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THE BALL OF THE MANNEQUINS

(A play in three acts)

Dramatis personae:

Mannequin 1 (male)
Mannequin 2 (male)
Mannequin 3 (male)
Mannequin 4 (male)
Mannequin 5 (male)
Mannequin 6 (male)
Mannequin size 46 (male)
Mannequin size 48 (male)
Mannequin size 50 (male)
Mannequin 1 (female)
Mannequin 2 (female)
Mannequin 3 (female)
Mannequin size 40 (female)
Deputy Paul Ribandel
Monsieur Arnaud — auto manufacturer
Angelique Arnaud
Levoisin — auto manufacturer
Solange Levoisin — his wife
Devignard — banker (Bank of France)
Delegate 1
Delegate 2
Monsieur 1
Monsieur 2
Monsieur 3
Monsieur 4
Monsieur 5
Monsieur 6
Lackey 1
Lackey 2
Police commissioner
Mannequins and guests

ACT I

A salon in one of the first class dress-making establishments in Paris. Muffled sounds of a jazz-band are heard — the tango. Couples of male and female mannequins are whirling round the stage. The mannequins are without heads; instead of heads, rods.

The dance lasts one minute. Then the music dies down. The dancing couples scatter over the stage, many of them disappear in the adjacent rooms. On the proscenium male mannequin 1 walks arm in arm with female mannequin 2. The female mannequin fans herself with a huge ostrich feather.

B. Jasiensky
Ball of the
Mannequins

SCENE I

F e m a l e m a n n e q u i n 1: What bliss it is to move about, to whirl in a dance, to be lost in motion! Can you imagine greater torture than being compelled to remain motionless, like a rock, for years at a stretch. Only man is capable of such cruelty! I am surprised that I have not yet forgotten how to move my legs. During these long months of absolute immobility it seemed to me more than once that I had grown to the floor for ever, that I should never be able to detach myself from it. For this one night I should be willing to give up the rest of my life. To move! To glide through space! To feel sweet languor in the joints of my limbs! To bend them and to unbend them! Is greater joy conceivable? I hate to think that this night shall pass, that dawn shall come, and that I shall once more be turned into a motionless statue. The thought of it alone is enough to drive me mad. (*Clutches her partner's arm.*) Listen, 42, why can't we arrange such balls oftener, really, why not? Why must we wait for the carnivals? Why shouldn't we assemble every night?

M a l e m a n e q u i n 1: Impossible. You know full well that we are bound to those premises. In any other place we might not have any music. The proprietor from the first floor, to whose music we are dancing here, gives a ball only once a year.

F e m a l e m a n n e q u i n 1: Is it really so important? Couldn't we get on without music?

M a l e m a n n e q u i n 1: Of course we could, but where? It is impossible to meet in our establishment. You have no idea how difficult it was for me to get away from there to-day? The proprietor never goes out of the workroom without leaving someone to watch it. One of the apprentices always stays there during the night. One has to wait until he falls asleep, before one can escape. But to bring so any guests there, this is altogether impossible. Everybody would wake up.

F e m a l e m a n n e q u i n 1: Just one man, that's no obstacle at all. If it is necessary, we can kill him.

M a l e m a n n e q u i n 1: He would raise a racket. A crowd would gather, no good would come of it. People would begin to be afraid of us. They would nail us to the floor for ever. We must act very cautiously, if we do not wish to lose the little bit of freedom that is still ours. We have no place to meet. And it is not only our workroom that is watched, there are watchmen all over — in Barclay's, in Sulky's, in Alba's, in H. Esders' and in the ladies' salons, too.

F e m a l e m a n n e q u i n 1: And in our place, particularly during carnival time, they work at night. They are finishing the evening gowns for the customers. They don't leave us alone for a moment. Last year they could not manage to arrange anything while the carnival was on.

M a l e m a n n e q u i n 1: Were it not for the strike in our workshop, nothing would have taken place this year, either. You were fortunate that the entire force has gone out on strike, and that the proprietor has refused to make any concessions. Last year also, at the very same time, our employees went out on strike, but there were so many urgent orders, that the proprietor agreed right off to raise wages, just so as not to have them throw down their work. So we gained nothing by it.

F e m a l e m a n n e q u i n 1: And so we will once more be nailed to the floor, perhaps for years. Now, after this night, now that we have tasted the joy of movement, it will be even more painful...

A band starts up. The couples begin to dance.
Dancing they disappear into the depths of the stage.



Male mannequin 1: Let us not poison the joy of this night by thoughts of future pain. Let us enjoy the moment. (*Embraces his partner*):

SCENE 2

Male mannequin 2. (*rhythmically moving along the edge of the stage with female mannequin 2*): Well, what do you think? Shall we dance to-morrow again? It would be unpardonably stupid if we neglected such an opportunity. Surely, your workshop will be empty for a few nights. Who knows how many years will elapse before we have such an opportunity again.

Female mannequin 2. (*in a melancholy voice*): Who of us will live a few years longer? Fashions change so rapidly nowadays. There is a rumor that flat figures won't be in vogue next year. Women with perceptibly large busts are coming into fashion. If this is true, then next year we shall all be thrown on the scrap-heap.

B. Jasiensky
Ball of the
Mannequins

Male mannequin 2: Well, and what shall be done in that case with the flat women? It seems that all women are flat nowadays. Are they too going on the scrap-heap? And where will they find others? People are not made so quickly as we are. It was 42 I think that once told me something about it.

Female mannequin 2: It is quite likely that some women too will end on the scrap-heap. I heard my mistress say something of this kind about a lady customer from Klaber Avenue. But people it seems do it a bit differently. I later often saw this customer come and order for herself new costumes. Still, I certainly do not think that all flat women will be cast aside. Women may be remodelled. They say there are special institutions or factories where they are completely transfigured. They are chisled here and increased there as fashion dictates. Apparently it pays. We are not remodelled. It does not pay. A new mannequin is cheaper. In this respect you are more fortunate than we — in your case fashions change less frequently, you have a longer life to live. You will live to the next ball...

Male mannequin 2: What then prevents you from arranging the next ball for to-morrow? Should there be no music, we will get on without it. We must take advantage of the opportunity. A few days more, and the strike will be over.

Female mannequin 2: I am afraid it is over already. I heard my mistress tell the forelady that beginning to-morrow there'd be an entirely new staff of girls. None of the former girls will be taken back. The mistress said that new ones were coming by the score, imploring for work. Beginning with to-morrow everything will most likely be as before. The nights will be devoted to the finishing of the gowns. We shan't be able to arrange anything this season anymore...

The couple, dancing, disappears into the depths of the stage.

SCENE 3

Male mannequin 3 enters, carrying under his arm a male mannequin in a frock coat. The latter has arms but no legs; he rests on a rod. He is placed against the wall.

Male mannequin 4. (*addressing mannequin 3*): Hallo, 44! What's the matter with 42? Weren't there enough legs? Did you have to drag him under your arm?

Male mannequin 3: Just think of it, there were not enough. They sent only three pair of legs for the entire establishment. We somehow managed to get enough hands together, though they are ladies' hands (*Shows his hand*). But there were not enough legs. The poor devil, he had been waiting so anxiously for this evening, he had gotten so spruced up, and then... his legs didn't arrive and there was nothing else to do. He begged not to be left behind, to be taken along; he said that he would be glad to remain standing in the corner, watching how the others walked about and danced. I kind of pitied him. I hoisted him up on my back and brought him here. Let the poor chap stand and look on. He would have been bored if he had to stay alone in the deserted workshop. Perhaps there is an extra pair of legs here?

Male mannequin 4: Don't even speak of it. Half of our workshop was left behind, they had nothing to walk with. And what trouble we had with the hands! There are no men's hands in the whole of Paris, they say. The humans were apparently suspicious of something and they hid them away from us. We got together a few ladies' hands in glove shops and in manicuring establishments. As to legs, don't mention them — the hosiery shops have only

ladies' legs. The shoemakers did have a few men's legs but not enough. I myself had to be satisfied with ladies' legs, or I would not have been able to get here at all. (*Shows his feet in ladies slippers on high heels*) I was in agony for a whole hour before I got them to fit me.

Male mannequin 5. (*breaking into the conversation*): — You can't even imagine what bother we had in organising to-night's ball. I'm so tired, I hardly feel my legs. You see, there are only a few of us who have arms and legs, and our numbers are decreasing yearly. It's a long time since we have been removed from the display windows of the sumptuous shops, now we are kept only in the shops that sell all kinds of cheap trash. We have been crowded out by the mannequins with heads. And with that gang we can come to no agreement. They are so proud of having on their shoulders false things shaped like human heads that they refuse to have anything to do with us. They are tickled to see the loiterers hang round the show windows and stare at them for hours. So tickled are they that they make haughty faces and stick their noses up in the air. They spurned us long ago. The entire job of organizing this ball fell on us. All evening long, divided into groups, we dashed about the city like mad, collecting all the arms and legs that could be found. There are no more, you may take my word for it.

Male mannequin 4: Let's go! The band has struck up. We'll get sick and tired of standing — to-morrow, the day after to-morrow, year in and year out. To-night I do not wish to remain motionless even for one second. I am going to dance.

Dispersing

SCENE 4

Male mannequin 6. (*moves rhythmically along the edge of the stage together with female mannequin 3*): Who has taught you to dance so beautifully. One might think that you do nothing else but dance all day long.

Female mannequin 3: I learned by watching others. Our girls in the workshop, they too are called mannequins, make such steps when they demonstrate before customers. I watch them every day. I have had plenty of time to learn!

Male mannequin 6: I don't believe that one can learn anything from the human. I saw enough of all these fops coming to us. They are all only poor imitations of ourselves! It makes me laugh when I look at these twisted monstrosities. They insist that costumes which fit us perfectly should fit them as well and they are quite peeved when everything that fits us like a glove puckers and wrinkles on them. These invalids make the apprentices slave nights, and use cotton paddings for the things they naturally lack, vainly attempting to make their figures look like ours. I simply can't understand why our clothes should be given to them. For things are bound to fit them wretchedly anyhow. And to think that this pack of apes whose only aim in life is to resemble us, to equal us, that this pack of apes are able to walk about and travel around from morning to night, wherever they please, while we are forced to spend our years stuck on a rod!

Female mannequin 3: You are unjust, and in your malice you exaggerate. It is not in everything that they copy us slavishly. For instance, they wear heads which we do not.

Male mannequin 3: Yes, they wear on their shoulders those shapeless empty pumpkins which they call heads. They fit them as wretchedly as do their clothes. I don't know, perhaps with some people heads do have

a certain function to perform, but with these do-nothings the heads serve merely as supports for their silly stove-pipe hats. Now really can you imagine anyone in his senses wearing such a contraption?

Noise behind the stage.

