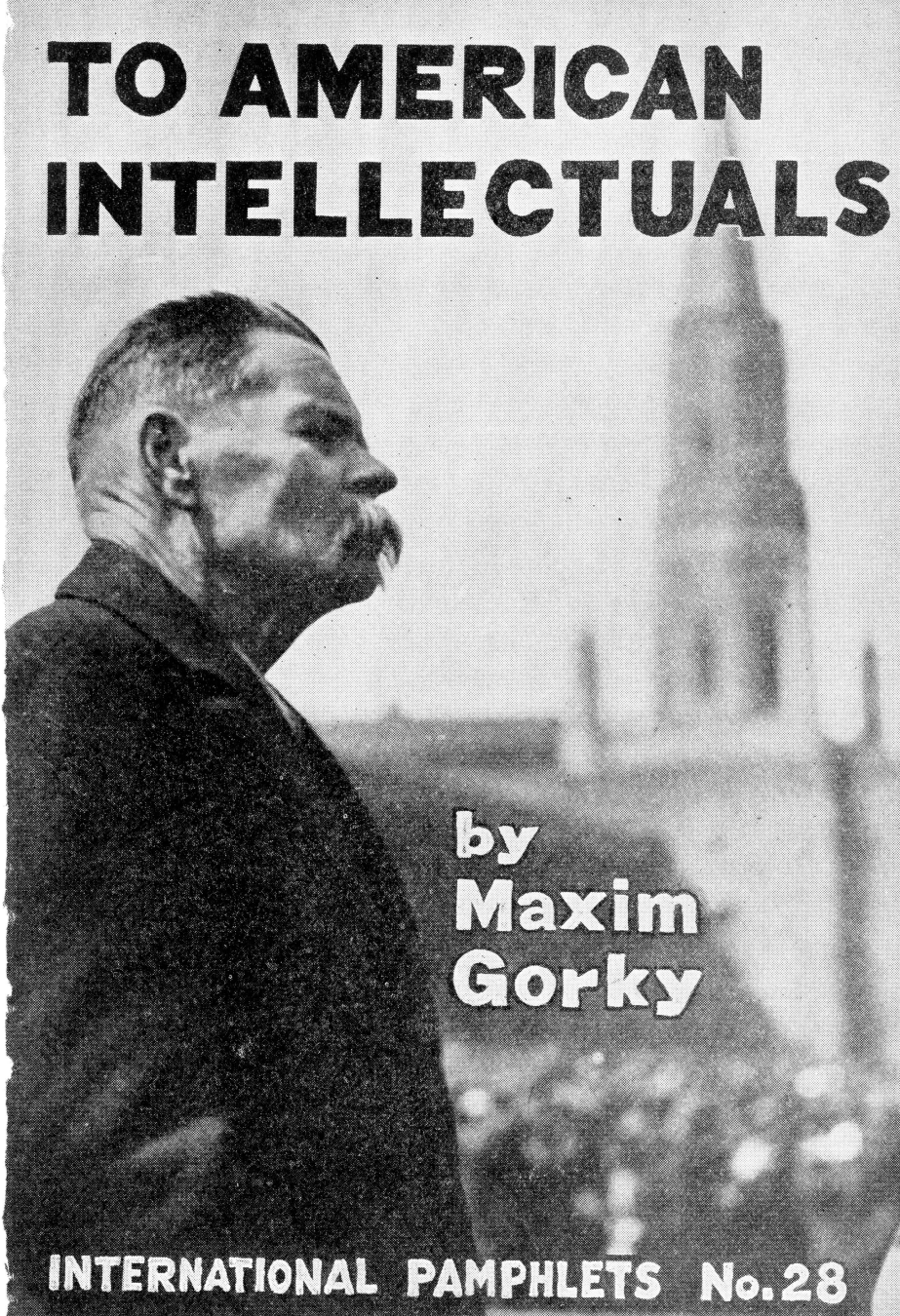


# TO AMERICAN INTELLECTUALS



by  
**Maxim  
Gorky**

INTERNATIONAL PAMPHLETS No.28

# MAXIM GORKY

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(March 14, 1868—June 18, 1936)

## EUGENE O'NEILL:

"Gorky is not dead. His genius and the spirit of tragic understanding and pity for humanity which characterized his work will live as long as true literature is read."

## SHERWOOD ANDERSON:

"He was one of the real fathers of all modern writing and most of all he spoke always for the downtrodden and defeated. But it seems to me his own life was one of the very successful ones of all time."

## UPTON SINCLAIR:

"His career during and since the revolution was followed by me with admiration for his heroic devotion, his loyalty to justice, right, reason and real human advancement."

## CARL SANDBURG:

"I never met Gorky, but the news of his passing is as though a beloved and close friend is vanished. Gorky came from the depths and never forgot where he came from. He grew and changed with a changing world. Out of the bitter dark of his earlier days and work came a faith to man that will yet change the earth from a theater of exploitation into something else easier to look at than what we have now."

## THEODORE DREISER:

"Only that literature, of which Gorky was a master, acknowledging the great sorrows and illusory pleasures of our real life arrests and holds a thinking world. Man may find ways to be economically free and at ease. But will he ever escape from the emotional restlessness and strain which comes from knowing life, as Gorky knew it? I lay a mental wreath beside the bier of this very great man."

# TO AMERICAN INTELLECTUALS

By MAXIM GORKY

You write: "You will probably be surprised to receive this message from unknown people beyond the sea." \* No, your letter did not surprise me. I receive such letters quite frequently and you are mistaken when you say that your message is a "singular" one, for during the last two or three years imploring appeals from intellectuals have become quite a daily occurrence.

