merely chuckled, but said nothing. About that time strangers began to make their appearance in Storojev's back yard. Everything took place at night,

however, with extreme caution and secrecy. Sitting in prison, Storojev had learned a thing or two.

But one night in May Adrian roused Peter Ivanovitch.

"There's a man come on a horse from Kamenka," he whispered. "He wants to see you, says it's very urgent. They'll ruin you, the blackguards, they'll ruin you again as sure as fate. What's all this now—have they come out into the open again?"

"Hold your tongue," whispered Peter Ivanovitch, slipping out of bed. Praskovia groaned and snuffled in her sleep. Peter Ivanovitch covered her up with the quilt, put on some clothes and went out.

"Now, what do you want?" he demanded roughly of the rider. "What do you mean by coming to me on horseback? If you're caught it's only one head the less, but if I'm caught—it means a thousand. You fool!"

"There was no other way, it's an urgent letter. And anyhow, I came round by the back of the houses, and no one saw me: I came from this place, I know every foot of it."

Storojev raised his head and looked more attentively at the rider. He recognized him as Sashka Karass from a neighboring farm.

"What! Have you gone over to Antonov, too?"

"Yes. And there are such a lot of folks there, Peter Ivanovitch, it's like a beehive."

Storojev went into the passage, turned up the night-lamp, put on his spectacles and began to read. The note, from Tokmakov, ordered him to organize the most reliable and trusty people he knew into secret committees of the Union of Toiling Peasantry. Instructions were enclosed.

It pointed out that the committees might keep armed forces at their disposal, that they should thoroughly purge all villages from which the Soviets had departed of suspicious elements, and should shoot every person suspected of being in sympathy with the Bolsheviks.

Tokmakov gave detailed instructions as to codes, secret signs, how to pass messages, meeting places.

"It looks as though we'd started! Go back to Tokmakov, Sasha, and tell him he need have no doubts. Now be off with you!" He saw Karass out, closed the gate after him and turned back into the house again.

It was a still, warm night. Away at Fool's End a dog was howling, and the rattle of a cart could be heard in the distance. Storojev looked round at that quiet world, at the little timber houses sleeping under the moon—then he crossed himself and went to bed. Praskovia awoke as he was lying down and pressed close to him.

Storojev wondered how much longer he would be able to sleep quietly like this. He remembered the months of worry, the meetings, the testing of people, the doubts, the hesitation, and the night in the forest.

"If God wills, everything will turn out well yet," he said softly, putting his arms around Praskovia.

The rumors of Antonov's approach grew more persistent every day. Peasants at work in the fields were often approached by riders with bits of green cloth in their caps. These strangers explained about Antonov and the distribution of land, about grain and land, asked for water to drink and rode away.

Fires began. The threshing barns and houses of the local Communists were burnt down, but the people responsible for the crime were never found. One after another, young men from well-to-do farms vanished from the village.

Unknown people dressed in common clothes waylaid Communists or members of the village soviet in the fields and beat them almost to death.

Andrei Kosyel, one of the poorest of the poor peasants, ran in to Peter Ivanovitch one day.

"I was just coming from the lake where I'd been fishing for carp—there's nothing I love better than a good carp, you know. I was going round by the back of the houses, when—what do I see but a fellow creeping into your threshing barn. First he has a good look round and then—in he dives—through some hole or other. Cross-my-heart-and-hope-to-die, it wasn't one of us, but some bandit or other!"

Peter Ivanovitch calmed Andrei Kosyel, and even made him a present of an old cock. He also told him to hold his tongue about the occurrence, as you never knew what people might think. After that he boarded up the hole in the threshing barn.

So the summer went by and autumn came.

Towards the close of November the local Communists called a meeting in the school house, to which they invited the Poor Peasants Committee and some of the men just back from the front.

Listrat attended the meeting. He had returned to the village just five days before and got stuck there. Sasha Chirikin was present, too. He was a pal of Lenka's—a daring young fellow and a great hand at playing the accordion and at fighting. The carter, Nikita Simeonovitch, came with his son Fedka, who was a member of the Young Communist League.

Nikita Simeonovitch had been in the Bolshevik Party, too, at one time, but had not been kept in it very long. He had got into some mischief while he was drunk and had been excluded from the Party.

He came to all the meetings, however, even to those of the Party cell, as usual, and was a member of various commissions.

The Communist meeting was attended by people from other villages, sometimes from a distance, from outlying parts beyond the Balashev branch of the railway.

Antonov's men had interrupted the traffic on this line more than once, had assaulted the employees, looted trains going to Moscow, and hidden grain in the villages.

In Sampur they had been singing the song of Antonov's men for a long time.

"I'll make myself a green bow
For my boy's a partisan. . . ."

The Communists began to be looked upon with disfavor in Dvoriki. It was better nowadays not to mention grain, or distribution of land. Otherwise the villagers would guffaw and tell you off in such a way that you would wish you were three miles off and never show your nose there any more.

"Have you heard that Antonov doesn't take anything from us peasants?" said Seliverst Petrov, the former village elder, to Nikita Simeonovitch. "He's not like your Communists, fleecing us for all they're worth. Antonov's starting private trading again, too. And what have you Communists started?"

All these rumors and talk led the Dvoriki Communists to call a meeting that night in the school house. Each one reported what he knew, what he had heard. It was clear to each that the time had come for them to leave the village and move nearer to the main forces of the Reds.

There was one safe spot, the railway between Tambov and Tsaritsin and the stations along it. It had not yet come within reach of Antonov's arm. So

they resolved to leave Dvoriki. Sashka Chirikin was the only one who protested, calling it a disgrace and so forth, but Listrat promptly stopped him.

"Now, none of that stuff, you fool, calling us cowards and all the rest of it. The Party says that at certain times it's no shame to retreat. In short—we've got to clear out to the station or else these bandits will kill us off like hens. Better be getting ready. If anyone's afraid to leave his wife behind, let him take her along with him. We'll have to organize the first Communist detachment."

Then and there Listrat was elected head of the detachment, and Sashka Chirikin head of the reconnaissance party. It was nearly morning when the meeting broke up. Red-faced young Fedka, trudging home behind his father, whined:

"You crazy old devil, you're going with them yourself and leaving me behind! Dad, I say, Dad! Let me go in Sashka's reconnaissance party."

"Hold your tongue, you simpleton!" growled Nikita warningly. "Else I'll give you reconnaissance, blast you!"

"Well, look here, Vanka Frushtak's no older and he's joined up in Sashka's party."

"Hush, I'm telling you, snotty nose!"

All the same, when they reached home, Nikita announced to his wife that he and Fedka were going to the station.

Next day Storojev knew, word for word, all that had taken place at the Communists' meeting: one of his own spies had been present. Towards evening a large detachment of Red Cavalry entered the village. The ill-nourished horses could hardly drag their hoofs out of the country sludge, weary riders swayed in their saddles. Without unsaddling their horses, they gave them some hay (for there was not a grain of oats in the Soviet) and dispersed among the houses. The commander of the detachment sent for the local Communists. Listrat appeared. When he left the commander he was fully equipped: he wore a leather jacket, and a revolver and a couple of hand-grenades hung at his belt. With spurs clanking, he strode off to the Soviet. In an hour's time the Communists had all been collected. Nikita Simeonovitch arrived with a pair of lively horses harnessed to a gig, to the box-seat of which he had attached a red flag. A machine gun stuck out at the back.

Before evening closed in, Listrat, accompanied by two riders, paid a visit to Storojev. Without exchanging greetings with the master of the house, merely bidding them all sit where they were, Listrat began to search the front room, the bedroom, and kitchen. Then he went down into the cellar, climbed up to the ceiling and even tapped the walls.

Storojev sat grinning all over his face. "What are you so pleased about, I wonder?" Listrat demanded sulkily, as he brushed the dust and cobwebs from his tunic.

"Because you're in such a bad humor," said Storojev.

"Where's Lenka?"

"Away on business," Peter Ivanovitch chuckled. "He went off at daylight to Griasnoye, he's got a sweetheart there."

"We'll meet again yet, Peter Ivanovitch."

"Oh, yes, sure enough, we're not likely to be parted for very long. Well, and what message shall I give your young brother from you?"

Listrat banged the door after him as he went out.

The Red Cavalry detachment left that night. In some of the houses women were weeping; their hearts told them sad times were coming.

That night Lenka returned from Griasnoye, and in the morning Peter Ivanovitch left to join Antonov in Kamenka.

Snow was falling and a chill wind was blowing. The horses trotted over roads hard with frost. Storojev did not speak, and Lenka cantered after him in silence.

Storojev spent about a fortnight in Kamenka. Even Antonov's notes had very little effect on the people at headquarters. While they were searching for men, and arming them, and making plans and maps for Storojev, precious time slipped by. Storojev missed his home and his son Kolka; he worried constantly, scolded Lenka without reason. The latter did not heed his scolding, he was fascinated by the crowd and the noise.

Lenka spent all day long in the street, for to sit at home meant to be tormented with longing. On the way to Kamenka he had stopped at Griasnoye and seen Natasha's father.

"When's the wedding to be?" the latter had asked.

"Oh, this damned war!" thought Lenka. "How can a fellow get married when everything's topsy-turvy like this. And yet I ought to get married, I'm getting worn out with waiting and so is she."

New people were constantly coming to Kamenka—deserters, desperate sailors, prisoners of war who had not yet been able to get out of Russia, whole families of well-to-do peasants. All of them were demanding something, waiting for something, living on something, living somewhere or other, and the whole of this ignorant, tattered mob that had missed its way gradually formed into regiments and detachments and were dispatched to the forest, the villages, the farmsteads. They disarmed small bodies of Reds and scattered before the slightest suggestion of a serious attack, in order to return to Kamenka, where life was free and thoughtless.

It was the first time Lenka had seen so many people lounging about the villages in idleness, boasting of the numbers of people they had killed, and the spoils that had fallen to them in battle or had simply been stolen under cover of the confusion.

But very soon Lenka grew tired of idleness. He was bored. Since he had nothing else to do he took to helping Esau—the landlord of the house where they had put up—to look after the cattle, clean the yard and take manure out to the fields. Esau was getting ready for spring. At first he was suspicious of Lenka, but soon learned his worth. After a while, when he no longer felt shy of the boy, he would complain to him in a whisper about the difficulties of living in such times.

"It's like this, Lenka boy," he said, "we never thought nor even dreamed of Kamenka getting to be a capital, God blast it! Would you believe it, they change my horse three times a day—indeed, I've stopped counting. It was a sorrel mare a while ago and now look—she's turned into a gray gelding. That's a capital for you. No, Lenka, my boy—war means ruin for the moujik. Sowing time's coming on, and the Lord only knows what we're to sow and what land we're to plough. Phew! Devil take it all!"

Esau Simonovitch spat viciously, and swore in a whisper. Then he tightened the calico sash round the waist of his torn winter coat and, throwing the sack of chaff across his shoulder, went out grunting into the yard.

Lenka strolled into the street, where he always saw the same scene. Horsemen galloped to and fro, a regiment passed by; the wind tossed the banner on which was written: "Land and Liberty, Long Live the Constituent Assem-

bly." A dashing accordion player was tearing at his instrument for all he was worth and singing:

"Come along, Dunya,
Come along, Dunya,
Come along, Dunya, into the wood.
Let's pick, Dunya,
Let's pick, Dunya,
A burdock in the wood."

It was the same every day. There was a regiment going out today, the guns and cases of ammunition rattling as they passed.

Captured Communists were being led out of headquarters to be shot, and the convoy was squabbling about the clothes and boots to be taken from the prisoners. The doomed men huddled down into their coats, and spoke to each other in an undertone, their faces pale, their lips inflamed.

"Oho, now they are going to pop 'em off," said someone just behind Lenka.

Lenka turned round. A strapping fellow dressed in a short sheepskin coat, and with his jaw bound up with a red handkerchief, flourished his whip.

"That's the third lot they're taken out today. Yesterday, they say, they caught two airmen, and cut out stars on their backs. Antonov said they fly so near the stars, they might as well be given stars as identification marks"—and the fellow burst into loud laughter. "Whose man are you?" he asked Lenka.

"We're from Dvoriki, not far from the station. I'm with Storojev."

"So you're not under Antonov yet, then?"

"No. We're going to be."

"Phew! And this is the second year we've been fighting."

"The moujiks are crying out because there are no horses left."

"There'll be enough to last our time."

"And will that be a long time?" asked Lenka. "Or do you think the war will be over soon?" And once again his yearning for Natasha came over him. "She's all alone there," he thought, "she misses me very likely, and sits crying. Oh, what a life. . . ."

The big stranger picked his nose with intense concentration.

"Ah, devil only knows if it's going to be a long war or not. They say it'll last till we win—a complete victory."

"Never mind. The commander told us the Cossacks are getting near Moscow. The Communists can't last out more than a month or six weeks at most."

"Where are you from?" Lenka asked.

"From a place near Sampur. Kusnetsov is our commander and oo-h, he's a holy terror."

"Does he drink?"

"Doesn't he? I should think he does. We all drink, of course. They're brewing moonshine all round here—why should they save the grain? The Reds'll only come and take it away. Yes, we drink, you bet. So do the commanders. Antonov himself and his Marussia have a bottle now and again—and then dance about naked." Here the fellow broke into another guffaw.

He began to urge Lenka to come with him to a widow named Katra who lived on the grazing ground. Out of sheer boredom Lenka agreed and trailed after the fellow. They went by narrow tracks past the gardens and the haystacks—from behind which came stifled sounds of talk, laughter, moans,

squeals, past the threshing barns and houses that had been either burnt down or wrecked by the guns.

The young man made his way cautiously to Katra's house. It stood apart from the rest, like a stake thrust into a plain. There was no light in the window, but when they got quite close, Lenka could hear drunken singing, noise and laughter. He went up to the window, found a crack where the curtains did not quite meet, and peeped inside. About ten people—both men and women—were trolling a song very much out of tune, each one singing as best he or she could. The women were sitting on the knees of Antonov's men, who were rolling drunk. Lenka, who, after his two weeks in Kamenka, knew many of Antonov's own regiment by sight, noticed several squadron and platoon commanders among the company. His companion knocked at the door.

The noise in the house ceased for a moment, then the company began their discordant song again.

"Who's there?" a woman's voice demanded.

"One of yourselves, Katria, let us in."

Lenka was about to step over the threshold after the big fellow, when, observing that a small detachment of riders was approaching the house at a rapid trot, he dived into the yard instead. The horsemen drew rein and surrounded the house. A few minutes later the drunken crowd were being marched under escort to Kamenka. Lenka followed them at some distance.

When they reached headquarters, the riders dismounted and one of them entered the house. He reappeared after a few minutes followed by Safirov, whom he had called out of the meeting. The meeting had lasted now for five hours. Safirov came out hatless, buttoning his short thick coat, and stopped by the railing of the flight of steps.

"Who've you caught?" he asked.

The man who had called him out of the meeting named those he had caught. Safirov chewed his moustache angrily.

"What's all this?" he shouted at the men who could hardly stand on their feet. "What d'you mean by boozing when you're supposed to be under arms."

"If we've got freedom, we're free to drink," someone hiccupped.

"Silence!" bawled Safirov, getting into a rage. "Hold your tongues, you bastards! Everyone of you gets 25 lashes. And I'm telling you once and for all—whoever I catch boozing in future, I'll have him thrashed without mercy. Now, then start away!" he ordered.

A huge crowd gathered round the drunken men. Some expressed sympathy with the sufferers, others shouted to Safirov: "Quite right!" "True for you!" while the peasants, after standing a little while, moved away.

The punishment began. The riders, who had dismounted, now thrashed the drunken men unmercifully. The latter tried to beat them back, while roaring and cursing Safirov.

"You wait, Yashka!" cried one of the commanders, less drunk than the others. "We'll remember this to you. You'll get a taste of our belts one day!"

Safirov watched the scene for a few minutes longer, and then, when he had had enough of the noise and cursing, he went back to the meeting.

Antonov had long been expecting a representative of the Tambov Social Revolutionary secret committee. Gorsky had written a month ago to warn him of the man's arrival. The lawyer frequently sent men to Antonov. From

the center they brought him important papers, copies of orders issued by the commanders of the Red forces who were fighting the rebels. Where Gorsky obtained these copies was known only to himself.

Through Gorsky, Antonov had learned of the failure and arrest of the Social Revolutionary leaders. Now a man was again being sent to him with important information, and he was expecting him any moment. That morning Antonov received a visit from Tokmakov, who looked thin and yellow. The red hairs of his beard stuck out uncompromisingly from his skin. He had been ill and was only now beginning to get about.

"Why are you in such a bad mood?" asked Antonov. "What is it you're dissatisfied with?"

"Oh, Alexander Stepanovitch, I don't know how to tell you. You've been praising this Storojev to me. I've talked to him—and he's a clever fellow, of course. But just ask him why he joined you. I'll tell you why: because his main idea is to get back his own land and all the rest means nothing to him. That's the way things are."

Tokmakov stared gloomily out of the window; the usual crowd of ne'er-do-wells were lounging about, guffawing, chewing sunflower seeds, and going on with their usual horse play.

"That's how things stand, old chap," he sighed. "It would be easy enough to get rid of this crowd of vagabonds—easy as winking. Peter Ivanovitch will stick to you of course, you're his last hope. But is Peter Ivanovitch anyone? Is Peter Ivanovitch politics? 'Aha,' the moujik will say, 'so that's who Storojev is depending on—on Antonov, is it?' And he'll send us both to the devil together with our party."

"Well, I think," Antonov objected, "that the well-to-do moujik is a figure that suits us very nicely. A moujik like him—clever and strong, the whole world rests on him. Let the Bolsheviks depend on the rapscallions and idlers. Just now, of course, the down-and-out peasant is supporting the Bolshevik because he's terribly covetous, but once he's grabbed something for himself, he won't want the Bolsheviks any longer. I know the moujiks: everyone of them has a mean, rascally little soul—no use hiding it. And in each of them sits a Peter Ivanovitch, take my word for it. The world is made like that, my lad."

"That's so, but still, it's not quite so either. My head's fit to split. Alexander, my inside burns, I ache all over—it's past bearing! Have you anything new?"

"I've got the newspapers. . . . Read them, there's something about us in them."

Tokmakov read the Moscow papers, followed the political events of the day, knew what was going on all around him. And for that very reason his life was not a happy one. Now peace had been concluded with the Poles, the Bolsheviks had taken Perekop, and were driving Wrangel out of the Crimea. Tokmakov sighed heavily, but kept his unpleasant thoughts to himself. It may have been that he saw, even then, the senselessness of the struggle, but the inexorable logic of events drew him on. Once having begun the business he had to finish it.

"Alexander," he said suddenly to Antonov. "Have you ever thought how things will go on afterwards, and where we're heading for, eh?" It was the first time Tokmakov had talked to Antonov in such a hollow, doleful tone.

"What's up?" Alexander Stepanovitch rose. "Why are you so upset all of a sudden?"

"Oh, never mind," Tokmakov replied. "It's nothing, just old thoughts. Yes,

and I was telling you—the Reds are beating the Poles, too. Luck's on their side, Sashka! They'll tackle us next, so you can look out!"

There was a knock at the door. Plujnikov entered followed by someone else—a short, stout man in a short coat like a railwayman's, of tanned leather.

"My name's Firsov," he said, addressing Antonov. "I'm the special representative of the Central Committee of our Party." He produced a document. The others crowded round him and shook hands. Antonov gave a twitch to his blouse and straightened the bedclothes.

"Call Ishin," he shouted, opening the door a crack. "And let no one else in, you understand?"

Ishin came in, trying to finish munching something in a hurry. They all sat down. Firsov took out his handkerchief, mopped his brow, and said to Antonov:

"I've been sent by the Central Committee of the Social Revolutionary Party to inform you, Comrade Antonov, of the following. We suggest that the rebellion should be liquidated, and that we should move to the north of the province to conduct educational work there If you fail to submit, we shall renounce you."

Antonov's face turned as white as chalk, and his cheekbones stood out sharper than ever.

"Ah, you blackguards!" he cried. "I knew you would betray me. Petka, Grigori, Yegorka—why don't you speak? I'm betrayed! betrayed!" Antonov suddenly moaned. He crumpled up and sank against the table uttering hoarse sounds. His body writhed convulsively and he began to foam at the mouth. They all rushed towards him.

"Again!" Ishin said with a gesture of disgust.

"What's the matter with him?" Firsov asked in a whisper.

"He has fits."

An hour later Antonov came to himself.

"Get me some moonshine," he croaked. "And call a meeting of the Union for tomorrow."

That evening in a dark room in the rear of headquarters, behind closely-shuttered windows, Antonov, Ishin, Marussia and Hermann Yurin—the young, handsome, impulsive second-in-command of the First Army—went on a spree.

Antonov gulped his liquor from a tumbler, taking nothing to eat with it. He was silent and his laugh was grim. He threatened all the time to go somewhere, and smash someone's head, he groaned and ground his teeth. Sometimes he would embrace Marussia, and then suddenly thrust her from him with frightful curses. But she would not leave him alone. Then he hit her in the face.

"Beat me, then, beat me," she screamed, shaking down her hair. "Beat me, Sashka, you'll love me all the same, because you've no one else."

She laughed, drank vodka straight out of the bottle, swore and cried. From time to time Antonov, his unshaven face green now, would fix his dull eyes on one point and begin to sing his favorite song.

"Transvaal, Transvaal, my country,
My country all ablaze."

That night, when Ishin was asleep, Antonov, who had quite taken leave of his senses now, went down the back stairs with Hermann and Marussia. Staggering, they made their way to the barn, where some Communist prisoners

had been awaiting their fate for two days. Antonov pushed aside the sentry. Hermann, who had taken more liquor than the rest but was not so drunk, opened the barn and lit the candle in the lantern hanging by the lintel.

There were three prisoners—two men and a girl—a teacher. They were crouching in a corner, clinging to each other, waiting for death.

On seeing the prisoners Antonov fired into the corner without taking aim. The girl uttered a cry.

"You can't shoot," said Marussia. "Let me."

Staggering, she took aim. The revolver missed fire. She aimed once more. Suddenly a little, dark man sprang out of the corner and shouted: "Hangman! Murderer! Here, kill me then!" and tore open the breast of his shirt.

With a trembling hand Hermann pulled out his revolver and shot at the white patch. The man fell and crawled towards his companions in the corner.

Antonov fired again at the living, stirring, groaning dark mass; then suddenly a figure began to rise out of it. Clutching at the log wall for support, the girl raised herself until she stood upright. Then she turned towards her murderers. The light flickered over her face, crimsoned with blood, and over the hands stretched along the wall.

Marussia gave a wild yell, dropped the revolver and rushed out. Hermann retreated, his face distorted into a mask of crazy terror. And, as in the morning, Antonov croaked hoarsely, fell on the floor and began to beat his head against the boards. . . .

People rushed into the barn.

At the committee meeting of the Union of Toiling Peasantry, over which a special guard from Antonov's own regiment had been placed, about thirty persons were present, consisting of the entire upper strata of the rebellion, the members of the committee and the commanders of various detachments.

Antonov came with a bandaged head—he had cut his forehead during his fit. He did not dare to look at Tokmakov. The latter knew of the events of the day before, and did not even greet Antonov, but sat gloomily in a corner, leaning his head on his arms, and apparently paying no heed to the proceedings.

Storojev, who had been invited, observed the attention paid by the leaders to the peasant delegates from outlying districts. Antonov called them by their full names, moved the best dishes towards them—the table was set with refreshments, mutton, jellied meat and beer. The well-dressed moujiks stroked their beards impressively, listened to the speeches and snuffled with an air of importance.

"Brothers," Ishin began, passionately, "and citizens, this man sitting here," he pointed to Firsov, who sat as if carved out of stone, not looking at anyone —"this man has been sent to us to demand that we lay down our arms, and end the rebellion."

The delegates whispered excitedly and scowled at Firsov.

"Have we been fighting for this then—to give in now. We know our Central Committee—well, they've betrayed quite a number of people before this. But they can't auction us off like cattle. They'll choke—and it isn't merely us they're trying to sell, but the *moujik*."

"The blackguards!" shouted a bearded peasant dressed in a new cloth jacket.

The meeting was in an uproar; they all got to their feet, and crowded round Firsov, who said nothing but sat, observing the confusion with a sneer.

Tokmakov was thinking as he sat here, of where to go, and whom to follow, and where to find truth. But when he thought that he would have to

give in, he felt a shudder down his spine. No, he wanted to live—and to live meant to struggle.

"The blackguards!" roared the same bearded moujik in the cloth jacket. "They've roused us and now they're throwing us over. Alexander Stepanovitch, we're going to stick to you! The land distribution's the end of us, their ways are the ruin of us. We haven't a stitch to our backs, we're covered with lice and sores. You lead the troops and I'll get on horseback myself and go fight till the end. Here, let me give you a kiss."

The moujik came up and kissed Antonov.

"Well, did you see that?" said Antonov's brother, Dmitri, an overdressed, pimply young fellow, to Firsov.

"You tell them what you've seen here. I say, brother," he called out to Antonov, "take 'em by the neck and chuck 'em out," he pointed to Firsov. "Haven't you fed them long enough, haven't they lived on our blood long enough? Let's go off by ourselves now, it'll be more fun. If it's robbing we're going to do, why, let's rob. . . ."

A sudden silence fell; the delegates twitched their noses thoughtfully. Antonov scowled at his brother. Tokmakov hissed something in his ear.

Then one of the peasants turned to Tokmakov and said: "Who is it Dmitri Stepan'itch wants to rob—I can't quite understand?"

A murmer of voices came from the delegates, who crowded together and began to whisper. Dmitri, feeling he had put his foot in it, sat down. Firsov smiled. Tokmakov again hissed something angrily in Antonov's ear. Antonov went up to his brother, took him by the back of the neck and pushed him out of the room.

"He's silly," Antonov observed morosely to the peasants. "He's young yet. I hope you'll excuse him. Now we're all tied with one rope for life and death. We're going to stand out to the end. Hey, you," here he turned to Firsov, "tell your elders of the Central Committee I don't give a damn for them! I'm going to rebel to the last drop of blood in me. I'll beat and burn and whip but I won't give myself up! I'll smash the commune yet."

"Fool!" Firsov flung out scornfully. "You don't understand the situation, you warrior, you blockhead! Submit now, there's still time—else they'll crush you and wipe you out."

"They won't crush me!" Antonov roared. "I've got two armies and I can get a third if I only so much as hold up my finger. I'll set all Russia swimming in blood; I'll drown the Bolsheviks in blood. And your elders along with them, the blackguards, the traitors! Sold themselves to the Soviets, have they? Lost all sense of shame? Never mind, moujiks, we'll fight, never give in!"

But the gloomy delegates made no response. They began to drift out of the room, without any farewells. Firsov laughed gaily, shaking and wiping the perspiration from his face. Red and angry, Ishin went up to him, took him by the collar of his jacket and shook him like a puppy.

"That'll do, no laughing, you son of a bitch!" Then he flung Firsov into the corner with all his might and went out.

Storojev gave orders that evening for the horses to be saddled. Lenka, who had been longing for home and Natasha, ran off delighted to the stables. The road home lay through Griasnoye.

It was night when they set out; the air was sharp in the open fields. A wind arose and formed snow ramparts. It was a snowy December, the eve of a new year—1921.

Translation from the Russian by Anthony Wixley

Jean Cassou

The Massacres of Paris[1]

Excerpts from a New French Prize Novel

There was a bivouac in the garden of La Trinité. That was where we had lunch at noon. Women served us with soup in wooden bowls. Some of them were quite pretty and gay and devilishly flirtatious. That was indeed the district for pretty girls. Little clouds rolled across the sky, and the tops of the houses were lost in a gold-spangled mist. I listened with delight to the drawling accent of all those, men and women, who encircled us and busied themselves with us. It seemed to me that never until then had I heard the Parisian accent.

"It's pleasant here," I said to Becker, who looked at me with round eyes.

Then we worked at a barricade on the Place Blanche until night. From neighboring houses people brought out coverings and mattresses. But I was so tired that I could not get to sleep. I had got beyond sleep. A lantern hanging from a stake made a hole in the obscurity like a great eye. I heard the voices of sentries: *"Passez au large!"*[2] Then I felt that I was protected; this passerby would not come walking over my body, would not trample us down before he went on gigantically striding over the barricades to rejoin the Versaillaists on the conquered heights of Montmartre. No, he would pass on and away; we would have still our night of respite.