SCENE 5

Pushing through the dancing couples, there appears on the stage a female mannequin in a fur cloak. The scarf wrapped around the rod creates a perfect illusion of a head. The couples stop dancing. The female mannequin commences to unwrap the scarf. Everybody gathers around her.

Male mannequin 3: What has happened? Why haven't you removed your things in the ante-room?

The female mannequin in the cloak: He is coming... He is following me...

The mannequins: Who?

Female mannequin in the cloak: A man.

The mannequins: What man? Where does he come from?

Male mannequin 4: Speak to the point, quickly.

Female mannequin in the cloak: A man... A man... He is following me here... He has come through the gates.

Male mannequin 3: What man? How does he come to follow you?

Female mannequin in the cloak: You see.. I am running here from Sherliet's. The watchwoman kept on fussing about, and I had to wait until she would go to sleep. That's why I am late. I wrapt this scarf around myself so as to look like the women in the streets, and I ran here. It is not far, about ten houses or so from here. I made just a few steps when a man accosted me. You understand, he mistook me for a woman. He approached me and insisted on escorting me. I began to walk faster. But he followed me. I ran. But he followed me. And as he ran, he kept on chattering all kinds of nonsense, that I had beautiful little feet, that he had never seen such, that I should not be cruel, and such like nonsense. I didn't understand everything he said. I wanted to baffle him, to escape him; I turned a corner, he grasped me round the waist. I tore myself away. I ran around the block, in order to come back. But he kept running after me, not letting me get ahead of him. He ran and chattered. I had no more strength to run. I dashed through these gates, and saw that he ran behind me. I rushed up the staircase, banging the door behind me. When I came up here, I heard him opening the door below. He'll be here any minute. What am I to do?

Female mannequins (*frightened*): What shall we do?

Male mannequin 5: Lock the door immediately, let no one in!

This very minute a man dressed in coat, scarf and stove-pipe appears at the door. General tumult. Then everybody stops.

SCENE 6

Man (*runs in, halts in amazement a few steps away from the door. Stares in amazement at the mannequins. Silence*): Beg pardon... I'll... I'm sure I am not drunk... Two or three little tumblers of port... No, it can't be that I'm drunk.

Male mannequin 5: Well, we can do nothing now. (*To the mannequins who appeared at the door behind the man*). Shut the door Don't allow anyone to enter.

Two mannequins lock the door behind the man. One of them hides the key in his pocket. They station themselves at each side of the door, their arms crossed. The female mannequins, frightened, crowd in the opposite corner of the stage. Two mannequins lock the door on the right side of the stage and station themselves as guards like the first ones. Silence.

M a n: I... b-b... beg your pardon.. Be so kind as to explain to me, please, what all this means. A masquerade? (*Looks cheered, as if he had just hit upon an unexpected solution. And now more freely*). Well, yes, of course a masquerade. I guessed it immediately, at the very first glance. An original idea... He-he...

M a n (*stops laughing*): It certainly is original! A ball of mannequins... And the costumes-hm... and the costumes are quite original, too... He-he...

M a n: Ladies and gentlemen, I have disturbed you unwittingly. You'll excuse me I hope. I mistook the door. Instead of the left door I opened the right one. The doors seemed absolutely identical... And... I... had not noticed the sign — absent-mindedness. He-he-he... Please, forgive me. I won't disturb you any longer (*Turns and wants to leave by the door through which he had entered. Notices the two mannequins who obstruct the way. Is at a loss*). Eh... eh... Permit me, gentlemen... I won't disturb you...

Silence.

Male mannequin 5: (*gruffly*): What shall we do with him?

Male mannequin 4: We cannot let him out now, that's clear.

Male mannequin 6: Neither now, nor ever.

Male mannequin 3: There is no other way out, we must kill him.

Male mannequin 2: Wait, colleagues, that's a serious business, it can't be decided in such an off-hand way. It has to be thoroughly looked into, and only then will a sentence be imposed. I propose that we immediately organise a tribunal to settle this question.

Male mannequin 6: We have only one night at our disposal, and are we to waste it on deliberating as to what to do with this cretin. To my mind the thing is clear — we cannot let him go, nor can we hide him. And so...

Male mannequin 1: Such affairs cannot be settled one, two, three; 46 is right, let the tribunal decide.

Man (*addressing the mannequins at the door, attempting to push them aside and open the door*): I beg your pardon, gentlemen, but I am in a terrible hurry, somebody is waiting for me. I have no time for jests.

One of the mannequins (seizes him by the shoulders and, raising him like a feather, places him on the chair by the wall): Now, sit!

Two mannequins sit down on the chairs on each side of the man.

Male mannequin 3: This being the case, let us not waste any time. It's a pity, the night is passing. The tribunal must meet immediately.

Male mannequin 2: Who will compose the tribunal?

Male mannequin 6: As usual. In accordance with our custom, the affair will be taken up by the big sizes.

Male mannequin 1: How many should we elect?

Male mannequin 5: Four will suffice, three judges and the prosecutor. Which are the biggest sizes here?

Male mannequin 2: 4, 46, 48, 50.

Male mannequin 6: A table! We'll need a table.

Male mannequin 1: A table and four chairs.

Two mannequins place a table and three chairs in the centre of the stage. The fourth chair is put a little apart. The bigger sized mannequins occupy their places and begin to confer in a whisper.

Male mannequin 50 (*rises*): I hereby declare the session of the tribunal open. Colleague 44 has the floor.

Mannequins draw nearer to the centre. Only the man, his guards, and the legless mannequin remain near the left wall.

Male mannequin 50: Colleagues, the case which you have instructed us to examine is as difficult as it is serious. A man has appeared at our ball. He has come here uninvited, to spoil for us these few hours of freedom which we have gained with such difficulty. If this man returns to his fellow-men, the city will immediately learn of our ball. The people who deprive us of our legs so that we may not move; will, on learning of our trick, hasten to rob us even of this opportunity; they will nail us to the floor for good. To allow this, would mean to sentence ourselves to imprisonment for life. The man who has foolishly forced himself upon us must not be allowed to live. (*Sits down*).

Male mannequin 46: Number 40, have you anything to say in this matter? (*Addresses the female mannequin in the cloak*).

Female mannequin in the cloak: I've already told you everything. He accosted me in the street. Followed me all the way. Ran after me into this place. The rest you've seen for yourselves.

Male mannequin 46: Have you anything to add?

Female mannequin in the cloak: No.

Male mannequin 46: Has anyone of the colleagues anything to say about the defendant personally?

Male mannequin 1: I have.

Male mannequin 46: Go ahead.

Male mannequin 1: I know him personally. He is of the same size as myself, he wears my garments. The very frock he is now wearing is mine. You may verify my statement. His right sleeve is shorter than his left one by half a centimeter. I recognised him as soon as he came in. He's one of the best customers my boss has; my boss calls him the leader.

Leader (*jumping up*). — Excuse me...
The mannequin guards place their hands on his shoulder; the leader humbly sinks into the chair.

Male mannequin 50: Defendant, you are not granted the privilege to speak. (*Addressing male mannequin 1*). What is it you said? Leader? Is that his name?

Male mannequin 1: This is what my boss calls him behind his back. However, in conversation with him the boss calls him "Mister Deputy". I presume that this is some kind of title. All humans seem to exalt each other in conversation.

Male mannequin 48: Do you know anything about him?

Male mannequin 1: He has drooping shoulders, and his coats always contain cotton padding. He wears a black silk corset. He tries on his suits three times, and each time he tries it on he finds fifteen faults. When he leaves, he shakes hands with the apprentices. The boss dances before him on his hind legs and says that he is a big bug. The apprentices cuss him for all they are worth, and behind his back call him "social-chloroformist." He orders five suits a season, all of genuine English material, and once every four years he orders a plain corduroy suit. This one he doesn't try on even once. The boss sends for this material to the department store "Samaritan". He would not have accepted such an order from anyone else, because the material is too cheap. But for him he makes an exception, though he charges him as much as for any other suit. The boss treats this order as a "special", and making the apprentices work overtime, he says: "You better hurry, or the leader won't have any suit for the election meetings."

Male mannequin 50: Is there anything else you can tell about him?

Male mannequin 1: I may also add that this is not the first time that he interferes with our fun. During the last carnival he worked all our workshop to death on account of his frock-coat, insisting that it didn't fit in the waist as it should. Three apprentices worked on his frock all night. As a result not one of us managed to get away to the ball at "Philipp and Gaston's." Now he has again spoiled all our fun.

Male mannequin 50: All right, you may sit down. Is there anyone else who would like to say something with regard to this case?

Silence.

Male mannequin 50. The prosecutor has the floor.

Male mannequin 6 (*rises*): Gentlemen of the court, in view of all that has been said by the preceding speakers, there is very little left for me to do, but to summarize the opinion of the court and to arrive at the only possible conclusion. Strictly speaking the mere fact that a representative of our oppressors, of those who have been inflicting so much pain and suffering upon us, crashed in on our ball would be sufficient to justify a most severe punishment. Being an act of legitimate self-defence, our sentence must at the same time also be an act of protest against this gang of loafers who make us serve them. Imitating us, slavishly copying every line of our flawlessly harmonious forms, these people, despite all their efforts, fail to make themselves look like us. They can all be distinguished by the pumpkins they wear on their shoulders. I demand that this brazenfaced wretch be made harmless, and I therefore propose that as a protest against this whole gang we amputate the useless protuberance on his shoulders. I demand that his head be cut off (*resumes his seat*).

The leader makes a number of desperate gestures.

Male mannequin 50 (*rises*): The court retires for a conference. The sentence will be pronounced in a few minutes.

The tribunal retires. The mannequins break out into loud conversation. They surround male mannequin 6.

SCENE 7

Voices (*interrupting one another*).

— Chop off his head!

— By all means!

— But there is no instrument!

— We must have a knife!

— It would be best if we had a hatchet.

— Yes, but where can we get one?

— Had I known, I would have brought it from our kitchen.

— But who could have foreseen this?

— And can't you find anything sharp?

— Perhaps we will find something sharp in his pockets. The humans like to lug about all kinds of sharp objects with them.

Leader (*jumping from his seat*): Gentlemen! Stop your jesting. Please understand, I am expected somewhere. I am already late for the ball at Monsieur Arnaud's.

Male mannequin 4: What is he saying?

Leader. At Arnaud's, the automobile manufacturer's. Surely, you have heard of him. It is not mere entertainment, it's serious business. They



are expecting a strike to break out in the automobile industry-to-morrow. I beg you to realise, gentlemen, that as a leader of a labour party I can not afford to waste a minute longer. I entreat you, release me. I shall gladly spend with you an evening some other time, not now. Your jest is really excellent and witty, but everything is good in its proper time. And once you know who I am, you must realise that any jokes exceeding the limits of propriety cease to be witty. Please, let me go immediately.