This is quite natural. The function of the intellectual has always been confined, in the main, to embellishing the bored existence of the bourgeoisie, to consoling the rich in the trivial troubles of their life. The intelligentsia was the nurse of the capitalist class. It was kept busy embroidering white stitches on the philosophical and ecclesiastical vestments of the bourgeoisie — that old and filthy fabric, besmeared so thickly with the blood of the toiling masses.

The intellectuals continue this difficult, but not very praiseworthy and absolutely futile, occupation even now, though they have manifested an almost prophetic clairvoyance of forthcoming events. For instance, before the imperialists began to partition China, a German named Spengler, in his book *Men and Technics*, wrote that a mistake was made by the Europeans in the nineteenth century by imparting their technical knowledge to the "coloured races." In this respect Spengler is supported by your American writer, Hendrik Van Loon, who is also of the opinion that the arming of black and yellow human beings with the experience of European

\* Since the original communications from American correspondents to which this is a reply were not available to the editor, the extracts quoted here have been retranslated from the Russian.—Ed.

culture was one of the "seven blunders of the world" committed by the European bourgeoisie.

At the present time we can observe an anxiety to rectify this mistake. The capitalists of Europe and of the United States of America are supplying the Japanese and Chinese with money and munitions, helping them to destroy each other, sending their navies to the Far East the better to be able to shake their mighty mailed fist in the face of Japanese imperialism at the most opportune moment. Then, when the bear has been killed, they hope to divide its hide among themselves, giving the brave hare his portion, too.

Personally, I am of the opinion that the bear will not be killed, for Spengler, Van Loon and other comforters of the bourgeoisie, who argue a great deal about the dangers threatening European and American "culture," forget to mention one thing. They forget that the Hindus, Japanese and Chinese are not really a uniform entity, but are divided into classes. They forget that against the poison of selfish philistine thought in Europe and America, a salutary antidote has been compounded and is even now at work — the doctrines of Marx and Lenin.

Perhaps, though, they do not really forget this; perhaps they are only hushing it up from tactical motives; perhaps their shouts of alarm about the threat to European culture can be explained by the fact that they know how impotent is the poison and how potent the antidote.

The number of those who wail about the doom of civilisation is growing rapidly. Their shouts are becoming louder and louder. Some months ago in France the former cabinet minister, Caillaux, was crying out in public about the instability of civilisation. This is what he shouted:

The world is enduring a tragedy of surfeit and mutual distrust. Is it not a tragedy to be obliged to burn wheat and to throw sacks of coffee into the sea when millions of people lack food? And, as for the distrust among us—it has caused enough evil already. It provoked the war and dictated peace treaties, which can only be amended when this distrust disappears. If we do not succeed in re-establishing mutual confidence, the whole of civilisation will be in danger, for the various nations may be tempted to overthrow the economic system to which they attribute all their disasters.

To speak of the possibility of confidence between robbers, who today are openly showing their claws and teeth to each other, one must be either a rank hypocrite or an extremely naïve person. And if the term “nation” is meant to denote the working people, every honest man must admit that the workers are quite right in “attributing” to the senselessness of the capitalist regime all the disasters with which this regime rewards them for creating value. The proletarians see ever more clearly that the modern bourgeoisie justifies with terrible accuracy the words of Marx and Engels, contained in the *Communist Manifesto*:

It [the bourgeoisie] is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him. Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie, in other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society.

Caillaux is but one of hundreds of dotards who still continue to produce arguments proving that their bourgeois idiocy is a sort of wisdom given to humanity for ever and ever, that mankind will never invent anything better, will never rise above it or go beyond it. And it was not so very long ago that these comforters of the bourgeoisie were trying to prove their economic wisdom, trying to prove that it would hold good for ever, and boasted of their science.

Now they are beginning to exclude science from their dirty business. This same Caillaux speaking in Paris on February 23, before an audience of former cabinet ministers like Paul Miliukov and other "has-beens," followed a line of argument similar to Spengler's:

Technique is everywhere creating unemployment, converting the wages of discharged workers into the surplus dividends of the shareholders. Science "without conscience," not warmed by "conscience," is detrimental to mankind. Mankind must bridle science. The present crisis is a defeat for human intelligence. There can sometimes be no greater misfortune for science than a great man. He puts forward theoretical theses which possess great significance and importance at the time when these theses are made. They are right, as for instance the theses of Karl Marx which were right in 1848 or 1870, but are absolutely wrong for 1932. Had Marx been alive at present, he would have written differently.

By these words the bourgeois admits that the intelligence of his class is impotent, insolvent. He wants to "bridle science" forgetting how much power science has given his class with which to strengthen its authority over the world of toilers. "To bridle science"—what does this phrase mean? To forbid science its freedom to explore? There was a time when the bourgeoisie was fighting valiantly and successfully against the attempts of the church to violate this freedom of science. In our day bourgeois philosophy is gradually becoming what it was in the darkest years of the Middle Ages—the servant of theology. Caillaux is quite right in saying that Europe is threatened by a reversion to barbarism, as foretold by Marx, about whose teachings he knows nothing. Yes, it is an indisputable fact that the bourgeoisie of Europe and America, now mistress of the world, is every year becoming more ignorant, intellectually weaker, more barbarous. It is beginning to grasp this fact itself—in your person, M. Caillaux.