Our night? What night? How many evenings and nights had passed since the entry of the Versaillaists? I could no longer keep count. Bah! What change had actually taken place in the position? Formerly they were at Ansières, then they were at Clichy. Now they were at Montmartre. I felt myself thoroughly well sheltered on my mattress behind my barricade. Squatting nicely against this wall, surrounded by splendid companions, watched over by the fine May night which leaned upon me and spoke to me like a woman. "Women again!" Becker would say. But Becker was not talking any more. All day he has said nothing. I do not recognize him any longer, and now he is sleeping. Whither then have passed his philosophy, his speeches, his witticisms? He is sleeping, I don't know any longer what he is, whether he is a philosopher or a fool, whether he is a really complete and developed human being, my friend or my angel. But I am glad he is there. And still gladder that he says nothing, that he sleeps, that he lets me dream undisturbedly. Dream of what? Of women, you may be sure, women gathered together again in the perfume of the May night. Such are men, bizarre race: they may be in the most imminent danger, all bent upon the disputed triumph of a holy cause, they may know that they are on the eve of losing all, their cause and their life—well, all the same, they have to keep thinking about women. As if on the morrow they would enter some tranquil dwelling, raise a gracious tapestry and, advancing towards a smiling young woman, kiss her hand with tenderness and at the same time with deft negligence, and little by little with solicitous conversation win from her the supreme secret . . . *Passez au large!* There has been the last hope, there has been the last effort and the last feast and the last day and here is the last night, a vigil of terrifying gloom. But man

[1] See review on page 109.

[2] "Move on and keep off!" A cry used by French sentries as a warning not to approach.

still hears the disturbing voice of woman and all his being trembles, although he knows very well that all is finished and that there is no eternity.

Do you remember Noémie Havelotte? said the night to me. Noémie, you know? That was so amusing! Her eyes were a little silly, but they were the eyes of a woman, moist, the color of the sky. And that dress she wore at the ball. . . . that tulle, that gauze, that garland of roses. . . . you held all that lightness in your arms, and you kissed the fresh lips of your cousins when they came to sit at your bedside. You did everything thoroughly well . . . You were quite right, little male . . . little mortal man . . . And then you felt yourself filled with strength and pride, like an apple which reddens on its branch and swells out: when the teeth dig into it, they feel its firm and succulent flesh which yields after having done all it was able to do. Ah! you are the teeth and you are the fruit, you are the iron and you are the heart, you are . . . Who are you? A man condemned to death at his own desire . . . Do you think that Noémie and Clemence and Adélaide will weep for you? Do you know how angrily they disapprove of you? You are rejected, disdained, misunderstood. They are saying: "But really, how could Théodore have done such a thing? . . . He was so . . . We thought that Théodore was a sensible young man . . . He was so charming! We took him for something better . . ." Everybody is saying that about you. No one knows who you are. You should have been and done like everyone, but instead you have obeyed inconceivable and inadmissible fates. They make a little grimace, turn their heads, hide their eyes. At this moment, while you are lying behind your barricade and dream and take consolation from the May night, as if the May night existed! . . . people are speaking about you: in a dizzy uproar they are saying things about you in which you would not recognize yourself, things which do not concern you. For there was in you such a longing to be looked upon, understood, esteemed! Vain little man . . . You desire that people should say about you things which would really concern you. And that is why you had need of women. For your vanity was so mighty and so subtle and turned to a pride so knowing that you were not satisfied at all by being able to say: me. What you needed was that the voice of all women should say to you: thee.

Then you would have existed and your life, your misery, your strangeness, your self-willed and prophetic whims, your compromises, your decisions, and your final presence behind this barricade would have been justified. But you know very well that *that* is what the world never justifies, the world or women: but an appearance for the sake of which, in secret and after a hidden manner, you employ craft and seduction. Do you think it is your life that women have loved? No, but your hand, which is but a craftiness, or your glance, or a certain very calculated graciousness with which you were able to play instinctively like a full-blooded animal. They loved in you a sort of squirrel. And none the less, it has helped you a little in living to feel yourself a squirrel and jump from branch to branch in the forest of youth and primal petulance. You laugh? Good. There is still time for that. It is a time for laughter . . . and the time to let the arms fall back empty and the hands, the crafty hands with the fingers upon whose tips all the rivulets of spring have ceased to drop.

"There's something burning over there."

"The finance ministry."

"Really? Who told you that?"

"It was . . . "

Here a name like Roucardin or Foucardin. The name of a man who is going to die along with me. The calm voices continue, these voices . . . they

flow through the night like molten silver. I listen with sudden attention as if before leaving the company of these voices I were going to learn from them an indispensable secret.

"I had put in a request for my father. I'd have liked to see him a magistrate of the Commune. He would have been all right as a commissary of police. Don't you think so, eh?"

"Before the Exhibition, a fellow, if he was a baker, would make thirty-five francs a week. And a franc for extra batches . . . But recently you could count on thirty-eight or forty francs a week."

"I was in a bookbinder's and got four francs seventy-five centimes a day. When the Commune came I said to myself . . . "

And as for me, what did I say to myself when the Commune came? I turn over on my mattress and stretch myself with a desire to press something against my perishable body. Something that would be my own. My frivolity, for example. Because it was through frivolity that I took the side of the Commune when the Commune came . . . Yes, through frivolity. Carried forward, with a light gesture, by all these women who refused to follow me, whom I left to escape, but who gave up to me some of their most encouraging caresses . . Ha, ha! Some are killing themselves for principle. For me, glory. For that's what it is, glory, these thoughts of women that make a cortege for you in death—in company with these men who made four francs seventy-five centimes a day . . . That's very frivolous too, to let oneself be killed for four francs seventy-five a day! You don't want to leave me my four francs seventy-five? No? You want to take them away from me? And my skin along with it? All right, take my skin, take everything. You close your eyes, you see the starry eyes of women streaming forth and tumbling from the skies, you hear a last laugh like a scarf. And good-night!

Is that all? No, you can never say that's all. You are never finished with this human heart which even, and above all, at the moment when it is going to cease to beat, produces its most fantastic claim. No, that wasn't everything. It is only now that it's going to be everything. Now only—full of happiness, exalted, uplifted by my conquests and my triumphs, striving towards myself at last and free, oh! free as no creature of sea or air has ever felt itself to be free, I rise up with my arm around the body of the real love, no longer that of women, but love! Love! That which I have chosen from the depths of my being as the most true part of myself. No longer the part of me which I once wished people to look at, the subtle, lying, momentary part. But this beautiful girl within me whom I call Marie-Rose and of whom I no longer know whether she is a lovely girl or whether she has a mind, but who is my beauty and my intelligence. She with whom I have exchanged the fateful words in I no longer know what language, in I no longer know what place, if it were not in the deeps of the instant and of the night. In the deeps of the earth it may be, as two dead people do, lying side by side and feeling all their two lives completely flowing back within them, sudden and present. Oh! They begin to talk excessively, and I know all that they say. After passing through such a miracle, one can die again.

I extend my arm. Dead like me and like me alive, Marie-Rose is at the other end of Paris and I touch her. They are going to kill us, Marie-Rose, or rather, I who hate death am going to fling myself into death's arms when morning awakens death at the other side of this barricade, yes, Marie-Rose, it is I who am going to throw myself upon her with your love bursting within me like a wave. Present, absent, you are there, child of my life, dear woman's body, and I do not ask you what you may have thought of me during our

existence, neither whether I have pleased you nor whether you have understood me, nor whether you have loved me. You, you are not my glory, and what is my glory to me? And what is everything to me if you are everything, you, you, my love! Could I be jealous of you? Could I suffer because of you? What stupid questions! One puts them to oneself about women and one finds it diverting. But my love! Does my love love me? This question alone makes me laugh to the point of tears. And what does it matter to me if I die and there remains of me nothing, if I have had my love and my love dies with me?

That's everything this time. That's really everything. My love is in me, and I am doing what I had to do, everything. I have followed my path, my love has inspired me, and I have gone haphazard, yes, at the hazard of myself, following all the windings of my path, seizing some feeble light in passing, to come out here where the road is finishing. Is finishing? How inexact a word! Is it to finish, to be able to say: that's everything. There is in me a formidable and tranquil joy. It absorbs all the beginnings, all the impulses, all the hopes. And is there really joy in that which is finished? This joy is the enormous total of all that which is beginning. No, my path is not finishing; it has conducted me. And once again I can say: That's everything.

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

He is still asleep. The long carcass of a philosopher is stretched out beside me and sleeps as if there were neither essence nor accidents nor categories. He sleeps a common sleep, he has perhaps not even a dream of his own, but an inconsistent dream which he shares with a cow or a rat, a dream which scarcely rises above this soil made bare by our unpavings. Eh, Becker! Have you gone already? Are we already separated from each other? Shall we find each other again? I had still so many things to say to you! And above all to ask you. For in truth, I know scarcely anything of you, and I would like at least to know . . . at least to know who you were. And now it is too late, since you are asleep. And so there you are. You are no more than a passing figure in an existence which is going to smash itself, a word in a phrase. Nothing more than that? But answer me! . . . No, all right, sleep your fill. Spend your last night in sleep; that befits a great philosopher. That is worthy of a sage of antiquity. I find that very good, very historic. Sleep, old fellow.

Why don't I sleep myself? Bah! To think of all the things of which I'm thinking is like sleeping. Thinking of everything save death. For it is not a dead man who dies in me. But a living one, the very living and very happy lover of Marie-Rose. I want to declare it unto myself and to repeat it to myself: if I am here, it is not for the sake of death. No, no, no, no. I am not conquered, I have not despaired, I have not wished to die. I have only done what I had to do and not for duty. No, no, above everything, not for duty. For duty? What a horror! The very word stings me and freezes me. Pah! Horror, horror . . . No, I have done . . . what I was doing. I have loved Marie-Rose: that was not a duty. That was love. And I have loved . . . all that have led me here. I was on this side, among all the white roads that opened up in the forest. Among all the innumerable streets which cross in Paris . . . the great city . . . which is burning! I too am burning. I am not dying.

The stars glitter away in the heights of the warm night. One of them especially trembles as if it were going to faint. But it persists, brave star! Sleepers mutter around me. People are still talking, moving, starting again to dig up the paving: tock, tock. As if someone were playing with pebbles on a nocturnal beach, someone sorrowful and abandoned who said to himself: "What am I doing here all alone?"

And me? Good, I have played my game and not that of another. I have

put down all my cards. I might have cheated, attempted to take the cards of another, or simply demand a trump. I would have been on the other side now, like the others, like one of the others! Monsieur Havelotte would have loved me, and his wife too, indeed! Uncle and aunt were honest folk, whoever thought the contrary? I would have married one of my cousins, Clémence or Adélaide, little difference which, and I would have had mistresses . . . No one would have had anything against me. What is it that has happened, but what is it that has happened? Why did I stay here when this famous siege began? They all went away, they closed the doors and built walls, enormous walls of stone, and Théodore stayed behind to sleep and to look at the stars. The others, away over there, they too sleep and look at the same stars. You don't think so? But surely, after all, there is no reason . . . The same stars . . . No, not the same . . . No, no. . . .

But if I had gone with the others? With Noémie Havelotte and my pretty cousins, and all the women who are on the other side of the entrenchments? I would be among them all, I would stroke my watch chain, and they might ask me: "Dear Théo, what time is it? Oh, dear Théo!" I would answer: "Time to lunch, or to go to the ball . . . Midnight perhaps . . . " And everything would be infinitely calm around us, other hours would come, there would be new tremblings among the leaves . . . Perhaps it is that which will die.

"Passez au large!"

Off with you Noémie! Off with you, you others, all of you, all of you! Ah! What a tremendous pride this night held in reserve for me, lying there on the smooth earth! What pride! Off with them all, far from me, lying upon the earth, splitting up the last thread of my supreme thoughts. The night weighs down upon me, and this great wall that has been built, no, that I constructed with my own hands from the paving stones of the city. This great wall behind which my whole life is going to crumble. Where will I fall? I raise myself up on my mattress. Becker grunts. No, no, sleep on, you donkey! Don't be upset: I'm only looking for the place where I shall fall. There, at that corner of the pavement? On this sack? On that omnibus wheel? I will fall backwards, won't I? And my head will fall on the wheel? And no one will bend over me. They will all be too busy! It will be all over with Théodore Quiche, but so much the worse! That is not the point. No, gentlemen, it is not by any means Théodore Quiche that you have to consider here, but a sort of inventor, yes, the inventor of a new sort of battle vigil during which one does not think of death. That is a great invention, gentlemen, and merits your attention for a moment. Reflect upon it, indeed, remark well that . . . What? Someone already has some observations to present? In a moment, I beg you. After I have explained myself. I want before everything to explain myself. You shall talk later. If I am still here to listen . . . Let us see, this is a battle vigil, isn't it? That's really what it's called? We are agreed. And I am an inventor. You understand: an inventor. And for all you may say and all you may do, it is always the inventors who are right. I know that myself. I know them, these inventors. They are all here with their inventions. And you may fire over their heads, that will make no difference to them. The balls pass athwart. The balls. . . .

This time a genuine ball had whistled. It had passed above me, and yet the night had not finished. The night had scarcely begun to pale, and already the balls were whistling. Once more voices resounded, soaked and sinister like clocks at morning. Becker snorted and it was now his turn to say to me:

"Are you asleep?"

"Me? I haven't closed my eyes all night. It's you that's never stopped snoring."

"That's a good joke! You yourself have just scarcely opened your eyes. And, all the same, it's beginning to get hot."

Everyone was getting up, muskets in hand. I rose in my turn, climbed up over the sacks and risked a glance at the other side of the barricade. In a thick fog I saw a silhouette appear. I shouldered my gun and fired. The silhouette flung out an angular arm, swayed, fell. I jumped down quickly from the height of the sacks and looked around me as if stunned. My mouth was clammy. A woman approached me.

"I have been making a requisition in the wine merchants' shops around here," she said to me. "Here you are, have a drink."

She offered me the gullet of the bottle and I drank. It had a bitter taste which I did not recognize. I asked:

"What is it?"

"Red."

"Red wine?"

"Yes, of course. Come on, now, drink. It will set you up."

I went back to the barricade and began firing. Suddenly a name made eruption into my empty head: Thiers. And a frightful hatred tightened my hands, my eye, my shoulder upon the barrel of my gun. I wanted to bring down the little hideous old man, it was at him that I fired. Beyond the mist which kept on thickening in front of me I felt that Thiers stood with his belly, his short legs, his dickey, his false hair, his spectacles. As each of these attributes fell, one after the other, I heard him sneer. And the spectacles appeared once more on his Punch-like nose, his wig re-extended itself upon his skull, his dickey snapped its fingers at me. I fired with fury. The day had now broken. It was very clear. Above the mists one could see the windows and roofs of houses. Behind us on a doorstep an old crippled woman, with her bonnet on asquint over her grey hair, was sitting in front of a little barrel organ and, with toothless laughs and with curses, had begun to play a little waltz. The dry noise of detonations seemed to overcome the waltz, to break it, then the waltz began again, sharp and skipping.

"All right?" said Becker beside me.

He fired carefully, regularly, like a well-mounted machine. Between shots he would laugh maliciously with that Alsatian laugh of his. The waltz continued behind us to unroll its little hiccups. But a tremendous noise interrupted it for good. A whole battalion of armed women emerging at the bottom of the street ran to our barricade with a red flag at their head. They wore the most diverse uniforms, the ribboned cap and the round petticoat of the canteen women or the tunic of the National Guard. Some of them had no more than trousers and camisole; one could see their breasts; their naked arms brandished *chassepots*.[1] The old woman left her music and hobbling along, her face purple, her eyes drunk, mingled with this troop. She was dancing now. House windows opened and greetings burst out.

"Ha!" cried someone. "Have to decorate these windows!"

"We'll see," said I. And I entered one of the houses, mounted the staircase and knocked at a door. A woman with her hair down opened. The room into which she led me was half lit because of the mattress which had been put up in front of the window. A man dressed in a blouse of grey wool with red

[1] A fire-arm, named after its inventor, which was use in France at the time of the Commune.

patches on the shoulders was surveying the street from behind this mattress. From time to time he aimed his gun and fired. At the back of the room against the bare wall an old woman was kneeling; two children were gathered in her arms.

"I've come to help you," I said to the man.

And putting myself behind the mattress, I in my turn saw the mass of Versaillaists which was moving through the smoke fifty meters from the barricade. The woman with her hair down handed us the cartridges. Bits of broken glass crunched under my boot.

After a moment a disturbance took place beneath us among the defenders of the barricade. The shouts of the women became more piercing. The red flag sank down under its own weight. I heard Becker's voice:

"Théodore! Théodore! Come down!"

I pulled aside the mattress and cried: "What?"

"Come down! We're going to be pushed back!"

The old woman at the back of the room began to wail. One of the children flung itself on the floor, trembling and yelling.

"Don't leave us!" cried the old woman.

"Be quiet!" said the man in the blouse, turning round. A ball whistled. The mattress caught fire. I made for the door and went down.

"It's all up," said Becker, seizing me by the arm. "The barricade's going to be taken. We'll have to make off to the right."

"At the Montmartre cemetery they're shooting them down by the dozen," said a woman near me. And putting her gun under her arm, she started running for all she was worth. We set off through a maze of streets where I recognized nothing. Balls and shells fell around us. Why did we take one street rather than another? Who was firing? Upon whom were we firing? I caught a glimpse of one-story houses with little gardens in front, walls covered with glycin, a sloping hillock, its meager earth all upturned, and a dirty stream flowing along it to lose itself among the rubbish. I ran up against a great black wall pierced by dormer windows from which people were firing. Half-turn! Becker was running a few paces in front of me. A young man in rags, a cigarette end stuck to his lips, his eye feverish, stopped us suddenly with a great priestly gesture.

"Rally at the Rue Myrrha!" he said to us.

"Eh?"

"Down there at the turning there's a fine barricade. Rally!"

He put his dirty hands in front of his mouth trumpet-like and yelled:

"Rally!"

We did indeed find ourselves behind a barricade of paving stones defended by a cannon which was charged with stones and bitumen. A house was burning and the crackling flames lit up the scene with their long black flickering. I seized Becker abruptly by his belt:

"Look!"

At the corner of the barricade, against the wall of a little low house with its windows smashed in, I had just caught sight of Dombrowski doubled up behind the plate of a Mitrailleuse. He was turning the creaking handle with a regular movement and his clenched jaws, his gloomy eyes expressed a lost and desperate thought. I felt myself seized by an exaltation of folly. I looked at Dombrowski, I did not dare either call him or put my hand on his shoulder. I understood that he must not be disturbed. He had to be left to spit out all his ammunition. I drew near him, I looked at his tense profile and the little yellow beard stuck on his chin which wagged from time to time. Becker

stretched himself out on the paving stones beside him, shouldered his rifle and fired. I took a cartridge, loaded my gun. An explosion burst out overhead. I ducked instinctively, felt myself drowned in a cloud of powder. When I lifted my eyes I saw Becker next to me no longer stretched on his stomach in the position of the firer, but turned over on his back among the paving stones, the arms open, the brow bleeding. As for Dombrowski, he was dangling from the Mitrailleuse, his head and arms hanging down. As if it understood that it had brought off a good thing, the Versaillaist cannon became silent and there was a stillness which seemed to me to last an eternity.

"The swine!" said a hoarse voice. "They've killed Dombrowski."

"Becker," I murmured, "Becker, get up . . . I beg you. . . . "

"And this one," murmured a woman very gently as she took me by the hand, "this was your companion?"

I pressed the hard little hand and made a "yes" with my head. But it was not possible that Becker should be dead. Or if it were so, the world would be left without thought. Who, then, henceforward, would explain to me everything that happened? Nothing more would ever happen. Several hours ago already—I remembered this quite well—Becker had killed himself. He was already dead beyond a doubt. He had nothing more to say.

"There is nothing more to say," I uttered in a loud voice.

People gathered round the two dead, touched their breasts over the heart, lifted their arms, which fell back. They were truly dead. People gathered round. I raised my head and slowly looked around me. I recognized some of the women who had come to join us at the corner of the Place Blanche. The one who had taken my hand held it still in hers. Among these women's faces there were the stubbled, bloodstreaked faces of men with their eyes veiled in tears. One of them blinked an eye, cleared his throat and in a voice streaked with gloom and tobacco let these words flow:

"It's a bad business. . . . "

He blew out his cheeks and added in that thick voice of his:

"Dombrowski . . . He died like a good chap . . . And your companion too. . . ."

"Have to bury them together."

"We'll give them to you," said a woman to me. "You'll take them."

This woman had a hat with mourning veils and a middle-class dress of black with baubles and ribbons. All that crossed by a scarf of red wool. I looked at her with amazement. She went on:

"They've gone to find a litter. You'll take them both."

Pity showed in her eyes. She was young, a pale face, with oval cheeks, slightly rosy. Between the upper lip and the cheek, on the right, in a very white little corner, there was a beauty spot.

"Jonfosse has gone to look for a litter," murmured the man with the thick voice.

"Three or four of us will be needed. Will you come, Pixou?"

The cannonade had begun again. But the sorrowful faces remained ranked around me. Then the circle broke. I saw, pressed against each other on the litter, their two heads emerging from under a red cloth, my two dead. Four men carried the handles.

"Go to the Hôtel de Ville," said a woman. "Tell them that it's Dombrowski and another good fellow who have perished for the Republic."

"Go on," said the woman to me, pushing me gently. "Take them."

I began to walk on. My gun, at the end of my arm, dragged along the roadway.

"Eh, Jonfosse," said one of the bearers behind me. "Shall we go by the highway?"

"Yes, and then by the Boulevarde Sebastopol."

"Don't hurry too much, Cambalusier."

Thus did I learn the names of my companions. I have not forgotten them: Jonfosse, Pixou, Cambalusier. The fourth was called Victor. When one of them pronounced the name of Jonfosse, it seemed to me because of his slum accent that I heard: Jean-Fesse.

"Listen, Jean-Fesse. . . ."

And I repeated that to myself like an idiot. Then I turned back and looked at the four bearers, their hairy faces, and the sorrowful and ferocious glance of Jonfosse, whom the name of Jean-Fesse[1] suited so well because he was short on his legs, fat, his tunic unbuttoned over a huge belly. And he wore spectacles which slid down his little dog-like nose. My glance fixed itself at last on the two bodies. I took my path again and as I walked on I thought:

"Well, we've found you again, Dombrowski. What do you say about that, Becker, old boy? We've found him again, haven't we, and we'll take him back to the Commune. They said he was a traitor. Well, here he is. . . ."

The uproar of explosions did not cease. The people whom we encountered asked:

"Are things still all right at Montmartre?"

And then they gave us their news: Wrobleski had taken over the defense on the right bank; fighting was going on at Croix-Rouge, at Chaussée du Maine. The streets through which we passed were still and quiet but people were hurriedly building barricades which opened up to our cortege. Jonfosse solemnly cried:

"Make way for the heroes! Let General Dombrowski pass. He died like a brave man for the people!"

The combatants uncovered or presented arms.

"Dombrowski!" they said. "Now they've killed Dombrowski."

"We'll avenge him!"

"They'll avenge him?" thought I. "What do they mean? Do they really not know that they also, all of them, are going to die?"

And then we passed on. Everywhere the windows were shuttered. The sky was colored with extravagant radiances. Urchins followed us, their feet bare, heavy guns at their shoulders. As we advanced I breathed the air as they say a horse does when it nears its home country or its stable, I don't remember which any longer; there is a simile which everybody always makes on this point and which I turned over and over in my head. And I thought:

"Well, here we are. Here we are indeed, coming back to my Paris, my little Paris, my narrow little Paris, there where I have my room, my Hôtel de Ville, my Faubourg Saint Antoine and my Marie-Rose. I am going to see Marie-Rose again and tell her something . . . Marie-Rose, I haven't yet given you my wedding present . . . I am bringing you two dead men. Here he is, our old friend Becker . . . Of all my friends he was the only one left. And now it's finished: I have no longer anybody in the world save us two, you and me, ah! misery . . ."

I repeated:

"Misery . . ."

My head was empty and I sifted over and over again absurd phrases, while a grin contracted my whole face. I did not weep, but this grin was more sor-

[1] Literally, John Buttock.

rowful than tears. I walked as quickly as possible. The others called me back:

"Now, don't hurry so much! We can't keep up with you."

From time to time I replaced one of the bearers. Then I was quite close to my two corpses. I was able to look at them. Dombrowski had a little face all white, milk color. Blood had clotted on his brow. He seemed to be smiling between his moustache and his little yellow beard. How black Becker's face seemed alongside his! And wicked, yes, wicked. One might have said: the good Dombrowski, the bad Becker. That would have been well said. As we walked, the two heads would sometimes jolt against each other, and it seemed to me as if this gave me a blow on my own forehead. As if my own forehead was going to open in its turn and let the gouts of blood flow forth. Then they would have laid me too on the litter mixed up with the good and the bad corpses. Ah! It's true that Becker had a wicked air, with his beard, which had grown in all directions, his jutting jaws, his hollow cheeks. And when someone said that there had been incendiarism all over Paris it seemed to me that I saw little flames dancing over his mouth. I began to mutter again:

"Becker, I beg you . . . Get up. Throw aside that red cloth and get up . . . You're not dead, damn it!"

Becker did not move. Then I insisted:

"It's a bad joke, Becker, and it's lasted long enough, I assure you. . . . "

It was thus that we arrived at the Hôtel de Ville. The corridors, the rooms were all full of wounded and dying. What an uproar! But our cortege made a sensation. People murmured: "Dombrowski . . ." And they uncovered their heads. The two dead were placed in a small room on a table with a candle in front. And I remained there for a moment to watch over them. An officer arrived who was able to draw, and who installed himself by their heads with a pencil and a pocket album. From time to time, in order to get a detail better, he would bend over his models. Jonfosse, Pixou, Victor, and Cambalusier had each patted me on the shoulder and gone off with troubled looks.

"We'll have to start work again," said Jonfosse readjusting his spectacles.

"You'll find enough to do around here," I said to them.

"No, no, we'll go back to our own district."

I set off on a quest for Marie-Rose and Siffrelin. I went as far as the house on Rue Vieille-du-Temple where my garret was. I saw once more the yard and the tiled roof. "You too," I said to them, "are going to leave me." At a barricade on the Rue de Rivoli they wanted to stop me and make me carry paving stones.

"I'm on Hôtel de Ville service."

"We won't keep you long, citizen, give us a hand."

"I'm looking for my wife."

"You'll find her right away. Now here's a spade for you."

Willy-nilly I had to work at the barricades. I felt myself completely exhausted, my hands tore themselves on the stones, I couldn't carry on. But I continued to work mechanically at the barricade, lifting stones, carrying them to the heap, where they fell with a gloomy noise. Suddenly I felt that my face was streaming. It was sweat, it was also tears. I thought of Becker, lying by the side of the general in the little room up there with their candle. A hand fell on my shoulder.

"What's the matter with you?"

I didn't even look at the man who was speaking to me. I continued to wield my spade with great ill-tempered blows of my foot, and I muttered:

"Nothing... I had a friend who was killed... And then I'm looking for my wife . . . I want her . . . I don't know where she is."

"Go off and look for her."

I let the spade fall and went off, still without looking at the man. He might have cried to me to come back, I would have done so. I wiped my wet eyes and walked ahead. I was hungry and thirsty, I didn't know what time it was. Four or five of the afternoon probably. Black clouds were covering the sky in the direction of the Hôtel de Ville. In the crowd all of a sudden I came up against Jonfosse. He said to me:

"I lost the others. Bah! The only thing is to keep together. I've found another musket. Have you still got yours?"

I looked at him bewilderedly and then tapped myself. My musket? Ah, I had it on my bandolier. I muttered:

"Aren't you hungry?"

He took me into a taproom where we could get wine and a bit of bread.

"Have you got any money?"

He paid. Then I asked him what his job was. It was all the same to me, but I felt a need to talk. He was a gilder.

"Cambalusier is too," he added. "The two others I don't know exactly. Bronze-turners, or something like that . . . Ah!" he continued. "I'm annoyed to have lost them. I'm annoyed. I'd have liked to fight in my own district."

"You've got no choice any longer," I said to him. "We're here and we'll have to stay here."

It was he who told me what time it was: five o'clock. And the latest news: the arrival of the Versaillaists in the center, the taking of La Trinité, of the Rue Royale, the burning of the Tuileries. I interrupted him:

"I'm looking for my wife. She must be round here somewhere. She's called Marie-Rose. Come on . . . Or perhaps we should go back to the Hôtel de Ville, she may be there. My wife, you understand?"

I did not find her until evening on the quays where, with her father and a great silent crowd, she had gone to watch Paris burn. I plunged my eyes in the direction of the Tuileries. Nobody knew who had given the order to set it on fire. People whispered: "Rigault did it . . . or Eudes . . . they were quite right." I knew that it was the red man, he who appeared on the eve of catastrophes in the little mysterious room where Maxime and I hid ourselves one day. But it was not only the Tuileries that was burning; there were also the Légion d'Honneur, the Cour des Comptes, the Conseil d'État. Enormous flames expanded in the dark sky and the Seine rolled their reflections. From time to time a shout mounted from the crowd as if for a fine fireworks display. Little boys were having a great time. They were sliding between people's legs and getting their bottoms spanked. When I turned round, my eyes dazzled, I saw the facade of the Hôtel de Ville all bright and in the Rue de Rivoli, round the barricades, the glittering of torches, lanterns and campfires. It was in going back that all of a sudden I saw Marie-Rose. She was pressing herself against her father, who had put his arm on her shoulder. His head was bare, his hair flying in the wind. I cried:

"Marie-Rose! Père Siffrelin!"

Then Marie-Rose lifted her face. I saw Siffrelin's beard and white hair wagging. I pierced the crowd and fell in their arms.