Murmur among the mannequins.

M a n n e q u i n s: Silence! The court is coming!

The tribunal enters and occupies the places at the table.

SCENE 8

M a l e m a n n e q u i n 50. (*rises, speaks solemnly*): We, the judges of this tribunal, having examined the case from every possible angle, have decided to pass the following sentence: the gentleman who is known to us as



„Leader” must have his so-called head cut off. Considering the lateness of the hour, the sentence must be put into effect forthwith. The sentence will be carried out by the prosecutor and by one of the members of the tribunal, both of whom have offered their services (*turning to the crowd of mannequins*). Please, get the place ready, and make all other necessary preparations. The execution must take place within five minutes, and then the ball will be resumed.

The tribunal rises, and the judges are merged into the crowd. The female mannequins clap their hands with joy.

V o i c e s: Quicker. quicker.

Several mannequins remove the table and the ^{chairs}, clearing the centre of the stage.

V o i c e s: That's all very well, but how are we going to cut his head off?

An uproar near the door to the right.

B. Jasiensky
Ball of the
Mannequins

Where will we get a sharp object? We can't manage without a knife.

V o i c e s: Step aside! Make way!

Male mannequin 6. walks in, carrying a huge pair of tailor's scissors. Murmur of amazement mingled with joy.

V o i c e s: Here are scissors! We have scissors! Scissors!

Male mannequin 5. (*making his way through the crowd*): Please, step aside. Please, make way.

Male mannequin 6, carrying the scissors and one of the mannequin judges carrying a heavy flat iron, advance to the centre of the stage.

They place the open scissors so as to have one ear and one point rest on the floor. Male mannequin 6 holds the upper ear of the scissors. Male mannequin 3 holds the upper point of the scissors. The mannequin judge stands holding the flat iron in readiness.

Male mannequin 5 (*addressing the mannequin guards*): Bring him over here!

The mannequin guards grasp the leader by the arms and drag him to the middle of the stage, to the open scissors.

Leader (*desperately trying to free himself. The mannequins pull off his coat*): Let me go! Quit this nonsense! This is violence! I shall call the police! (*In the tussle, he jerks with all his might the arm of one of the mannequin guards. The arm remains in the leader's hands. The leader is overwhelmed, lets the arm go. The arm falls clattering to the ground*).

The mannequin guard bends down, picks up his arm, and in most nonchalant manner begins to adjust it.

Leader: In the name of the father, the son and the holy ghost, What does it mean?

Several mannequins throw themselves on him, pulling him to the scissors.

Leader (*horrified*): Let me go! Enough of this masquerade. I understand everything now! It is a political plot. You have lured me in here in order to compromise me. If you don't release me immediately, I shall bring it up before the Chamber of Deputies to morrow. Let me go! Police!.. Police!..

Two mannequins put him adroitely on his knees, pushing his head into the open scissors.

Male mannequin 6: Bang!

The mannequin judge raises the flat iron and brings it down full force on the point of the scissors. The severed head rolls on the floor.

Leader: My head! My ministerial head! (*skips along, endeavouring to get hold of his rolling head. The mannequins drag him aside*).

Leader (*tearing himself away*): My head! You have robbed me of my head (*whirling about, he vanishes through the right door*).

Male mannequin 5: Nab him — he'll escape!

Male mannequin 43: Headless, he may run any place he pleases. He may keep on talking from now till doom's day, no one will believe him anyhow. They'll think that he lost his head in a drunken party. No one will take his jabber seriously.

Male mannequin 5: Remove the scissors. On with the ball.

Several mannequins carry out the scissors and the flat iron. Some mannequins are already dancing.

Male mannequin 2 (*picks up the leader's head turns it around as if examining it*): And what shall we do with the head?

Mannequins: Yes, that's right! What shall we do with the head?

Male mannequin 1: Give it to me.

Mannequin judge: But why to you? I want it! I cut it off, and by right it belongs to me.

Mannequin 3: How did you cut it off? With the flat iron? But it was we who used the scissors. I held the scissors. The head belongs to me.

Male mannequin 6: Is that so? You held the scissors? Anyone might have held the scissors. But it was I who found the scissors in the workshop under the table. Without scissors we could not have cut his head off at all. Whom does the head belong to? Clearly, to me.

Male mannequin 4: It belongs to me, I pushed it into the scissors.

Male mannequin 44: Colleagues, let us not quarrel, time flies. To avoid any dissensions over the ownership of the head, I suggest that we throw it into the waste-basket.

Male mannequin 2: Why throw it away? Let us cast lots — the one who wins gets the head.

Voices: That's right. Let's cast lots.

Male mannequin 1: The female mannequins are not involved in this—what do they need a male head for?

Male mannequin 6: Of course.

Male mannequin 2: All right, let's begin. Who has a box of matches?

Male mannequin 3: I saw a box of matches near the looking-glass.

Male mannequin 5: Here it is.

Male mannequin 2: Hand it over to me. How many of us are there? It'll be enough. I am breaking the tip of one of the matches. Now, attention! I'm tossing them up in the air. Catch them. Whoever catches the match without the tip wins the head. One, two, three! (*throws the matches up in the air*).

! Hurling themselves on the floor, the mannequins catch the matches.
General confusion.

Male mannequin 1 (*shouting*): I! Here it is! Without the tip!

Male mannequin 2: Let's see!

Male mannequin 1 (*Shows the match*).

Male mannequin 2: Right. You have won. Here is the head, take it.

Male mannequin 1 takes the head, scrutinizes it, walks over to the mirror.

Male mannequin 6: What do you need it for? What will you do with it?

Male mannequin 1. (*In front of the mirror, tries on the head. Setting it on the rod he claps it down with the palm of his hand. Looks at himself admiringly in the mirror. Turns to the other mannequins*): Not bad! Not bad!

Female mannequin 1: Just like a human. If I had not seen you put it on, would swear that you were the leader.

Male mannequin 1. (*strutting about, and looking with evident self-satisfaction into the mirror*): Just as if it were made for me!

Male mannequin 7. (*in the depth of the stage*): There is a wallet here on the floor. The leader must have lost it here while wrestling with us.

The mannequins, scrutinizing it interestedly, pass along an elegant monogrammed wallet.

Male mannequin 1: Let us see! (*He is handed the wallet; he opens it examining the contents*). Money... visiting cards... (*reads*) Paul Ribandel, Deputy... A photograph. Another photograph. Still another... All nude women... A free railway ticket. A bill. Another bill. Another bill. Two bills from Pakin, and one from "Phillipp and Gaston". (*Reads*). One evening gown, riding costume, twelve pair of ladies underwear. (*Puts everything back into the wallet; from another compartment he takes out a membership card, reads*). Membership card — the League for the Protection of the Rights of Men and Citizens. A check-book. A membership card (*reads*) Socialist Party of France, parliamentary fraction.. (*pulls out a ticket reads again*). An invitation. Monsieur Arnaud takes pleasure in inviting Monsieur Deputy Paul Ribandel to a ball which is to take place on Thursday, January 17, at eleven o'clock in the evening. Paris. January 12. Champs Elysées, 17. Well, well, this is an invitation to the ball that is being held at the auto manufacturer's. That's why our leader was in such a hurry (*Suddenly strikes his forehead with his hand*). I am going!

Mannequins (*wonderingly*): Where?

Male mannequin 1: Where? And do you think I have won this head to remain here with you? To wait for the morning, and then to rush back to the atelier? To tremble for fear that the boss or the apprentices might notice me? To turn once more into a dummy on a stick? To be trying on, day in and day out, suits that are not being made for me? To stand and wait in the hope that within a year or two or even ten another opportunity might arise and that I might be able to gather once more the missing limbs and escape into the city for a few hours? No! I am not such a fool! I've had enough of it! This sort of life is choking me! This is the end! I have won the head. Do you understand? A head! A passport enabling me to wander the world over. To go wherever I please, whenever I please! A key to all doors. I am going! I am flying! My gloves! My stove pipe!

Mannequins: Wait, where are you running?

Mannequin 1. (*near the door*): Au revoir! Enjoy yourselves! I am expected at Arnaud's. I am going to the ball of the humans!

Curtain.

ACT II

Foyer in the mansion of Arnaud, the manufacturer. At the back there is a glass door through which a ball room filled with dancing couples can be seen. On the left side there is a window looking out into the garden, and farther to the back of it, there is a door. On the right hand side there is a door leading to a vestibule. Soft arm chairs, divans, tables, palms. In the right hand corner there is an armour knight. Behind the stage there is music — the tango.

SCENE 1

Arnaud (*offering Devignard a cigarette*): Real Turkish brand, imported from Constantinople.

Light their cigarettes.

Arnaud and Devignard come out from the ball room.

Devignard: By the way, there have been rumours circulating on the stock-exchange that a strike is about to break out in your works to-morrow.



Apparently, you won't be in a position to fill the order on time. Your stock has been dropping precipitously. Should this rumour not be stopped by to-morrow morning, your stock is likely to drop still lower...

A r n a u d: This rumour shall be denied.

D e v i g n a r d: So much the better... *(Pause)*. If a strike does break out, your position won't be enviable. I have not the slightest doubt that La-voisin will immediately throw into the exchange a bunch of your shares in order to create a panic. You must be prepared.

A r n a u d: There will be no strike.

D e v i g n a r d: I'd be very glad. However, I have heard that it has already been declared. Perhaps I was not correctly informed.

A r n a u d: Only the communists are set on a strike. The majority of the workers in my factory belong to the reformist union, and they do not take orders from the communists. Without the participation of the reformist union every strike in my place is doomed. And the reformist union, I know, will not participate in any strike.

D e v i g n a r d: Are you quite certain? The political situation at the present moment is such that, if sufficiently pressed from below, the reformist

B. Jasiensky
Ball of the
Mannequins

union, not wishing to lose its authority won't be able to keep out of the strike. They say that the general sentiment among the workmen is definitely in favor of a strike.

Arnaud (*ironically*): I see that you've got your information from first hand sources.

Devignard: You know how it is — one mixes among people, one hears all sorts of things. You will understand that the Bank of France must know something of everything. Moreover, your affairs interest me personally somewhat. You have made a pretty risky move. At the present moment, while a strike is in the air, to go ahead and cut wages again by five francs requires a great deal of nerve — or capital. Still, it is the brave who take the fortresses. I should be very glad. Nothing would make me happier.

Arnaud: I see that they have managed to infect you with a bit of pessimism. It has reached me that Lavoisin visited you to-day and that you had a half-hour conference with him.

Devignard: A conference? That's a bit exaggerated. We'll call it simply a chat, a friendly chat. Surely you know that my relations with him have for a long time been quite as warm as my relations with you.