The idea of a possible reversion to the epoch of barbarism is now "quite the fashion" among the modern bourgeois. The Spenglers, the Caillaux' and other "thinkers" of this type reflect the feelings of thousands of petty bourgeois — feelings of alarm, provoked by the presentiment of class peril, by the fact of the growing revolutionary consciousness of the working masses throughout the world. The bourgeoisie would prefer to ignore this process of the revolutionary cultural development of the working class, but it cannot help seeing it and sensing it. That this process is developing rapidly is borne out by evidence from all quarters. It is the logical and inevitable development of the entire experience of humanity, that experience which bourgeois historians used to write about so instructively. But history, also being a science, needs "bridling" too, or — a still more simple expedient — its existence can be forgotten. To forget history — such is the advice of a French poet and academician, Paul Valery, in his book *Review of Modern Times*. It is at the door of history that he quite seriously lays all our misfortunes, saying that, by recalling the past, history arouses futile dreams and deprives men of rest. By "men" we are of course to understand "the bourgeoisie." Paul Valery is probably incapable of noticing any other men on the face of the earth. This is what he says about history — a science of which the bourgeoisie was so proud until recently, and which it has written so skilfully:

History is the most dangerous of all the products of the chemical laboratory of our mind. It stimulates dreaming, it intoxicates nations, it generates in them false memories, exaggerates their reflexes, irritates their old wounds, deprives them of peace and infects them with megalomania or mania of persecution.

As you see, Paul Valery performs his duties as comforter in a very radical spirit. He knows that the

bourgeoisie wants to live peacefully, that for the sake of a quiet life it thinks itself justified in destroying tens of millions of human beings. Of course, it could also destroy tens of thousands of books, since libraries, like everything else, are in its hands. It could exclude all historical works from circulation; halt the teaching of history in the schools; proclaim that the study of the past is a dangerous and even criminal pursuit. Men who are inclined to study history could be treated as insane and deported to uninhabited islands.

The main thing is peace! This is the first thought in the minds of the comforters of the bourgeoisie. But, according to Caillaux, peace requires the establishment of mutual confidence among the national-capitalist brigands. In order to establish such confidence, some distant country such as China must be thrown open for plunder by all the freebooters and shopkeepers of Europe, whereas the shopkeepers and freebooters of Japan want to close the doors of this country to everybody except themselves. This the Japanese shopkeepers and freebooters are doing on the grounds that China is nearer to them than to Europe, and that it is more convenient for them to plunder China than to plunder India, since it is the habit of the "gentlemen" of England to plunder India. Out of the competition which this plunder involves there arise disputes which threaten us with the danger of a new world slaughter. Furthermore, in the words of the Parisian journalist Gringoire, "the Russian Empire, as a normal and sound market, is lost to Europe." Therein Gringoire sees the "source of all evil" and, together with numerous other journalists, politicians, bishops, lords, adventurers and sharks, insists upon the necessity of a pan-European intervention against the Soviet Union.

Then, unemployment in Europe is increasing con-



stantly, and the class-consciousness of the proletariat grows apace. Really, there is very little chance of establishing "peace"; it would even seem that there is no place for peace. I am no optimist, and being aware that the cynicism of the bourgeoisie is unlimited, can find only one method by which the bourgeoisie might establish a haven of repose for itself. This way was hinted at on February 19 by the "nordic" deputy Berger in Cologne. In his speech he said: "If, after Hitler's coming into power, the French make an attempt to occupy German territory, we will massacre all the Jews."

Learning of Berger's declaration, the Prussian government has forbidden him to speak again in public. This prohibition aroused the indignation of Hitler's followers. One "nordic" newspaper writes: "Berger cannot be accused of inciting to any illicit action; we will slaughter the Jews on the basis of a law which we shall pass after coming into power."

This declaration should not be looked upon as a joke, as a German *Witz*. The European bourgeoisie in its present state of mind is quite capable of passing such a law for the wholesale extermination not only of Jews, but also of all those whose opinions are not its own and, in the first instance, of all those who do not act in accordance with its own inhuman interests.

The comforters from among the intellectuals, confined within this "vicious circle," are gradually losing their skill in offering comfort, and are in need of comfort themselves. They beg for comfort even from people who are opposed to charity in principle (for fear of establishing a precedent). Their gift of seductive lying, their chief gift, is no longer able to gloss over the filthy cynicism of bourgeois reality. Some of them are beginning to feel that to entertain and console people

who are weary of plundering the world and are worried by the ever growing resistance of the proletariat to their infamous designs, people in whom the thirst for profit has taken on violent, mad and socially destructive forms — that to console and to entertain such people is becoming not only futile but even dangerous for the consolers themselves.

It would not be amiss to point out how criminal it is to console the sorrows of robbers and cutthroats, but to do so would not really affect anybody, for it is moral, in other words, something excluded from real life on account of its uselessness. It is much more essential to point out the fact that in the world of today the consoling intellectual has become that "excluded middle" whose existence is denied by logic.

Bourgeois in origin but proletarian in social standing, the intellectual seems to grasp how degrading is the part he plays in the service of a class which is doomed to ruin and just as fully deserves this ruin as any professional bandit or murderer. He begins to grasp this because the bourgeoisie is no longer in need of his services. He hears more and more frequently how people of his own sort are trying to please the bourgeoisie by wailing about the overproduction of intellectuals. He sees how the bourgeoisie turns for "consolation" to charlatans who claim the ability to foretell the future, rather than to philosophers and "thinkers." The newspapers of Europe are full of advertisements of palmists, astrologers with horoscopes, fakers, clairvoyants, spiritualists and other quacks even more ignorant than the bourgeoisie itself. The camera and the cinema are killing art, and painters, in order to avoid starvation, are bartering their pictures in exchange for bread, for potatoes or for the old clothes of the bourgeoisie.

The following cheerful item appeared in a Parisian newspaper:

There is great distress prevailing among the painters of Berlin; not a ray of hope is to be seen. Rumours are heard about the organisation of mutual aid among the painters, but what mutual aid can be organised by people who earn nothing and have no prospect of earning anything? Artistic circles in Berlin therefore received with enthusiasm the original idea of Annot-Jakoby, a woman painter, who suggested a barter of goods. The coal-merchants are to supply the painters with fuel in exchange for statues and paintings. Times will change, and the coal-merchants will not be the losers in such a transaction. The dentists will give the painters treatment. A good picture will never be superfluous in the waiting room of a dentist. Butchers and milkmen should jump at this opportunity of doing a good deed and at the same time acquire works of art without having to pay cash for them. A special bureau has been organised in Berlin for developing Annot-Jakoby's idea and putting it into practice.