"Théodore! But where have you been? What have you done? But you look like a dead man."

They showered questions on me. I said to them:

"No, I am not dead, I'm not dead . . . Not I . . . Not yet . . ."

And nodding my head at the illuminated windows of the Hôtel de Ville:

"The others are there . . . Have you seen them?"

I told them. Dombrowski, Becker . . . At the moment it was anger that I felt, an anger which strangled me, which made my hands tremble. Siffrelin and Marie-Rose suffered too. Siffrelin pounded me on the shoulder with his fist. Marie-Rose looked at me with a haggard eye. I could see nothing more in her face than the flame of her eyes and her raw lips. Never had she seemed to me more proud. She gathered her fichu over her breast and questioned me in her loud, almost vulgar voice. I pressed her arm, her fist. I took her thick and coarsened hand. She pressed herself against me; she also had lost me and found me again, just as I had lost her and found her again.

"I thought of you all night," I said to her in a low voice. "All the night, without a moment of interruption, for I did not sleep."

"Did you eat, at least?"

"It's difficult getting food," said Siffrelin. "The shopkeepers are having nothing more to do with requisitions. When you sign receipts for them, they throw them in your face. They say: 'Do you think that the Versailles people are going to recognize these bits of paper?' They've made up their minds already about us."

"We have too."

"What do you think about it?"

"So it's true?" cried Marie-Rose. "It's true? We're going to die?"

I knew not whether there was ecstasy or horror in her glance. But I took her by the waist and whispered in her ear:

"As long as I hold this body in my arms I am not going to ask myself whether we are to die or not."

"Is it true that we are going to die?" she repeated.

"That has nothing to do with us," I said aloud, still holding her by the waist. She leaned her head towards me with a smile. And this time I saw happiness in her smile, that kind of almost rascally complacence which there is in women who are in love when they look at their man and confide themselves to him and abandon to him all their flesh and all their faith.

"Well!" I said to her. "When you look like that, you please me."

"You please me, too," said she.

Siffrelin interrupted us:

"Children, we must find something to eat all the same. And to drink. And a place to sleep."

We cried out:

"To sleep?"

"Yes, of course, even if it's only for a few hours. Let's go to the Hôtel de Ville."

We made off towards the great ruddy facade.

"Père Siffrelin," said I, "we'll find you a little corner where you can rest. As for me, I'm going to see Delescluze."

"I'll go with you," said Marie-Rose.

She waited for me in the corridor while I went in to see the delegate. He was at his table surrounded by a few officers and was signing papers. The furrows which pulled at his face on each side of the long bitter mouth were buried in a yellow, hollowed flesh which was terrible to see. Men went in and out, people spoke in a low voice.

"Look here," he said, pointing to me as I came in. "He'll do the job . . . Take over the evacuation of the Hôtel-Dieu. There are about eight hundred

sick men there who will be bombarded to death. Get them transported to Notre-Dame. Here's a paper. Now let's get on to the next business. Where's Brunel?"

I led Marie-Rose off to the Hôtel-Dieu, and we went to find the director with Delescluze's order. On the way I observed:

"Of course, I'll never get them out, dead and dying."

At least at Hôtel-Dieu I was able to discover a little bit of something to eat and drink. They made me coffee and I drank a whole liter of wine. Then we set about the job. I see once more in memory the series of rooms lit by candlewicks, the white beds, the sick and wounded who were shrieking. Most of them wanted to stay where they were. All the worse if the whole brothel blew up! They had had enough, they didn't want to be upset again. Then the crimson-girdled nuns tried to reason with them; they replied with "damns" and "blasts." The stretchers piled up in the yard under the red sky. The bombardment had started its ruction again. "And then," said the wounded, "will we be any safer in Notre-Dame? Blasted holy water shop . . ." And the procession began towards the parvis and the great holy water shop, where by torchlight it was necessary to put things in order a bit because during the day the chairs had been set on fire. I admired the calmness of Marie-Rose, the air of authority which she assumed as soon as it was a matter of arranging the sick, shifting them here and there, quietening them and shouting to them to be quiet. She brought to all this a naturalness which imposed itself upon me, she knew what had to be said, I asked myself where she could have found all the words that she used then, these familiarities, these decisions . . . As for me, I followed her among the white stretchers which at a word from her, began to move. There was a little old woman, all trembling, whose bed had been installed against a pillar in a little quiet corner where she could see a rose-window, statues and heaps of interesting things. For a moment I dreamed of being this old woman and passing the days and the hours which would follow in the shelter of this strange semi-obscurity while the tempest raged outside.

"Well, granny, you're going to be all right here . . . Yes, now then, don't be afraid."

It was after midnight, I believe, and we had returned, Marie-Rose and I, to the yard of the Hôtel-Dieu with the citizen director and some doctors when Siffrelin reappeared.

"So that's the way you've been sleeping?" his daughter asked him.

"Ah," he said, "we'll have time for sleep afterwards. They're going to evacuate the Hôtel de Ville and ascend towards the town-hall of the eleventh."[1]

"No?"

"Yes. The Commune is leaving its home and the Committee of Public Safety and the whole outfit. That's the way things are going. We'll fight in the suburbs."

He added:

"They're taking away Dombrowski and Becker."

"Where to?"

"To Père-Lachaise. Is your business finished yet?"

"An hour or two yet."

"I'm going to see what's going on," he said to us. "And I'll come back."

After a moment he reappeared.

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[1] I. e., the eleventh of the municipal districts into which Paris is divided.

"It's on already," he said. "The funeral is beginning."

"Oh, I must be there!" I cried.

"I don't need you any longer," said the director to me. "All my boys will soon be evacuated. You can clear off."

The square of the Hôtel de Ville was now silent and deserted. Not a cannon, not a person. Only in front of the gate shadows moved confusedly. We approached. There again I saw stretchers appear, again wounded men who cried or asked for drink or who whimpered with a tremendous panting breath which tore at your throat. There was a van in front of the gate, a van from which jars of petroleum were being unloaded.

"There's something to make punch with!" said a melancholy voice near me.

Groups formed. People argued. Then came the stretcher with Becker and Dombrowski, its red cloth trailing on the ground. Everyone uncovered. Federals followed, carrying torches. The cortege made its way towards the Rue Saint-Antoine. We followed behind. Someone ran up to join us; I recognized Vermorel. Further on other people fell into step with us. The noise of the cannonade pursued us.

"Did you see," I said to Marie-Rose, "how beautiful they are?"

"Yes," she replied trembling, "I saw the face of Becker. . . ."

We slackened our pace. Siffrelin went ahead of us. He was speaking with Vermorel. I took Marie-Rose by the arm and said to her:

"How you tremble!"

"Press me to you," she replied. "Press me to you as you did just now."

I pressed her to me, and a great desire seized me, that savage desire which she had often inspired in me since I made her acquaintance. I untied the square handkerchief which she wore on her head, and I touched her hair as one touches grass or straw, her black hair, thick and twisted. She turned her head back with a smile, then I took her by the waist and amused myself by feeling how her hips moved with each step.

"I want you," I said to her in a low voice.

With a movement of her chin she pointed out the corpses that were being led in front of us and murmured:

"We will never see them again?"

"Never," I replied.

"Poor Becker?"

"Is dead."

"Tell me, Théodore, you who know so much . . . after one is dead. . . ."

"My little heart," I said to her, calmly, "when you have ceased to beat, there will be nothing more."

"Nothing more? Nothing more at all? But then," she went on with a little childish grimace, "how then? Théodore and Marie-Rose . . . what will become of them? They won't know each other any longer? They won't love each other any more? Oh! tell me, you must know, you. . . . "

"I know what has been, Marie-Rose, and that has been sufficiently extraordinary. Théodore and Marie-Rose came to know each other and fell in love. They did that in spite of the whole universe. Yes, they did that all on their own, the little rascals . . . Because they wanted to . . . and that's what matters now. That's the miracle now. You see: that's what I've done. I've loved you. At the end of a long, long road. And now all Paris is beginning to burn behind us little by little. And we walk on with the same step, pressed one against the other. What do you want more?"

"Is there nothing else to seek? I'm only a girl, Théodore, and we're not of the same world. . . ."

"We were not of the same world, it's true. But do I really know what world I belong to? Well, here we are, we've met each other, you and I. Do you want me to say to you that we have two immortal souls? Do you really believe that? That would be a pitiable lie, Marie-Rose. I know very much, yes, my dear little girl, much more than you, it's true. But I don't believe, you see, that we possess two immortal souls. What I can tell you is that at present we have two souls, they've scarcely been born, one under the fichu of the girl called Siffrelin and mine in the body of . . . I don't even know who. And they press against each other in the flames!"

I was delirious, my teeth chattered, my hands feverishly grasped the body of Marie-Rose against my own. It seemed to me that we were running at tremendous speed, pursuing the funeral cortege which was also running in front of us along the Rue Saint-Antoine. The Bastille appeared, alive with bayonets and clamor. Torches ran from all sides to join the torches which encircled the bodies of Dombrowski and Becker. People cried: "Make way!" A great cortege was formed and at the foot of the Column which soared up, wreathed in red, from a mass of circlets of immortelles and banners, we placed the great litter. A man stood near me on the pedestal, his arms forming a cross and, a lighted torch in each hand, he yelled:

"Long live the universal Republic!"

The shout mounted to the glowing sky. It seemed to me that up there it was repeated by the angel of Liberty to the four winds. Then I saw that we were surrounded, Marie-Rose and I, by a circle of haggard faces, the bearded faces of men and the pitying faces of women, just as when Becker and Dombrowski lay at my feet behind the Myrrha barricade. And, as then, all these glances warmed my heart. They considered Marie-Rose and seemed to find her lovely and to admit that we ought to be in love.

"What is going on down there?" asked a voice. "Is it true that the Commune has left the Hôtel de Ville?"

"And that they set it on fire before leaving?"

"Everything's burning, everything's burning, everything, everything, everything!" said an old woman tremulously.

"There will be nothing left of Paris."

From the height of the pedestal I looked at the last Parisians. I seemed to recognize in all this crowd the faces proper to each quarter, the folk of Menilmontant and the folk of Vaugirard, those of Popincourt, and those of La Villette, the artisans of Marais, the spectacle-makers of the Rue Pastourelle and under the ragged uniforms each trade, the printers, the sign-painters, the stone masons, the coopers, the cobblers, the flowermakers, the bakers' journeymen and the *gindres,*[1] who are so called because you can hear them at night through the gratings grunting as they work the dough, and the beggars of Les Halles also, the barge thieves, the beggars of the bridges and the scoundrels of the Route de la Révolte. I could, without a mistake, have put my hand on the shoulder of this one and say to him: "You're from the Left Bank. And you, old boy, have your bookbinder's shop behind the Panthéon. It's getting hot in your part, yes? But here we are still the masters . . ." I still held Marie-Rose pressed close to me, my arm around her waist, my hand on her hip. And then my eyes fell on Becker's face, red in the light of the torches, and motionless, the lids lowered. I began to talk with him as in the old days:

"Well, Becker . . . What? What do you say? Vermersch? You say: 'He

[1] Literally, "grunters." Bakers employed to knead dough.

is desperate.' And you, you are not desperate, are you? It does not fill you with despair to be dead . . . Yes, yes, they have raised despair to a principle. They suffer from being men. And then through boredom, through despair they desire to act. To act: to kill, to die. It's very strange: you take an emotion, anguish, fear, despair, separate it from the rest, place it very high, very far, and endure it without understanding. Such is their metaphysics. I'm summing up a little quickly, but it's just to remind you where we left off. Good. But you, your metaphysics came from the stomach, didn't it? From life, from living life. From joy. Yes, why should not joy be just as true as anguish, fear and despair? And as the horror of being a man? The joy of being a man, the joy of becoming a man, and of accomplishing oneself in life. Not in death of course. What do you say? My joy . . . you speak of my joy, mine, Théodore's . . . You say it is close to me, don't you? Here, right close to me, my joy on the earth, hanging to my arm like a great basket of cherries. Marie-Rose, isn't it? She whom I chose because nothing fated me to her, nothing . . . but my desire for joy. And now the times are fulfilled, aren't they, Becker? I'm going to die of joy! The shot, the fire which are going to take me off, are they not sustained by joy? All this joy around us like a sea that burns? . . . Oh, Becker, speak again, tell me, tell me . . ."

"Théodore," said Marie-Rose to me in her rough voice, "it's you who are trembling now."

"I'm trembling with love," I replied. "Shall we be together again, alone, once more for the last time?"

I felt her leg, her thigh, hard against me. I spoke again:

"Will there still be a bed for us in this furnace?"

Siffrelin spoke suddenly:

"Come on, children. Come and defend our house."

We set off through the crowd towards the suburb.

"That's it," I said. "Let's go home. There'll be a bed there all right, in our place, between our own four walls."

"You want to sleep?" asked Siffrelin, wagging his beard.

I shook my head as if to say no. To sleep, no, it wasn't that. But to hold this woman in my arms, one last time again, to stretch myself upon her, lip to lip, behind a wall, before that wall clattered down and fire submerged us. Siffrelin went in front of us. Marie-Rose and I followed him hanging to each other like a couple of drunkards and stumbling at each step. It was thus that we attained the Rue d'Algre.

II

Behind the windows in the abandoned workshop I saw the little hunchbacked girl who was playing with the other children. And in the dining room everyone had gathered together as in the old days, Fernande, the *Gavot,*[1] the carpenter with earrings and the old Fouriérist with the old-fashioned moustaches, the man who sang ballads. He was not singing now any longer, his face was black with powder, he had a blood-stained bandage on his brow, but I saw in his eyes a reflection of the sky of the Happy Isles. Then this reflection became extinguished. I do not know any more what happened. I was in Marie-Rose's room; from time to time the reflection passed

[1] *Gavot,* a member of a society of workers which combined features of a secret society, a trade union, a Masonic lodge and a friendly society.

before me like a lightning flash. I had fallen on the bed and Marie-Rose untied the laces of my shoes, then she caressed my brow. I had promised myself to grasp her within my arms, but I had no longer the energy to move. I saw myself walking behind the litters, behind a whole line of dead and dying. I followed the long corridors of the Hôtel-Dieu: the Blanqui corridor, the Barbès corridor . . . but these freshly-painted names were being effaced. "The saints are coming back," said one of the crimson-girdled nuns. And we began once more to walk behind the litters. We attained the reflection at the end of the horizon. Then everything darkened in storm and chaos.

When I awoke it was dark. Was it still the same night, or the following evening? I called to Marie-Rose. The house was empty. In the street they were building a barricade. I found there my folk and Marie-Rose, who was all fresh and had changed her dress for the last battle. Cannon thundered. "That's ours," somebody said. Our cannon held Bicêtre, Père-Lachaise, Buttes-Chaumont, and thence bombarded the half of Paris. The Versaillaist cannon replied from the Panthéon, the Trocadéro and Montmartre. Delescluze and the Commune had taken refuge in the town-hall of the eleventh. We still had the Bastille. But for how long would we have it? Meanwhile, the little hunchbacked girl played with the other sickly children, shadows of children, among the paving stones, the sandbags, the barrels and gabions. The sky was red. The children shouted and laughed. Siffrelin said to me:

"The Grenier d'Abondance has also been set on fire."

"Very good," I said to him. "The only thing to do is to set everything on fire."

I found this idea of setting everything on fire very comic. And I began to laugh with an inextinguishable, idiotic laugh. It brought tears to my eyes. To keep countenance I pushed a barrowful of paving stones and set myself to unloading it on the barricade. But I still wanted to laugh. The little hunchbacked girl threw herself on my legs. I lifted her up from the ground and asked her:

"What are you playing at?"

"At a game," she answered.

It must have been an extraordinary game, for her poor cheeks were red and she was panting with having run. Her lovely lively glance escaped from mine and she choked with laughter, while at my feet her impatient comrades waited for me to let them start their game again.

"All right, off with you," said I, putting her back on the ground. And delivered, she began the game once more. The whole band scattered through the enchanted garden of paving stones and sacks. Sometimes they went into Père Siffrelin's workshop, and one could see them there behind the windows, drunk with this abandoned space which had become their empire. The game, it seemed, was to see who could shout the loudest. The little hunchback filled her heart with joy at this.

I can no longer remember very well how the night passed. From this moment there are in my memory only incoherent images. I recollect sudden moments of intense emotion, for example, the moment when we learned that the enemy was advancing on the Bastille, that they had taken a barricade in the Rue Castex. The enemy was approaching! Once more I was going to have their red trousers in front of me in the smoke, and once more I was going to fire at the crowd of them! Marie-Rose had got hold of an old-fashioned musket; seated on a heap of paving stones she was having the operation of it explained to her by a boy.

"They're approaching!" I said to her.

She lifted her eyes and looked at me with that fine glance of hers, so wild and sorrowful. I sat down beside her and caressed her shoulder.

"It's very pretty," I said to her, "that dress you've put on today."

"It's a little summer dress," she replied smiling. "Isn't it the time for it?"

She went on with a coquettish air:

"If all this hadn't happened, and we had been living together, would you have liked me to wear pretty dresses?"

"Yes, Marie-Rose, and I would have bought you very pretty ones."

"Do you think we would have been happy? That we would have had a nice little household?"

"I think so."

"Ah," she sighed, "it's just as well as it is. There is too big a difference between us."

"No, Marie-Rose, no, Marie-Rose. There would have been no difference, and we would have lived a long time, a long time, for days and years."

"You would have got tired of me."

"No, my little Marie-Rose, my little Marie-Rose . . ."

And as her look became infinitely sad, I wanted to make her laugh:

"It's you," I said, "who would have got tired of me, who would have found me busied with a whole heap of pretentious follies which would have been too ridiculously complicated for you . . ."

"Oh!" she said, shrugging her shoulders.

"You know," I went on timidly, "that . . . I used to write poetry?"

"Yes, like Jules de Renaud."

"That's it," I said. And dreamily I went on:

"Well, if you had loved Jules de Renaud, he would have wanted you at any price to understand his verses, that you should penetrate their secret . . . Oh! that would have been very, very difficult, that would . . . You would have had to study and study. . . He was an idiot, Marie-Rose. Now as for me, I would have read you my verses, and you would have understood them. And then, what does it matter! They've been left down there, at Rue Vieille-du-Temple. Perhaps they're burning now."

We pressed ourselves together, we also two children, in the depths of a Paris streaming with petroleum and aflame. I remembered how across a street in flames I had seen papers flying at the breath of the burning wind, a whole flight of papers. My poems without a doubt were rolling around in the same way, in this hell. I took Marie-Rose's hand. Dear little one . . . My woman, my wife . . . The flames came right up to her feet, the whole depth of the universe reddened. Then an enormous black cloud hustled the flames. The gloom extended, but suddenly was pierced by the din and the starred explosion of a shell. And the crackling flames reappeared. I repeated, my heart beating:

"They're approaching . . ."

Ah! if only it could have been that they never arrived . . . that they remained eternally on the way . . . We were hidden at the bottom of the cul-de-sac, Marie-Rose and I. I held her hand. I was afraid. Nevertheless, I had already been in battle. I knew what it was to see the red trousers surging through the smoke on the other side of the barricade. But then, I had had space behind me; now we were going to be overwhelmed. They were arriving with fire, with the speed of fire. And we, Marie-Rose, I . . . my poor little dear!

I see also the square in front of the town-hall of the eleventh, the grinning

statue of Voltaire and two ammunition wagons which had miraculously arrived from the mint with the new money which the Commune had had cast. It was with these coins that I received my last pay.

"We won't get very far with this!" people said laughingly.

In one of the rooms of the town-hall Delescluze, yellow, demolished, was still scribbling papers. Around him uproar. Wounded were brought in on stretchers. On the wall a proclamation spread itself: "The Commune has made a pact with death . . ." And then, suddenly I see again the Rue d'Algre in full battle. This time they had arrived! They have arrived! Marie-Rose next to me fires away, just like me. I do not know where the others have gone, Siffrelin, the *Gavot,* and all of them, but I shoot, I shoot, and I know that Marie-Rose is next to me. I have in my mouth the sharp taste of powder, which makes me tipsy. My ears burst. Above us at all the windows people are firing. And suddenly the fog tears apart, and as if I had come out of a fever crisis, I see what surrounds me, I see! The little hunchbacked girl has just fallen on the roadway, like a broken toy, like a dog with its tongue hanging out. There is a red streak across her cheek and nose. And the head pushed back into the shoulders: truly a little hunchback. Fernande, her blouse open, her hair down her back, shriekingly, springs out from a door, picks up her child like a parcel and turns sharply round. People try to stop her. She holds the little corpse in her outstretched arms and climbs over the barricade, leans against a barrel, sends stones clattering away from her feet, marches out into the smoke. She throws the corpse down like a stone and falls in her turn upon her knees. It is no longer shrieks that she utters, but terrible barks. I see her a last time, her skin black and dry through the tatters of her white chemise, the face convulsed, the hair twisted. At last she rolls away from the other side of the barricade. I turn and fall upon the chest of Siffrelin who is standing behind me, pale with horror. A tile has fallen close to me, close to the locksmith whom I see leap up, his mouth open in a grimace of hatred, musket in hand, throwing himself in his turn upon the barricade. Fresh explosions burst out, a section of wall crashes down behind us with a roar and I feel against my cheek the slap of a flame.

I cried:

"Marie-Rose!"

I had to find Marie-Rose. I did not find her until some distance back, as we retreated through the blazing streets. She had her musket in her hand and marched with eyes enlarged by delirium.

"Did you see?" I asked her.

A big thin man with corkscrew legs cried to us:

"We still have Belleville left! We're not finished yet!"

It was he who led me away and once more I lost Marie-Rose. A shell burst. The big thin man folded up in four, said: "Hop!" and fell. I continued on my way all alone. Rain had taken a hand in the game, a destructive heavy rain which, however, soon stopped. I wandered through Menilmontant, questioning the friends I met. Someone had seen Siffrelin and his daughter on a barricade in the Rue de Puebla. I looked for the Rue de Puebla and got lost. People slid in the mud. Silhouettes flitted past with collars raised. People told how down there, in the conquered streets, the Versaillaists were massacring all they found, women, children. Up there I met a fantastic cortege which mounted the Rue de Paris. The bugles sounded: *Y a la goutte à boire là-haut!*[1] Communard officers on horseback

[1] French military call ("There's a drop to drink up there!")

were in the van, with a canteen woman also on horseback, a red feather in the wind, her fist on her hip. Was it not Marie-Rose that I saw thus emerging fabulous and mounting towards the last entrenchments of Paris, towards the last walls beyond which there was nothing more than the Prussian cannons? My glance crossed that of the horsewoman, but we did not recognize each other. It was not Marie-Rose. It was one of the mounted women sentinels of the Commune, Princess Dimitrieff perhaps, or a girl from the opera, or the goddess of Reason. Marie-Rose had to remain glorious for me alone, for the secret of our nights and the accomplishment of my poor private adventure. None the less did I feel a tremble of love upon seeing this beautiful woman who passed magnificent, with always one fist on her hip and the other brandishing a pistolet. Gripped, I halted, and could do no more than follow her steps. Besides, the cortege filled the whole street, a hairy beggar grasped me by the arm and I mingled with the crowd. Then I saw that we were encircling a band of prisoners, priests, gendarmes, and others in bourgeois dress. There was one near me who wore trousers of light blue velvet, a blue blouse open over a waistcoat of red wool. They were hostages.

"They shot some of them already the other day," said my companion in a drunken voice. "The archbishop . . ."

"And the civilians there?" I asked him. "Who are they?"

"Spies."

As we passed the crowd shrieked: "Death to them!" The people had it in for the priests most of all.

"Swine!" the woman cried to them. "You won't kiss our daughters any more."

I looked at the hostage in the blue blouse. He was fantastically pale, his lips trembled, a Federal pushed him on with musket-butt blows on the buttocks to make him move. A priest with his hands in handcuffs was mumbling prayers. Spittle was trickling down his cheek. Some of these miserable people carried in their hands a little parcel with their things; they did not know where they were being taken, perhaps they were being changed from one prison to another; in any case they had taken with them all that they had left in the world.

I did not know either where they were being taken. But I had a tremendous desire to know. I was seized with curiosity about this business. I had forgotten that Paris had been forced and yielded, that in a few hours there would not remain one stone of it upon another. That over the man who held me by the arm there was already the shadow of the gallows or the rules of a firing squad, and that I was in no better case than he. But I followed, I climbed up behind the sinister bugles and the lovely canteen woman. Suddenly the bugles ceased and the drums began to beat: terrible, that funeral roll that takes you by the bowels. No one shouted any longer. You heard nothing but the drums making their savage music, obstinate, pitiless.

"Is it far yet?" I asked in a strangled voice.

Somebody answered: "Rue Haxo."

It was all on high, the Rue Haxo; one seemed to breathe the air of mountain crests there. There were low houses with ochred walls, courtyards, wooden gates painted a thin green which blended with the foliage. We engulfed ourselves like a band of beasts in a long obscure lane. At the end of this corridor there burst out the light of a garden. Through the leaves you could see a huge black wall rising up at the back. I held my musket clutched in my hands. The canteen woman caracoled up there above me, pushing

her horse through the crowd. Under the breast of her horse shrieking faces turned and showed their teeth.

The rain had brought out all the scents of the earth and leaves and the sky over our head was a fine luminous blue which towards the edge of the wall shaded into opal. In front, upright on the damp earth, stood the fifty hostages. A ditch full of rubbish separated them from our muskets. Up above in front of a little steeple on a balcony of wooden openwork, like the balcony of a Swiss chalet, a man was speaking. I recognized Varlin, but the shouts were so loud that nobody heard what he was saying.

"That's enough!" a terrible voice near me cried to him. "You've landed us in the muck and all you can do now is shut up!"

He disappeared and I looked at the hostages. I too wanted to fire into that bunch. Into the bunch? No, I would choose. I would choose the most criminal, the banker for example . . . The banker? Pah! That was too easy. Besides, was he there? I asked:

"Is Jecker there?"

"No," somebody answered. "His account has been settled already."

Well, then, a gendarme or a policeman. Or a priest. Nevertheless, all these men looked at us with an expression of disdainful hatred. They were going to die on the field of honor, like heroes, like martyrs, assassinated by blackguards. And their souls would rise straight up to the paradise of honest folk. "Executed without trial!" the gendarmes seemed to say. "Without the proper formalities! It's abominable. We, when we arrest a guilty person, everything is done decently, and it's a worthy magistrate who condemns him."—"Father," added the sublime glances of the priests, "forgive them, for they know not what they do."—"It's at a priest," said I in my turn, "that I'm going to fire."

Gendarmes, policemen, bankers if there had been any, Adolphe Thiers himself if he had been there, certainly these were all too easy to choose for vengeance. It would have been too just. They were defending the cashbox, and as for me, I was one of those who wanted to put my hand in the cashbox. They were the cheats, the tyrants, the executioners. They were not fighting even for honor, or for an idea, but for authority, their authority, their order, their force. And at that moment it was we who had the force. So much the worse for them! When two wolves fight, and one is beaten, is there any reason to glorify it? Is there any reason for carrying his carcass with splendid pomp to the cathedral of the wolves? It is a bloody carcass, torn, destroyed, that's all. The flies will devour it; there is nothing admirable in that. A banker has all power. If it pleases him for the sake of his business to send a hundred thousand men to kill themselves in Mexico, he does not hesitate. But if on returning from Mexico the others are able to catch him in a corner there's no question about it: they will crush him against the wall. I caught once more the face of my hostage in the blue blouse. Next to him a gendarme, a corporal, was jutting out his chest as if to make a good display of the military medal which was exposed there. Bah! The rabble could play at being smart and putting on grand airs; they were going to return to the dust, it was simple as how do you do. So simple that I disdained myself for taking part in such a business. But the priests were booked for me. If it were but one priest . . . that would be enough for me. That would be a carcass heavy enough upon my conscience to satisfy it fully. All these thoughts which I record here I develop and put in place, but then they offered themselves to me at a tremendous speed and at the same time with great lucidity. It was as if I had already thought out all that without know-

ing it and that instantaneously it all projected itself in front of me and became apparent to myself. I recalled my childhood, the impiety of my father, the devotion of my mother, the hymns of my first communion under the high arches, the mellow music of the harmonium at vespers, then how my vaguely pious education had become clouded, leaving always in me a certain superstitious fear of religious things. The time had come to finish with this very fear. Had I not chosen to break with everything, to tear myself away from everything, to give myself up no longer to anything but the unknown and the new? Had I not taken the long road? But for a last time that which might have been my destiny signed to me, striving to draw me back, to give myself no longer to doubt and question. "Let things be," said to me my frustrated destiny. "You will be happy and esteemed. You will ask for nothing, you will not even question yourself and your nights will be without secret. Innocence, that is what you need. To live innocently, to marry, to earn money. And not worry about the rest. The rest is God's business only. Who then art thou to fathom the will of God? Let things be . . ." I shrugged my shoulders. To me? Was it to me that such a vile temptation dared address itself? Death! Death to the priests, death to the man of God! . . . Bah! Why? What has he done, the poor man of God? "What has he done?" I cried within myself. "He has done this: that there exist men who believe. And as soon as one believes one cannot love any more."