Arnaud: I can just imagine him raging against me, blaming me for all kinds of things.

Devignard: Well, it's not quite so... Of course, he does not feel particularly grateful to you. After all, you did snatch a huge half-milliard order, right from under his nose. Such orders are not picked up in the streets nowadays.

Arnaud: I should think so. He has only himself to blame. Had he offered to sell at a more reasonable price, the order would have been his.

Devignard: That's true. But it's easier to promise low prices than to carry out the promise. If this strike in your place breaks out, it may involve a strike in the whole metallurgical industry.

Arnaud: I've already told you that there won't be any strike. The reformist union is dead against it. The communist instigators will remain an insignificant minority. Do you demand proof? Here it is! You may convince yourself to-night, right here. I expect Deputy Paul Rivandel to be at the ball to-night. He is the leader of the Socialist Party, he and I have come to a definite agreement on this question. The reformist Union will this very day issue a proclamation against the strike. Have you still any doubts?

Devignard: I never had any doubts. I know you as an experienced business man and I am quite certain that you would take no risky step unless you felt yourself absolutely secure. Did you say that Ribandel would be here to night? (*looks at his watch*). It's past two now. Isn't it rather queer that he has not showed up yet? I know Ribandel to be exceedingly punctual. Don't you think that something may have happened in the meanwhile, something to change his original plans?

Arnaud: Impossible (*glances nervously at the watch*). I myself am a little surprised that he has not come yet. He must have been detained. Party-affairs, you know. He has a fine head on his shoulders. I'll wager my arm that he'll get a ministerial post when the next change in the government takes place. You may rest assured that once he has promised, he'll come. Just watch Lavoisin's face when he meets Ribandel here.

Devignard: Well, let's join the ladies. People will begin to suspect that we are discussing our financial affairs here. (*As they are passing through the doors he turns to Arnaud*). A propos, those five million you need... well... you can readily see that in case of a strike our bank will hardly be in a posi-

tion to give it to you. However, of this later. (*Devignard goes into the ball-room. As he enters, he collides with Angelique Arnaud*).

19

SCENE 2.

Angelique (to Devignard): Ah, gentlemen, why do you always retire? Always business, business. Can't you forget business, at least, while the carnival is on?

Devignard: Why business? You are offending us! Indeed, who would dare to discuss business in the presence of beautiful women? We had a little chat about a hunting trip. Lavoisin has suggested to arrange a hunting party for the end of the month. I hope you'll oblige us with your presence.

Angelique: He has just invited me. He even went so far as to offer his best horse. By the way, he was wondering where you had disappeared. I left him in the smoking room.

Devignard retires.

SCENE 3.

Arnaud mops his forehead with a handkerchief.

Angelique: Why are you in bad humour, dad? Was your conversation with him unpleasant?

Arnaud (looks nervously at his watch): I can't understand why the leader isn't here yet. What can have happened? I'm afraid this faker Lavoisin has already managed to tie up with him. He has also managed to turn Devignard against me. This miser oscillates like a little pendulum.

Angelique: Yes, it's quite unpleasant, particularly now that you are in such need of him.

Arnaud: I should say so! Devignard is the Bank of France. Without the five million the Bank has promised me I won't be able to make any payment this Saturday. And you know what that means?

Angelique: But if there is no strike, they won't have any ground for refusing you the money. And you have come to some agreement with the leader as regards the attitude of his union, haven't you? What then is worrying you now?

Arnaud: What is worrying me is the fear that the fellow has changed his mind. How otherwise can we explain his absence. Lavoisin is ready to stand on his head so long as he prevents any agreement between the two of us. I am afraid that he has already done a lot of harm. It is he who is spreading the rumor that a strike in my factories has been definitely decided upon. I must refute these rumors so as to pacify Rosenthal and the Bank of France. It is absolutely necessary that the leader be present at my ball (*pause*). If he comes you must be particularly attentive to him. You can help me in this matter. You understand? You may even permit him some slight liberties. However this is your own feminine business, and I do not wish to interfere. Ribandel is well known as a great admirer of the fair sex. And he always has been very attentive to you. You must try to make our ties with him much closer, we'll need this man more than once.

Angelique: I understand, I understand... Don't worry, I'll do everything that is necessary. You can't say that he displeases me altogether. True, he looks a bit dissipated, but he seems to know what's what when it comes to women...

B. Jasiensky
Ball of the
Mannequins

A r n a u d: Well, that's your affair, child. I refuse to get mixed up in your business. I repeat, to me this is very important.

A n g e l i q u e: And will you present me with a new machine. An eight cylinder one, the kind you plan to release in the near future?

A r n a u d: I'll give you anything your little heart desires (*looks at the watch*) — What the devil, he is not here yet!

A n g e l i q u e: When he arrives, won't you please call me, dad. And now to dance (*she stops at the door, laughingly*). And do you know Lavoisin is making eyes at me. He has even invited me to visit him and to examine his collection of Chinese engravings (*runs ont, laughing*).

Enter servant.

A r n a u d (*impatiently reaches for the telephone*): Elysée 47—82. Yes.

S e r v a n t (*announces*): Monsieur Deputy Paul Ribandel.

Arnaud throws aside the receiver, and runs to meet Ribandel.

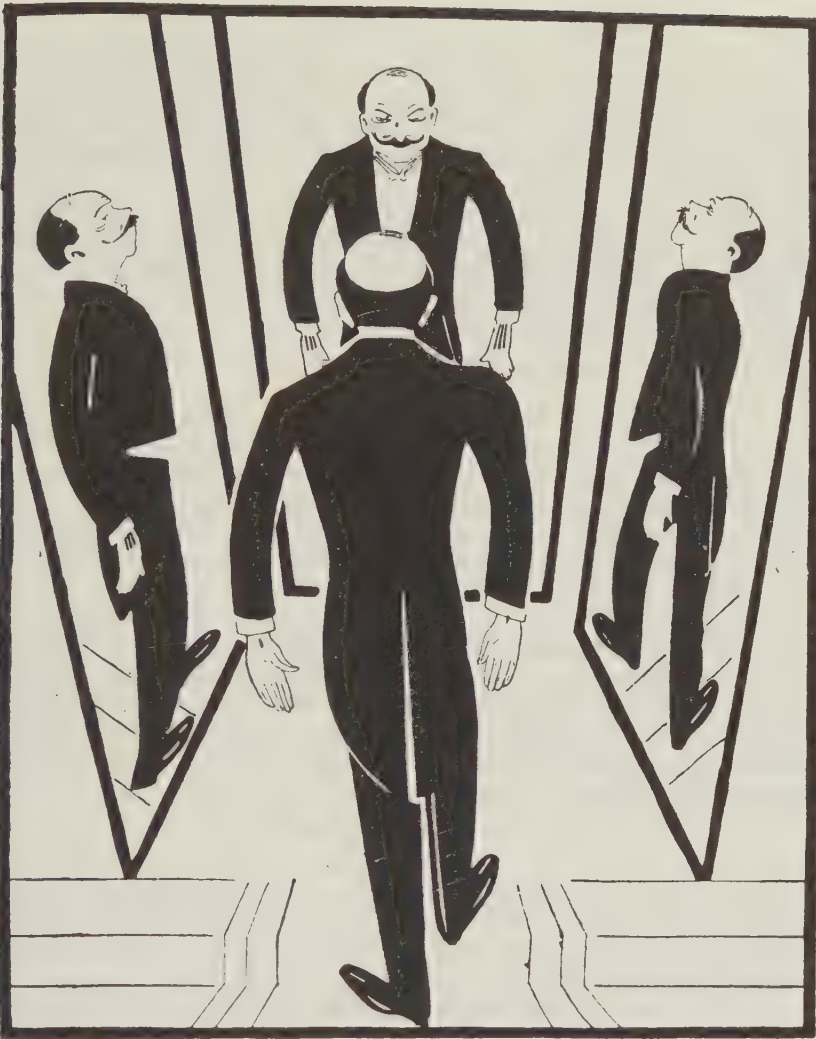
SCENE 4.

Enter Mannequin leader, diffidently looking about.

A r n a u d (*runs over to him*): Well, well, at last! We have been waiting impatiently for you, dear leader. (*shakes his hand*) I understand, I understand—duties, party affairs. Of course, of course... What would the poor workmen do without their own leader? But surely, we, the non-proletarians, aren't we entitled to at least a little of your time? One in your position, one who personifies the union of the two forces that move the world, of labour and of capital, must, while devoting himself unstintingly to labour, not forget also despicable capital. (*Pulls him gently to the chair*). Please, sit down, dear leader (*points to the chair*).

Mannequin leader takes a seat: looks embarrassed.

A r n a u d: Before we go into the ball-room, let us settle our affairs here. Yes, yes, first business, social business, and then pleasure. This motto of yours has always been my motto, too. Things have reached such a pass that we cannot procrastinate any longer. The communists in my plant have already declared a strike. No doubt you know all about it. There must not be any more delay. The reformist union, motivated by a deep understanding of what is good for the workers, must come out definitely against the strike. At the present moment the country is going through a terrible economic crisis. We must all make some sacrifice. And unless the workers are willing to lose a few francs a day, my plant will have to be shut down. And there is already unemployment, you know; they are likely to find themselves thrown on the streets. As I see it, it is much better to forego five francs than to lose the entire wages. It should not be difficult for you to explain all this to the workers. Isn't that so? Peace in industry and the consequent prosperity of the country are based on mutual understanding between the worker and the employer. This, your party seems to appreciate, judging by your tireless efforts for the benefit of the country and your real understanding of your civic duties. I do not want to be understood that I am opposed to strikes in principle. If conditions are really favourable, if the manufacturer really makes big profits, there is no reason why he shouldn't raise wages a little. But there is a difference, a great difference, between rational strikes and harmful strikes, strikes, the sole purpose of which is to undermine the foundations of the present order. I know full well the



tremendous difficulties with which your party is confronted when it tries to paralyze the growing influence of the communists, who received gold from Moscow. Being a grateful member of this society for whose benefit you, gentlemen, are working so valiantly, I make bold to present you with this modest sum, in the hope that it would help the fund of the first rational strike under the guidance of your party. *(Looks furtively at the door, tears a check out of his check-book and hands it to the mannequin leader).*

Mannequin leader *(takes the check hesitatingly)*: Yes... but...

Arnaud: Without "no's", please. No "no's", dear leader! Haven't I a right as a citizen of our country to work for its rational development, and to aid, though in a very modest way, in improving the working conditions of those who give all their time and all their energy to increasing the welfare of society. Well, that's that *(rises)*. Now let us join the guests. I haven't the right to deprive them of your presence, my daughter would never forgive me. *(Takes the mannequin leader by the arm and guides him to the doors leading to the ball-room. The doors of the ball-room suddenly open and Arnaud and his guest are met by Angelique, Devignard and Lavoisin).*

SCENE 5.