In speaking of this barter of goods, the newspaper omits to mention that it is already in existence in Paris.

The cinema has gradually destroyed the high art of the theatre. It is superfluous to speak of the corrupting influence of bourgeois movies. That fact is very clear. Having exhausted all sentimental themes, it has now proceeded to exploit physical monstrosities:

A special troupe has been assembled in the Hollywood studio of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to work for the film "Freaks." It consists of Koo Koo, a girl-bird bearing a great resemblance to a stork; P. Robinson, the human skeleton; Martha, born with one arm and a past-master in the art of knitting lace with her feet; Schlitze; women nicknamed "pinheads," who have normal bodies, but extraordinarily small heads, resembling pins; Olga, a woman with a large beard like a man's; Josephine Joseph, half woman, half man; the Siamese twins, the Hilton sisters; dwarfs and lili-putians.

There is no room now for true artists. They are being replaced by Fairbanks, Harold Lloyd and other

tricksters, with the sentimental and dejected Charlie Chaplin at their head. In the same way, classical music is being replaced by "jazz," while Stendhal, Balzac, Dickens and Flaubert are being ousted by writers such as Edgar Wallace, who know how to spin yarns about detectives who protect the property of the big plunderers and organisers of mass murder, and catch the small thieves and murderers in their clutches. In the sphere of art the bourgeoisie is quite satisfied with collecting postage stamps and tramway tickets or, at best, collecting counterfeit pictures of old masters. In the sphere of science the bourgeoisie is interested in ways and means by which the physical labour of the working class may be most cheaply and conveniently exploited, for bourgeois science exists only in so far as it is able to provide self-enrichment for the bourgeois, regulate the activity of his gastric-intestinal organism and increase his sexual energy as a libertine. The basic problems of science — intellectual development; improvement of hygiene, which is maintained at a low level by the capitalist yoke; the conversion of inert matter into energy, the solution of the technique of the structure and growth of the human organism — all this is beyond the understanding of the bourgeois, and is of no more interest to him than to the savage of Central Africa.

Seeing all this, some of the intellectuals begin to understand that the "creation of culture," which they were accustomed to consider as their business, as the result of their "free thought" and "independent will," is their business no longer, and that culture is by no means an inner necessity of the capitalist world. Events in China remind them of the destruction of the university and library of Louvain in 1914. They hear how Japanese guns destroyed the Tuntsi University in

Shanghai, the nautical college, national university, college of medicine, agricultural and engineering colleges and workers' university. This act of barbarity aroused no one's indignation, just as no one is troubled by the reduction in appropriations for cultural institutions while expenditures for armaments continue to grow.

Of course, it goes without saying that only a restricted and quite negligible part of the European-American intelligentsia has sensed the inevitability of its subjugation to "the law of the excluded middle" and is debating the question of which way to go. Are they to go with the bourgeoisie against the proletariat — the usual path — or with the proletariat against the bourgeoisie — as honour demands? The majority of intellectuals continue to be satisfied with their task of serving capitalism, a master who, knowing well the moral flexibility of his servant and consoler, and seeing the impotence and futility of his conciliatory work, begins to despise his servant openly and is already beginning to doubt whether it is necessary for him to exist any longer.

I frequently receive letters from these specialists in the art of consoling the philistines. I quote one of these letters which I received from Sven Elverstad:

DEAR MR. GORKY:

Terrible perplexity, bordering on despair, is now prevailing everywhere, as a result of the frightful economic crisis which is now shaking all the countries of the world. This world tragedy prompted me to commence a series of articles in the most popular Norwegian newspaper, *Tidens Tegn*. The object of these articles is to raise the spirits and kindle the hopes of the millions of victims of this terrible disaster. In pursuance of this object, I found myself obliged to apply to the representatives of literature, art, science and politics, requesting them to express their opinion with regard to the tragic position of the peoples during the last few years. Every citizen of every country is confronted with the problem: whether to perish under the heavy blows of cruel fate, or

to continue struggling in the hopes of a happy issue to the crisis. This hope of a favourable outcome from the present hopeless situation is essential to everyone; it will bring a bright ray of hope to all those who may read an optimistic opinion, expressed by a person to whom everyone is accustomed to listen with respect. This is why I take the liberty of asking you to send me your opinion of the present situation. This opinion should not exceed three or four lines, but it will no doubt save countless people from despair, giving them strength to look forward bravely to the future.

Yours respectfully,

SVEN ELVERSTAD.

Men like the author of this letter, men who have not as yet lost their naïve faith in the medicinal power of "three or four lines," and in the sacred might of a phrase — such men are still to be found aplenty. Their faith is so ingenuous that it can hardly be genuine. Neither three nor four, nor three hundred nor four hundred phrases will put life into the decrepit limbs of the bourgeoisie. Thousands of phrases are being uttered in all the parliaments of the world and in the League of Nations every day, but they fail to console or soothe anybody, or to inspire any hope that the spontaneous growth of the crisis of bourgeois civilisation can possibly be arrested. Former cabinet ministers and other idlers are traveling from city to city trying to convince the bourgeoisie to "bridle" science and to "discipline" it. The babbling of these persons is immediately caught up by the journalists — men for whom "nothing matters, and everything has long ago become tiresome." One of these men, Emil Ludwig, in a serious newspaper article published in the *Daily Express* urges us to "kick out specialists." And the petty bourgeoisie listens to this advice, reads all this nonsense, and draws its own conclusions. If the European bourgeoisie finds it necessary to close down its universities, it will be nothing to be wondered at. They will be able

to refer to the fact that every year in Germany there are 6,000 openings for official posts requiring university diplomas, while the yearly number of graduates from the German universities is 40,000.