What? What's that you're saying? . . . But of course, certainly. Believe? Believe? What does it mean to believe? Admit a truth? Revealed truth, an inaccessible monster to whom I should submit body and soul? Believe? Obey? To wallow, eyes shut, ears stopped up, in obedience, complaisance, servitude? And if I am hungry? And if the woman I love is hungry? And if my children are crying with hunger? And if I wish to take joy in the scent of spring, without shame, without anguish, without terror? Then the dear man of God will come to me and say: "Believe! God is pitiful, even although you are a vile sinner. Believe that your sins may be forgiven you." "My sins?" "Yes, your terrible sins. For it is a sin to be a man." And is it a sin to be hungry? Tell me that, priest of my heart? And tell me something else: will nothing ever change? "Yes, in the sky after death. But what do you take yourself to be, miserable sinner, presumptuous creature?" I take myself to be someone who strips all bonds from himself, poor devil. And all his fevers and all his follies and who does not wish to believe and who wishes not to know even what it can be to believe, and who wishes to see what the world will be when the world no longer believes, and to what a new life, truly holy, pure and divine it will then accede!

In the mass of hostages I had at last chosen my victim: a little curate, very young, the best of the lot doubtless, the gentlest, the most innocent. Spotless lamb, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us! He looked at us without effrontery, this one, and without disdain, but with a merciful melancholy, and his lips murmured prayers for our forgiveness. He knew himself to be saved, he knew himself to be elect, and his eyes as they met mine beseeched me to hasten his adorable sacrifice. I could see the angel with great wings who had already placed his hands upon this sweet victim and was getting ready to carry him off to eternal life. A beautiful smiling angel, sure of himself and with a brow as pure as the conscience of a good man. For a moment I hesitated: should I fire at the priest or at the angel? At the angel, that would be more definitive. . . But the priest, that perhaps would be surer. Besides, I also had behind me an angel, a fallen angel with black wings, a youthful demon who lifted my hands in his own, made me

shoulder my musket and whispered in my ear: "Go on, sight the priest! As for the angel, that's my business." He had a rasping and dolorous voice. It was the demon of tears. He leaned over me, his cheek against mine, and I saw then how beautiful he was. With a beauty which not everyone, certainly, could understand or approve. A beauty without resignation, the savage beauty of spring when it explodes and refuses to be turned back beneath the earth. Or again, the beauty which clothes the greatest human sorrow when it refuses to despair. I sighted the priest's forehead between the two eyes, while the sorrowful demon helped me to hold up my musket. The priest's face turned back a little in the folds of his angel's robe. I still hesitated. My eyes became veiled. It seemed to me that close beside me other people were also weeping. A hard hand knocked down the muzzle of my musket. Varlin, his face convulsed, shouted at me:

"What are you doing, Quiche? You ought to know better! You were in the Central Committee. You cannot, you must not . . . they're mad."

Around us explosions cracked. People shrieked, people laughed. Some hostages fell, like characters in a puppet theater. One of the killers approached us and took Varlin by the arm:

"And down there, do you think there's any ceremony about the way they shoot our people?"

Varlin waved his red scarf. It was torn from his hands.

"There's no Commune any longer!"

"It's like your archbishop: we put paid to him!"

"You clear off if you don't want to get the same."

Varlin took me by the arm and dragged me away.

"My boy," he said to me, "my boy . . ."

Until then I had had few chances to see him close, I scarcely knew him. But he seemed to me to resurrect in himself the gentle and fraternal authority of the friends whom I had lost. A few minutes later I found myself along with him and some other members of the Commune, Valles, I believe, I don't know who else, in a taproom at the corner of the Rue du Borrego. Our comrades were eating at a corner of the table. The woman of the place sobbed as she served them. At every shot she jumped. They made me sit down, they made me drink a glass of wine. Then I threw down my musket, I seized the glass from which I had drunk and flung it to the floor, stamped on it furiously. Then I fell back on a corner of the table, my head in my hands and in my turn I burst into tears.

"You were wrong, Varlin," said one of the Communards. "You were wrong to go up there."

"I don't regret it," said Varlin, pointing to me. "I prevented this one from doing a stupid thing."

"Yes, but they'll say that there were members of the Commune there."

"They'll say so many things!" sighed Varlin.

He had a beautiful face, regular and calm. I asked him if he knew what had happened to Siffrelin. He knew nothing. Then they spoke of Delescluze.

"He too," said Varlin, "just managed to get out of the hands of the mob, the very people who tomorrow will acclaim the Versaillaists and massacre us."

"Delescluze," broke in another, "I was there when he died. He took his cane, his tall hat, buttoned up his frock coat, knotted his scarf, and made off for the Chateau-d'Eau barricade. He repeated all the time: 'I do not want to live any longer.' "

"And Vermorel?"

"Dead."

Explosions and shouts continued to reach us. And then, from time to time we heard little waltz airs. This was the Prussian music coming from the other side of the declivity.

The rain began to fall again. The woman of the place had closed the shutters. Around me people were speaking in low voices.

The next day, Saturday . . . First there was a great yellow fog, then the sun appeared. But I was cold to the very depth of my bowels. And I kept on repeating, from fear of forgetting it, and as if I would be asked for it on the threshold of death, our last password: Bouchotte-Belleville . . . Belleville . . . Yes, Belleville, that must be remembered above everything: our ultimate fatherland, the last ruin, all that remained . . . Belleville! And I looked around me: was this then Belleville? Our houses, our streets, our garden? I was enclosed in Père-Lachaise.

In front of me, upon a sloping alley bordered by sycamores, muddy silhouettes were pushing a cannon. Their heavy boots were slipping. I also climbed up. When I turned around, I saw below the immense smoky red abyss pierced by explosions. I no longer knew whether the fighting was going on, or where people were fighting, or even why; but something long and sorrowful was about to be accomplished. A devouring mouth was going to snap me up. Suddenly I found myself alone, and enveloped in a kind of silence. I was at a turning of a winding alley. Foliage surrounded me all around. Long cypresses detached themselves against the sky, and the tombs, under the covering of weeping willow trees, offered themselves to my glance in a familiar and sentimental disorder. It was a very romantic place, with its urns, its gratings, its stone draperies, its broken columns and its rotting flowers. The sunlight played upon the window of a chapel. And closing my eyes, I passionately breathed in the door of elder trees. An incredible bird began to chirp. I pushed open the door of a chapel, seated myself at the foot of the altar, my musket between my hands, and I remained for a long moment in this hiding place under the protection of the dead. From time to time distant shots rang out. I thought of nothing, I did not wish to think of anything, I muttered all the time the password, then occasionally the name of Marie-Rose. Marie-Rose? What had happened to her now that I was there amidst the dead? As for me, I had begun to forget what was due to the living, and what must be done, to fight them or to love them. I felt the damp earth swaying about me, and the thought of love, little by little emptied of the lovely living flesh of Marie-Rose, could not but mingle for me with this soil which breathed out the scent of grass, the elder tree and the box tree, and which was broken in all directions by dead bones ready to crumble into powder. Dizziness made everything turn around me. "What time is it?" I asked myself. It might be three o'clock of the afternoon. "I have still a whole afternoon in front of me," I thought. A whole afternoon? To do what? Then I began to look at the names of the dead to whom I was paying a visit. All this family, all these dates, all these gilded names . . . Eugène-Arthur Bénédict . . . Jeanne-Victoire . . . Lucie-Adrienne-Marie . . . Marie, Marie-Rose, lost Marie-Rose . . .

It was necessary to shake off this stupor, to try to do something, to fight again. To fight all one's life. Yes, evidently all one's life. Once I had finished fighting, I should have finished my life. The others had indeed finished theirs: Maxime, Becker, all those whom I had met, old Corbeau, all those of whom I had taken charge, who had become a little part of myself. And as they had left me, I could in my turn depart from myself. There was no longer

anybody in me. That was it, to die. To die to oneself, as some people say. That is to say, to die to those whom one has loved. To die to love. I was going to die to Marie-Rose. I got up like a madman, I took my musket and I swear now that never have I loved Marie-Rose as in that moment of fury and confusion. Never had she been within me as at that moment when, my face matted, my hair in my eyes, my teeth chattering, I left my refuge. The sun was glittering. A clamor resounded from behind the confused mass of tombs and trees, and I ran in that direction crying: "Who's on the watch?" Then I cried: "Belleville! And long live the Commune!" Crouched behind an enormous funeral monument, Federals were firing their last cartridges. Upon the slope among the tombs, Versaillaists were ascending. I sighted, I fired. Then as they continued to ascend, we ascended too, sheltering ourselves here and there behind the chapels. A Versaillaist suddenly ran upon me. I fired; he uttered a savage cry and fell. Below, veiled in black, Paris was burning, and I felt an absurd impression of consolation: "Bah!" I said to myself. "Everything will be all over soon. Paris will be completely burned and, here, it's enough to fire at each Versaillaist who shows himself, and kill him. And then what? Paris burned and all the Versaillaists killed, what would happen? Everything will be all over." Up above I heard the noise of a Mitrailleuse.

"That's a nice shower of prunes!" whispered a Federal who was close to me.

"Who is it firing?" I asked.

He put his hand to his throat and fell upon a tombstone. I flung myself on my stomach and tried to find out where the shot had come from. A musket pointed at me from behind a clump of yews. I heard an explosion and thought: "Finished!" Then I sighted a face which had sprung up. Next to me I heard the rattle in the dying man's throat.

I got up and continued my ascent. The noise of the Mitrailleuse had begun again, monotonously, anguishingly. "But what is it?" I cried in an irritated tone. For it was truly irritating, this noise. Then came the noise of cannon. I continued to climb up among the tombs and the trees. A Federal suddenly threw away his musket, his cap, and began to tear off his red facings:

"It's all up," he cried to me. "Now let everyone save his own skin."

He got astride of a tombstone, disappeared among the trees. And I had a desire to follow him, for perhaps he knew where he was going. Perhaps he knew an exit. In any case, he was leaving the play to follow its course without him. He was not acting any longer. Then, as a shell began to explode, I threw myself once more on my stomach and mechanically recharged my musket. Then I fired. Here again there is a gap in my memory. Or perhaps it is that I can stand no more, and that, arrived at this point of my memoirs, an irresistible force compels me to cut short, to come to the last vision, that which stayed with me forever as an image of despair. Did I really see that? Was it I who saw that? Was it in a dream? Or in hell? Was I not in hell before my death? Or will someone indeed ever explain to me in what sort of world I was living then? And what I am doing now? Am I telling a story? Am I delirious? Perhaps this is all nothing but an invention, the invention of a poor visionary who thought that he lived through it all while he remained in his attic on the Rue Vieille-du-Temple. For it is in such places with a chair, a table, a bed, and a roll of paper hidden in a corner on a plank, it is in such places that one has visions of this kind. Yes, it is enough to have a table, a chair . . . a window giving upon a yard . . . The hours pass, and one gives oneself to imagining all kinds of strange and terrible

things. One imagines: Marie-Rose, the burning of Paris, the battle of Père-Lachaise. How these words resound! The battle of Père-Lachaise. Will people later on speak of it as one speaks of other battles? Austerlitz, Waterloo . . . What do people do afterwards with places where there have been such battles? Will people dare still to keep Père-Lachaise as a cemetery where they will go on interring worthy folk, stupidly dead from death, dead in the bosoms of their families? And buried with their families? Eugène-Arthur-Bénédict, Jeanne-Victoire, the grandfathers, the uncles, the nephews? It's all senseless, everything is senseless. And of all that I have seen of senseless, that which I am going to say now is by far the most senseless. Moreover, as I retreated among the tombs, firing, and as I mounted ever higher, I felt more and more clearly that I was going to see something unheard-of, and that it was the end, yes, the end. It is difficult to understand what this word means: the end. But I knew that I was going to understand. It was a monstrous and anguishing knowledge within me, the knowledge of the end. The Federal who had thrown away his musket just before, torn off his facings, given his resignation, he had left before the end. He would not see it, doubtless. But as for me, I had to see it, I had to arrive at the end. And suddenly I arrived there. The earth was upturned everywhere, worked up, pitted, broken by great holes. I surged out of a trench as if to attain the level of the stage where an extraordinary spectacle was going to take place. I surged thus into the smoke and into the middle of a deafening uproar. Down below there the Versaillaist cannon spat out all their fire, black men scurried around them. And standing against a wall which quivered, my last companions huddled together as they uttered their supreme cry, and I perceived Siffrelin, his great white beard spread out, and next to him, Marie-Rose, her hand before her eyes, her hair in the wind, and her body bending. I myself bent in two, a sudden pain lashed my shoulder, and I fell down in the mud.

III

When I came to myself again, it was night. I had my face in the cold mud, I moved an arm and uttered a cry of anguish. At last I was able to rise stumblingly. I was wounded in the shoulder. Above me a shadowy sentinel was standing. I saw him shoulder his gun, the sharp crack of a shot rang out. I bent down and remained motionless for a long moment. Then I started walking again. The sentry had disappeared. I wanted to go beside the dead, but I fell into the bottom of a trench. I got up again, wandered down an alleyway, found myself in the street. At the corner of the deserted street by the light of the moon I read the plate: "Rue du Repos." There was a low house there with closed shutters. I knocked. An old woman opened the door. Her name was Mère Gaspard. She washed my hands and face, washed my wound, made me lie down in a bed, the bed of her boy, a prisoner in Germany. Then she took away my clothes and my boots in order to hide them, as she said to me. In the wash-house. There they wouldn't find them. And she brought me her boy's clothes and laid them down next my bed. Outside shots were ringing. "You hear the executions?" said Mère Gaspard to me. I was as indifferent as a sleepwalker. She put out the candle and I was left in obscurity. After an interminable night she reappeared, opened a shutter, once more cleaned my wound with alcohol, which made me suffer greatly. Then she went out and eventually came back, her hood awry, her air unquiet. She was a nice little old woman, with a head like a cat's. She told me that houses were being searched all down the street, that

local people were accompanying the soldiers in their searches, that I must escape. She washed my hands again, rubbed with oil the black bruises which had been made on my shoulder by the recoiling of the butt and dressed me in her boy's clothes. They were a little too big, but she said they would do. For a long moment we stood behind the door looking out and waiting for the street to be clear. Then I went out and went off straight ahead.

All the houses had their shutters closed. At the corner of the street I saw a heap of corpses, faces white, mouths open and showing the teeth; this gave them a foolish appearance. Especially those whose eyes were not closed and who looked like blind people with their blank and staring eyes. Great repugnant black streaks of blood threaded the pavement. I went on.

I am not going to relate here the details of my flight. I would have been lost forever if I had not encountered an ambulance wagon. I stopped it, a big major with an eye-glass and the Red Cross armband on his sleeve got out and looked at me. I spoke, I no longer know exactly what I said to him. I had been on my way to see my sweetheart who lived near the Bastille, a stray shot had struck my shoulder. I needed attention. He said to me:

"I don't see any mark on your jacket."

I remained silent. He went on:

"Take off your jacket."

I began to take off my jacket, but the pain halted my arm. He shrugged his shoulders and said to me:

"Get in."

I passed two days in the hospital and was attended with a sort of haughty disgust by this big and silent man. On the third day an officer entered the hospital, a cane in his hand.

"You've got insurgents here," he said to the major. "I could get you shot for that."

In the beds the heads of wounded men moved abruptly. The major and the officer passed into a neighboring room, one could hear a discussion. In the meantime troops filled the room. Next to me a wounded man was killed right in his very bed. Other officers came in and ordered the evacuation of the room. The big major reappeared, very red. Towards midday he said to me:

"You're cured. You can clear off."

He himself helped me to get dressed. A nun slipped a medallion into my hand, and I found myself again in the street.

I got to the Seine, as high up as the Austerlitz bridge. It was still very sunny and in the current you could see long trails of red. Wrinkling up my eyes, I tried to find again my old distant Paris, the Paris that is steel-colored. I leaned over the river and breathed in its flat and viscuous odor. For a moment the desire came to me to let myself fall in. Then I took my road again. From time to time I touched my shoulder at the place where the wound was still open under the bandages, and it did me good to feel a little pain. A Versaillaist patrol got hold of me near the Jardin des Plantes.

I was kept for the night at the bottom of a cellar and the next day I came before a courtmartial. A little captain with a cigarette in his beak examined us one after another and in a sourish voice said:

"The same."

And then they took away those who were going to be treated the same as the others, who were going to be shot outside in the garden. From time to time by way of a change he said:

"This one can go to the health resort."

I was one of those who was kept for the health resort. While the shots were

ringing out in the garden, my arms were tied behind my back and along with some other poor beggars of the same kind, I was made to walk through all Paris. It is useless here to recall all the abuse of shrewish women, shopkeepers and hooligans as we passed. It was a great success. Next to me a young woman with her hair down her back, her bare arms bound in ropes, was weeping:

"I tell you, it was just a milk jug! You don't put petroleum in a milk jug, do you . . ."

She took me as a witness. The troopers who were escorting us twisted themselves up with laughing.

As we were passing down a long avenue where benches were piled with corpses, heaped one above the other, one of the troopers said to me:

"You dirty swine! We'll very likely get the job of burying them. But it's you dirty swine that ought to do it!"

The corpses were lying there in all directions, with arms hanging down and legs twisted. Their shoes had been taken off; you could see their poor torn socks or their naked and dirty feet. Gaunt dogs sniffed them curiously, flies buzzed above. I looked at all this without understanding, and the shattered house fronts also seemed amazed to see us pass. On a square against a long wall spattered with posters and surmounted by chestnut trees in bloom, an execution squad was busy shooting three men. A cry, an explosion tore the air. The three prisoners, their bodies twisting in the smoke, their faces black, screaming, fell down. Two officers looked on, smoking cigarettes. They turned round as we passed. I also looked at them, but I got a push in the back. Further on there were houses, the Seine, and on a barge a man fishing with a line. It was very warm. The sky was stickily languorous.

We were once more flung into a cellar. There I learned from another prisoner of mass shootings, massacres, those of the Lobau Caserne, those of the Luxembourg, those of the Tour Saint-Jacques. The young woman who had been taken as an incendiary was bent down next to us and muttered incoherently about her milk jug. The next day we took the road for Versailles. We formed an interminable chain. There were women, they whimpered like exhausted animals. Bound one to the other by the arm, those who had long dresses could not tuck them up and their feet got entangled in their trains. As they passed in front of a haberdashery store, they implored the woman of the shop, standing on the threshold, to throw them a pair of spare shoes, for their own were worn out and they were walking with bare feet. The incendiary was raving all the time. It was in considering her unbound hair that suddenly I began to think of another sort of anguish than my physical anguish. This was the first time since Père-Lachaise that I thought of Marie-Rose. It seemed to me that I was awakening from a long stupor; it was terrible.

"Tear their nails off!" cried an elegant courtesan, waving her parasol as we passed.

I felt as if my nails were really coming off my fingers, and the wound on my shoulder was beginning to bleed again. She was a pretty little thing; she wore a light dress and her parasol had flashed across my vision like the swish of a wing. At her feet lay the thick carcass of a horse. I turned my eyes away. We passed alongside burned and gaping house fronts, and we had to make a detour when we came to the ruins of one of our barricades. At each jolt the ropes sawed at my wrists. We stumbled. "What dials they've got!" cried an urchin. It must be admitted that we were terrible to look upon, particularly the women with their hair down, black, stinking, their eyes

squinting, slavering through their teeth. I recalled what I had been told of the Polish patriots and Russian revolutionaries, whom the tsar sends to Siberia, and whose long chain goes on through the snow singing hymns. They are cold, but the cold is clean, the cold purifies, they can look without disgust upon the sublime woman who accompanies them and whose eyes are ardent and whose hair is black under a handkerchief of vivid colors. They are happy, they sing! I was going away without my sweetheart, my feet stumbled, we did not sing. We were a herd of driven beasts which would never again lift up their heads. The soldiers who escorted us seemed too disgusted even to hate us.

We reached La Muette. There a magnificent general sitting on a black horse was waiting for us. He was a bit stout, the visage congested, his white hair clipped short, a black moustache which was twisted into two little spikes and which looked like a strip of braid. He let fly at us with all the little jokes which have been related since in the histories; he ordered prisoners with grey hair to come out of the ranks and be shot on the spot because they had probably fought in '48 and were consequently old offenders. They were thrown into a ditch. I saw the backs of the platoon bending and the poor devils falling in the smoke, their arms in front of their eyes, with that instinctive gesture of people being shot that I had seen Marie-Rose make, oh, God, back there, I no longer know when. . . . Then, from the height of his horse our fine general bowed gallantly to the women who were weeping:

"Madame, I have often been in theaters, I admit that you do not lack talent for melodrama, but your comedy leaves me cold."

And then it was he who adopted the theatrical manner and with a Mephistophelean snigger, commenced a tirade:

"Well, people of Montmartre! . . ."

Trembling behind him at the edge of the road, at the gate, the refugees of Versailles, the boulevard strollers, the men of letters, the dealers, the fashionable women, awaited the end of our procession. It was only when all Paris had disgorged its last prisoners and there remained nothing more than corpses with their brains trickling out of their skulls, it was only then, following the bloody feet of Général Marquis de Galliffet, the glory of the French army, that the French bourgeoisie was able to make its return to Paris.

I pass over the days and the nights of Sapory, the life of dirt, vermin, urine. And the cattle wagon which was leading us to the convict ship, jammed up against each other, the sick against the living, the mad against those who still resisted. Meanwhile I asked myself what would be better: to think of Marie-Rose so as to drown my ills in a still more vivid anguish, or to think no more of anything and to constrain myself to be nothing but an object in order to be able to support the intolerable fatality of being immobilized, bound, bruised for hours and hours, in a box without air, and to feel against me the presence of this woman who had changed into a wolf in her efforts to find a little bit of room that her baby should not be smothered and that she could put its lips to suck at her empty breast. That baby, I turned my head away so as not to see it. But my ears still heard its cries. And as, when anyone cried, the gendarmes had orders to shoot through the holes in the wall, we wanted to make the baby be quiet, and its mother besought it to be quiet with words that tore our hearts. But he was not an object like me, he was a living being, a little obscure soul that suffered, that cried, incapable of shutting itself up in silence and nothingness, incapable of not making its existence known. He cried as a little dog might have done. And then the

women who had gone mad also began to shriek. And the gendarmes tapped on the wall, a revolver muzzle appeared through a hole. Our mass of people moved away as if the steel muzzle were going to burst. The dry shot rang out and on the face of the maddest woman blood gushed out and we had to go on our journey with this supplementary horror.

It is several months now that I have been at Nou. I have written all this in my clay hut. The porter of the Rue Vieille-du-Temple, my old friend, who escaped the repression, was able to get out to me my verses and the notebooks in which I kept my journal during the seige, but I know nothing of my people or of anyone. I reread my poems, but I do not write any more, except joking little things to amuse my companions. It is very amusing to make couplets against our keepers, or ballads to well-known airs in which one evokes memories and common hopes. It is very amusing. That proves that we still have a lively mind which seizes the ridiculous side of people and situations, which gets something out of circumstances and is able to make something where there was nothing. A ballad, well, that's one more ballad, and that makes my companions laugh, they understand the meaning, they repeat the words with a wink. No one else could understand what it is about, to what familiar details it makes allusion. It is a ballad for the prisoners of the island of Nou, at the other end of the planet. It is for them alone, as is the fantastic blue of the sky and the mauve hills and the red earth. For them alone this forest, into the skirts of which they adventure, and in the gloom of which the lianas stretch and twist. The power of these lianas is strange to look upon when one is no longer anything but a shadow like me, a frail shadow, scarcely clothed in shirt and trousers, which glides on naked feet and passes like a sleepwalker. They bear flowers of all the colors, white, yellow, large as stars, heavy as fruit. There is a liana with golden apples, and a fuchsia liana which creeps up to the summit of a tree and there weaves garlands of snow, and another which produces a kind of little tomato, purple and shiny, with a skin stretched to bursting point. Suddenly a tree will fall in the rustling vegetation, it explodes into morsels and strange insects escape to die at once on contact with the air. Glassy flies buzz about. All the shadows tremble and sigh. I come back to the beach. I fall exhausted in the shadow of a mango. A sea alga, violet color, protrudes from a little mound. The bay glitters like a diamond. I am truly very far away here. I see nothing, I feel nothing. The space and the light are infinite, and nevertheless they are nothing to me, I see nothing in them or beyond them. The sun sets; it is a majestic spectacle. It unrolls itself for me alone. And as if I were not there. A treacherous breeze arises, vanishes. The phosphorescent night extends itself. The hours pass. I drag myself to my hut and seek to attain a little sleep. I will sweat upon my mat without being able to close my burnt eyes or refresh my panting throat. And tomorrow I will see again the sky and the sea, all the immensity of the bay. Things are very well with me here. I will stay here always. I do not wish ever to return to the country whence I came. For this country here is so strange and so distant that I am able to expect from it a marvelous surprise, and it is that alone which permits me to live a little bit, to risk thinking that I live a little bit, and as if there were a reason for living. For in the country whence I came, everyone is dead. But this country here is so strange and so distant: I am able still to hope to find here once more Marie-Rose.

Translated from the French by H. O. Whyte

Sandor Gergely

Wolves

A Hungarian Short Story

The forest stood silent. On the bare thicket dawn-lights reddened, and with the first rays of the sun the forest grew smoky with mist.

The she-wolf had crept out early from her lair, sniffed all around, and wandered to the stream. There she stopped, her tail between her legs, and stood a long time on the bank. Then, scenting something hostile, she turned and ran back. Hidden among root-stubs which, thick as an arm, stuck up out of the earth, she lay poised for a spring, jaws wide and nostrils quivering.

The winter was a fierce one this year. There were people skulking about the woods, making fires and remaining a long time in one place. They were ransacking the forest for game and the smaller animals were being killed off. The wolf's means of subsistence was being taken from her; she grew lank in the rib and prowled to and fro at night in circles around her lair. The hungry wolf cub, shoving and pressing against her, gnawed at empty teats. And now, driven by hunger, she no longer waited for the night but went out even by day after a kill.

One night she returned earlier than usual to the cub. Strange noises and rustlings had put fear in her. Alone, she could have broken through this circle of suspicious smells and voices, but she had her defenceless young one in the lair. In the morning, she again prowled in search of prey, until suddenly, from a glade almost on top of her, she heard a sound made by something which was not a beast.

The she-wolf was old and canny. Often enough in the past she had succeeded in escaping from men relentlessly on her track. Often enough, the pursuit had been hot after her. Steaming horses neighed and whinnied, almost overtook her; dogs barked fiercely and hunted her through the forest. She still had to tackle dogs, and even men, if she tried to go among the sheep.

Since the autumn she had been looking for a quiet spot for herself and the cub coming shortly. She had made long wandering searches from north to south through the woods, along the frozen streams and rivers, sometimes keeping low, sometimes lighting upon prey in plenty. When winter came, she had settled down to look after her cub, keeping clear of people and their traps and hunting-stands. But now in the immediate neighborhood of the lair there were no more of the smaller animals to be found and the wolf was forced to pick fastidiously at the offal she scratched up out of the earth.

This winter morning she lay before the lair, her head on her fore-paws. Her eyes flashed yellow fire, her furry tail beat violently on the ground. Suddenly her low growl changed to a frenzied howl, and grinding her teeth she backed into the lair. The cub squealed and bounced at her; its toothless gums sought and sucked her dried teats.

Suddenly a series of dull jolts jarred the lair. The earth above it trembled, shattered by pounding blows. The wolf leapt up, and dropped to the floor again, ears pricked and neck tense. Above, the earth was already being scattered about in lumps and clods. The beast leaped to the entrance; and as suddenly recoiled, encountering the long sharp shaft thrust through it. She hid in the farthest depth of her lair. The blows fell more furiously; the earth

hailed down in clods. The wolf bounded from side to side of the lair, howling, and scooping the cub under her for safety. Her eyes stared at the sharp iron stuck immovable in the entrance, cleaving its strip of daylight.

Once more, earth scattering down, the roof crumbled and a huge hole gaped in it, letting through the daylight and an iron pick at the same time. The wolf hurled herself to one side, but the iron ripped her flank and she leaped to the entrance, howling frantically. Her howl was soon silenced, for the long bright iron drove into her maw.

The hunters dragged the slain beast from its lair, and the smothered cub with it. There were three men; one had a spade, one a pick, and one a freshly whetted scythe. Their high boots were frayed at the top, and tied up with string. Their ragged clothes, greasy caps and sheepskin coats were heavy with the dirt of many years.

"Look!" said one of the men, "a wolf!"

The others bent over the beast.

"It really is, it's a wolf allright," they sighed and shook their heads. But they did not spend much time wondering, this outlandish trio. True, they had followed a fox's spoor, and had visions of a fox's fur—and now, after all, it turned out to be a wolf.

As they deftly set about flaying the beast—and they knew what they were about, for this was not the first time they had done it—the man with the scythe suddenly spoke up:

"How the devil did a wolf happen to be here?"

The two others also broke off work. Their gaunt faces, shaggy with many days' growth of hair, turned one to the other. And how indeed had a wolf come to be there? Since their very childhood they had never heard of wolves being at large in these parts. No ordinary beast, this. And here they had been lying in wait for it two whole days—but would they get eight pengos from the dealer for this pelt? That is what they'd got last time for a fox's.