Angeliq ue (*standing in the door, addressing Lavoisin and Devignard*): Don't you believe me? Let us ask father. (*Notices father with Leader. She addresses Leader*). At last! (*Offers her hand*). We were quite in despair for fearing that we might not see you here to-night (*reproachfully*). Shame on you for coming so late...

Arnaud (*casting triumphant glances at Lavoisin and Devignard, he takes the Leader's arm demonstratively*). Duties, duties (*Significantly, to Devignard and Lavoisin*). People like our esteemed Leader must at such a difficult moment devote all their time to warding off the danger that is threatening the social equilibrium of the country.

Lavoisia and Davignard greet the leader ingratiatingly.

Angeliq ue: Daddy, Monsieur Lavoisin does not believe that I shall have an eight cylinder machine. He maintains that you never have turned out, and that at the present moment you can't turn out a machine of this type. Will you please convince him, so that there won't be any doubts about it.

Arnaud (*in Lavoisin's direction, emphatically*): Monsieur Lavoisin is in error. It is now particularly that I am in a position to turn out any type of machine.

Angeliq ue (*to Lavoisin*): Well, what did I say? Who was right? You have lost the wager! (*to her father and the Leader*). And what's more, our wager was a discretion. Tremble! For who knows what I may demand.

Lavoisin: I beg your pardon, but I am not quite certain that I am the loser. To err is human. We must wait for further developments. I shall acknowledge myself the loser on the day you come to fetch me in your new machine to join you in a game of golf.

In the doors of the ball-room appears Solange, Lavoisin's wife.

Solange: Gentlemen, what are all these discussions about? You seem to hide in nooks and corners, and to boycott the rest of the guests!

Lavoisin (*to the leader*): Aren't you acquainted? Monsieur Deputy Paul Ribandel — My wife.

Solange (*indifferently courteous*): Glad to know you, I've heard a great deal about you.

Arnaud: Let's go now.

Angeliq ue: Monsier Ribandel, you have invited me for a tango, yes? (*takes him under his arm and leads him to the ballroom.*)

Solange sits down on an arm of a chair, fanning herself with an ostrich feather. Arnaud waits politely for Devignard to pass through the door first.

Devignard (*in the door*): Oh, yes. With regard to those five million... Well, I think the thing is settled. You can get it to-morrow (*exeunt*).

SCENE 6.

Solange (*alone with Lavoisin*): Poor Frederick, you are walking around Mademoiselle Arnaud like a cat around a plate, and she doesn't pay you the slightest attention. I am sincerely sorry for you. I may help you if you wish. I'll have a talk with her. I don't guarantee success, but still it's much easier for a woman to approach another woman in such cases.

L a v o i s i n: You are talking nonsense. I am as much in need of Mademoiselle Arnaud as of last year's snow. If you do wish to help me in some way, help me along an entirely different line — get the leader involved in an affair. Arnaud, it seems, has already managed to make a deal with him. They must have agreed on having the reformists come out against the strike. Without their aid the strike in his plant is bound to be a flop. And Arnaud will be in a position to fill the order on the stipulated terms.

S o l a n g e: That's no business of mine. You're quite ridiculous. You keep on annoying me with all this talk about strikes and socialists. You ought to know by this time that all this does not concern me in the least. I wouldn't move my little finger to take part in all this foolishness. I am offering to speak for you to Mademoiselle Arnaud, to urge her to take your attentions a little kindlier. But to get mixed up in some strikes, this I haven't the slightest desire to do.

L a v o i s i n (angry): This is not a matter of strike or no strike, it is a matter of the half million francs Arnaud has snatched from under my very nose.

S o l a n g e: But what do I care? I hope you don't expect me in my old age to take to heart all your financial affairs and embarrassments. Whether you snatch half a milliard from Arnaud or whether Arnaud snatches half a milliard from you — all this after all has nothing to do with me.

L a v o i s i n (angrier): I wouldn't be surprised if you preferred Arnaud snatching it from me.

S o l a n g e: It doesn't make the slightest difference to me.

L a v o i s i n: I doubt it!

S o l a n g e: You are quite sour to night, I see, and you insist on provoking a conversation on subjects it would be better for you to avoid. All that is missing now is a jealousy scene. The role of a jealous husband would be rather becoming to you (*laughs*). I can't restrain myself (*laughs louder*). Let's invite spectators. I am not so selfish as to enjoy this unusual spectacle all by myself.

L a v o i s i n: I don't interfere in your affairs now, nor have I ever interfered in them. I am really not interested. And all I ask of you is — please, don't interfere in mine, either.

S o l a n g e: Do I interfere? If I offered my help in your flirtation with Mademoiselle Arnaud, it was only because you had started this affair from the wrong end. You are simply getting old, my dear, I wanted to render you a friendly service.

L a v o i s i n: Don't bother about Mademoiselle Arnaud! When I need her, I shall certainly not fail to have recourse to your kind intercession. At present my worries are a little more serious. I stand to lose a half a milliard francs.

S o l a n g e: O dear me, if anyone does succeed in snatching such a sum from you, it is proof absolute that you are growing older and more stupid every day. But why don't you snatch it back?

L a v o i s i n: This is just what I intend to do.

S o l a n g e: Well, go ahead and do it, who is stopping you!

L a v o i s i n. You can help me in this. I've never asked you to do anything for me, although I should imagine, that I have some little right to ask it of you. Your expenditures last month were so enormous as to almost force me to stop payments on checks.

S o l a n g e: My dearest, a wife is an expensive pleasure. It is about time you realised that.

L a v o i s i n: But I don't demand any sacrifices of you, all I ask you to do is to turn the leader's head. You understand, you may even allow him

some slight liberties. However this is your own feminine business, and I don't want to interfere. The main thing is to influence him so as to have him force his union into a strike in Arnaud's plant. As you see, this is a purely feminine and a very simple affair. I am sure that if I were not so interested, you certainly would have no objections to a little flirtation with the leader. He is really an attractive male, his success with the ladies is phenomenal. The task, you see, is not a very difficult one.

S o l a n g e: He is not in my style. The game is not worth the candle.

L a v o i s i n: Well, it is not so certain that you would be his style (*teasingly*). When I introduced him to you he did not pay you even the slightest attention. It appears that success with the ladies has become tiresome to him. Have you noticed how Mademoiselle Arnaud is clinging to him? I am ready to admit that rivalry with her is not quite so easy. After all, she is somewhat younger than you.

S o l a n g e: Do you wish to provoke me in to action? I'll bet that within two hours I'll have him twisted around my little finger.

L a v o i s i n: I am rather doubtful.

S o l a n g e (*challengingly*): A wager! To the devil with the wager! You know one's weak spot. I just want to show you that even ten such ninnies as your Mademoiselle Arnaud put together wouldn't reach the heel of my slipper. Furthermore, while it is true that the Leader is not exactly my style, I can't say that I altogether dislike him. True he looks a bit worn, but he has what you would call "it"! just imagine, he is so cynical, so impossibly cynical! Now see you have convinced me. Why not, really? (*Rises and goes towards the door*).

L a v o i s i n: Wait a moment, you don't even know, what you are to demand of him... The thing is...

S o l a n g e: Please don't teach me what I am to demand of him. Indeed, I don't expect to demand anything for you. Demand it yourself! (*Exeunt.*)

Lavoisin remains nonplussed and somewhat lost.

SCENE 7.

Mannequin leader comes in through the left door and shuts the door quietly as he enters. For a moment he listens to hear whether he is being followed. He does not notice Lavoisin standing in the corner. Wipes his forehead with a handkerchief. Exhausted, he sinks heavily into an arm-chair, fanning himself with his handkerchief.

L a v o i s i n (*approaches him from behind*): They have tired you out, leader, eh?

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r (*jumps up in fright. Hastily hides his handkerchief in his pocket*): Tired me out? O, no, not at all!

L a v o i s i n. I can imagine how the leader is overwhelmed with work during these last days. It is a long time since our country was in such a miserable situation. Industry is at a standstill. Conditions are terrible, prices are sky-high. Is it any wonder that our workers are restless, that they demand higher wages? Do you think I don't understand them? I understand them quite well. I would have been the first one to increase wages if it were at all possible. There are no orders, the production must be reduced to a minimum. There is really no way of raising the workers' income; I myself can do nothing but hope to pull through these hard times. And yet despite the depression of the present period, there are industrialists — and we don't need to look far, we may take as an example our honorable host, Monsieur Arnaud—there are industrialists, who actually attempt to provoke the already aroused working

masses. Now say yourself, to cut wages now, isn't it provocation pure and simple? Is it not an open challenge to the workers, a challenge to strike? *(Pause)*.

Mannequin Leader (rapidly): Yes, yes, of course *(looks about himself, as if searching for a door through which to get away)*.

Lavoisin: I know beforehand that you will not fail to appraise properly such irresponsible conduct. Individuals like Monsieur Arnaud jeopardize the peace and security of a whole state. The socialist party must take a decisive stand against such individuals, just as it has always fought against all sorts of agitators who heedlessly light their matches near barrels of powder. A skillful and timely strike used as a means of clipping the wings of uppish individuals is the best method and guarantee of peace in industry and of a real union between efficient labour and humane capital. Am I not right?

Mannequin Leader (as if startled from sleep): Yes, yes, of course!

Lavoisin: You will readily understand that it in Arnaud's case if the Reformist Union, instead of going out on strike, attempts to hold the workers back, it will be guilty of a very serious mistake. In that case the communists would seize the leadership and would rouse the workers who are at present fighting only Arnaud, to fight against your union as well. They would claim you were allies of Arnaud and advocates of lower wages. The indignation of the workers in Arnaud's plant is so intense that the strike is bound to be popular. In that case you would lose in Arnaud's plant, and therefore in the entire district, the influence you now have. The reformist union must join the strike, must take the initiative, and must do it immediately, this very night, before the communists have a chance to anticipate you. I wonder what you think of it?

Mannequin leader: Me? Of course, of course.

Lavoisin (joyfully): It means then that the Reformist Union is joining the strike, doesn't it? Well, of course, it's as clear as daylight. You are surprised, I suppose, that I am even asking you such a question. Knowing the firm principles of your party, I have never doubted it for a moment *(draws quickly a check-book from his pocket)*. I know full well the tremendous difficulties with which your party is confronted when it tries to paralyze the growing influence of the communists. Being a grateful member of this society for whose benefit you, gentlemen, are working so valiantly I make bold to present to you this modest sum, in the hope that it would be of some help to the strike fund. *(Tears a check out of his check-book and hands it to the mannequin leader)*.

Mannequin leader (takes the check hesitatingly): Yes... but...