Citizens D. Smith and T. Morrison, you are mistaken in saying that the rôle of bourgeois literature and journalism is to "organise cultural opinion." This "organiser" is a parasitic plant, attempting to cover the dirty chaos of reality, but covering it with less success than the dirt and débris of a ruined building are covered by ivy and other similar weeds. You, citizens, are ill informed as to the cultural importance of your press, which proclaims unanimously that "an American is an American first and foremost" and only after that is he a man. The anti-alien press in Germany likewise teaches that a nordic is first and foremost an Aryan, and only after that is he a physician, geologist or philosopher. The journalists of France argue that a Frenchman is first and foremost a victor, consequently he should be armed better than others — the question, of course, being not one of arming the brain, but merely of arming the fist.

It is no exaggeration to say that the press of Europe and America busies itself assiduously and almost exclusively with the task of lowering the cultural level of its readers, a level which is already sufficiently low. Serving the interests of their capitalist employers, the journalists — past masters in the art of making mountains out of molehills — are by no means desirous of curbing the swine, though they certainly cannot help seeing that the swine has lost its sense and is beginning to run amuck.

You write: "With deep bitterness we felt, when we were in Europe, that the Europeans hate us." This is very "subjective," and subjectivism having allowed

you to see a certain feature, obscured your vision of the general truth. You failed to observe that in Europe the entire bourgeoisie is living in an atmosphere of mutual hatred. The plundered Germans hate France, which, suffocating from a plethoric surfeit of gold, in turn hates the English, just as Italians hate the French, while the whole bourgeoisie is filled with unanimous hatred against the Soviet Union. Three hundred million Indians live in hatred of the English lords and shopkeepers; 450 million Chinese hate not only the Japanese but also all Europeans, who, being accustomed to plundering China, are also ready to hate Japan, because it considers the right to plunder China as its own exclusive right.

This all-enveloping cloud of hatred is growing denser. The hatred is becoming more virulent. It is festering in the bourgeois organism like some noxious abscess which, of course, will eventually burst, so that the best and purest blood of the peoples of the whole globe may once again be poured out in streams. The next war will destroy not only millions of brave men but a tremendous quantity of valuables and of the raw materials from which these valuables are made, and all this will result in the impoverishment of mankind in health, in metals and in fuel.

It goes without saying that the war will not obliterate the hatred between the various national groups of the bourgeoisie. You think yourself "capable of serving the common culture of mankind" and "obliged to prevent it from declining into barbarity." This is all very well. But first ask yourselves this simple question: What can you do today or tomorrow to protect this culture, which, by the way, has never been the "common culture of mankind" and can never be such while there are national-capitalist state organisations which



have absolutely no responsibility to the toiling people, and which stir up the nations against each other.

And then, you must ask yourselves, what can you oppose to the facts of unemployment, the exhaustion of the working class from starvation, the growth of child prostitution — things that destroy culture? Are you aware that the exhaustion of the masses means the exhaustion of the soil on which culture is grown? You are certainly aware that the so-called “cultural stratum” was produced by the masses. You should know it very well, for the Americans are in the habit of boasting that in the United States of America newspaper boys have risen to the post of President.

I mention this only because I want to point out the cleverness of your boys, and not the talents of your presidents. Of these talents I know nothing.

There is also another question which you ought to bear in mind: Do you think it possible to make 450 million Chinese the slaves of European and American capital at a time when 300 million Indians are already beginning to understand that the gods have not foredoomed them to play the part of slaves to the English? Please consider: several tens of thousands of plunderers and adventurers want to live forever in peace and quiet on the labour of a billion workers. Is this a normal state of things? It has been so and it still is so, but have you the courage to assert that things should go on as they are at present? Plague used to be an almost normal occurrence in the Middle Ages, but plague is almost extinct now. Its rôle on our planet has been taken up by the bourgeoisie, which poisons the whole coloured world, inoculating it with the profoundest hatred and contempt for the whole white race. Has it not occurred to you, defenders of culture, that capitalism is provoking race wars?

You reproach me with "preaching hatred" and advise me to "propagate love." It would seem that you think me capable of preaching to the workers: Love the capitalists, for they are devouring your kith and kin; love them because they are wantonly destroying the treasures of your earth; love the men who waste your iron for the construction of guns to annihilate you; love the rascals at whose will your children are starving to death; love those who destroy you for the sake of their own peace and satiety; love the capitalists, for their church is holding you down in obscurity and ignorance.

Something of this kind is preached by the gospels and, recollecting this, you speak of Christianity as a "lever of culture." You are a little belated in arguing thus. Honest people long ago stopped speaking of the cultural influence of the "teaching of love and meekness." It is a little out of place, indeed quite impossible to speak of this influence in our day, when the christian bourgeoisie at home and in the colonies preaches meekness and forces the slaves to love it by means of "fire and sword"—means which it is applying more vigorously than ever, for as you are well aware, in our day the sword has been replaced by the bomb and the machine gun, and even by the "voice of God from heaven." One of the Paris papers writes:

In their war with the Afridi the English have hit upon a new method which has given them a tremendous advantage. A group of insurgents was hiding in some fastness in the midst of inaccessible mountains. Suddenly a large aeroplane appeared above them at a great height. The Afridi seized their rifles. But the aeroplane did not drop any bombs. It dropped words instead. A voice from heaven, persuading the insurgents in their native tongue to throw down the arms and to stop their senseless contest with the British Empire. And in many cases the insurgents, shaken by this voice from heaven, did indeed stop their struggle.

Thus a simple way was found to prove the existence of God, and to utilise His voice for the enslavement of simple savages. We may soon expect to hear the voice of God speaking somewhere above San Francisco or Washington, speaking in the English language, but with a Japanese accent.