They looked at the skinny carcass of the beast, felt its fluffy fur, and reckoned what it might fetch, together with the smothered whelp.

"This—this dead 'un might have torn us to bits," said one of the men.

"Yes, she wouldn't have needed asking twice. 'Specially with an empty belly. She was famished allright," declared another.

"She'd hardly be enough for us," said the third with a gesture of his hand as he went on flaying the wolf.

While they were at work, one of them bent over the beast and began greedily licking up the clotted blood on the wound. The other two also got down and put their lips to the oozing wounds. The three of them caught the others' eyes. And their eyes were troubled.

After a while only two kept on flaying the wolf, and the third made a fire. The flame and smoke might attract foresters to them, but their tormenting hunger and perhaps the blood they had drunk stupefied them into forgetting all caution. When the fire had been well started all three sat round, holding over it pieces of the tough lean flesh skewered on the pick and the scythe, and waited impatiently for the dainty titbits they were going to get. For months now they had not seen meat, and for three days not even a crumb of bread, if bread is the word to describe a sticky lump of bran flavored with flour. No wonder they were overjoyed at their catch. True, their roast was wolf-flesh, and stinking; but for all that it was something to eat.

They stretched out on the ground, drying their rags in front of the blaze. Their hands and faces were rough and dry, weatherbeaten and burned by the sun and air in the forest.

"We've become mad dogs, boys," said the man with the scythe.

"Worse. Dogs don't guzzle up wolf-flesh," muttered another. "Wherever else in the world d'you find a beast that'd eat wolf? There just aren't any. Only a man . . ."

"There are men that eat even human flesh," put in the third.

"But that's a long way away," said the man who had held the spade, waving his hand. "They're black men . . ."

"No, they're white, they're our masters. It's they who drink up our blood . . ." He threw himself on the ground, soggy with the thaw from the fire. "But even they get their turn in time," he muttered.

They threw the rest of the dry twigs on the flickering fire, stretched out, and tried to go to sleep. Two of them dozed off. The third, the one with the scythe, kept watch, with his head turned towards the fierce wind. His face grew cold, and his hand groped indecisively over the bodies of his sleeping comrades. It was a pity to wake them, and he began to listen again. The wind, a strong one, rushed through the trees and set the forest rumbling. The man huddled over the fire, neck outstretched; then tense, he began to shift a little.

"We'll have to run for it," he said to himself, and gave the sleepers a shove. "Run!" he cried, "the dogs are after us! The masters with the dogs!"

They started to run and the high wind that had started up drove them on as it whirled wildly through the forest.

Shots rang out. The fugitives stumbled and fell. When one fell, the others helped their comrade to his feet. Dry twigs crackled. The wind roared and blew behind them. The man with the scythe stumbled once more, and the scythe flew far out of his hand to one side.

The others stopped and looked back. Their comrade lay on his face, and blood dripped from his back, which was torn by a wound broad as a palm.

Now there were only two of them running, grappling with branches, jumping over the root-stubs in their way. Nearer and nearer the furious barking of wolfdogs and the whistle of bullets asailed their ears.

The man with the pick stopped.

"Run!" he cried.

"Come on! don't stop!" panted the other hoarsely, but his comrade turned, and ran straight for the dog behind them, a beast as big as a calf. Lifting his pick, and uttering a wild cry, he drove it into the animal's back. An instant later, he dropped to the ground, his breast riddled with shot.

The pursuers were three in number; two woodmen, and the forester of the ducal estate. It was the latter's dog that the poacher had cleft with his pick. Its master covered it with the newly-flayed wolfskin, which he had snatched up as he was passing it, and dropped on his knees beside the faithful animal. But he could not bear the suffering look of his dying favorite. He turned his head. . . . His face twitched convulsively.

"Shoot the third, too!" he ordered. Then, leaping to his feet in a frenzy, "Shoot the dog!" he howled.

The woodmen dropped to their knees and fired. Then they got up and brushed the soil from their clothes. Far away, at a turn in the wood, the third poacher had thrown up his hands like one flying or swimming, and rolled into a gully.

Translated By M. Lineham

M. GORKY

FROM RECENTLY PUBLISHED MATERIALS

Fedor Diadin

Sketch

The black lines of the iron grating in the window cut the piece of grey sky into six squares. From the prison yard suffocating odors, stirred by the heat, pour into the cell together with the indistinct noises of the sluggish, depressed life there. Time moves slowly.

Diadin moves along the wall warily and with a rapid sweep of the arm catches flies. On trapping one he opens his fingers slowly, one by one, and when the insect flies away he raises his brows and follows its flight with a look of concentration in his dark eyes. Once in a while he presses his lips together grimly and tears the wings off the fly; then he squeamishly throws it away and wipes the perspiration from his face with the sleeve of his smock.

His movements are strong and supple, but his back is bent and his head —involuntarily—droops to his bosom. Angrily, the soldier throws it back, and, frowning, looks at the door of the cell as if listening with his eyes. The thick eyebrows tremble, veiling the extended pupils. The dark moustache jerks and the thin face turns wooden, acquiring a cold, stubborn look.

A sleepy murmur is heard from the corridor, as of someone praying. Tired voices merge into a soft stream of noise. It is Sergeant Makarov teaching young recruits to read. From time to time his hoarse voice rises:

"Speak out the 'I'! Say soldier! Not sodjer. You dumb hick!"

Diadin smiles good-naturedly and a little condescendingly. He wipes his moustache and wipes the smile off his face. Then, adjusting his smock, which has crept up from under his belt, he continues his noiseless pacing of the cell and watches the alarmed black flies dart about.

" 'Tention!" is heard out in the yard.

After a while, with a great screeching of rusty hinges, a door is opened somewhere. Steps sound dully, a bayonet rings, and Makarov's voice is heard again, calling out " 'Tention!"

Diadin buttons the collar of his shirt, straightens himself and turns sharply in the direction whence issues the sound of approaching feet. A grey pall of dull indifference suddenly settles over him.

The thick, iron-bound door half opens, as if unwillingly, and a little soldier rolls busily into the cell. He runs about panting from right to left as if trying to hide. He stops, pushes his fist into the door and, winking at Diadin with his right eye, says softly, ingratiatingly:

"Strong, all right! Hello, pardner! Hot! In long?"

Diadin, smiling, nods good-naturedly. Without waitinng for an answer, the new arrival quickly goes over to the window, grabs the grating, raises himself on it and looks out. Softly letting himself down again, he wipes his hands, looks around and remarks casually:

"Say, how are we going to sleep? There is only one cot."

"They'll put in another," Diadin says affably.

The little soldier stops in a corner, and sending a searching look at Diadin from a pair of small dull eyes, whispers mysteriously:

"Say, but I have seen you somewhere before, pardner? What do you say? My name is Lukin, Ivan, non-combatant, of the river battalion. And you are from the second company, Fedor Diadin, aren't you?"

"That's so!"—Diadin says, looking at him.

"Well then, we've met before! In the gully behind the camp, near the foundry, at meetings—now I remember! You once told the organizer that the leaflets are written so they can't be understood by a soldier and that all writing should be simple, clear—isn't that so?—I remember."

The words come fast, as if repeating a lesson learned by rote. There is a trace of ingratiating guilt in the soft rustle of his speech.

Diadin frowns thoughtfully, half closes his eyes and answers distinctly: "I do not remember you . . ."

The little soldier moves away from the corner, sits down on the cot and murmurs: "There were so many! It's easy to forget one! But now they have all been picked up—absolutely all!"

"All?" Diadin asks again, and smiles as he straightens up.

"Absolutely!" Lukin repeats and begins to take off his boots. "Up to the very last man! Our weakness! The people let their tongues wag, give each other away. Everyone is scared. We thought we were a power! It turned out—only talk—nothing more. Of course many joined the mutiny, but mostly out of curiosity. Who will win out?"

The boot off, he picks among the toes of his left foot, pants and mutters:

"The people—what do they know? You try to do things for them—but do they appreciate heroism? Yah, and all these . . . the teachers too, those gentlemen! Vassili Ivanovitch, for instance. Who is he? No one knows! He came, talked, and all of a sudden is gone. Where? Maybe he did teach us, maybe he was just stringing us? They say he is in prison. But how do we know? We don't know anything about him . . ."

Diadin shrugs his shoulders and says sternly:

"You mustn't say such things, pardner! Vassili Ivanovitch is an honest man, a veritable apostle to us . . ."

"Who knows?" Lukin repeats challengingly.

Diadin glances at the round, crumpled body of the little fellow and says impressively:

"I do! I would die for him."

Lukin grabs his boot from the floor, straightens out and, nodding with satisfaction, exclaims softly:

"Of course, if you . . ."

"Wait!" Diadin stops him. "All can't be arrested."

"Why not? Some for a longer, some for a shorter term."

"And who for a longer term?" Diadin asks triumphantly. "Do you know?"

"Of course I can't count them on my fingers, but . . ."

Diadin stops him with a gesture and begins pacing up and down the cell while Lukin bores into him with small winking eyes and listens to the soft, sure voice.

"There were few apostles—twelve in all. And who triumphed? They did."

Under the window, water is being pumped and the handle squeaks and rattles. Time is beginning to move faster.

"And now there are a great many apostles. They are the children of the people's spirit. Our secretly born children—you understand! They know all the thoughts and desires of the people—they do! The apostle of truth is

cherished by the people. Why? Because his breast contains my heart and your heart and another thousand. When there are thousands of hearts in one —there is the heart of an apostle. And thousands of thoughts in one head —thoughts taken from everywhere—my thoughts and your thoughts. United they burn and light up what we do not see otherwise, what is a mystery to our minds. And this is what is called an apostle of the people. A holy servant of Truth."

Diadin speaks with difficulty. He passes his hand over his throat, squeezes it with his fingers, coughs confusedly, mustering his words with evident labor. Under the strain his face grows dark and at the same time soft and good-natured.

His boot on his lap, Lukin leans on the cot, his broad nose in the air, his eyes squinting and his lips moving like those of a hungry calf. The skin of his forehead and cheeks, thickly covered with dark freckles, runs to creases. The stiff hair of his red moustache bristles and his entire round body shakes, stirred by a sort of impatience. He tries to look Diadin in the mouth as if he wants to see the heavy words which compose his thoughtful and confident speech.

"Have you been in long, pardner?" he asks suddenly.

"The second month—perhaps the third."

"That's a long time. Why so long?"

"I don't know."

Stepping noiselessly, Diadin is again pacing the cell.

"That which comes from the people, from its great labors and martyrdom is eternal! Everlasting! It will continue to the end!"

"And why are you in?" Lukin asks softly. His spotted face assumes a sly innocence.

"That makes no difference!" Diadin answers.

Unable to stand Diadin's look, Lukin looks down, sighs and continues persistently and insinuatingly.

"Among the non-combatants," he says, "there is a rumor—but, of course, they must be lying . . ."

"What did they say?" Diadin asks sternly, stopping again and looking at the little fellow.

Lukin gets restless, starts to pull on his boot and, groaning, throws out single words.

"Well—they—were admiring you—pardner. They—also wondered . . ."

"About what?"

"Whether you really let the prisoner escape while under convoy and some more . . . such stuff!"

Diadin straightens, passes his hand over his face and smiling good-naturedly, confesses with some pride.

"That's true. I let him escape."

Lukin jumps up from the cot in animation, stamps his foot and waves his hands in trepidation.

"And you didn't let them shoot? Didn't shoot?"

"That's right."

"Well, well," Lukin answers, sitting down on the cot again. "You'll get it for this! Too bad! Severely! Say, you broke your oath! That is a very serious matter. The law does not permit such action."

Frightened amazement sounds in the exclamations of the little soldier, although there is a look of peculiar satisfaction, almost gladness on his face.

"Have I a right to feel where the truth lies?" Diadin asks, speaking slowly

and quietly. "I have, because I am human! And that prisoner was to me an apostle of truth. So I had to let him go unharmed, that he might live longer. In him, I tell you, there is the best of what's in you and me—understand that!"

"You are an odd one!" Lukin exclaims with evident admiration. "Oh, my God! And aren't you afraid?"

Rubbing his hands, scraping his feet on the floor, Lukin bends his head towards the door listening for something, while smiles run over his splotchy face like ripples over muddy water into which a stone has been thrown.

"The only thing to be afraid of—is to sin against the people, and I have done nothing evil, no! I did well," Diadin answers calmly, beginning again to slowly muster his words.

"I have seen men who illuminate the truth for the world like a flame, have seen that this truth is my truth and yours and that of all living men. Such men must be cherished and made stronger by our help, by the spirit of the people. They must not be quenched for the sake of mean greed. There is a godly power in the people's truth and this truth is God, because in that is there freedom from sin.

"I see you like to talk," Lukin answers him with a note of satisfaction. "You have been silent a long while, eh?"

"Yes, I can talk now, I have thought much. The holy fire must be maintained, must!"

"Is what you are saying out of the bible, or is it your own?" Lukin asks after a while.

"The bible I have read. And the prophets. You pardner, if you know how to read, read the prophets! They have prophesied our times and our sins even unto this day. When you understand the word of the ancient prophets, you will also understand ours."

Diadin steps over to the window in thoughtful silence. Lukin turns his eyes on him, looks at his back, his throat. Lukin's splotchy face becomes serious and loudly smacking his lips, he says.

"Yah-h, you are an odd one, pardner! An Old-Believer, maybe? One of those—what you may call them? There are so many—by God!"

"The whole people is an Old-Believer!" Diadin answers without turning around. "It has always believed firmly, ineradicably in the power of truth. I am referring to laboring people—those who began everything on earth and gave birth to all."

Out in the yard an angry voice counts

"One, two, three, four . . ."

And suddenly the voice shouts,

"Where are your eyes, you blind pig!"

It is getting dark.

Diadin turns away from the window, shakes his head and with a smile continues softly,

"My grandfather was a serf. He left the estate—abandoned his family and went in search of truth. He was caught and flogged. When he got well he ran away again. This time he completely disappeared! Nowadays, he would not have had to go so far. It has become easy to find the truth. Her voice can be heard everywhere. Here we are in prison—and she is here. Here! Shall I show you?"

He takes a wide step towards the door and Lukin, surprised and scared, jumps up from the cot.

"Eh, wait a minute, what's the matter—pardner!"

Smiling broadly, Diadin glances at him and taps at the iron peek hole cover with his finger. Straightening up, he says,

"In thought people are free everywhere!"

"Wait a minute," Lukin says, also moving towards the door in alarm, "I want to go out too . . . that is, I ought to go . . . "

His eyes begin to wink incessantly and, worked up by something, he feels in the pockets of his trousers, pulls at his moustache.

"Don't get scared," Diadin advises affably. "The people are reliable, won't give you away! What are you afraid of? You'll see."

The peek hole cover moves aside carefully. Diadin bends down to it while Lukin goes over to the window, muttering angrily

"I don't want to . . . maybe you are off your nut . . . I want to ask them to transfer me—yes! I want to be alone!"

Diadin evidently does not hear him. He has his ear to the peek hole in the door and for several moments is listening intently, his shoulder pressed close.

"Is that so?" he asks dully. And his head hits the door.

"All kinds of crazy people, and I have to suffer here . . ." Lukin mutters, his voice rising. He stretches his neck towards the door as if getting ready to jump, and his eyes open wide and bulge as if they were trying to come out of their sockets.

Fedor Diadin straightens out heavily, leans his back against the door. Head down, he is wiping the perspiration from his face and is silent for a few seconds.

"I don't want to be here with you," Lukin screams now. "Do you hear? I want to go out! You say such things . . . I am afraid!"

In a thin voice he shouts,

"Warden!"

And then his voice breaks.

Diadin looks at him, shaking his head sadly. His face has turned ashen and he bites his lips thoughtfully while his hands ball up into fists.

"What are you trying to do?" Lukin asks, his voice lowered. "Let me get to the door!"

"So that's what you are afraid of!" Diadin says quietly.

"I am afraid," Lukin answers, hiding his eyes. "Of course, I am! Maybe you are crazy!"

"So-o!" Fedor Diadin draws the word out. "So-o you have been put in to draw me out?"

Lukin raises himself on his toes and again calls out, not so loudly, "Eh, guard!"

"Well, since you are a spy, go and tell them that I did it all, that I owned up to you! Go!"

"But we're locked in!" Lukin responds in an angry whisper, nodding his head towards the door.

"They'll open it! But listen here . . ."

Diadin walks up along the wall, rubbing his elbows against it, and stops opposite the little soldier.

"What you have been sent for, you have done. You'll get what they promised you. But about their telling me from the corridor why you were sent here, you don't tell the officials—do you hear?" Diadin admonished him.

"Allright!" Lukin answers, not looking at Fedor and shrinking into himself.

"Wait a minute! Why mustn't you tell? Because only one told me. You don't know which one, and there are nine men there in the corridor. They

will beat all of them to intimidate them. They will torture innocent people for nothing. You are a soldier too and should understand—it is too much!"

"I understand!" Lukin answers, vexed.

"You swear you won't tell that?"

"What's the use? You won't believe me now!"

"Why not?"

"Since I undertook . . . such. . . ."

"Oh, that's out of foolishness. You are a fool, so you went in for it. And now one wrong done, avoid another one."

Both speak fast, but softly. One is calm and sad, the other dejected and gloomy.

A wasp flies into the cell and mingles the strange hum of its flight with the sound of the men's voices.

Lukin goes away to the window, and raising his eyes, murmurs,

"So help me God—I won't tell . . ."

"You will only tell about me—is that right?"

Then Lukin looks him in the face and shrugging his shoulders, exclaims in a voice shaking with fright, "But they'll shoot you!"

"That's allright," Diadin says calmly, moving away from him. "They wouldn't have forgiven me anyhow . . . now go!"

Lukin makes a rush for the door, while Fedor presses against the wall, holding back his smock with his arms as if to keep it from contact with the other's clothes.

At the door Lukin hammers away with his boot, shouting in a thin, excited voice,

"Warden! Open! Beasts . . ."

Suddenly turning towards the window, he says rapidly and loud enough to overcome the noise outside the door,

"My name's Fedoseev—not Lukin . . ."

Diadin waves his hand, responding,

"It's all the same to me!"

"Oh!" Lukin exclaims, pushing at the door. "But they are slow!"

And he falls back. The door opens and warden Makarov, his moustache bristling, steps in, asking sternly,

"Who is being disorderly here, eh?"

"Take me out of here!" Lukin interrupts. Waving his arms, he tries to push the warden aside. Makarov punches him in the chest.

"What's your hurry?"

"I want to go to the office . . ."

"I'll show you an office!"

Diadin's voice is distinctly heard from the rear of the cell.

"He really has to go, Mr. Warden, to report to the officials, because he has done what he has been sent here to do."

Two heads are raised and two pairs of wary eyes flash from behind Makarov's back for an instant.

"So then you confess, Diadin, eh?" Makarov asks thickly and sullenly.

"Yes. They've decided on my death anyhow, and they are only corrupting people for no good purpose . . ."

"Aha . . . so then, of course . . ."

Suddenly Makarov shouts fiercely:

"Lock the cell! What are you staring at?"

"Wait a minute!" . . . Lukin shouts in alarm. "What about me?"

"You wait. I'll report first."

Diadin's soft voice is heard again.

"Please, Mr. Warden, take him out into the corridor."

"But why?" Makarov asks undecidedly, looking over Lukin's head.

"Please, Mr. Warden, I beg of you, because it is hard for him to be with me and hard for me too. Please."

"Yes," Lukin says dully.

Makarov hesitates a moment, then shouts,

"March! Out of here! You two stay with him—you!"

Lukin bends down and slips out, and Makarov follows him, going backward like a horse in harness. The door is closed without haste. Slowly the bolt is shot and then the lock fastened.

Then soft but angry talk is heard outside the door, the speakers interrupting each other. A sharp cry is heard.

"Fools! You should have told me sooner."

A foot stamps on the floor.

Diadin listens to all the noises, sighs, smiles and turns towards the window, straightening himself and raising his head.

Evening has come, and it has grown cooler.

1910

Translated from the Russian by S. D. Kogan

Morning

In November 1910, after the death of Lev Tolstoy, a boy of seven named Ilyusha Frenkel wrote Gorky a letter in which he alluded to Tolstoy's death and asked for a story. Gorky answered the lad's letter with short sketches of Tolstoy and Korolenko and enclosed the story *Morning*. The typewritten copy of this story dated 1910 with the author's corrections was found among his correspondence.—*Editors.*

The best thing in the world is to watch the day being born!

As soon as the first ray of the sun strikes the sky, the darkness of the night runs to hide in mountain caves and rock fissures. It hides in the thick leaves of the trees, in the lacework of grass sprinkled with dew while the mountain-tops smile benignly, as if they were saying to the soft shades of night:

"Don't be afraid—this is the sun!"

The waves of the sea raise their white manes up high, bow to the sun like polite ladies at court before their king, bow and sing:

"Welcome, lord of the world."

The good sun laughs. Those waves have been playing about all night, whirling and dancing, and now they look a sight. They are all dishevelled, their green clothes all creased and their velvet bows all tangled.

"Good morning!"—says the sun as it rises over the sea. "Good morning, my beauties! But that's enough—you must be quiet now! The children will not be able to bathe if you continue to leap about so wildly! We must arrange life so that it will be good for everyone on earth, mustn't we?"

Green lizards dart out from fissures in the rocks and say to one another, their eyes blinking:

"It will be nice and hot to-day!"

On hot days, flies are lazy and lizards can catch them more easily and eat them. And a nice fly is so good to eat! Lizards have a sweet tooth for flies.

Weighed down by dew, the flowers shake their heads playfully as if to say:

"Pray sir, you must write about us, about how fine we look wearing the morning dew! You should make little portraits of us in words. Just try—it is easy—we are so simple . . ."

They are sly ones, they are! They know very well that their beauty cannot be told in words. They are really only teasing me!

I take my hat off respectfully, and say to them:

"It is really very kind of you! Thanks for the honor, only you see, I have no time to-day. Some other day, perhaps . . ."

They smile proudly, stretching in the sun. Its rays flicker in the drops of dew, scattering the radiance of diamonds over petals and leaves.

Golden bees and wasps are already circling over them, thirstily drinking their sweet honey. In the busy hum one can hear the song:

Praised be the sun—
Joyous source of life.
Praised be labor—
For the beauty of Earth.

Robin redbreast now wakes up. He stands shaking on his thin legs and also sings a song of quiet joy. Birds know better than humans how nice it is to

be alive on Earth. And the robin is always the first bird to greet the sun. In far-away, cold Russia the robin is called the dawn-bird because the feathers on his breast have the color of dawn. Jolly siskins jump about in the bushes. In their greys and yellows, they look like street urchins—and they are just as mischievous and just as noisy.

Hunting for midges, swallows and martins dart about like black arrows, sounding joyous and happy. It is nice to have good light wings and be able to fly fast.

The stems of the peonies tremble. Peonies are great big cups filled with yellow sunshine that looks like golden wine.

People wake up—those whose whole existence means labor, who spend all of their lives beautifying, enriching the earth but themselves remain poor from the day they are born till the day they die.

Why?

You will find that out when you grow up—if you want to know, of course. For the present, learn to love the sun, the source of all joy and power. Be good and jolly just as the sun is good to all alike.

People awake. And now they go to their fields, their work. The good sun smiles down at them. It knows better than anyone how much good these people did to the Earth. It saw the Earth when it was wilderness, and sees it now covered with the works of these people—the works of our fathers and grandfathers and their fathers and grandfathers who, among all the serious things that children do not yet understand, also made all the play-things and all other pleasant things on earth—even the movies.

Oh, they labored much, our fathers did. There is good reason to love and respect the great works they have left all about us!

This is something to think about, children. The story about how people have worked upon the earth is the most interesting story in the world . . .

Roses bloom in the hedges, and everywhere flowers are smiling. Many of them are already fading—but all look lovingly up to the sky, to the golden sun. Their velvety petals rustle and send out sweet odors. In the warm, blue air, full of fragrance, a sweet song softly rises:

What is beautiful—remains so
Even when it fades;
What we love—we keep on loving,
Even when we die . . .

Day has come.

Good day, children. May there be many, many good days in your lives!

I have made this story a little dull.

It is too bad. But when a child gets to be older than forty he becomes a little dull.

Translated from the Russian by S. D. Kogan

Gorky's Letters to Chekhov

Prefatory Note

Gorky's letters to Chekhov help to reveal the constant struggle with class-alien surroundings which accompanied the development of Gorky's talent as a writer and his approach to new social tasks. Both in his immediate personal life and his broad social existence, Gorky keenly felt the need for struggle, the need for a sharp break with the old world, for its violent destruction.

At the same time, however, Gorky was undergoing the complicated process of critically assimilating the riches of the old-world culture. With all the inspiration and receptiveness of his great talent, he assimilated and familiarized himself with the treasures of the opposing world. He studied the lives and activities of the old world's prominent men of art and science—those who in their works came closest to the tasks of the inevitable overturn in the life of human society. With the fervor of the pioneer of a new culture he sought to understand and personally experience excursions to the summits of old art (painting, opera, drama). That is the reason he was utterly enthralled by the high culture of the Moscow Art Theatre, regarding which he said, "The Art Theatre is as good and as important as the Tretyakov Gallery, Basil the Blessed and all that is finest in Moscow. It is impossible to keep from liking it, and not to work for it would be a crime."

Seeing the masterpiece of the old culture and feeling the devotion to his cause of the greatest masters of contemporary literature, theater and painting, of contemporary art as a whole, Gorky regarded Chekhov with special affection, recognizing him as a writer who had mastered the methods of his work to perfection. To some extent he himself, who came from and represented the oppressed masses, would have liked to have devoted himself completely to art for a time. But for one in the position of a rebel and revolutionary pioneer, such solitude, such comparatively tranquil and leisurely creative work as he observed was being done by Chekhov, and Vasnetsov, and at the Art Theatre was out of the question. His writer's workshop was not distinguished by its tranquility. His workshop was located not so much in his study as in the concrete task of organizing the new social life. Realizing this fact, he wrote to Chekhov: "You were, I believe, the first person I ever met who is free and does not worship anything. How fine it is that you can regard literature as your primary business in life. I myself, though I feel how fine that is, am incapable of living the way you do. I have too many other likes and dislikes. It angers me but I can't help it."

This condition of apparent dualism—the desire to understand more, and to undertake more in the world of creative endeavor, to absorb more from the old forms and examples of art, on the one hand, and on the other the constant experience of "other likes and dislikes"[1]—led him to the extremely poignant and personally not very cheering estimate of his possibilities and his role as a new writer.

Gorky's discussion with Chekhov on Strindberg very naturally invites comparison between Gorky himself and Strindberg. The credit for this comparison belongs to Chekhov. He apparently bases his comparison of Gorky with Strindberg on the external similarity of their creative temperaments, their liking for forms that rise above current reality—forms of protest, of a certain inner strength. And even in this comparison Chekhov is of course re-

[1] Excerpt from an essay by E. Leitnekker.

treating from his original estimate of the undercurrent of Gorky's writings as a lyrical one. But the comparison fills Chekhov's correspondence with a certain bitterness. Gorky raises the question of the writer's lack of freedom, "of the heavy fetters" on his soul.

Chekhov, as he gets to know Gorky better, with increasing frequency dots his letters with advice and "admonitions,"—as he himself calls his appeals to Gorky, regarding his work. Gorky is pleased at the way Chekhov admonishes him "like a dean." "I already have told you how fine it is," he wrote. "You treat me better than all the 'fellow writers.' That's a fact."

But Gorky naturally paves his own way. This is especially felt in his conception of his tasks as a writer. Disagreeing with the usual concept of the writer's halo, of the conditions determining the success of his life and work, Gorky consciously blazed his own way as a writer and was prepared to continue.

Chekhov advised Gorky to go to India: "When you have India and a long ocean voyage to look back on, you have something to remember in times of insomnia." Gorky's desires were somewhat different. "I won't go to India even though it might be a good idea. And I won't go abroad. I am planning to walk through Russia with a friend. By the end of April we intend moving on to the Southern countries; we'll go to the Danube, the Black Sea, etc."

Here it is in place also to recall the reason for his "wanderlust" in those years. Gorky gave his reason in his last letters. "My tramping through Russia is not motivated by wanderlust but by the desire to see where I live and what the people around me are like."

Chekhov offers an entirely different kind of advice. "So you're going to travel through Russia on foot? A pleasant journey and a smooth road, though it seems to me that while you are still young and healthy it would be better to travel not on foot or third class, but to more closely observe the public which reads you. And then, in two or three years time, you can go on foot." (June 29, 1899.) The traces of the road forecast by Chekhov, the road along which, in his opinion, the young Gorky should proceed, are to be found in E. Klein's book, which quotes the following words of Chekhov in a conversation with A. Kalyuzhny. "It's time Alexei Maximovich put on a frock-coat." Evidently Klein assumes from what Kalyuzhny said that Chekhov corroborated his opinion that "Gorky had in fact finished portraying tramps and that since he now had entered an intellectual environment it was time he began to write about the life and manners of those intellectuals."