Lavoisin: Without "no's", dear Leader. Haven't I a right as a citizen of our country to work for its rational development and to aid, though in a very modest way, in improving the working conditions of those who give all their time and all their energy to increasing the welfare of society. Well, that's that!

Arnaud appears at the ball-room door.

SCENE 8

Arnaud (notices the leader and Lavoisin. Unpleasantly surprised): Ah, the leader's here! The ladies are asking for you.

Lavoisin (pointedly): The leader and I had a very interesting conversation about the economic situation. It's remarkable how our points of view coincide. *(Enter Solange)*.

Sclange: Is the leader here?

Angelique (*enters through the left door*): Is the leader here?
(*Both discover the leader at the same time and approach him simultaneously*).

Solange: Leader, am I dancing the charleston with you?

Angelique: Leader, have you invited me for the charleston.

Arnaud: Good Lord, you'll tear him to shreds.

Solange: Leader, I am waiting.

Angelique: Leader, you've asked me to dance with you.

Lavoisin (*ironically*): I am afraid you'll have to draw lots!

Solange: Let the leader decide for himself.

Angelique: Have you invited me for this dance?

Mannequin leader (*confused*): Indeed, yes...

Angelique: Come. (*Pulls him by the arm.*)

Mannequin leader (*while following Angelique, to Solange*): Really, it seems... yes... perhaps... the next dance...

Arnaud (*good naturedly*): She got him after all! He-he! It's remarkable how the ladies cling to the leader.

Lavoisin: He's a charming person! What profundity of judgment, what foresight, what cold-blooded calculation, what promptness of decision. All the qualities of a real statesman.

Arnaud: Indubitably, indubitably.

Lavoisin: I'm going to finish up my game of bridge. Would you like to take part in the next game? You'll find Devignard and myself in the third room to the left, behind the colonnade.

Arnaud: I am sorry, but my duties of host deprive me of the pleasure of having you as partners. I must give some order to the servants. (*Goes to the right and tells something to the lackey.*)

Lavoisin (*going to the left door, remarks casually to his wife*): By the way, don't trouble any more. I've managed everything myself. And, incidentally, I've done it much better than you could have possibly done it.

Solange: Idiot!

Lavoisin goes out through the left door.

SCENE 9

Arnaud (*lights a cigarette; pause*): What is it that you have not managed to do for him?

Solange: Don't be so inquisitive, you may accidentally learn a family secret.

Arnaud: Family secrets do not particularly interest me. What interests me more is what your husband had to say to the leader. I caught them unawares. They conversed very confidentially. Has he mentioned anything about it?

Solange: Will you stop bothering me with your loathsome business. First that one and now this one! Go, hang yourselves, both of you, with your half a milliard. Cheat, do what you please, but don't annoy me. Can't you understand — I am not interested.

Arnaud: Of course you are not interested. Whoever of the two takes in the half a milliard, it's all the same to you.

Solange: What do you mean?

Arnaud: Just this! Your flippancy and your habit not to consider anyone have got under my skin. You don't know when and what one may allow oneself. Your last jeweller's bill has exceeded all limits. If you intend to carry on this mode of life in the future, I shall have to shut down the plant and declare myself bankrupt.

S o l a n g e: But my dearest, a sweetheart is an expensive pleasure. It's time you got used to it. O yes, I am glad you reminded me, I have a little request to make of you. The day before yesterday Devignard and I were in Deauville. I played the roulette, and, as if to spite, quite unsuccessfully.

A r n a u d (*angrily*): Well?

S o l a n g e: I lost about 150 thousand. I owe it to Devignard. I promised to pay within a week.

A r n a u d: Have you gone mad? One hundred and fifty thousand.

S o l a n g e: Believe me, this is the first time in my life that I have had such bad luck. This means I'm going to have phenomenal success in love.

A r n a u d: And do you imagine me paying this debt?

S o l a n g e: I don't imagine, I am certain. I've always considered you a gentleman. And I have as yet no reason to doubt you. You see I cannot turn to Lavoisin with this debt — I've exhausted my allowance from him three months in advance.

A r n a u d: You're jesting, my dear! All talk of my paying this sum now is futile.

S o l a n g e: What do you mean "now"? Haven't you made half a milliard?

A r n a u d: First of all, I haven't made a franc yet, I have merely got the order. And it is not at all certain that I'll be able to fulfil the order. Moreover, just a moment ago I heard you say that you were not interested in my financial affairs and that you were absolutely indifferent as to who would rake in the half a milliard — whether it was I or Lavoisin.

S o l a n g e: You take my words much too literally.

A r n a u d: In short, the payment of your debt depends wholly on whether the order remains with me or whether Lavoisin grabs it. His hobnobbing with the leader disturbs me quite a bit. You can help me.

S o l a n g e: I know, I know, all you want me to do is to turn the leader's head, to permit him some slight liberties, and to persuade him to get the workers to strike.

A r n a u d: You've lost your mind! Just the opposite! He has to come out against the strike.

S o l a n g e: Ah, so? Just the reverse? Very well — let it be the reverse.

A r n a u d: You don't have to wheedle that out of him. I have definite guarantees. Try to find out, if you can, what Lavoisin had been discussing with him and what their relations are. As Lavoisin's wife, you should find it easy. The Leader won't conceal it from you.

Both advance towards the doors leading to the ball-room.

S o l a n g e: Very well, very well, I shall do it.

A r n a u d (*by the door*): But don't get it all mixed. He may think that you are trying to get something for Lavoisin. You may spoil the whole thing.

S o l a n g e: Don't be afraid. Leader is no fool. He will understand immediately what I want of him.

exeunt.

SCENE 10

Lackey enters through right door, is followed by two men. The latter are in dark suits, bright tan shoes, colored socks, flashy neck ties, and bright silk kerchiefs in their coat pockets. The first walks boldly, the second more diffidently, looking around wonderingly, awkwardly hiding behind his back his rough hands which serve as evidence of his working class origin. It is apparent that both in his clothes and his gestures he imitates the first one.

L a c k e y: How am I to announce you?

D e l e g a t e 1: I would like, citizen, that you go over to comrade deputy Paul Ribandel and tell him that his comrades from the union have come

B. Jasiensky
Ball of the
Mannequins

to get instructions. You won't forget it? Comrades from the Metal workers' union have come for instructions.

L a c k e y: Deputy Ribandel is now in the ball-room and is not ready to attend to any business.

D e l e g a t e 1: Please, citizen, go and tell him what I have just told you. The comrade Deputy instructed us to call for him here at three o'clock in the morning and to wait for him in the vestibule. All you have to tell him is that the comrades from the metal workers' union have come for instructions. Comrade Ribandel will understand.

L a c k e y: You stay here. Don't go beyond this place. (*Goes out through the door leading to the ball-room*).

D e l e g a t e 2 (*to the first one, enthusiastically*): What parquet floor, eh? Just glide along. One can break his noodle if one is not used to it.

D e l e g a t e 1: O this is nothing? You should see the ball-room. There your feet just break out into a jig! And no mirrors are needed, you can see yourself from head to toe.

D e l e g a t e 2: Is that so? And you, comrade, were you ever in a capitalist ball-room?

D e l e g a t e 1: Sure thing! Not here, not in Arnaud's place, I was in other places. As a matter of fact, comrade, it was on party business (*looks around, notices the arm-chairs to the second delegate*). Sit down. There is no use standing; that's what chairs are made for, to be sat upon.

D e l e g a t e 2. Somebody may come in.

D e l e g a t e 1 (*sinks into a chair*): That's nothing. Who cares? Haven't we the right to sit? You, comrade, must learn to respect your own party dignity, and then the capitalist will in point of fact treat you with due respect. He will himself offer you a chair.

D e l e g a t e 2 (*feels the chair, sits down, pleased*): These damned capitalist potentates have a sweet life of it! Eh! I'll bet this chair costs piles of money!

D e l e g a t e 1: Under socialism every party worker will in point of fact have such a chair. Yes, sir, some of us have it right now. Ain't it the best proof that socialism is on the way? And do you think that the leader's joint is not as swell as this one? Yes, sir! And he ain't the only one! Social evolution, you must know, does in point of fact always come from the top, and, of course, it takes lots of time before it reaches the bottom. Only individuals have a chance to meet evolution half way. Society, you must know, is — well — something like a building, I might say. Different classes rise to the top in different ways. The rich ones, the capitalists, they have it easy — they just walk to the lift and are wheezed upwards without ever shaking a leg. Those who have no capital, but who belong to the privileged classes, those climb up the front staircase — wide, carpeted. And the proletariat, too, has a staircase, a separate staircase, a little narrower, a little darker. Not many can go up that staircase at the same time. This dark staircase is in point of fact our party, the whole proletariat in a bunch cannot clamber up this staircase, but those who are clever manage to get there all right.

D e l e g a t e 2: With a head like his Comrade Secretary will sure get to the top.

D e l e g a t e 1: O! any one can do it, who has a head on his shoulders. You are young, not long in the party you must therefore watch your elders and learn. You see, politics for a beginner is just like rowing in a boat. When you first go our rowing, your head begins to turn. You row to the right and it turns to the left, you row to the left and it turns to the right. Everything seems topsy-turvy. Only when you begin to collect your senses do you get wise to

yourself, do you understand that in order to go in the direction you wish, you must row in the opposite direction. And take my word for it, not until you plumb this secret will you stop being surprised at everything. If you begin to fuss about—you are done for, you go to the bottom. The first thing in a political career is not to be surprised at anything, and to watch how the superiors do it. Even if you are a hundred times sure that this is not the way to do it, you better shut up and do as you are told. You'll understand later. Politics, brother, is a complicated business.

Delegate 2: But doesn't it happen sometimes that even the party chiefs make mistakes and break their necks. And who in hell can make out the difference between a mistake and a policy.

Delegate 1: Before such a leader breaks his neck, you'll be the food of worms. Just put it in your pipe and smoke it — if such a leader breaks his neck it is because he has something to gain by it politically. When you'll be longer in the party, you'll understand.

SCENE 11

Lackey (*in the door*): Here, Monsieur Deputy.

Mannequin leader enters, both delegates rise precipitously.

Delegate 1: How do you do, comrade leader? (*Offers his hand timidly*).

Mannequin leader (*shakes his hand*): Good morning.

Delegate 2: (*also offers his hand timidly*): How do you do, comrade leader?

Mannequin leader (*shakes his hand*): Good morning.

Delegate 1: We have come for instructions, in compliance with your order. It is just three o'clock.

Mannequin leader: For instructions?

Delegate 1: Exactly. The communists have already issued a proclamation calling a strike. Here's a copy, straight from the printing shop. (*Hands the leader a leaflet*). And here is a text of our appeal against the strike. (*Hands him another leaflet*.) There is really no use of your reading. The text is the usual text. All you have to do is sign.