You hold up to me as an example the "great men, the teachers of the church." It is strange that you should say this in earnest. We will not now discuss the question of how these "great men of the church" are made, for what end and from what materials. Let me only say that before putting your trust in these men, you should have first tested their reliability. In arguing the "cause of the church" you are manifesting that "American idealism" which can grow only on the soil of profound ignorance.

In this case, and in relation to the history of the christian church, your ignorance may be explained by the fact that the inhabitants of the United States have never experienced in their own flesh and blood what a church really is. They have not learned to know it as an organisation of violence over the mind and conscience of mankind. They have never experienced this with the force with which it was experienced by the population of Europe. You should have first acquainted yourselves with the bloody strife which took place at the ecumenical councils, with the fanaticism, ambition and selfishness of the "great teachers of the church." You would have benefited greatly by studying the history of the council in Ephesus. You should have read something about the history of heresies in order to become acquainted with the extermination of "heretics" in the first centuries of Christianity, with the massacres of Jews, the extermination of the Albigenses and Tabo-

rites, and with the whole bloody policy of the church of Christ.

The history of the Inquisition is also of some interest to semi-illiterate people, but not, of course, in the way it is told by your countryman Washington Lee, whose description is approved by the censorship department of the Vatican, the organiser of the Inquisition. It is quite possible that, having become acquainted with all the above, you would become convinced that the fathers of the church were zealously doing their best to strengthen the power of the minority over the majority, and that if they fought against heresies, it was because these heresies arose from among the mass of toiling people, who instinctively felt the falseness of the churchmen, these preachers of a religion for slaves, a religion which was never accepted by the masters except through some misunderstanding, or in a fit of panic before the slaves.

Your writer Van Loon in his article *The Seven Blunders of the World* asserts that the church should have fought not for the teachings of the gospel, but against them. The third blunder, he says, was

The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, seventy AD, forcing the Jews into exile all over the world and helping thereby the dissemination of . . . christianity . . . a doctrine which was as dangerous to the safety of the state [Rome] as the teachings of Lenin and Marx were to be to that of our modern capitalistic and industrial society.

Such was indeed the case, and the same is true today. The christian church has been fighting against the naïve communism of the gospel, and its whole "history" can be reduced to this fact.

What is the church doing in our day? In the first place, of course, it prays. The Archbishops of York and of Canterbury, one of whom preached something like

a "crusade" against the Soviet Union, have concocted a new prayer, in which English hypocrisy is excellently blended with English humour. It is a very long composition, drawn up in the same form as the "Lord's Prayer." The bishops are calling to God:

In the policy of our Government for the restoration of credit and prosperity;

*Thy Will be done.*

In all that is done for the settlement of the future government of India;

*Thy Will be done.*

In the coming Conference on Disarmament, and in all that is planned for the promotion of Peace;

*Thy Will be done.*

By the restoration of commerce in the confidence of restored credit and of mutual good-will;

*Give us our daily bread.*

By the co-operation of all classes in labour for the common good;

*Give us our daily bread.*

Because we have indulged in national arrogance, finding satisfaction in our power over others rather than in our ability to serve them;

*Forgive us our trespasses.*

Because we have been selfish in our conduct of business, setting our own interest or that of our own class before the interest of others;

*Forgive us our trespasses.*

This is a prayer typical of frightened shopkeepers! In this prayer they ask their God to "forgive them" their "trespasses," but forget to mention that they might just as well stop committing these "trespasses." And only in two cases do they ask "forgiveness" of their God.

Because we have indulged in national arrogance, finding satisfaction in our power over others rather than in our ability to serve them — *Forgive us our trespasses.*

Because we have been selfish . . . *Forgive us our trespasses.*

Forgive us these sins, but we cannot stop sinning — this is what they say. But the majority of English priests have rejected this prayer of forgiveness; probably they found it awkward and humiliating.

This prayer was “presented” to the throne of the English God on January 2 in St. Paul’s Cathedral, London. The Archbishop of Canterbury allowed all priests who did not relish this prayer to omit it.

So you see to what silly and trivial comedies the christian church has descended, and how ridiculously the priests have reduced their God to the position of some senior shopkeeper, a partner in all the commercial dealings of the best shopkeepers in Europe. But it would not be fair to speak of English priests alone, omitting to mention that the Italian priests have organised the Bank of the Holy Ghost, while in France the Parisian newspaper of the Russian emigrés publishes the following interesting item:

The authorities have ordered the arrest of the manager and salesman of the bookstore of the Catholic publishing house “Union.” The bookstore was selling pornographic photographs and books imported from Germany. The stock has been confiscated. The contents of some of the books were not only pornographic, but poured filth on religion.

Hundreds of facts of a similar kind could be cited and they all prove the same thing: The church, which is the servant of its boss and tutor, capitalism, is infected with all the diseases which are destroying the latter. And if we admit that there was a time when the bourgeoisie “held the moral authority of the church in some respect,” we must also admit, that it was the authority of the “spiritual police,” the authority of one of its organisations, which served to oppress the toiling people. Did the church “console”? I don’t deny that it did. But consolation is also one way of quenching intelligence.

No, to preach to the poor that they should love the rich, and to the employee that he should love his employer, is no business of mine. I have no gift for consolation. I have known too long and too well that the whole world is living in an atmosphere of hatred, and I can see that this atmosphere is daily growing darker, and therefore more salutary.

You, "humanitarians who want to be practical men," should have understood long ago that there are two forms of hatred at work in the world. One form has sprung up among the plunderers because of their competition with each other, and because of their apprehensions for the future, which threatens them with inevitable ruin. The other is the hatred of the proletariat, which originates in its disgust with things as they are, and which is daily becoming more clearly defined because the proletariat realises that it has the right to power. Nothing and nobody can reconcile these two hatreds, so strong have they now grown — nothing and nobody save the inevitable physical clash of the representatives of these two classes. Nothing save the victory of the proletariat will be able to rid the world of hatred.