With his inherent tact, Gorky describes the difference between his position and that of Chekhov as follows: "You see, I live a fantastic incoherent life. My head gets muddled and I envy you your tranquillity. Life seems to treat you with reverence; it doesn't bother you in your solitude; it knows your quiet love of people and doesn't wish to disturb it by roughly intruding upon you." And in his correspondence with Chekhov, Gorky refrained from discussing many disturbing questions.

It is correct to say that Gorky's correspondence with Chekhov reflects the entire complexity and difficulty of Gorky's growth as a founder of proletarian art, as a fighter and revolutionary, among alien class surroundings under the peculiar conditions of autocratic society. "I try hard to keep from feeling sick at heart, but to no avail. God knows I don't understand what causes it," he writes in July 1900. "I shall write no more for I feel like swearing and everything seems unpleasant," he reports in October of the same year. Chekhov, evidently guessing the causes of his condition, enquires, "I heard that first in Petersburg and then in Moscow you were downcast. Write me what

the matter is. I know little, almost nothing, as you'd expect from a Russian living in Tatary, but I have lots of forebodings." Chekhov was right, Gorky's condition was that of a man sensitive to all the main trends of current events in the social center. It was the condition of a man who came into direct conflict with that tremendous, monstrous historic foe—the autocracy that was supported by the feudal nobility and the capitalists—while at the same time he critically and with inevitable ups and downs overcame the influence of the culture of the ruling classes.

Thus, even in 1900 he was faced with the elusive, deceptive question of "god," a question which he did not finally solve until somewhat later. Reading Vladimir Solovyov, he poses to Chekhov this question: "Is there any need for god?" The thought of god crops up when he speaks of Tolstoy's religious arguments—"what is his god? It's not god but a particle of Count Leo Tolstoy, the god without whom people cannot live."

It would be childish to suppose that in the given instance Gorky is employing the concepts of the orthodox god even though Vladimir Solovyov is under discussion. Clearly it is not Tolstoy's concept of god either. In Gorky's case, at that particular stage, this entire ideology boils down to his raising the problem of every individual's need for a definite philosophy—for man to know himself.

And of course, in his quest for truth, and in his conscious efforts, Gorky is dominated and guided by human values. The earth and man are his point of departure. Philosophical questions are placed on the plane of the developing political and class struggle. In those years Gorky's philosophical awakening was in the long run linked with his social development. And only from this angle can his remarks about god in his letters to Chekhov be understood since his philosophical awakening proceeds only through struggle, only through "scrimmage."

This struggle is the main criterion of his philosophic and literary interests, for "I have a terrific desire to live differently somehow—more brilliantly, faster—that is the main thing—faster." Gorky thus raises the question of the pace of maturing events. He is completely plunged in the tempos and gigantic range of these events.

Separate remarks, fragmentary phrases and words in his letters in general during that decade and in his letters to Chekhov in particular, are imbued with a trait common to them all. Gorky lived, thought, and worked only in the scheme of development of the manifold forces of the revolution.

Below we give some of the letters.

Christ is Risen!

Dear Anton Pavlovich:

I made my departure from Yalta after some trouble with the chief of police,[1] and on Saturday at 6:40 p.m. arrived in Moscow. I had lost your Moscow address. I met Korsh in the station but forgot to ask him. All I re-

[1] *I made my departure from Yalta after some trouble with the chief of police*—Gorky was given permission to remain in Yalta two months for treatment, as is evident from the communication of the Nizhni-Novgorod governor to the Tauride governor dated march 15. 1899, No. 430: "I have the honor to inform Your Excellency that Alexei Maximovitch Peshkov, living in Nizhni-Novgorod under special police surveillance, as a result of his application to the Ministry of Home Affairs has been given permission to live in Yalta for 2 months for medical treatment."

member is Dmitrovka. I wandered about Moscow, saw the Kremlin in the morning, went to the Vorobyev Hills and in the evening left for Nizhni.

I was on the same train with Posse and another acquaintance. I couldn't get to sleep all night; I was in a rotten mood . . . As I left the Nizhni station I saw my wife walking with Posse and Zhukovsky. It made me furious when I learned that we had all been travelling in the same car and hadn't seen each other. I haven't much hopes that this letter will reach you, but all I can say is that I am glad I met you, terribly glad! You were, I believe, the first man I ever met who is free and who does not worship anything. How fine it is that you can regard literature as your primary business in life. I myself, though I feel how fine that is, am incapable of living the way you do—I have too many other likes and dislikes. It angers me but I can't help it.

I ask you please not to forget me. Speaking frankly—I would like you to point out my shortcomings to me from time to time, give me advice and in general treat me like a comrade who requires teaching.

I wanted to speak about this to you back in Yalta and ask you this favor, but it's harder for me to talk than to write. All the same I hinted at it and perhaps you understood what I meant at the time.

Write a play, Anton Pavlovich. By God, that's what everyone needs. Speaking of plays, in Moscow I stayed overnight with Timkovsky. He is an educated person and seems intelligent. He has a gloomy disposition and loves to philosophize and study philosophy. Watching him and listening to him talk, I was sorry that you didn't read his play through. I'd very much like to hear what you would have to say as regards its "idea." And Posse keeps asking that you contribute something to *Zhizn*. Speaking frankly I also would like you to. Posse likes you very much and would be proud of your collaboration on the magazine. Did you read the article on you by Solovyov? I don't like the part where he talks about you; but all in all it's a lively article and even a pleasant one. All the same, when will there be real criticism? When all is said and done Solovyov's article supports and strengthens my intention of writing about you, not because I am capable of making a "genuine critique" but because I can treat the subject more profoundly than Solovyov.

And as a preliminary I will write a decent story and dedicate it to you. Do you have any objection to my doing so? Let me know. Good-bye! I send you my best wishes. It wouldn't be a bad idea if you left for the Crimea soon; in Moscow you must be having as rotten weather as we are having here.

With a hearty handshake.

Yours,

A. Peshkov

May, 1899
Nizhni-Novgorod
to Melikhovo, Moscow Gubernia

I read the play and sent it to Yoost.[1] Thank you for bothering with me. It was very good of you.

A bold Swede! Never have I seen such a striking portrayal of lick-spittle aristocracy. I see certain defects in the technical side of the play; I regard

[1] *I read the play and sent it to Yoost.* A. Strindberg's play *Froken Julie* is under discussion. Chekhov had sent a translation of it by E. M. Shavrovaya-Yoost to Gorky; "I am sending you Strindberg's play Froken Julie. Read it and return it to the owner." (May 9, 1899.)

Julie's and the lackey's talks about their families as superfluous—but that's trivial. The gist of the play amazed me and the author's strength aroused my envy and surprise, dissatisfaction with myself and lots of gloomy thoughts about our literature.

I'm surprised at you! What do you see in common between me and Strindberg? That Swede is a direct descendant of those Normans who throughout the course of history were everywhere the creators of something strong, beautiful and original. In the awful period of the Crusades they succeeded in creating a real knightly state in Sicily and in the darkness of those times it was the torch of humanity, of spiritual nobility; doubtless the best state there was at the time. Strindberg is the reincarnation of Ragnar Leatherbreeches, who in the good old times so enjoyed saying "mass on spears" to the Scots and Picts. He is a great man with a brave heart and a clear head; he doesn't hide his hatred and doesn't conceal his love and I guess he gives the numbskulls of our days plenty of sleepless nights. He is a man with a great mind. What can there possibly be in common between him and me; I am not trying to belittle myself when I say this; I am speaking with a heavy heart for don't I want to be myself and not have a sealed door in my soul which won't set my bold thoughts free?

Somewhere Nietzsche said, "All writers are the lackeys of some morality or other." Strindberg is no lackey. I am a lackey and I serve a mistress whom I don't believe and don't respect. Do I even know her? Perhaps not. So you see what the matter is. It's very sad and depressing as far as I'm concerned, Anton Pavlovich. And since you aren't having a very happy time of it either, I won't discuss my heavy spiritual fetters.

On April 30, they produced *Dyadya Vanya* in Tiflis. A friend wrote me a letter on his impressions. They produced it twice in succession and he attended both performances. I am sorry that I can't forward you his letter but I can tell you that he must have been tremendously affected. I enclose the review in *Kavkaz* which he sent and which he swore over. In my opinion the reviewer didn't go very deep and he understood things badly, very superficially. All the same, it may be interesting to you.

Read Gedberg in *Nachalo,* Anton Pavlovich. I am sure that you will enjoy him.

It's too bad that you saw a poor performance of *'Chaika'* although I would even go to see a poor one. Write me how long you will stay in Lopasno and when you will go to the Crimea. I shall tell the priest to go to see you and I'll send you his book. He asked me to come to the Crimea. I am not going. I am not going anywhere. I shall stay in Nizhni all summer. My wife and child are taking the steamboat on the Volga. When my wife returns she'll immediately leave for Kama as far as Perm. I will be living alone and working. "Solitude is the mother of wisdom" one of Gedberg's heroes says, and another adds "and folly." I am for the first. I would like to be completely alone, more alone than you are. A family is all very well but you are even better off without one, so far.

Couldn't the translator be prevailed upon to give *Froken Julie* to *Zhizn?* I would very much like to see it published in that magazine.

"It's a consolation that others are no better than we are," says Jan. The disgusting lickspittle! How clearly he revealed his own contemptible soul with these words.

And again I ask myself and you—why don't we have either a Strindberg or a Gedberg or an Ibsen or a Hauptmann?

Why? Is it really true as others say that education and our middle schools

throttle individualism, make a man characterless, destroy his soul?

But I weary you with my long letters.

Good-bye! My best wishes. I hope you will be in a good mood and want to work.

My hearty handshake.

A. Peshkov

Beginning of January, 1900,
Nizhni-Novgorod
to Yalta

Happy New Year!

I am living aimlessly, as always. I feel myself terrifically unstrung. I shall go to Yalta at the end of March or in April if I don't get sick before then. I have a terrific desire to live differently somehow—more brilliantly, faster—that is the main thing—faster. Not long ago I saw *Dyadya Vanya* on the stage. It was remarkably well acted! (I incidentally am no expert on acting and always when I like a play the acting is splendid.) However *Dyadya* has the strength to *compel* even bad actors to act well. That's a fact. For there are plays which you can't possibly spoil by the acting, and there are plays which are ruined by good acting. Recently I saw the *Power of Darkness* at the Maly Theatre. Formerly I laughed when I saw it and I rather liked it, even; now, however, it arouses my dislike and I'll never go to see it again. All this is the result of the acting of good actors who mercilessly brought out all its crudeness and nonsense. The same applies to music: I go into raptures over Ernst when a bad fiddler plays it but if a virtuoso plays some trashy song it becomes positively foul. I read your *Dama*. Do you know what you're doing? You're killing realism. And you'll kill it soon for a long time to come. That form has outlived its time. It's a fact! No one after you can go any farther on that path; no one can write so simply about simple things as you can. After reading the most insignificant of your stories everything else seems coarse, written not with a pen but with a fence post. And—that is the main thing—everything else seems lacking in simplicity, unnatural. That's the truth. In Moscow there is a student, Georgy Chulkov—you know, he imitates you most successfully and seems like a talented youngster. So there you go, doing away with realism. And I am extremely glad. So be it! And to hell with it!

The fact is the time has come when the heroic is required. Everyone wants things that are exciting and brilliant so that it won't be like life, you see, but superior to life, better, more beautiful. Present-day literature must definitely begin to color life and as soon as it does this, life itself will acquire color. That is to say people will live faster, more brilliantly. And observe what ugly eyes they have now—dull, cloudy, glassy.

You do splendid work with your short stories by rousing people's disgust for that sleepy, half-dead life—the devil take it! That *Dama* of yours had such an effect on me that I immediately wanted to change wives, to suffer, to swear and so forth, in the same spirit. But I didn't change wives—there was none to change with. I merely had a terrific row with my wife and with her sister's husband, my bosom friend. You probably didn't expect such a result? I am not joking—that's exactly what happened. And it doesn't affect me alone

that way, don't smile. Your stories are exquisitely cut phials filled with all the smells of life and—believe me!—a sensitive nose can distinguish among them the subtle, pungent and healthy odor of what is "genuine," really valuable and essential, which is in everyone of your phials. Well, enough of that, or you'll think I'm paying you compliments.

As regards a separate volume of my best stories, that was a splendid idea on your part.[1] I shall arrange it although I decidedly do not agree that *Sputnik* is a good story.

Was that the way to write on that subject? Just the same, kindly enumerate those stories which are worthy of each other. Well—*V. Stepi, Izergel, Na Plotakh, Sputnik,* and then what? *Chelkash?* How about *Malva?*

You treat me very strangely, that is to say not strangely but somehow surprisingly—I mean absurdly. That is, it isn't you who treat me that way but I who treat you. Your letters produce a peculiar impression upon me. Not at present when I am terrifically unstrung, but in general. I am very fond of them and so forth in the same spirit. Excuse me for all the long-windedness, but you see the fact is that every time I write you I want to tell you something amusing and pleasant and in general make life on this rather disagreeable earth of ours more pleasant, easier. Thanks for the news about Sredin. He too is a hell of a fine fellow. Only I can't for the life of me understand—why does he like Timkovsky? There is a problem! Give Sredin my regards.

And they say that you are getting married to some actress with a foreign name. I don't believe it. But if it's true I'm glad. It's fine to be married provided the woman isn't from the country and isn't radical. But the best thing is children. Oh what a scamp of a son I have. And very smart, you'll see for yourself when I bring him with me in the spring. Only he learned to swear from me and he swears at everybody and I can't make him unlearn. It's most amusing—but not pleasant—when a two-year old charlatan shouts to his mother at the top of his lungs: "Get out right this minute, you anathema!"

And how distinctly he pronounces the word ana-the-ma.

Well, good-bye. My best regards. Somehow my *Foma* hasn't yet appeared. Did you read about how the Germans praise you? And recently somebody in Petersburg wrote that *Dyadya* is better than *Chaika.* That's a complicated business.

Please write me. *A. Peshkov*

Middle of January, 1900
Nizhni-Novgorod
to Moscow

Well, so I went to see Lev Nikolayevich.[2] Eight days have passed since then and I can't yet muster together my impressions. To begin with, his external appearance surprised me: I had pictured him otherwise—tall of stature, big-

[1] *As regards a separate volume of my best stories that was a splendid idea on your part.* Gorky is referring to Chekhov's letter of January 2, when he wrote "in your place I would choose the best things from the three volumes and publish them in a single volume for a ruble—and as a matter of fact it would be something remarkable for its strength and composition. As it is, in the three volumes everything seems mixed up. There are no bad things but it gives the impression that the three volumes were written not by one author but by seven authors—an indication that you are still young and have not yet finished maturing."

[2] *I went to see Lev Nikolayevich*—this visit of Gorky's to Tolstoy was the beginning of their personal acquaintance. Tolstoy's diary contains the following note dated January 16, 1900, "Gorky called. We had a fine talk and I like him. A real man of the people."

boned. And he turned out to be a little old man and for some reason reminded me of the stories about the eccentric genius—Suvorov. And when he began speaking I listened and was amazed. Everything he said was surprisingly plain and profound even though at times entirely incorrect—as I see it—but awfully fine. The main thing is his extreme simplicity. When all is said and done he is a whole orchestra, but not all the instruments play in tune. And that is very fine because it is very human. That is, a human propensity. All in all it is terrifically stupid to call a man a genius. It is utterly impossible to know what genius is. It is a lot simpler and plainer to say—Lev Tolstoy—that is short and completely original, decidedly unlike anything else and therefore very strong, particularly strong. It was very important and profitable to see Lev Nikolayevich although I by no means regard him as a miracle of nature. When you look at him you are tremendously pleased at feeling that you too are a man and to realize that a man can be Lev Tolstoy. Do you understand? Pleasant for man in general.

He treated me very well, but that is, of course, not the important thing, nor is it important that he spoke of my stories. What is important is all of that together, somehow: everything that was said, his way of speaking, sitting and looking at you. It is all closely interconnected and tremendously beautiful. I never believed that he was an atheist although I felt it. But now when I heard how he talks of Christ and saw his eyes, which are too intelligent for those of a believer, I know he is indeed an atheist and a profound one. Isn't that right?

I sat with him for more than three hours and then walked in on the third act of *Dyadya Vanya*. Again *Dyadya Vanya*. Again. And I shall still deliberately go to see that play, buying a ticket in advance. I don't regard it as a gem but I see more contents in it than others see. It has a tremendous symbolic content and it is entirely original in form, utterly unlike anything else. Too bad Vishnevsky doesn't understand his part; but by way of compensation the others are simply splendid. Incidentally, Stanislavsky's Astrov isn't quite what he ought to be. However, all of them play remarkably! The Maly Theatre is amazingly coarse by comparison with that company. What clever intelligent people they are and what artistic discrimination. Knipper is a splendid actress, a lovely woman and tremendously intelligent. What fine scenes she has with Sonya. And Sonya also played excellently. Everybody, even the servant Grigory, was splendid. All of them knew perfectly what they were doing and even Vishnevsky's mistaken presentation of *Dyadya Vanya* may be forgiven him on the grounds of his acting. All in all, that theatre gave me the impression of genuine, serious work, important work. And how well suited to them is the absence of music, the fact that the curtain does not rise but is pulled back. Why, you know, I couldn't even conceive of such acting and staging. Fine—I'm even sorry that I don't live in Moscow or I'd constantly go to that splendid theatre. I saw your brother. He stood up and applauded. I never applaud actors. It's an insult to them, that is, it ought to be an insult.

Well, did you see *Cyrano de Bergerac* on the stage? I saw it recently and was delighted with the play.

Make way for the free Gascons!
We are sons of the southern sky.
All born beneath the noonday sun
And with the sun in our blood.

I very much like the "sun in our blood." That's how one ought to live—like Cyrano and not like Dyadya Vanya and his ilk.

However, I'm tiring you doubtless. Good-bye.

I have pleurisy. I have a racking cough and can't sleep nights on account of the pain in my side. I will certainly go to Yalta for treatment in the spring.

I send you my best regards. Remember me to Sredin if you see him and have him give my regards to Yertsev and Aleksin.

Yours,

A. Peshkov

Scenes From Hindu Life

Photos By D. G. TDNDULKAR

Hindu Woman and Baby in the Market Place

Peasant Woman Addressing a Group of Striking Farm Workers

Hindu Beggars

CRITICISM and ARTICLES

Eugene Lundberg

Oswald Spengler: The Last Philosopher of Fascism

In Place of an Obituary

The "Soviet Nest" in the pension "Albrecht" on Eisenacherstrasse in Berlin aroused the unflagging interest of the radical circles of German literature. This was in the years 1920 to 1923. The "Nest" bore the rather long official title, "Bureau of Foreign Science and Technique of the Supreme Council of National Economy," and occupied the upper floor of the most banal of all Berlin's banal pensions.

Of an evening, German writers and "intellectuals" gathered here. At that time they regarded us somewhat as wild men, and were sincerely surprised when it developed that we knew German literature and philosophy. They were drawn by curiosity and various other feelings, very much mingled. The worst of them let drop veiled hints:—would not our country help them rise anew to power and glory and destroy the victors of yesterday? The best of them were dejected and restless, and had lost faith in the victorious might of German culture; half consciously, half instinctively, they were attracted to ideas broader than that of a national historic mission.

This was in the days when not only the journalists from the *Lokal Anzeiger* but also pillars of the Foreign Ministry fancied they heard the devastating tramp of the "Bolshevik-Scythian" hordes all the way to the English Channel and the Adriatic; and they tried to calculate whether Germany stood to win or lose from it. The theme of Blok's *Scythes*—"You are the millions, we are the multitudes and multitudes and multitudes"—the disturbing, and for others even astonishing, "apocalyptical" tone of his *Twelve*, gave birth, here in these literary circles, to a most original variation that was far from being apocalyptical. Into the pension "Albrecht" came spies, adventurers, disillusioned romantics, rebels, radicals, dreamers and muddleheads. Among them were not a few genuine friends of "New Russia." Here was laid the foundations for the "Society of Friends of Soviet Russia" that subsequently developed.

B. Kellerman brought here his smile of the eternal tourist, that same slightly cold, artistic smile that led the malicious Franz Bley to write of him in *The Great Literary Menagerie:* "This singularly gotten up and able 'water ass' (*asellus aquaticus*) best develops and manifests his abilities in the shadows of others more highly gifted. Very often the *asellus aquaticus*, seeking warmth, presses itself to the body of the idly recumbent Hamsun. Thanks to the fact that Kellerman has a thousand little feet, he is able to move at any speed in all directions, and in any position—forward, backward, on his back, and even on the tip of his nose."

B. Kellerman listened with a thin, affable smile, sympathized, and, sympathizing, went out. In an uncomfortable straight-backed arm-chair Arno Holtz towered like one burdened with the years and bowed down with the failures of the gods. He was silent, suspicious, strange, and unyielding.

Arthur Holitscher was there, full of the joy of life and slightly infantile, noisily scattering anecdotes that were not always funny. In him, the passion for world travel appeared more democratically and more fruitfully than in B. Kellerman.

R. Kaiser, editor of the Fisherite *Neue Rundschau* bustling about to issue a "Soviet number" of that journal, got a foretaste of the indignation of the literary philistines and reactionaries. Others dropped in, too, some larger, some smaller; but the one who came oftenest of all, and who talked the most frankly of literary matters in Germany, was that weak-willed, restless emigrant from the "Baltic provinces," that moralizing rebel who dreamed of marrying an aristocratic lady, that Catholic who in fact betrayed both pope and Catholicism, that poet of great conceptions and incompleted compositions --Rheinhold von Walter.

Walter, vying with N. Gregor, translated Blok and Bryusov for us. He used to come in every three or four days, and would tell about the writers' grim struggle for their daily bread, about the machinations of the German bourgeois newspapers behind the scenes. There was something fine and appealing about him. He loved to have people feel sorry for him, whereupon he would become doubly fine and appealing. He was one of those writers for whom there was no place in old bourgeois Germany, with its fierce competition, its discipline, its businesslike and calculating ways. Not one country in Europe bore so many unsuccessful geniuses, nor broke so many gifted and pure dreamers, as old Germany. Her practical bourgeoisie needed the refreshing lemonade of romanticism, but once those gentlemen were convinced that their goblets foamed not with sweetened water but with fiery wine, they called their servants and sent the wine back to the kitchen to be turned to vinegar.

Kleist, Lentz, Grabbe, Hoffmann . . . how many of them lost their minds, put bullets through their foreheads, for years abandoning themselves to lamentations with some two-legged tom-cat like Murr.[1]

Rheinhold von Walter, like his stronger and more gifted fellows, knew that he was doomed to perish, but fought desperately in the grip of semi-destitution and misfortune, endeavoring to put off the fatal moment.

And Walter and other writers often mentioned Spengler and his *Decline of the West*. And here is what amazed me most of all: Kellerman and Walter and Kaiser perceived only the pessimism of Spengler, that atmosphere in which his book was wrapped; but not his analysis of culture, nor his prognoses. These talented writers shunned any general prognoses from which arise decision and the necessity to act. Spenglerism was for them no program but music to which they eagerly listened while abandoning themselves to their own sorrows. Spengler could not but know of this will-lessness, this apathy, of his fellow-writers. They wanted only one thing: that there be no storms, that publishers should not be ruined, that German letters should bloom anew in the salons.

Even at that time I believed I saw a breach between Spengler and contemporary German literature. I felt this break most sharply in conversations with the decadent Rheinhold von Walter. As nearly as I recall, it was he who brought me the book.

Decline of the West lay on my bedside table. I read it nights. When I had

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[1] Reference is made to the German fairy-tale *History of Tom-cat Murr* by Ernst Hoffmann, 19th century *(Kater Murr)*.

read it through, I began it anew. I cannot say that *Decline of the West* attracted me. Spengler impressed me with his enormous erudition, his temperament, and his masterful literary craft. But all the while I read, a strange feeling of duplicity, or to put it more bluntly, of "insincerity," never left me for a moment. Insincerity and arrogance. Arrogance, and the hidden tension of a strong-willed, efficient, power-loving man. A heavy, gloomy tone—and a naive glorification of biologism. Philosophical-historical intuition—which claimed to be of an all-European, world significance, and a furious struggle with intellectualism, venomous criticism of scientific methods of cognition. His was the gigantic self-confidence of a man who reveals to the world a new field of wisdom. And, hidden by a brilliant play of thoughts, hidden by subtlety of observations, by inventiveness, by the variety of his stylistic devices, lay a lack of independence, I would even say a "winglessness" in his general conclusions. Spengler is an epigone, I thought. An epigone, and . . . he wants something or other, but he refrains from saying just what it is.

I took up the study of Spengler's commentators, both German and Russian. The German did not comment upon him very zealously. They, like Walter, occupied themselves most of all with his "music." They needed Spengler. He proved that the Germans were *not guilty* of the catastrophe bursting over Europe. The catastrophe was, according to Spengler, *inevitable*. Europe had entered the "next to the last" stage of civilization, the stage of international wars and internal class struggles. Decadence was not the destiny of Germany alone, but the fate of all Western civilization. No matter how pessimistic the general tone of Spengler's book, this note was consoling to the German nation's self-love.

Then it first occurred to me that Spengler's pessimism was far from being his conviction, but was a method of influencing his fatherland, and its ruling classes. These classes were looking for medicine, so Spengler brought them a spoonful of bitter pessimism. Spengler's pessimism is not the pessimism of Schopenhauer, who in one form or another reiterates, "You, people, are dogs" and all of you, without class distinctions, are doomed to a dog's life.

And then it became clear to me that Spengler's readers were not interested in where he obtained the foundation-stones upon which he built his philosophy. His readers sought in him the *formulae* of the evil that was corroding Germany in the post-war years, and the *formulae* of salvation. The philosophy of Spengler had for them a practical significance—a fact which explains the paradoxical success which this most pessimistic of books has had in the last decade of German culture.

How to save Germany, if all Europe is doomed to destruction? Spengler deprives Europe of unity. Any historical comprehension is mere "physiognomics." To write history means to make portraits. Neither religion, nor philosophy, nor science develops in any kind of sequence. They are local and national. The historian-physiognomist is the biographer of separate cultures. There are not, nor can there be, any universal cultures, transversing all times and all social forms of values. There are as many histories as there are peoples. More than that: "There are as many worlds as there are peoples." History is made up of ragged rows of forms which are dying and being born. History is the kingdom of "accidentality"; it is the play of fate and personality; it is a workshop in which personality is forged—taking personality to mean state and class and man—on condition that they are resigned to their fate and are able to rule over their equals. From here, hold out the hand to Nietzsche's "blonde beast." The only difference was that Spengler's idea of the "predatory" sovereign beast arose on the ruins of the German

Empire. Nietzsche could not have come to such far-reaching historical conclusions as did the epigone Spengler.

It is curious how Spengler transformed the wonderful Goethian yearning toward realism. Goethe fought against the limitations of any definite point of view, and easily changed the vantage points from which he—willingly or unwillingly—had to observe the phenomena of the external world. At one time, he greedily pressed himself up to the very pores of the phenomenon; at other times he held it at arm's length; or permitted it to conceal the whole horizon or assumed the right to judge it on the basis of individual interests. Goethe wanted a "genuine" contemplation of the world, in all its nakedness, with a maximum accord between the knower and the known. Spengler does not surmount any limitations: he simply rejects cognition.

Spengler has obviously borrowed from Nietzsche the theme of European decadence: but where Nietzsche is pathetic, Spengler is calculating and reserved. Nietzsche is a lyricist. The image which rose in the hour of his failing strength appears to him as a panacea for all the ills of the world simply because it strengthened him, Nietzsche.

No images of the world captivate, trap or strengthen Spengler. He is a practical man, a publicist. Poetry as an art-form is for him only an instrument for influencing others, while he himself remains cold, unchangeably cold. Under his algebraic symbols Spengler places very definite figures from the none-too-distant past. He puts them there with the definite purpose of carrying them over into the future, of preserving in their hands power over the future. In his desperation, Spengler poses, although this desperation is induced by very concrete and really threatening historical circumstances. He poses so as to "hold on"—a phrase beloved by the German imperialists and reactionaries in the years of destruction. "To hold on," to gather forces—and. . . . At that time I did not know what kind of an "and" was blazing in Spengler with a flame far fiercer that his dark pessimism.

Thus I ruminated over the pages of *Decline of the West* in the quiet Berlin nights toward the end of 1922. And then, early one morning, a telephone call. Walters whispers hastily into the telephone—whispers something incomprehensible about Spengler. Before I could ask him what he means, he hangs up. A little later he dashes in, all out of breath. Spengler is to read a lecture in a club on Wilhelmstrasse. And I will have an opportunity to attend.

"You will be one of eight," says Walter hurriedly.

I suspect a joke. However, the answer to this riddle soon appears very simple: Spengler will read a lecture on the present position of Germany especially for the cables. Eight representatives of the world press are to hear him. By a lucky chance the eighth place has fallen to me.