Mannequin leader: Y-y-yes... (*Unfolds the leaflet and reads aloud*.) "Comrades, the administration of the Arnaud plants, in utter disregard of the terrible conditions in which the workers live, is now cutting our already low wages by another five francs per day, thus exposing the workers' families to slow death from starvation. This step seems the more contemptible when we realize that Monsieur Arnaud has just landed an order from abroad amounting to a half a milliard francs. Arnaud's attempt, if successful, will serve as a stimulus for the reduction of wages in the entire metal industry. Comrades, the amalgamated union of metal workers, after closely studying the situation, has decided to offer active resistance. This brazen provocation by an exploiter, drunk with power, must be met with a one hundred percent strike. Workers of all convictions, to protect your elementary rights, you must join hands in the common struggle! The rank and file must create a united front. You must compel the blood-thirsty capitalist sharks to retreat! Down with capitalist exploitation! We must have our five francs! Long live the united front of the working class! Down with the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie! Long live the dictatorship of the proletariat! (*After reading it, he folds the leaflet. To the delegates*). That's right! I'll sign immediately.

D e l e g a t e 1: That is... the comrade leader will sign our appeal? This is the communist proclamation. Ours is the other one, the one you have in your hand — it's against the strike.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: And why the other one, when this is o. k. What's bothering me is that perhaps they aren't demanding enough. Only five francs. It says here that the wages aren't enough to feed the workers and their families. Well, then, why not ask for more; let's say ten francs at least! Arnaud hands out money right and left. Why the devil shouldn't he raise wages.

D e l e g a t e 1: This... this... yes... but... in that case the workers in Lavoisin's plants will rise to-morrow and also demand higher wages.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: Let them. And they will be damn right! Why should they earn less?

D e l e g a t e 1 (at a loss): If that's the case... if I understand comrade leader correctly... they are going out on strike. And, what's more, not only in Arnaud's plant, but also in Lavoisin's, they are going out at one time.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: Sure thing.

D e l e g a t e 1: And should we print a proclamation using the same as the communists?

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: Sure, why change when this one is good enough. Just change the five francs to ten francs.

D e l e g a t e 1 (increasingly perplexed): We are outdoing the communists! That places us at the head of the strike. If that's the case, we must issue a proclamation to the Lavoisin workers as well, the same as to Arnaud's except for a few changes. Do I understand you right?

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: Sure.

D e l e g a t e 1: Is this all comrade leader wished to tell us?

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: Yes, that's about all. By the way, it almost slipped my mind altogether. (*Takes out the wallet and gets the checks*). Take these checks, I got them from Arnaud and Lavoisin for the strike fund.

D e l e g a t e 2: What? Checks from Arnaud and Lavoisin? What for the strike fund in their plants?

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: Sure! (*Holds the wallet in his hands and suddenly notices Ribandel's money in it. Pulls it out and hands it over to delegate 1.*) And here is some more money, give it to the same fund. This is Deputy Ribandel's money. Well, so long. They are waiting for me, Now I'll have a dance (*He starts and with some fancy steps, dances into the ball-room.*)

SCENE 12

Both delegates stand bewildered. A long pause.

D e l e g a t e 2. Say comrade, pinch me, won't you! Is this a dream or am I crazy. No, it ain't no dream. He's left the check behind him, they are in your hands! Give us a look.

D e l e g a t e 1. (examines the checks): Two hundred and fifty thousand from Arnaud and two hundred and fifty thousand from Lavoisin. They are real honest to goodness checks, there isn't no doubt about that. And here is another ten thousand, in real cash.

D e l e g a t e 2: If you wasn't right here, I could swear I went crazy. We're going out on strike in Arnaud's, we're reprinting the communist proclamation, we're increasing demands one hundred percent, we're calling La-

voisin's workers out on strike, and all this when there wasn't a damn word said about the strike. And what gets me is that Arnaud and Lavoisin are handing out money for this purpose. One can sure go off your nuddle.

D e l e g a t e 1. (*scratches the back of his head*): I am right sorry I have not taken a written order from him. I don't want to be responsible for this muddle. However, you'll be the witness. Everything was said in your presence. There is no doubt about this. He spoke perfectly clearly. You've heard everything.

D e l e g a t e 2. Oh, I heard it all right, but I don't know what the hell it is all about. Either he is crazy, or we are.

D e l e g a t e 1. (*regaining self-control, now speaks with an air of one initiated into a mystery*): You fool, you! You never make head or tail of anything. I've told you that politics is a complicated business. You just look on what your superiors do and keep mum. Once the leader gives us these and not other instructions, it means he has some higher political considerations. I am beginning to see the track, old boy!

D e l e g a t e 2: (*wonderingly*): Do you mean to tell me that you have any idea what all this means?

D e l e g a t e 1: Once I say that I'm beginning to understand, it means I'm beginning to understand. That this is a great political game, I have not the least doubt. Otherwise Arnaud and Lavoisin would not in point of fact give us money for it. The point is to start a new and determined move against the communists. We are beating them at their own game. It is as plain as the nose on your face. We assume leadership of the strike, and we compromise the communists by the pettiness of their demands. Arnaud and Lavoisin give money, because it pays them — they can get better terms from us. Don't you understand now? Well, let's not waste any time. We must act immediately.

D e l e g a t e 2: (*despairingly*): It looks as though I'll never make a politician...

D e l e g a t e 1: (*near the door to the right*): When you are in the party as long as I am you won't be surprised at anything. Yes, old fellow, riddles stiffer than these I had to solve in my long party life. Let's go. (*Exeunt*).

The lackey enters from the right, scrutinizes disapprovingly the place where the delegates sat. Shifts the chairs.

S o l a n g e (*enters through the left door*): Isn't Monsieur Ribandel here?

L a c k e y: Monsieur Ribandel was here a minute ago, madam. He's gone back to the ball-room.

Solange goes into the ball-room. Lackey leaves by the right door.

SCENE 13.

Almost at the same time there appears at the left door Angelique Arnaud who is pulling the leader by the arm.

A n g e l i q u e: Come along. At least, there is no one here. I am so tired of all these people. I just yearn for a rest from all the noise. Let's sit here. Isn't the light a little too glaring — it hurts the eyes (*turns the switch, the nalon is now in semi-darkness. Makes herself comfortable on the chaise-slogue, draws the leader mannequin closer*). I'm so weary... (*leans her head on the leader's shoulder*).

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: Shall I get a cushion? (*Rises*).

Angelique (*draws him back to his seat*): Be seated, please (*presses herself against him*). How strange you are... I presume you are weary of women...

Mannequin leader: I? Of women? Oh, no! Not in the least!

Angelique. Now, now, we know all about you, Monsieur Leader. There is not a soul who does not know that the women don't give you any rest. Even to-night, we are not given an opportunity to be alone for a minute. This unbearable Madame Lavoisin simply tears you out of one's arms. One can't get rid of her. She has a pretty face, one must admit that, but there is something vulgar about her, her mouth is too wide. I hate women of this type. Do you like her?

Mannequin leader: Yes... she has a rather nicely formed figure, except that for a number 40 her hips are a little too flat.

Angelique: What details you observe about women! You undress them at the very first glance. In her case however you are quite mistaken. Her legs are too short. When she is dressed, you can't discern it, she raises her waist line quite a bit. But you ought to see her nude, and I'm sure you'll have your chance before long, then you'd convince yourself with your own eyes. Besides, this woman engages in no sport, except the sport of love. And this is not conducive to an harmonious development of one's form. She only plays golf, and that pretty badly.

Mannequin leader (*confidently*): No woman has a perfect form. Everyone has one defect or another.

Angelique: Are you trying to provoke me? I assure you, if there weren't so many people around I would prove to you that you are all wrong.

Mannequin leader: You? (*He glances at her curiously*). Not a full thirty eight.

Angelique: How do you know?

Mannequin leader: I am expert at it...

Angelique: That's amazing! When do you find time to engage in politics? To know women the way you know them, one must kill a good deal of time.

Mannequin leader: You are exaggerating. After a bit of practice...

Angelique: You haven't told me your opinion. What flaws have you noticed in me?

Mannequin leader (*scrutinizing her carefully*): You have no bust. That's why your dress does not fit you so well.

Angelique (*offended*): What? That's impudence! (*Looses her bra-sier and exposes her breast, her back to the audience*). Well? Do you still insist?

Mannequin leader (*examines her with the eye of a connoisseur, turning her lightly with his right hand and tapping her shoulder-blades*): Your shoulder-blades stick out a bit...

The door of the ball-room is opened wide, enter Arnaud, Devignard and Lavoisin, husbands and wives.

SCENE 14.

Arnaud: Why is it so dark here? (*Turns on the light.*)

Angelique. Ah! (*grasps the leader and hides behind him.*)

Arnaud, Devignard, Lavoisin, husbands and
32 wives (*in a chorus*): Ah!

Mannequin leader (*to Angelique, imperturbably*): You've torn your brazier. You must never remove your things so impetuously.

Angelique (*pressing herself to him*): Hush!

The ladies and gentlemen start back and go into the ballroom.

Arnaud: Just... that is... yes...

Angelique (*having regained her equipoise, fixes her dress*): Father, it's about time that you announced to our guests that Monsieur Ribandel and I are engaged to be married. (*Buries her nails in the leader's hand*).

Mannequin leader: You'll break my finger.

Angelique (*in a whisper*): Hush! If you utter one word, I will declare that you tried to get me by force. I've always considered you a gentleman.

Arnaud: Yes, of course! I've almost forgotten! That is, not forgotten only I intended to do it later... But since you desire it, I'll do it right now. (*turns to Lavoisin and Devignard*). Monsieur Ribandel and my daughter... it is to-day that we have decided to announce... that is, are announcing their engagement.

Lavoisin (*sharply*): We've seen it. You ought to announce it to those who have not seen.

Devignard (*approaches the leader and shakes his hand warmly*): Congratulations!

Mannequin leader (*shakes his hand*): At your service.

Lavoisin (*approaches him and also shakes his hand*): Congratulations! (*In a whisper*). I hope you haven't forgotten our conversation.

Mannequin leader: Of course, everything has been attended to.

Arnaud (*to his daughter, embracing her*): Let's go, child; let's go, ladies and gentlemen. We must announce this happy news to all the guests.

Devignard: And raise our glasses to the health of the engaged couple.

Everybody exeunt, except mannequin leader.

SCENE 15.

Mannequin leader alone, examining his fingers.

Solange (*appears at the door to the left*): Are you here all by yourself, leader? She has finally let you go, this irrepressible Angelique! It's the first time during the entire evening that we have a chance to be alone. You know, I like this cynical curve around your lips. I presume women have been annoying you too much.

Mannequin leader: Women? Well yes, you know. A little too much. They don't give me a minute's rest.