You write: "Like many others, we are of the opinion that in your country the dictatorship of the workers results in violence to the peasants." I want to give you a piece of advice. Just try to think not like the "many others," but like those members of the intelligentsia, as yet very few in number, who are beginning to understand that the theory of Marx and Lenin is the highest pinnacle yet reached by scientific thought honestly investigating all social phenomena, and that only from the heights of this theory may the straight road leading towards social justice and new forms of culture be clearly seen. Make some mental effort and try to forget, if only for a moment, your kinship to

that class whose whole history has been and still is a history of continual physical and moral violence inflicted on the masses of toiling humanity, on the workers and the peasants. Make this effort and you will understand that your class is your enemy.

Karl Marx was a very wise man, but it should not be imagined that he came into the world as Minerva sprang out of the head of Jupiter. No, his theory is another case of genius perfecting a scientific experiment, as were also the theories of Newton and Darwin in their day. Lenin is much plainer than Marx, and not less wise as a teacher. These two teachers will first show you the class which you serve in all its power and glory. They will demonstrate to you how this class by means of inhuman violence built up a "culture" most suitable for its purposes on a basis of blood, hypocrisy and lies. And then they will show you the process by which this culture decays, and, further, the process of its present decomposition which you can witness for yourselves. Why, it was this very process that inspired you with alarm, as expressed in your letter to me.

Let us discuss the subject of "violence." The dictatorship of the proletariat is only a temporary phenomenon, which is indispensable for the reeducation of tens of millions of people who were formerly the slaves of nature and of the bourgeois state and for making them the sole masters of their country and of its vast resources. The dictatorship of the proletariat will cease to be a necessity as soon as the whole toiling people and the entire peasantry are placed on an equal footing in the social and economic sense and as soon as each member of society has the opportunity to work according to his ability and receive according to his needs. "Violence" as you and "many others" understand it, is a misunderstanding, but more often it is a lie and a libel against the



working class of the Soviet Union and its Party. The term "violence" as applied by the enemies of the working class to a social process now taking place in the Soviet Union is nothing but a slander of the cultural activity of the toiling masses — an activity which involves the restoration of the country, and the organisation of new forms of economy.

In my opinion, it is possible to speak of compulsion, which is a very different thing from violence, for in teaching children to read and write you do not use any violence. The working class of the Soviet Union and its Party are teaching the peasants their socio-political A.B.C. You, the intellectuals, are also impelled by something or somebody to feel the drama of your life "between the hammer and the anvil"; someone is initiating you also into the elements of the socio-political A.B.C., and this somebody is certainly not myself.

In all countries, the peasantry, the millions of small proprietors, form a fertile soil for the growth of plunderers and parasites. Capitalism in all its villainy has sprung up from this soil. All the peasant's strength, all his gifts and abilities are absorbed by the care he bestows on his beggarly farm. The cultural idiocy of the small proprietor is precisely the same as the cultural idiocy of the millionaire. You intellectuals should have seen this fact, or sensed it somehow. The living conditions of the peasantry in Russia prior to the October Revolution were those of the eighteenth century. This is a fact which even the Russian emigrés, whose rage against the Soviet Government has already assumed comical and monstrous proportions, will not dare to dispute.

The peasantry should not live like semi-savages; they should not be prey to the cunning of the richer peasants, the landlords and the capitalists; they should

not live under conditions of convict labour upon an exhausted land divided into minute strips, unable to feed even its beggarly illiterate owner who has no opportunity to fertilise his land, work with machines and develop scientific agriculture. The state of the peasantry should not be such as to justify the gloomy theory of Malthus, the foundations of which, in my opinion, conceal the fanaticism of the church. If the mass of peasantry is as yet unable to grasp the real degradation of its position, the working class must impress it with a consciousness thereof even by means of compulsion.

There is no necessity for this, however, for the peasant of the Soviet Union, after enduring all the agony of the world slaughter of 1914-1918, was roused to life by the October Revolution. He is no longer a blind creature, and has already learned how to think practically. He is being supplied with machinery and fertiliser; the doors of all the schools are thrown open to him; every year, thousands of peasants' children are starting life as engineers, agronomists and physicians.

The peasantry is beginning to understand that the working class, embodied in its Party, is striving to create one master in the Soviet Union — a master of 160 million heads and 320 million hands, and this is an important fact necessary for them to understand. The peasants can see that everything which is being done in their country is being done for all, and not merely for a small group of rich men. The peasants can see that what is going on in the Soviet Union is designed to serve their interests; that the 26 scientific research institutes in the country are busy finding methods of increasing the productivity of their lands and facilitating their labour.

The peasants want to live not in the filthy villages which they were forced to inhabit for centuries, but in

agricultural cities with good schools and nurseries for their children, and theatres, clubs, libraries and moving pictures for themselves. A thirst for knowledge and a taste for cultural life is growing in the peasants. If the peasants had failed to understand all this, the work in the Soviet Union would never have been crowned by such magnificent results as have been achieved by the united efforts of the workers and peasants in the last 15 years.

In bourgeois countries the working people constitute a blind mechanical force, which cannot in the main realise the cultural importance of its labour. In your country you have economic trusts, organisations of men who plunder the national forces, parasites on the toiling people. Fighting with each other, gambling with money in their efforts to ruin each other, they have staged dramas of fraud and deceit on the stock exchange until now at last their anarchy has brought the country to an unprecedented crisis.

Millions of workers are suffering the pangs of hunger, the health of the people is being wantonly ruined, infant mortality is mounting to disastrous proportions, the number of suicides is increasing, the original source of culture, its vital human energy, is being drained dry. And in spite of all this, your Senate has rejected the La Follette-Costigan bill for the appropriation of 375 million dollars for immediate assistance to the unemployed, and the *New York American* publishes the following figures showing the eviction of unemployed persons in New York for non-payment of rent: in 1930, 153,731 evictions; in 1931, 198,738 evictions. Hundreds of families of unemployed were evicted daily in New York in January, 1932.