The scheme was naive and rather blunt, like many another scheme of the men in the German government. Germany was fighting for the Ruhr. She had no army, no international influence, no money. In addition to diplomatic intrigues and the machinations of industrial magnates, it was decided to toss into the Ruhr bonfire the diverting words of a famous philosopher.

Extensive halls and offices, deep and quiet, furnished with leather armchairs. A decidedly modest but excellent buffet. There were very few people. There was a faint and not altogether unpleasant odor of cigar smoke grown old. There was also a species of preternaturally polite and considerate young men, the highly promising "rising generation" of the Foreign Ministry. I felt myself smothering from the sheer stodginess of the whole place, from the indiscriminately polite words, from the traditional duelling scars on the faces

of the budding diplomats. Why, among them must have been former students of Jena, who had battled with rapiers somewhere in the outskirts of a charming little town, sung national songs, poured beery libations to the statue of the great *Kurfürst* before the Town Hall and imagined themselves romantics. Then it had all been a bit exotic, and slightly funny. But now these things were symptomatic of a definite class selection, and testified to a definite world outlook. There was nothing funny about all of this. It was not the exotics of a provincial German town, nor the dead law of the ancient societies of landed nobles. Here, on Wilhelmstrasse, in the years of destruction these dueling scars were distinctly suggestive of an oath of allegiance to the old Prussian banners. This club's cold politeness was the mask of a secret enemy.

In a small room stands a long table covered with a green cloth. Tea is served, with pastries and cigars. Eight foreigners sit down at the table. (By the way, there may not have been eight, but seven or nine). They are calm, apathetic, and callous. I recognize a Hollander, a Norwegian and another Scandinavian. And over there, a representative of the North American newspaper trust. And who is that beside him? They speak English and German. They get out their notebooks. Most of these journalists know shorthand—a custom well worth imitating.

The young men, in contrast to the apathetic journalists, constantly fidget about. The calmness of the foreigners irritates them. They are presenting Oswald Spengler as a great man. Unfortunately, not merely that. They would scarcely have been so excited had it been their duty to make the arrangements for a lecture by Kant or Hegel. Spengler is a great man from their own department. This is not a lecture, but an outpost skirmish. The young men of the Foreign Ministery do not care who sits here before them; they do not see human beings, but cables, hundreds of newspapers, millions of readers, the organization of the public opinion of two continents.

Enter Spengler. I first see a high, bony forehead, an ill-fitting frock coat—the single touch of awkwardness that is this man's sop to absent-mindedness. He has solid, hard-set jaws. In his entire strongly-knit figure, in his face, in the corners of his mouth, there is an expression not exactly of haughtness, nor yet the realization of conquering strength. I have it—this expression conveys consciousness of his right to a monument in his lifetime; this is the pride of a son of an ordinary petty official who, by his own powers, has lifted himself to a great height.

It may be that he will indeed live to see his own monument.

I look about me in acute discomfort. I make comparisons. I recall the faces of G. Hauptmann, T. Mann, M. Buber, Eichen, Cuno Fischer, Professor Ferster —several dozen prominent men of Germany whom I have known or seen at close range. Hauptmann was conceited to the point of becoming a pathological case. Cuno Fischer proudly bears the title of a secret counsellor; and Eichen, that naive little old man, invariably overestimates the influence of his philosophy . . . but here is something different: In this man Spengler there is something repellent and aggressive. Suddenly I was seized with that thought which had at first seemed absurd, but later possessed me entirely:

"A high official of the Foreign Ministry. . . . A self-enamored upstart. . . . A war-maker in civilian clothes, and a servitor of the old Germany of the nobility. Burdened with the mean heritage of a bureaucrat's son, the narrowness of his provincial childhood, a pedagogue's respect for rank, a schoolman's devotion to routine. . . ."

I cannot restrain myself from foolish thoughts. I begin to "biologicize" almost as he does in certain parts of his philosophy.

No, Spengler is not a great man. His thoughts are those of a provincial pedagogue, a compiler. As a matter of fact, consider how much there is that he has not thought through to the end. Can it be said that the belief that the Prussian soldier will bring Germany to world-wide power is not provincialism, is not narrowness? Is not his relativism provincial, petty; does it not smell of the sly scepticism of a dozen generations of civil servants?

He is contemptuous of Simmel, Eichen, Cohn, Ewald—and yet what hasn't he taken over from them? And what are those "souls of culture," every one a law unto itself, going through their own isolated cycles and disappearing, isolated from the mass of humanity? These are pictures from the walls of his father's study, these are the shelves in his grandfather's office, these are the entries in his great-grandfather's ledger. Did not Danilevsky, in his *Russia and Europe* think better than Spengler point by point on this very theme? And whence this "predilection for business" if not from injured provincialism?

Spengler gives himself away entirely, by assigning to the philosophers of antiquity and of modern times original tasks. He proposes that Aristotle take charge of the finances of Athens. He values Goethe's commercial and administrative abilities. Hobbs appears as an expert on colonial questions. As a politician and a strategist, Leibnitz was no fool. . . . Contemporary philosophers, complains Spengler, have lost this flair for the business side of life. "From the perspective of birds in flight, they have descended to the perspective of frogs." Assuming that they have, are colonial questions and the Prussians indeed an upward flight, a "new upsurge of philosophical thinking?"

His race theories present one of the most invariable aspects of provincial European narrowness and obtuseness. The smoking-car argument between men of Berlin and Munich as to whose beer is better is here stretched to the frame of a world problem. And his banal, pretentious talk about Russia: "The real Russian is as foreign to us as a Roman of the Imperial period, or a Chinese of the pre-Confucius epoch." You just wait, thought I; we'll show you Confucius.

Spengler does not read very well. He speaks too loudly, too energetically, too precisely. His intonation is somewhat vulgar. I had been expecting a new chapter from *Decline of the West*. Instead, I was hearing a politically-schooled official of the Foreign Ministry, the secretariat of which had supplied him well with selected statistical material. His literary gifts had been completely discarded as useless.

Statistics on poverty. Statistics on French indecorum. Statistics on the expense of the occupation of the regions which had been torn away from Germany. Statistics on payments to the Entente. A picture of the destruction of industry. Data on the natural resources of Germany.

It is a speech obviously directed against France. Cold fury breaks into the philosopher's voice. His jaws close more tightly. The author of *Decline of the West* humbly serves Spengler, the civil servant, who is under contract to prove that Germany is the salt of the earth and the land of the future, and that other States (especially France) are dying of an hereditary disease and are trying to pull Germany down to the depths of the European quagmire after them.

The culture of France? A myth! France has created nothing positive. France is sick; a feverish delirium possesses her. England is using this delirium for her own egotistical aims. Belgium is a strategic point from which

English troops are to be sent against Germany. The Netherlands are threatened by the opening of the attack of France and England against Germany. Over the Netherlands hangs the same fate as that of Belgium; while Germany is weak, they will be swallowed up by France and England. The long arm of the bandit Entente will ultimately reach the Scandinavian Peninsula.

No yellow peril, but a black peril, is advancing upon Europe. France has betrayed European culture. In the name of her own impotence, she has awakened the African continent. The Negro horde is no apparition. The blood of Europe is poisoned by France's wretched miscegenation . . .

Few questions were asked. Oswald Spengler's hearers were typical American and European journalists, human megaphones, sedulous stenographers, registrars of sensations.

I am far from sure that all of them had read *Decline of the West*. The Hollander alone displayed well-disguised humor and liveliness of thought. He, however, was interested in facts and figures, not in conceptions. Facts and figures, for the communication of which it had hardly been worth while calling in Spengler.

I tried without any particular animation, to direct the conversation into a different channel—to the *Decline of the West*. But Spengler opposed infringement upon the room's established tone. To a question on how he viewed the possibility of peaceful co-existence for the peoples of Europe in the future, Spengler replied by referring to the ancient history of China. He did not wish to seek an analogy any closer home: peaceful co-existence of the peoples will become a fact when the stronger swallow the weaker.

The session ended, the audience shook hands with the lecturer, and, surrounded by the polite young men, left the club. Suddenly one of the deferential Spengler adjutants darted to my side and asked me not to leave, as Doctor Spengler would like to converse with me alone. Puzzled, I raised my head, and my glance collided with the cold, inscrutable eyes of a thick-set man with a high bony forehead, aloof, concealing within himself a sort of evil activity.

I remember distinctly how it flashed into my mind: "This is not a human being—this is a machine."

"My work, I have heard, is translated into the Russian language?" inquired Spengler.

I thought that he wanted to hear how his book was received by readers in the land of the Soviets. I knew nothing of the reaction of the Soviet readers, and was feeling uncomfortable because I would not be able to satisfy the writer's natural interest.

"Translated and issued by the publisher L. D. Frenkel," continued Spengler, enunciating with exactitude the publisher's initials.

I confirmed this.

"In view of the absence of copyright convention . . ."

Ah! he was talking about royalties!

I looked at Spengler in perplexity. He was expecting an answer. I shrugged my shouldres—that certainly must have looked impolite—and suggested that he write to Moscow.

There is no doubt that if Spengler's *Decline of the West* had appeared before the destruction of Germany and the terrible upheavals of the World War, he would not have had the noisy success that fell to his lot. Neither can there be any doubt that had not Germany fallen under the power of fascism, Spengler's literary fate would have been different.

Oswald Spengler sought world-wide resounding fame for his ideas, but he walked the world not as a writer, not as a preacher, but as a servant, a day-laborer for that very capitalism which, to a large extent, nauseated him. For Spengler was inclined to a more archaic form of state, to one where the nobility, the clergy, and the monarch would rule.

Although Spengler left several books behind him, he was a one-book writer, and that book was *Decline of the West.* The literary history of Spengler is the history of the degeneration of a writer, the history of philosophical and literary degeneration, accompanied by the exacerbation and the disclosure to all and sundry of the depraved duplicity and dilettantish incompleteness of his conceptions. Although the prophet of the collapse of European civilization, with pessimism as the foundation of his philosophy, he believed that the world would be saved by the Prussians—one of the most rudimentary and gross elements ever born of European history.

The subtle appraiser of "Faustian" streams in culture, he returned to the Nietzschean idea of celebrating animal origin. In his book *Man and Technique* there is a special chapter entitled "Herbivorous Animals and Beasts of Prey." Here Spengler declares, "Man is a predatory animal." In reading this quotation it is necessary to remember that the philosopher has studied animals but slightly. His aim is higher—at the masses of the peoples.

"Thought in the human sense, active thought, is possessed only by the predatory animals. In comparison to them, the herbivorous animals are stupid. This applies not only to the innocent dove, and the elephant, but even to the thoroughbred species of ungulates, such as the ox, the horse, and the elk, *which can fight only in blind rage and under sexual excitation, and which generally lend themselves to training and can be led even by a child."*

The analogy is revealed in a quotation from another of Spengler's books, where the above-mentioned child appears as none other than Bebel, and those being led like cattle are the disciplined workers organized in a party.

Taking the basis of the historical perspectives of the Prussians ("Preussentum") to be that they are the youngest people, to whom it is fated to save the world with faith in *instinctive life* and devotion to *genuine socialism,* Spengler formulates the idea of this socialism in the following manner: "The Prussian army, Prussian officialdom, and Bebel's workers—these are the products of this (Prussian) disciplined thought."

The "socialism" of Spengler is a synonym for all such nationalistic and imperialistic tendencies. According to Spengler, the "social revolution" took place in 1914, when the German people stood armed and tightened their belts over their emaciated bellies. "Socialistic monarchy" and "authoritarian monarchial socialism"—these are the alloys which this towering pessimist prepared for his own people before the advent of Adolph Hitler. The recipes were concocted by him long ago. We find their original form in *Decline of the West,* in the chapter devoted to "Pictures of Souls and the Feeling of Life." Here socialism is treated as "a form of decay."

In 1919, under the pressure of events, Spengler renovated his ideas, endeavoring, like Bismarck, to discipline "socialism." Here he slipped in a word which subsequently came in very handy for the fascists. "For the workers, freed from the illusion of Marxism, there is only one way out—either Prussian socialism, or nothing at all." And "Prussian socialism" is the union of the "healthy" sections of the German workers "with the best representatives to the old Prussian state intellect."

But when this "Prussian socialism" came to be put into practice, Oswald

Spengler felt it was not at all that of which he had dreamed. At this juncture his "bureaucratic" features told in him with especial clarity; his furtive, mouse-like, anti-historical practicality. Neither his first recipe, nor his last, deceived the forces upon which he had counted most of all. However, Spengler continued to hang on to fascism, grumbling the while.

In such a case, a "pure philosopher" would have left the world of affairs and locked himself up in his study to pour out on paper the bitterness of his disillusionment. A "pure preacher" of new truths would have come out onto the streets and raised "the city and the world" with his catechism, no matter what dangers threatened him for so doing. A "pure politician" would have tried to gather an army of those of like mind, or would have changed.

Oswald Spengler did not go into solitude, did not decide upon any heroic deed, and did not change. He went on serving fascism as of old, grumbling, and goaded by the bitterness of an unfortunate and ageing school-master. Neither his intellect nor his style grew stronger, nor did they sharpen, as happens in times of grave trials; but his hatred of Demos flared up all the more cruelly and he developed a maniacal conception of the forces which were opposing him. His last book *Decisive Years* gives off a stifling odor of burning wrath and secret hopes.

"From the first day, I hated the dirty revolution of 1918," says Spengler, "for it was a betrayal by the worst element of our people committed against the stronger, more healthy element which rose to arms in 1914 for the sake of the future. All that I have written about politics from that time on has been directed against the forces which have entrenched themselves, with the aid of enemies, upon the heights of our poverty and our misfortune, so as to make a better future impossible. Every line that I have written has served toward their overthrow."

What I. von Leers terms Spengler's "ice-cold contempt for the people" is warming up. This school-teacher is displaying the quite un-theoretical blood-thirstiness of a primitive Teuton chieftain. He strives for both class and "race" wars, correctly embracing the unity of their natures. He reproaches fascism for supporting "the cult of the mass." He calls the German proletarians "white slaves, around whom everyone fawns, who are spoiled by the leaders of the workers' parties and the cowardice of the bourgeoisie." Spengler rages, stirring the fascists to more effective action. In Spengler's eyes, fascism is not only infected with "Asiatic collectivism," but is also chicken-hearted, anaemic, and runty.

Spengler proved to be "more radical" than the founders of fascism; but they have turned out to be of smaller calibre than he considered essential for the salvation of European civilization. The Nazis are guided by day-to-day politics while Spengler claimed to be a politician "for great historical distances." In his book *Decisive Years,* and in a number of public addresses, Spengler even dared to make vicious criticism of the "Führer." To him, as early as 1924, the "Führer" was no hero at all. Spengler dubbed him "a heroic tenor." What is there in common between this tenor and the Prussian Caesar whose coming Spengler awaited year in and year out with unabated fire? His differences with fascism became all the sharper, since fascism has not been able to overcome Communism, since Communism is embracing ever-widening circles of the German workers, since the Communist word resounds throughout Europe. "We are living through a volcanic eruption of incomparable force," agonizes Spengler. "Night encloses us, the earth trembles, and torrents of lava pour over the heads of whole peoples." And it is understand-

able that at the moment of such an eruption, in such a night, the fascist leaders would appear to a philosopher familiar with great historical canvases like figures out of an operetta. Here Spengler's arrogance breaks through in altogether unprecedented style: "The fascist formations of the present decade will be replaced by new, as yet unforeseen forms." Salvation, according to Spengler, is in Caesar, in power based on the army, in the regime of the epoch of Wilhelm I, in Prussian officialdom and the officer caste, in triumph decked out in the uniform of the "beast of prey."

No one is disturbed by this family spat. "*The Comedian*" understood no less than Spengler the significance of militarism and officialdom in the cause of strengthening the "Third Empire," and no less than Spengler suffered and suffers from the indestructibility and growth of the Communist movement. And "bestialism" is fully as well-understood and dear to the "heroic tenor" as it is to Spengler.

Translated by Robert S. Carr

A. Lezhnev

Simplicity and Dignity

There was a time when simplicity was highly appreciated both in word and deed. Then it became poor manners to talk about it at all. All of a sudden the Russian proverb "Simplicity is worse than thievery" was recalled. Others just shrugged their shoulders and asked—what is simplicity? Does not everything we are accustomed to and know seem simple and everything new or unusual seem complex? The cult of simplicity is a defense myth of the mediocre, something to cover up mental laziness and a protection against the inroads of novelty. "What sort of literary quality is it?" the clever ones would exclaim in hurt surprise, looking fiercely through their horn-rimmed glasses. "Rhyme, adjective, metaphor, lexicon: these are palpable things, have a distinct meaning. What can poetry do with such an indefinite thing as simplicity or sincerity? It is like trying to have scientific truths pass the test of the ten commandments. You wouldn't think of applying such a criterion to an engineering project! And is not the poet also a technical master—an engineer of language?"

And they would turn away triumphantly, their glasses flashing.

That was at the time when it was customary to write that bonfires were invented first and only then an application found for then, that art is something distinct from life and it was no longer the function of art to teach. A strange mixture of formalism and a sort of childish, fantastic utilitarianism reigned in books and minds. Architects planned cities in the air or on springs. "To free the earth"—was the motive. No one really knew why the earth must be freed of cities—but that was unimportant. Artists were proud to be called *craftsmen* and gladly spoke of their *trade*. He was a shoemaker, but he did not make any real shoes, he made abstractions of the forms of shoes—something that could not be applied or even imagined. Form arose in the imagination of the craftsman and condescended to life, while practical needs were supposed to adapt themselves to them and fill them with purpose and content. The world of form like the ideas of Plato stood apart from and above the world of everyday reality and preceded it. Art turned into invention. Prose writers projected their images onto speeding, intersecting planes. Poets declared simplicity a sham. Simplicity was dressed in rags—a Cinderella, a sloven. And a literature in which the traditions of Pushkin and Tolstoy were still supposed to be alive stubbornly declared that it did not understand its language.

2

Nowadays, of course, this sounds rather weak and unconvincing. Art is not technique but ideology, and if you will, both technique and ideology with the former subordinated. The poet might be called an engineer—but in a different, a much deeper and broader sense than the formalists conceived it—not simply in the sense of word engineering, but engineering of the human soul (which is something vastly different both in volume and idea). Art is inseparable from the didactic function. Art must always "teach," lead somewhere. It cannot be said that those formalistic doctrines did not sound silly and even ludicrous before. That was quite evident to all, except to those that should have been the first to see it but closed their eyes to it stubbornly repeating the silly formulas learned by rote. Men of letters lived through a

period of strange intoxication with dry theory and lifeless practice. It developed that the entirely tasteless and stale distilled water of the laboratory can act like strong spirits, or poison.

The sobering process was slow. Fresh forces came into literature and they could see that water was—water. The generation of formalists was shaken in its principles. Simplicity, which but yesterday had been pronounced hypocrisy, suddenly revealed itself as a new but tempting heresy. One was very much tempted to try it, but it was rather venturesome, risky and—not entirely easy. The old way was more comfortable: one was more accustomed to it, it was more familiar.

Art does not develop under arbitrarily chosen conditions but within definite historical circumstances. Like a newcomer to a large apartment house, it does not choose the tenants but finds them already there. Soviet music or literature should, of course, prefer to have as its own direct predecessor a Beethoven or Goethe. Unfortunately this forerunner turned out to be an art anemic, weatherbeaten and shattered. The new forces that came to replace the formalists, people of an entirely different social order and spiritual makeup, could not, unfortunately, entirely escape their influence. The fact is they considered themselves progressive and it seemed as if they were right. In art, as in a forest, it is easy to lose one's bearings: one may think one is going ahead when one is actually going backward or describing circles about the very same spot.

The sobering up process came, but it was slow—the formalist intoxication was a long time evaporating from the body of literature.

3

It seems to some that simplicity consists of, say, Mary setting out the baking while Mitri sits by, idly scratching his head. They imagine simplicity as something like the stories in the defunct *Russkoye Bogatstvo*.[1] Or they think they have found it in the smooth, imitative verses of Ratgaus. They triumphantly haul it out and shout: there is your simplicity—look at it! Weren't we right to shun it? No, no—that's enough of Mitri scratching his head!

What some say jeeringly others repeat seriously, impressively. The style of the stories from *Russkoye Bogatstvo* seems to them an irreproachable canon which only has to be renovated by modern themes. Head-scratching Mitri becomes the senior saint of their literary calendar. Of course they quarrel with the ridiculers, quarrel vehemently—but the quarrel is about whether the head-scratching figure is to be despised or respected. The ridiculers despise, the simpletons respect it. Both, however, have the same idea of simplicity.

Thus a situation arose in literature where for years there stood at one pole a formally-subtle and internally-vacuous art, laboratory experiments leading nowhere, and at the other pole—swollen, wishy-washy books giving dull imitations of life devoid of substantiality and attempting to parrot its speech. These two forms of art or rather two departures from art were externally unlike. The language of one did not even seem intelligible to the other. They were however intimately related and the reader marked this by an equal indifference to both. Between the poles there was all the vast living Earth; both its South and North Poles, however, were equally cold, both were icy, lifeless wastes.

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[1] A pre-revolutionary magazine of the Narodniki.

4

Simplicity appeared to them in the poverty-stricken form of the decadent Narodniki and the last born of the realists. To us it flourishes in the vital art of the great eras.

Not everyone will, of course, venture to declare outright he is opposed to simplicity. On the contrary—rare is the hokum dealer who does not claim to be the only one who has really understood what simplicity is in fact, the only one to have caught this blue-bird. And it is not always hipocrisy. Without much difficulty he will produce facts to support him in his assertions. It is "simple" to show a few dabs of paint instead of a well thought out form or subject, "simple" to invent an unintelligible language that means nothing but might mean a lot and leave it to the reader to think out the rest. When art is lacking in form, meaning and emotional content—it is "simple." Truly, in such a case a blank sheet of paper or a blank canvas is the height of simplicity as it gives unlimited scope for the creative imagination.

Nowadays this sounds like an absurd exaggeration. But it is only because the conclusions are brought to an extreme—the logic remains the same even when it is put more mildly. A childish drawing is simple, everything that is made on the same principles therefore is simple. Exotic primitive art is simple—hence to achieve simplicity it should be taken for a basis. And it is from the childish drawing and primitive art that modern subtleties originate. In other words—the most complicated, formalistic art can claim some sort of effort at directness or sincerity which led it to a "simplicity" of a special order, peculiar to itself only. No matter how confusing Pasternak's poetry may be in its associations of ideas, in its literary, philosophical and other allusions, no matter how studied it may be, it is not hard to find a "simplicity" peculiar to it. This is the principle of primitive purity of feeling, childlikeness of perception, the tendency to catch the mind at work unawares. The very confusion of associations is, in a way, the result of a desire to convey impressions just as naturally and involuntarily as they are received, without artificial selection or systematization.

If this were so, however, simplicity would not lend itself to definition. It could be twisted into a meaning directly contrary. If everything is simple nothing is. It is necessary therefore first of all to agree upon a definition of simplicity.

The multitude of interpretations is enough to exasperate. It proves that the problem of simplicity is not a very simple one. But neither should its difficulty be exaggerated. It becomes concrete under concrete circumstances. The fact that the problem at times becomes pressing, that a certain tenseness of atmosphere gathers about it and conflicts, and arguments arise, proves that a certain common understanding of the terms has been reached and the time for solving the problem has arrived. When simplicity becomes a slogan, it is evident that its meaning has become quite clear.

5

And as a matter of fact, simplicity, just now, stands first of all for complete lucidity. We do not want an art like a rebus, an esoteric art that is like a deep narrow well, of which only the top is visible and everything else about is hidden in its profound depths—and those profound depths may hide nothing or only some discarded tin cans—we want an art that is like a broad open river with clear sparkling water flowing, water so clear that every pebble in its bed is visible and even seems more visible and nearer the surface

because of the refraction. What we want is not symbolists who made a profession of depths and chasms and would rather feign profundity than admit simplicity of conception, but Pushkin whose conceptions reach our consciousness naturally, "unexpectedly," by themselves. We want an art that is accessible to all, like the blue sky, like a country road. Like air—like air? But we only notice the air when there is a lack of it. Art is *created* and requires activity not only on the part of the creator but of the receptor as well. Similarly the country roads may be bad on which both vehicles and pedestrians struggle with the mud.

Which only proves that the comparisons we used are not altogether correct ones. Art is an activity which cannot exercise upon our consciousness the compulsion of nature. The most perfect work of art does not come into the world as something absolute and immutable. It is subject to suspicion and varied appreciation and may even be simply misunderstood. We all breathe the same air—but in art this is not exactly true: the air which is quite delightful to some may be intolerable to others. It depends upon perception—something which will undoubtedly still remain variegated even when all class distinctions have been completely abolished. We have no idea how art will develop under communism in the future, but we have not the least doubt it will be replete with struggles of art trends and schools, fruitful, comradely struggles, competitive struggles—not squabbles, but still struggles—because tastes and requirements cannot be equalized. On the contrary inasmuch as individual development will have greater freedom, differences, idiosyncracies, must become more pronounced.

But lucidity-simplicity will always retain its value. The doors of the tremendous house of art must be wide open—then everyone can select what suits him best. This is particularly important now when the structure of art is being erected for the entire people and not for a select few. It is not a tower—even of ivory. It is a great big sound building designed for a long life and many great feasts.

6

Lucidity means respect for the reader, for human thought, it means honesty on the part of the artist. In adopting this as a rule the artist by no means condescends to his lesser literary brethren for whom the complexity and subtlety of it would be very unflattering. The terminology itself! It takes a hermitlike cissus could think so. It is a prime requirement of literature itself which would otherwise wither, suffocate. Democracy in art is its renovation, a fresh breeze under the low ceiling of the literary garret. As to the great craft or, as some say, the great disease—a great deal can be said about it—and much of it would be very unflattering. The terminology itself! It takes a hermitlike, perception to present art—which is concentrated force and vital energy—as a malaise, something ill and decadent. True—the pearl is only a disease of the oyster. But the pearl of art is no sick tumor, monstrous swelling. or pathological phenomenon. It is rather a manifestation of robust health, excess energy, spiritual wealth.

Lucidity in art, simplicity in expressing the most complex things, honesty to oneself and to one's reader—are some of the conditions of democracy and easy accessibility. What a remarkable paradox! The aristocrats Tolstoy and Pushkin—who perfected their arts to a high order—could and would be democratic while there are some among us who think that to make a principle of simplicity and intelligibility means a debasement, a profanation of

art! It is a disgrace to hear it and a shame to argue. I can not understand the artist who is not affected by the mention of a people's art, looks upon it with indifference or smiles skeptically. What Wagner and Romain Rolland, Walt Whitman and Verhaern dreamed of, what Beethoven and Handel achieved in the ecstatic flights of some of their works, what the ancient Greeks only partly achieved, and what has since then been a thousand-year-old inaccessible dream of mankind, is now arising as a real, achievable possibility, something insistently awaiting its realization. More—it is a powerful demand of our times. In thrall to the Talmudic scholastics of our petty squabbles, enslaved by the really unsatisfactory realities of our art, we fail to see how its confines are being widened, what a vast, broad field is opening up before it.

Simplicity should not be a superficial rule, designed to facilitate adaptation to one's audience, to man! Not only to the one for whom one writes, but also to the one about whom he writes. Perhaps many of us are so fond of the thing and the phrase because we are lacking in love for man and yet the most inconspicuous, the "greyest" sort of a person is such a complex thing that all the secrets of art may be insufficient to reveal it entirely.

7

Simplicity also means something else to us: it is not only lucidity—it is also substantiality.

Pushkin spoke of this when he said, in his definition of prose, that terseness and precision are its prime requirements and that brilliant expressions serve no purpose there. Pushkin's dictum is somewhat too absolute. It is a principle of his work—but can hardly be taken as a general law. Gogol's prose is built on a different principle. Hertzen's prose bears evidence that brilliant expressions may fit in excellently with the greatest precision of thought. In other words—the development of Russian literature has shown that Pushkin's definition is incomplete, does not encompass all the diversity of literary phenomena. The disparity would be even greater if one were to include French literature with Chataubriand and Hugo or German literature with Heine and the romanticists. Nevertheless Pushkin's remarks on prose are fundamentally true and are applicable not only to prose. It is only necessary to disregard their nature of finality.

The main thing is undoubtedly the requirement of terseness and precision —the statement on brilliant expressions is to be considered only in the light of the main requirement. What I wish to convey is that the value to us of Pushkin's definition of prose does not consist of the condemnation of embellished, "poetic," prose rich in metaphor, etc. (although this was Pushkin's practice)—it consists of the requirement for substantiality and for the primacy of meaning, and the condemnation of pretty but meaningless phrases, inserted for their own sake, as mannerisms. This was the common practice of Pushkin and Gogol, Tolstoy and Hertzen, though each did it in his own way. Which one of them came closest to the truth? That is an idle question. There is nothing obligatory about it. Artistic truth is fluid and assumes various forms.

One cannot set any limits to the use of picturesque means of expression. The metaphoric dose cannot be set by pharmacopoeia. No line can be drawn firmly establishing where the permissible ends and the impermissible begins. The volume must remain variable and differ in individual cases. The boldest use of metaphor may be justifiable when it is a function of meaning and is organically tied up with it, when the rule of substantiality retains its primacy. It is really a law entered upon the soul of every artist.

8

But can simplicity by itself constitute great art? How frequently it can clothe itself in boring sameness, in the grey sobriety of common observation! Do not we even now feel the discrepancy between the mighty features of the times and the petty everyday script of our literature? Isn't there too little of that great—tragic or festive—quality which gives us the "chills of inspiration" when we hear Beethoven's music, which makes us forget ourselves in a book, calls out breathless silence or frenzied applause in the theatre, too little of that which lends art its great power of conviction—and can it be achieved by such writing and a timid fettering of the imagination? A chronicle may also be simple. So may correspondence be simple. And correspondence is only read for information. The chronicle is frequently forgotten as soon as read. Neither has any strong, lasting effect. I am not speaking here of ability. I do not mean to say such simplicity does not require skill, only that it has no wings. And there is no use alluding to the fact that such reproaches have been addressed to every artist that has tried to draw life as it is, in all its prosaic reality, that Gogol and others also had to defend themselves against such reproaches. This is not at all the point. The art that tackles common life is not necessarily common art. Laughter, comedy, irony, indignation to the high degree brought by Gogol, Rabelais, Aristophanes are powerful, purely national, festive elements. Because art is essentially festive. Roused or indignant, shaken by pity or anger, we nevertheless feel the mighty, festive, effect of art,—festive on account of its great power, concentrated energy, integrated intent. Marred by an inimical social order art for a long time lost both its power and integrity. But we are on the way now towards the unfettering of art, towards returning to it its ancient birthright of joy.

9

I know many quotations and facts can be brought to contradict me. Symbolism, Ossian (the poetry of "weltschmerz"), Ecclesiastes and the Book of Job can be pointed out. References can be made to Swift and Anatole France, to the great skeptics, masters of irony, of sadness, to all those who lost faith in mankind and devoted themselves to the description of its ugliness. And tragedy which calls out horror and sympathy? Art is both festive and prosaic, is just as much an expression of health as it is a cry of pain. Who can say which it is most!

But it is not so. The contradictions hit wide of the mark. It is quite evident that were art always festive and incapable of being otherwise than festive the question of its workday phase would not arise. But this question is put, so we evidently see its workday phase also. The substance of art does not always correspond to what it historically expresses. Class society, particularly in its capitalist phase, possesses the gift of metamorphosis to an extent that should be the envy of the witches of story and the alchemist of the Middle Ages. It has turned merry England into a land of sanctimonious hypocrites and curmudgeons. It has turned into commodities things which should never be that—things like honor, talent, painting and poetry. It has compelled the sale of inspiration together with the manuscript. Art was distorted in its iron or gold vise (and gold proved more binding than iron). And yet art could not forget its ancient rights, its undersurface substance. This broke through to the surface "illegally," exploded with powerful discharges of energy. The greatest works of art are stamped with a festive mark. This is not a rule—it

is its potency, its inherent law through it is not always realized. Is it any wonder that Socialism, in liberating man and his potentialities, should also liberate the internal law of art and make an every-day principle of it?

The festiveness of art is not be to understood as an eternal Irish fling. Tragedy is also a festive child, only a sad one. The funeral march is just as solemn as the wedding march. You say not only joy—pain as well? True enough—pain as well, because suffering has its own pathos—the word pathos meant suffering in Greek—but it is the pain of great emotion and feelings and not feeble illness, dejected nagging, not the grey humdrum of lack of adaptation, weakness, spiritual impotence. If skeptics did sometimes create great works it was because they did believe in something, could rise above the plane of everyday life and shed over their works the radiance of adumbration and of an all-understanding smile.

10

Simplicity is essential, but is it sufficient? Did not Pushkin, who announced the law and realized it in practice, with such natural invariance also write: "Beauty should be dignified"?

"Beauty should be dignified." But this saying of Pushkin's was covered with the dust of many arguments and when one attempts to transpose it in the light of contemporaneity the first thing that comes to mind is the sombre, cadaverous term: monumentality. There comes the recollection of conventional figures with mechanical joints, wooden limbs and smudgy spots of faces, the prints of Bela Uitz resembling those of tin soldiers, the desolate frescoes and veneer libels of humanity which used to fill our squares. Deformity in these instances was not the accidental discovery of inventive talent. It was a consequence of style. Convention, statuesquery, numbness of form and the strange lifeless spasms which, as if by special orders, caught entire rows of automatons were a conscious principle of their work. They took for their model the art of the so-called "organic" eras, which charmed the artists and especially the art theoreticians by their integral assuredness and superpersonality. In reality those were eras of extremely retarded development, backwaters of history, when the course of the stream was hardly noticeable, and the art of the time was enslaved by religion and tradition, frozen in canons hallowed by time. And its superpersonality was really lack of personality, submission to custom, to ritual. Imagine the art of ancient Egypt interpreted in the decadent principles of cubism playing with disentegrated forms and nonsense!

Such dignity we do not want. The first commandment of our art must be motion. A realistic and volitional conception of socialist culture cannot consent to convention and to a language of art fettered by ritual, just as the desire for a fuller life cannot abide by an intentional impoverishment of form. Would not, in this sense, the plentiful vitality, voluptuousness and solemn magnificence of an art like baroque be more acceptable? [1] Only, those exuberant facades, that external magnificence and theatricalness covered an ulcerous reality. And there is a certain falseness about this anxiety to impress at any cost, to astonish, dazzle, there is a certain negation of the principle of simplicity in the very decorativeness of this art, in the scrolls of its em-

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1 The fact that our examples are drawn from the plastic arts, where peculiarities of style are more graphically apparent, and formalism is more candid and stands out more vividly should not be confusing; corresponding features in literature are easily to be found.

bellishments, the exaggerated expressiveness of its forms touched by decay —at any rate—for our times, in the eyes of a people that do not feel the necessity to embellish reality.

Thus neither cadaverous monumentality, breathing formalism and boredom, nor obese decorativeness whose very exuberance smells of decadence, can help us or give us the answer needed. Both principles are vicious. Nothing that is taken as an *addition* to substantiality-simplicity or as a detraction of it, will do. So there is only one thing left: its *lucidity*.

11

"Beauty should be dignified." But the secret of dignity need not be sought outside of simplicity, in additions to it or embellishments of it. Art does not become dignified by donning buskins or giving the face a proper make-up. When simplicity-substantiability, simplicity-truth is developed to the extreme, when it expresses a great idea perceptible to millions, art becomes dignified, becomes great art, without the aid of cosmetics. This is not a phrase or the expression of a desire. It is a statement of fact.

We have felt this dignified truth in Tolstoy and Shakespeare when it arose out of simple words and events to stir us. King Lear remained on the field, Lady Macbeth came with the candle lit, the little woman with the raised upper lip died in labor, and the mourned corpse, Andrey Bolkonsky, returned from the battle of Austerlitz and climbed the stairs to his home. We have felt this recently when Babachkin-Chapayev came up on the screen smiling into his moustache, smilling to thousands of children and grown-ups who can never forget that smile.

What is the reason for the tremendous popular success of *Chapayev*? The film is made very simply. *Chapayev* is shown very human. There it is all in a nutshell and the most profound analysis will produce nothing more.

Our literature has not yet achieved a great style; what we have is at best only an indication, only an approach to one.

If one were asked to give an example from our literature that would illustrate simplicity and dignity such as it is to be found in Tolstoy or Pushkin, the critic would be embarrassed. We can only speak of a trend of development, of attempts that unquestionably have been made and that are coming to the surface, though not always in very firm sprouts. And then they are obscured by all kinds of weeds in the form of mannerisms and phrases. Phrases grow much more rankly than substantiality and seem much smarter. Anyone, however, that wants to see the future of our literature will pass by all these wild weeds.

At a certain stage of unfoldment simplicity-truth gives rise to a great style, or rather itself becomes a great style. The stage of development however has to be of a high enough order. As soon as the tenseness lets up in the least, as soon as the contours become somewhat vague, as soon as it begins to look like half-truth—we have "literature," common stuff, light novels for a railway journey.

Translated from the Russian by S. D. Kogan

Louis Aragon

About "The Massacres of Paris"

I will not relate to you the story of Théodore Quiche, a petty bourgeois of the Hôtel-Ville quarter who found his way through the luxury of the Second Empire, to the proletariat, joined the Central Committee of the National Guard, was a fighter for the Commune and only escaped by a miracle from the Massacres of Paris, after which we find him with the deported prisoners on the Island of Nou. This heroic story is both a novel and history. It is the adventure of a young bourgeois of last century but also it appears in France in the days of the People's Front and in order that it should attain the power of emotion and reality in the romance which it tells it was indeed necessary that it be the reflection of a great contemporary adventure: the passage to the side of the proletariat of French intelligentsia. Thus, Jean Cassou's book has in two ways a double aspect.

The historic novel in France up to our days has been more of a pot boiler than a work of art. Its miserable level was the result in the first place of the fact that it had for foundation no theoretical conception of history. Alexandre Dumas is a better representative of it than Augustin Thierry. The originality of what Cassou has done is to give flesh to an epoch but at the same time to weave a guiding thread through his work: I mean the echo of Marx's historic thinking. To Marx is due the appreciation of Haussmann's role in cutting large avenues through Paris in order to allow the army to *clean up* working class Paris. To Marx is due Becker's reflections before the Commune upon its defeat. And, when the workers of Paris have taken the initiative of history, it is to Marx that we owe the lesson lying beyond the temporary defeat—that it is better to die fighting than to die with the shame of not having fought.[1] It is this which gives Jean Cassou's book a special place and permits us to look upon it as a veritable point of departure for the historic novel in our times and in our country.

It is under this aspect also that it offers to criticism its only really vulnerable point: not so much in the first part which describes the bourgeoisie, the court and the little circle of workers and revolutionary students under the Second Empire as in the second part, in the image he gives of the Commune. In this image the stirring of persons, the movement and atmosphere, are so successful, and reality is so fully here, bathed in a poetry of power, that the reader *believes* what the author tells him. And the author has with tragic force given the impression of disorder and dispute furnished by the leaders of the Commune, torn as they were by the struggle of tendencies in which the proletariat of Paris had not found the support of an ideology of its own incarnated in a great party, a directing party with an iron discipline. He has thus explained forcibly the reason for the defeat of 1871. But he has not been able to make us feel at the same time—apart from an emotion of the grandeur of sacrifice—the positive aspects of the Commune, the labor of organization which it undertook, the measures of working class democracy, all this is lacking in the picture. As in the hero of the book, despite his part in the Central Committee of the National Guard, there is lacking, all the same, knowledge of what is actually happening under his eyes. He is nothing more than a poet bewildered by the battle. This is the weakness and the strength of a book to which I must address here only reproaches against the historian and praise to the novelist.

For the novel is magnificent. It is at one and the same time one of the most beautiful love stories of our literature and an epic of Paris in insurrection, a voice given at last to those feelings which each year still burst out at the Mur des Fédérés from the growing mass of those who do not forget. How Théodore Quiche, the son of bankrupt traders, little by little understands where his place is and gives up the career offered him by his bourgeois uncle to join the student Becker and the ebony worker Siffrelin is also a piece of depiction without precedent in the French novel. It is here that the times in which we live find reflection in the most gripping fashion. It is here that we find Jean Cassou himself who has followed undeviatingly the path of Théodore Quiche and who, in following that path, gives us some merciless portraits of waverers whose fate in the final account is with the oppressors against the oppressed; such is Jules de Renaud who desired so much to *come to the people* and whom we find later drunk with enthusiasm in the bourgeois crowd which shouts "To Berlin!" at the declaration of war. This Jules de Renaud to whom Becker said: "It's very difficult for you. You are rich, you

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[1] In creating the character of Becker Cassou has certainly borrowed much from the German poet and pre-Marxist revolutionary Georges Büchner. Thus, to be accurate, Becker expresses in the novel only the ideas of Marx but not Marx's point of view.

have a heart, you are ashamed." How can we fail to recognize in him some of our contemporaries? In the same way one feels that the author perpetually has in mind the Camelots du Roi and the Croix de Feu when he describes the Versaillaists and the demonstrators of the Place Vendôme. In the same way we can see clearly that it is from the days of February 1934 and the great popular manifestations of the two past years that he takes the very colors of which he had need lovingly to paint the Paris of the Commune.

That which is characteristic of the *Massacres of Paris,* what goes straight to the heart in this book full of singular beauties is the immense, sincere, direct love for the people of Paris. A love which is simply enthusiasm for the power of the people, a love which is made from a profound knowledge of its traditions, history, struggles, virtues. The workers of the Commune are the very same as those who fought in 1848, the heroes of June, those who fought against the Empire, in the streets at first, then secretly, the founders of the First International. And in this care to show the continuity of the development of proletarian consciousness we see how much Jean Cassou feels its continuity to our own days. One would like to speak here of those pages which make your throat dry, like those which finish the first part of the novel, the declaration of war; and the burial of Dombrowski (which *Commune* recently honored itself by publishing); and above all the last hours, the street battles right up to Père Lachaise, the bloody crown of the epic where, along with the martyrs of the working class, there die old Siffrelin and his daughter Marie-Rose, of whom we must now speak.

For the epic of the Communards would be incomplete without the idyll of Théodore Quiche and Marie-Rose; in the heart of the tempest there is a story of love. The most touching and the most beautiful. Théodore and Marie-Rose, I am sure, will join in legend the most famous lovers ever imagined by men; Romeo and Juliet, Tristan and Isolde, Paul and Virginie. Here is a love which finds its majesty in being the final blow to cut Théodore off forever from the class of his origin; a love of which the destiny is the same as that of the Commune itself and which is marked from the first page by a blood-red star. In Marie-Rose the proletariat is incarnate. And it is this that will carry the intelligentsia of our country to her. Marie-Rose, it is thus that she has been named by Jean Cassou who has written on the flyleaf of the book an epigraph from Arthur Rimbaud and who in doing this was certainly thinking of the Jeanne-Marie, also a heroine of the Commune, who was sung by Rimbaud in the poem quoted recently at the Villeurbanne by Jacques Duclos in speaking of youth.

Youth; it is to youth above all that I recommend the reading of *Massacres of Paris,* a book which is full of youth and which is for youth, a book such as youth demands, which makes you clench your fists and at the same time laugh with that light laugh of exaltation which is so close to tears but which bears the idea of victory. For this sombre history of the Commune, this terrible echo of past years which rings again in our ears in the days of the Reichstag fire, in the days of Vienna and, since the October of Asturia, is today haloed with light—without the experience of the Commune would the workers of Russia have marched to the Soviet Victory? Without the experience of our brothers in Germany and Austria would we have forged the weapon of the People's Front which has begun, still better than with us, to shine joyously in the sunshine of Spain? And the lesson to be derived from Cassou's book, black as history made it, is it a lesson of despair? Is it the dismaying moral of other love stories which finish on a tomb? The shots of Galliffet did not truly kill Marie-Rose, they pierced but one Marie-Rose. Marie-Rose is immortal like the class a thousand times decimated which carries the standard of humanity into the light of the future. Marie-Rose is the youth of this youth which I recommend to find its own reflection in reading the *Massacres of Paris* and to draw from this reading a new lease of the enthusiasm which makes it unconquerable, the enthusiasm of Gavroche and Vuillemin.

Thus the poet, my dear Jean Cassou, who is a true poet, finds in the very life of the proletariat the flame which transforms him and which, in his turn, through the marvelous words which he then is able to find, he renders back to the class which incarnates all poetry, the living and animating poetry of struggle. And he is no longer simply the bewildered poet that Théodore was in the days of the Commune, he is the enlightened warrior that you will be in the Commune of tomorrow.

Translated from French by H. O. Whyte

CHRONICLE

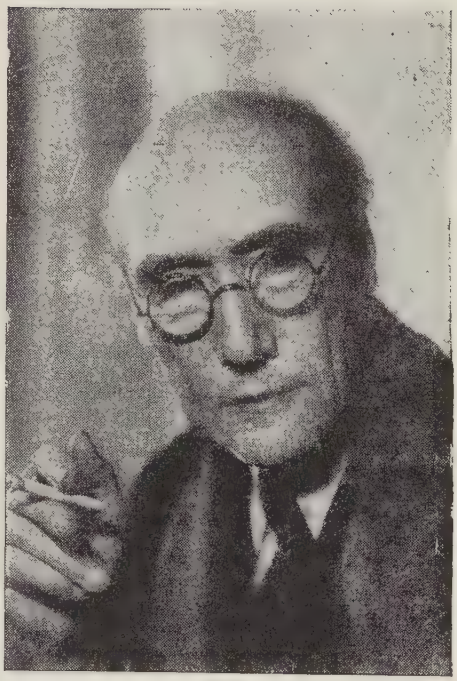
MEETING BETWEEN GIDE AND MOSCOW STUDENTS

During his last visit in the USSR a meeting was arranged between André Gide and Moscow students. The following is a report of his speech:

"Comrades—representatives of Soviet youth! I want to make you understand why this meeting with you stirs me so deeply. To do this I must say a few words about myself. The sympathy with which you surround me impels me to do it. It seems to me that to a certain extent I have merited this sympathy. I believe that I shall not be taking too much liberty if I think and speak in this way. It is to my merit that I was able to wait for you. I waited for a long time. I waited calmly, confident in your arrival. Today you are here and your reception rewards me fully for the long silence, isolation and lack of understanding which surrounded me. Yes, I truly feel that your sympathy is a real reward.

"When the periodical *The Commune* appeared in Paris, under the supervision and thanks to the courageous initiative of Comrade Aragon, the idea occurred to him to draw up a questionnaire. He gave the following question to each French writer—Whom do you write for- I didn't answer this question and explained to Aragon why I did not. You see, I couldn't tell the truth without appearing somewhat egoistical. I have always written for those who are yet to come. Applause didn't touch me. Only the bourgeoisie could applaud me, from whose ranks, it is true, I come and to whom I still belonged, but whom I scorned depply just because I knew them so well. All that was best in me rebelled against them.

"Since my health is bad, and I could not hope for a long life, I was reconciled to leaving this earth without having known succes. I willingly regarded myself as a writer to whom fame would come only after death, as one of those whose pure glory enraptured me who departed almost unknown, who wrote only for the future, like Stendhal, Beaudelaire, Keats or Rembeau. I lived with the fixed idea: *Those* for whom I write are not yet here. And I had the painful, but fine and inspiring feeling that my words resound in a vacuum. It is good to speak in a vacuum where words are not distorted by an echo, where it is not necessary to think about their resonance and subjugate the desire to be sincere. And it must be said that the taste



Andre Gide

of the public is distorted. When convention has become stronger than truth, sincerity is treated as an affectation. And I was considered an affected writer. They made me feel this by not reading my books.

The example of the great writers whom I have named, whom I loved more than anything else, calmed me. I was reconciled to not having any success in this life, firmly convinced that the future would repay me a hundredfold. I have preserved a receipt, as others preserved an honorary degree, of the sale of my book *Earthly Fruits*. In 20 years there were exactly 500 copies sold. Neither the public nor the critics noticed the book. With the exception of two friendly reviews, there was not a single article written about it. What I am telling you is interesting only because later this book had such an unusual success due only to the influence which it had on the young generation.

This has been the fate not only of my book *Earthly Fruits*. The initial failure of my books in general was always in direct

proportion to the newness of the subject. I do not want to draw the conclusion from this that only insignificant books can count on immediate success, which would undoubtedly be paradoxical. Of course, I do not think so. I simply want to say that the value of books, works of art, are not always at once understood. But works of art do not only appeal to the present day! Real, artistic works are messages which frequently are understood only much later, while works which only answer the requirements of the present moment and in a too facile manner, frequently prove to be insignificant in a short time.

Youth of new Russia, now you understand why I appeal to you. Why, I waited just for you. Why have I written a new book for you with such joy? For me you are the future. The future will not come from the outside. You carry it within you. And not the future of the U.S.S.R. only—because the fate of the rest of the world depends on the future of the U.S.S.R. You are creating the future.

Beware! Be on your guard! You have a grim responsibility. Do not calm yourselves with the victories of your older comrades which were paid for so generously with their strength and blood. They have cleared the sky of clouds which are still hovering over many countries of the world. Be active! Do not forget that we look to you from the heart of the West, full of love, anticipation, and great hope."

Translated by Selma Schwartz

MEXICO

REVOLUTION, poem by Miguel Bustos Cerecedo.

The active group, Integrales, of Veracruz, Mexico, has published a new short poem by the revolutionary poet, Miguel Bustos Cerecedo.

Miguel Bustos Cerecedo is a young poet 20 years old, a student in the higher school of Veracruz. This school is the only higher educational institution in Mexico which has been sufficiently revolutionary to adopt what in Latin America is known as the university reform, which tends to make the university autonomous with respect to the bourgeois government.

Cerecedo is a native of the Huasteca region, known to the Standard Oil Company for its rich oil-fields.

Bustos Cerecedo's poem sings of the Mexican revolution which has yet to be fought by the workers and peasants of his country. In so doing, he closely follows in the footsteps of the Mexican revolutionary poet, Gutierrez Cruz.

The Mexican revolution of 1910 against feudalism and imperialism found strident expression in Maples Arce, a poet whose literary strength unfolded in the constant fluctuations in the form and character of the revolution yet did not succeed in asserting itself. In Bustos Cerecedo, on the other hand, we have a poet whom the Mexican revolution in its present stage has turned toward the workers and peasants to show them in precise forms, though somewhat poster-like, the road the peasant must take in the revolution.

At times the poet is a little confused—perhaps because of the fact that he is very young and his ideology, which he certainly has, is maturing. For this reason, some of his verses have a pessimistic ring.

On the whole, and especially in his last verses, *Summons*, Bustos Cerecedos may be considered a poet of great potentiality for Latin America. *Routa*, the journal edited by Jose Mancidsidor, has offered him the help he needs both now and in future.

ARGENTINA

UNITY, for the defence of culture

The Association of Intellectuals, Artists, Journalists and Writers of Argentina, founded a year ago, is now publishing an official organ, *UNITY*, with the subtitle, *For the Defence of Culture.*

In an editorial announcement to the Argentinian public, *Unity* defines its position as follows: "We proclaim, above all, the necessity of Unity of action of all the intellectuals. They must rally around one banner, that of the defense of culture, in the face of the greatest danger which threatens the world: fascism." Farther on, it defines more clearly its position: "Fascism is more than the absolute expression of the dictatorship of a class resolved to crush the great masses of workers in order to exploit them cruelly for the exclusive benefit of the dictators. Fascism is also the enemy of the intelligentsia."

Considering that in these class relationships and their political expression in the international mosaic, the Argentine is no exception, *Unity* declares that fascism is not exclusively a European phenomenon but rather a world phenomenon. "Our country (Argentina) has not escaped this consequence of the world economic crash. Fascism is already threatening our liberties. Even more. The cumulative process of loss of liberties has begun." The editorial then points out that the landlord government (a form of South American fascism) in Argentina contains all the most concrete elements of fascism.

Contributors to the first number are Professor Anibal Ponce, well-known journalist; Alberto Gerchunoff, the poet, Jose Porto-

gallo, a construction worker; Dr. Schmerkin, Margueritte, Barboza Mello, the poets Alvaro Younque, Nydia Lamarque, Cordova Iturburu and Gonzalez Tunon; the critic Hector P. Agosti, and others.

Prof. Anibal Ponce writes on Romain Rolland and his position in the intellectual world; Alberto Gerchunoff and Jose Portogallo on Henri Barbusse, Margueritte, citing Stalin's words to the graduates of the Kremlin military school in 1934, speaks of the necessity of fraternity. Barboza Mello writes of the Brazilian revolution. Nydia Lamarque writes on the United Front in Paris; Iturburu reviews an exhibition of painting sponsored by the organization which publishes *Unity*.

A well-known poet and revolutionary journalist, Iturburu writes of this exhibit, "The salon recently held by the AIAPE (Association of Intellectuals) shows that we are on the way to revolutionary art. Some of the conditions necessary for it already exist. Our artists are beginning to organize—a very significant fact. Already an understanding of the social reality and the meaning of events, the direction in which the world is going, is important. What do they lack? They need to free themselves from the foreign viewpoint which still clouds many eyes. They must see our own reality with our own eyes, to feel as artists this spectacle of a struggling society born of the ruins of decadence, and to acquire an adequate idiom. The study of the different schools whose banners mark the history of art—the schools of the vanguard included—point the way to the acquisition of that technique, which, fortunately, many of our artists already possess. As for the rest, they must identify themselves with the formidable social drama in which we are taking part."

Unity challenges the Civic Radical Union, the largest party in Argentina, to join a peoples' front against fascism. It declares that it will devote the greater part of its energies to forming this peoples' front.

It is true that the first number contains an excess of foreign material and very little from the Argentine. Of the magazine's 20 pages, 14 are devoted to information from abroad. Nevertheless, the journal is well-gotten up, consistent and readable. Its sphere of influence reaches into the provinces, giving the publication greater force in its struggle against fascism for culture.

AIAPE

The Association of Intellectuals, Artists, Journalists and Writers (AIAPE) of Buenos Aires, Argentine, was organized in February, 1935. At the time, 94 of its 100 members lived in the capital. Now it has 400 members in Buenos Aires, and three branches—in Rosarios, Tucuman and Tandil. (In the last-named city, it sponsored an athenaeum of folk culture). Two other branches are now being formed, and by the end of this year, there should be branches in all the important cities of the country.

The association has various departments or sections—for physicians, architects, artists, journalists and writers. The well-known actor, Orestes Caviglia, is organizing an actors' section. Commissions for economic and social studies, and commissions of journalists and writers already exist.

AIAPE has organized united action in accord with its program. A wide variety of left elements, from radicals and liberal democrats to socialists and Communists have participated in this action.

Raul Gonzalez Tunon, Amparo Mom and Nydia Lamarque represented the organization in the congress of anti-fascist writers in Paris in May, 1935. Anibal Ponce and Pondal Rios represent the organization on the permanent committee of the international organization which has its headquarters in Paris.

Armando Campos Urquijo.

THE MONGOLIAN PEOPLE'S THEATER

The hot sun of the Mongolian steppes throws into sharp relief picturesque figures, gay robes forming a brilliant mosaic. From time to time the mountains reecho with their laughter, which reverberates across the steppes. Why have these people gathered? To witness a performance of the Mongolian People's Theater. The audience is assembled on a field: those in front occupy the places "reserved for orchestra," those in back—stand. There are many nomads on horseback. In the center of the field, before the audience, the actors of the Mongolian People's Theater make their appearance. At one side stand an interesting group of actors dressed in the glittering costumes of the feudal lords, their hats adorned with genuine peacock feathers. A puppet show (played by the actors) is being shown on the stage. Its appearance is greeted with joyful shouts by the audience; this is a very popular form of entertainment in the East. Their grotesque masques arouse general merriment, and the amused audience is moved to hearty laughter.

But the puppets provide more than mere entertainment. Their buffoonery tells the Nomads, who have never seen a newspaper or a radio, about the tyranny endured by their Manchurian neighbors. An old man sitting on a pillow with his knees crossed and smoking a pipe, recalls his own youth and compares it with the life of the con-

temporary youth. A young Nomad feels a burning desire to go to Ulan-Bator where he will be able to quench that thirst for knowledge which the theater has aroused in him.

The theater in Ulan-Bator is quite different. It is located on the principal square, named for Sukka Boshar, a national revolutionary hero of Mongolia whose life has served as a subject for many Mongolian dramas. The majestic towers of the great Tibetan temple rise to the sky, and, until the Revolution of 1921, dominated the city. The theater, a simple, green building in the form of the Nomad's tent, provides a startling contrast to the elaborately gilded towers.This physical contrast between the temple and the theater is a symbol of the latter's splendid struggle to awaken the Mongolians from century-long lethargy, to explain to them actual problems and to help them to defend their independence and develop national culture.

Five years ago, when the theater was established in Mongolia, it had no tradition at all. There was only the influence of the Chinese theater and the conventional Tibetan dance performed at the annual religious ceremonies of the Imaists. Naturally, these forms were unsuitable as an expression of contemporary problems. The educational work the theater was to do required the freedom and clarity of a realistic style.

At first it was difficult for the young theater to find material for its repertory in the national literature. Until the national revolution, Mongolian literature consisted of little more than religious tracts and epic poems, which, however interesting they might be from a literary point of view, were far removed in content from the real problems of a people fighting to preserve its independence. Only the creation of a new dramaturgy could ensure the further development of the young theater.

Improvisation played a tremendous role in the theater, and is now highly cherished as its most original creation. The actors themselves are the authors of the improvised sketches, whose themes frequently do not reflect the past. The actors depict the life of the people with fine humor, and their productions are adapted to the ideology of the audience. Many of these sketches recall the literature of the Renaissance. One describing the life of the monks reminds one of Boccaccio notwithstanding the fact that the authors have never even heard of him.

The problems facing the theater are closely related to the work of the actors themselves. Recently, both actors and directors of the theater began to study Western literature. There have been new works created on such real problems as the struggle against feudalism and fascism. In order to encourage young writers, the government in sponsoring a contest for the best dramatic works.

Translated by S. Schwartz

Editor-in-chief SERGEI DINAMOV

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