In the Soviet Union both the economy and the legislature are in the hands of the workers and of that

part of the peasantry which has come to realise the necessity of destroying all private ownership of land, of socialising and mechanising labour in the fields, and of themselves being regenerated psychologically into workers similar to those who are employed in the factories and mills, in other words, of becoming the true and only masters of their country. The number of collectivised peasants, the number of Communists is growing daily. They will continue to grow at a still more rapid rate, when we have a new generation which can outgrow the relics of serfdom and the superstitions of secular slavery.

In the Soviet Union the laws originate from below, from the depths of the toiling masses. They flow from the conditions of their active life. The Soviet Government and the Party formulate and ratify as law nothing that has not matured in the labour processes of the workers and peasants — labour, the chief aim of which is to create a society of equal human beings. The Party is a dictator in so far as it is the organising centre, the nerve centre of the toiling masses. The aim of the Party is to convert the maximum quantity of physical energy into intellectual energy in the shortest possible time, in order to give vast scope and freedom to the development of the talents and abilities of every individual in the whole mass of the population.

A bourgeois state, which stakes everything on individualism, assiduously trains its youth in the spirit of its interests and traditions. This is, of course, quite natural. But observe how anarchic ideas and theories have arisen and still arise for the most part from among the youth of this very bourgeois society. This is an unnatural phenomenon and is a proof of the abnormal and unsound state of an atmosphere where people are suffocating and beginning to dream of the total de-

struction of society in the interests of the unlimited freedom of personality. You are well aware that your youth is not only dreaming such dreams but is also putting them into practice.

The European press publishes more and more frequent reports about the "pranks" of the youth on both continents, pranks that have the nature of crimes. These crimes are not the result of material want, but of *tedium vitae*, weariness of life, curiosity, search for "violent" sensations, and the basis of all such crimes is often enough to be found in an extremely low valuation of personality and of human life.

The bourgeoisie absorbs into its ranks the most gifted members of the working and peasant masses, making them serve its own interests, and it boasts of the "ease" with which a man can attain "a certain personal prosperity," a convenient lair, a cozy den.

But you will certainly not deny that thousands of gifted persons in your society fall and perish by the wayside on the road to this trivial prosperity, being unable to overcome the obstacles set in their way by the conditions of bourgeois life. The literature of Europe and America is full of descriptions of the futile ruin of gifted men. The history of the bourgeoisie is the history of its spiritual impoverishment. What are the talents of which it can be proud at the present time? It has nothing to be proud of save sundry Hitlers, save various pigmies suffering from megalomania.

The people of the Soviet Union are entering an epoch of renaissance. The October Revolution roused tens of thousands of gifted men to vital activity, but they alone are not enough to realise all the aims of the working class. There are no unemployed in the Soviet Union, and everywhere, in all fields of human energy, there is a dearth of forces, though these forces are being

replenished more rapidly than has ever happened anywhere before.

You intellectuals, "masters of culture," should have understood that the working class, having taken political power into its own hands, will open before you the broadest opportunities for creative cultural work.

Observe what a stern lesson history has given the Russian intellectuals. They did not go hand in hand with their own working people and now they are decaying in impotent rage, rotting in emigration. Soon they will all be dead, leaving behind them the name of traitors.

The bourgeoisie is hostile to culture, and at present cannot help being hostile to it. Such is the truth, borne out by the facts in bourgeois countries, by the practice of capitalist states. The bourgeoisie rejected the Soviet Union's plan for universal disarmament, and this fact alone tells us clearly enough that the capitalists are socially dangerous and are preparing a new world slaughter. They are keeping the Soviet Union in a tense state of defence, forcing the working class to spend an enormous amount of precious time and materials on the production of weapons for defence against the capitalists. They are gathering their forces for an attack on the Soviet Union in order to make this vast country their colony and their market. The people of the Soviet Union are spending an enormous amount of their forces and resources for self-defence against the capitalists of Europe, forces and resources which could certainly have been employed with greater advantage for the cultural regeneration of mankind — for the work of construction in the Soviet Union has a world-wide importance for the whole of humanity.

Rotten bourgeois society, mad with hatred and panicky fear for the future, is producing a rich crop

of idiots, who absolutely fail to understand the meaning of what they are screaming about. One of them appeals to the "gentlemen rulers and diplomats of Europe" as follows: "At the present moment, the forces of the yellow race should be utilised by Europe as a means wherewith to smash the Third International."

It is quite possible that this idiot blurted out the dreams and intentions of similar "gentlemen diplomats and rulers." It is quite possible that there are already some "gentlemen" who are seriously contemplating what this idiot proclaimed aloud. Europe and America are ruled by irresponsible "gentlemen." The events in India, China and Indo-China are quite sufficient to increase the racial hatred against the Europeans and the "white race" in general. It will be the third hatred, and you humanitarians should meditate a little on whether you want it for yourselves, and for your children. And what will you gain by preaching "racial purity," by propagating racial hatred in Germany? Here is an instance of it:

Saukel, the leader of Hitler's party in Thuringia, instructed the National-Socialist group in Weimar to protest against the presence of Gerhardt Hauptmann, Thomas Mann, Walter von Malo and the Sorbonne professor Henri Lichtenberger at the solemn celebration of the 100th anniversary of Goethe's death. Saukel accuses these people of non-Aryan origin.

It is time for you to decide on which side you are, "masters of culture!" Are you for the elemental labour force of culture and for the creation of new forms of life, or are you against this force, and for the preservation of the caste of irresponsible plunderers, the caste which is decaying from its head down and is continuing its existence only by inertia?

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