Solange: What conceit! But you know I like it in you. I can just imagine how this Angelique Arnaud has been boring you all evening. She's sticking to you like glue, robbing us of your company. She has a pretty face, that can't be denied, but there is something fishlike about her. Besides, her mouth is much too wide. Surely, you must have noticed it yourself.

Mannequin leader: A minute ago mademoiselle Arnaud said exactly the same thing about you.

Solange: About me? What insolence! I can imagine to what length she went in describing me. This is an old, old method used by provincial young ladies who are afraid of rivals. Well, what else was she babbling about?

Mannequin leader: She said that your legs are very short. She said that your dress concealed it, because you raise your waist line.

B. Jasienky
Ball of the
Mannequins

S o l a n g e: I have short legs?! The insolence of this fool is beyond all limits! My legs are too short?! And you? what did you answer her? Or are you of the same opinion.

Flourish of music behind the stage.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: I'll tell you. As far as your legs are concerned I can't say much. But as I see it, your hips are a little too flat for your size. However, there are no women with a perfect form. Everyone has something wrong somewhere.

S o l a n g e: I assure you, if there weren't so many people around I would prove to you that you are all wrong.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: Mademoiselle Arnaud has already tried to prove to me that I was wrong, but I still remain of the same opinion.

S o l a n g e: Are you trying to provoke me? Very well! I don't give a hang about the people here! (*Quickly unbuttons herself and opens her dress, her back to the public*). Well, what's now? Do you still dare to insist?

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r (*examines her with the eye of a connoisseur*): Your hips are not sufficiently curved. And as far as your legs are concerned, there is nothing simpler than to measure them. (*Gets down on his knees and begins to measure with his hand from the hips down*).

The doors of the ball-room are opened wide, Arnaud, Devignard, Lavoisin, Angelique and a crowd of guests, with wine glasses in their hands enter.

T h e g u e s t s (*in a chorus*): Where is the fiancé?

SCENE 16.

E v e r y b o d y (*discovering the mannequin-leader on his knees before Solange*): Ah!

The tinkle of falling glasses. Angelique drops her glass and goes off into a faint. Arnaud catches her.

E v e r y b o d y: Ah!

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r (*rises from his knees, slowly and seriously*): Very flat hips!

S o l a n g e: How dare, you?!

D e v i g n a r d: That's a pretty affair!

L a v o i s i n (*pale, drawing closer to the mannequin-leader*): What did you say?

M a n n e q u i n - l e a d e r: Very flat hips.

E v e r y b o d y: Ah!

(*Gathering in one group. In the centre of the stage is only the mannequin-leader*).

Lavoisin swings his arm and slaps the mannequin leader's cheek.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: Excuse me, but what is it all about?

A r n a u d: Monsieur Deputy Ribandel, after everything that has taken place here there is nothing left for you to do but leave my house.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r (*surprised*): Me?

Behind the stage there is the clatter of doors being locked.

L a c k e y (*enters through the right door, stiffly and solemnly*): Monsieur Director!

Arnaud: What has happened?

Lackey: The police commissioner.

Enter police commissioner through the right door.

Police commissioner (*at attention*): I beg your pardon, ladies and gentlemen, but circumstances suffer no delay. A strike has been declared in your plants. The workers are attempting to organise a demonstration. The square in front of your mansion has been chosen as the meeting place. The police prefect has sent me a command of a detachment to protect you and your guests. I have been ordered to shut all exits and entrances and not to permit anyone, under any circumstances to leave, until the street is cleared. Your guests will have to stay in the house until we receive new orders.

General tumult

Curtain

ACT III

The same foyer in Arnaud's mansion. The stage is empty.

SCENE I

The window in the left wall, looking out into the garden, begins to move, as if someone is trying to open it. It is finally opened. The upper part of a headless body appears, and then the whole body. The man creeps into the foyer; he then brushes his clothes. This is the real leader, Paul Ribandel. The leader furtively approaches the door leading to the ball-room.

Mannequin (*armored knight in corner at first absolutely motionless suddenly stirs*): Tsss!

The leader stops in astonishment.

Mannequin knight: Tsss! where are you going? You are out of your mind. Have you lost your way, or what? This is a human dwelling. Beat it quickly, or they'll see you.

The leader turns around, bewildered.

Mannequin knight: Where are you returning from? Is our ball over? How was the attendance? I had also intended to go, but I could not get away from here. Besides, one could hardly walk through the streets in this carapace, a crowd would gather. And I would not wish my worst enemy to dance in this outfit. I had to give up the idea. Well, how was everything there? Was the ball a success? Were there enough legs for every one?

Leader (*in a rage*): Shut up! I am no mannequin, I want you to understand! I will expose the whole damn lot of you. Cutthroats! Where is my head?

Mannequin knight: Which head? What are you batting about? you are quite tipsy, old fellow, as tipsy as any man!

Leader: You don't know which head? The one you have robbed me of, you bandits. Wait, wait, I'll get at you yet (*turns resolutely to the ball room doors*).

B. Jasinsky
Ball of the
Mannequins

Mannequin knight (*blocking the way by stretching out his arm*): Don't you dare! Are you crazy? They'll notice you. You'll get us all into a hell.

Leader (*in greater rage*): Step aside!

A short tussle. The broken off iron glove falls clattering to the floor. Enter lackeys through the right door: they examine the room suspiciously. The mannequin knight stiffens back into his former position.

SCENE 2.

Lackey 1: What's this?

Lackey 2 (*to the leader*): Who are you, monsieur? What are you doing here? Where have you come from?

Leader: I am Deputy Paul Ribandel, I must see Monsieur Arnaud immediately.

Lackey 1: That's a good one! As it happens Monsieur Deputy Paul Ribandel is here already. He's in the ball-room now. You'll have to give a different name, old fellow!

Lackey 2: And where did you unearth such an extraordinary costume?

Leader: Is Deputy Ribandel here? Allow me to go in, I must see him immediately.

Lackey 1: You have just said that you were Deputy Ribandel, and now it is Deputy Ribandel that you wish to speak to. It looks as if you're pickled and have forgotten who you are.

Leader: I am Deputy Ribandel, and I wish to speak to the imposter who parades here under my name.

Lackey 2: That's a funny guy for you! Where the deuce does he hail from?

Lackey 1: He must have clambered over the fence into the garden. Don't you see, the window is open.

Leader: I cannot waste a single moment! Announce me immediately to Monsieur Arnaud. Or call Monsieur Arnaud out here.

Lackey 2: Now it is Deputy Ribandel and now it is Monsieur Arnaud that you wish to see. You yourself don't seem to know whom you want. Run along, find your head, and put it under a water hose. Perhaps that'll do you some good.

Leader: Let me pass immediately. How dare you speak to me in such a tone!

Lackey 1: Ho-ho-ho! How would you, O Gracious Count, have us speak to you, since you refuse to tell us whom we have the honour to address?

Leader: I have told you already. I am Deputy Paul Ribandel!

Lackey 2: We have heard that; surely the Count has at least some sort of a visiting card; without a visiting card we cannot announce you.

Leader: To my regret, I haven't any — they were all stolen from me.

The lackeys roll with laughter.

Lackey 1: They were stolen?

Lackey 2: And who might have stolen them from you?

Leader: I am not obliged to give an account of myself, to you! I request that you call Monsieur Arnaud.

Lackey 1: Hey there, don't you start a riot here! Go to the devil where you've come from!



Leader: Citizens, please understand, this is urgent... I have to see him about the strike which is liable to break out in Monsieur Arnaud's plant.

Lackey 2: Oh, don't worry about that, Monsieur Deputy Ribandel has fixed it all up already. The strike will take place without your assistance.

Leader: What do you mean? Has that rogue said anything about it?

Lackey 2: Indeed, he has. It's all fixed up. Don't trouble yourself about that. The delegates of the metal workers' union were here, and he gave instructions without waiting for you.

Leader: What? Instructions? What kind of instructions?

Lackey 2: The kind that was necessary. He is a swell chap, this Deputy of yours. It was only towards the end that he got into hot water, and received a slam in the jaw.

Leader: That's impossible! You are talking nonsense! I must see Monsieur Arnaud immediately, I must clear it all up. (*Wrestles with the lackeys, who refuse to let him pass.*)

B. Jasiensky
Ball of the
Manhequins

L a c k e y 1 (*to lackey 2*): What the devil are you wasting time with him for? Found somebody to talk to: You have a long tongue, and it keeps on wagging. Don't you see the guy is full to the gills. We'll get into trouble yet on account of him.

L e a d e r (*shouting*): Let me n, let me pass immediately!

L a c k e y 1: Not so long, god damn you! Make your racket outside. It's enough that you crept into somebody else's house, without starting a riot here (*Gently pushes the leader to the window*). Just beat it, while your bones are whole. Or I'll call the police (*to lackey 2*). Help him to the main-floor.

Pushes him to the window.

L e a d e r (*on the window*): Gentlemen, citizens, comrades, please understand.

L a c k e y s (*pushing him out*): We understand, we understand (*shut the window*).

L a c k e y 1: What a fish! It's the first time I've seen a guy quite so tipsy.

L a c k e y 2: He's apparently returning from some masquerade. There are a whole lot of them guys getting dead drunk during the night and then wandering all over the city looking for their home. That's what carnivals are for!

SCENE 3

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r (*enters through the door. Alone. Looks melancholy as he wanders about the stage. To the retiring lackeys*): Is the door below shut? Is it possible to go out?

L a c k e y 2: I am sorry, Monsieur Deputy, it is impossible. The police orders are not to permit anyone to pass. There is some disturbance in the streets.

Both lackeys leave through the right door.

Mannequin leader, whistling plaintively, walks up and down the stage. Arnaud comes out of the ball-room. Simultaneously Lavoisin walks in through the left door.

Both start for the leader, but noticing each other they nonchalantly, slowly, with studied absent mindedness walk to the opposite door. Both whistling.

A r n a u d (*to Lavoisin on meeting him*): Haven't you perchance seen Devignard?

L a v o i s i n: Devignard is playing bridge, the third room to the left.

A r n a u d: Thank you.

Walk in opposite directions pretending not to have noticed the leader mannequin. Both reach the doors.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r (*to Arnaud*): Will there be any more dancing?

Arnaud stops in the threshold, as if ready to answer. Lavoisin stops too. Arnaud, upon noticing Lavoisin, does not say a word and walks out quickly. Lavoisin disappears through the opposite door.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r (*shrugging his shoulders*): Well, no is no...

SCENE 4

Two gentlemen enter from the ball-room, and walk toward the mannequin leader.

G e n t l e m e n 1: Monsieur Deputy Ribandel? We should like to offer you our services, if this privilege has not already been granted to somebody else.

Mannequin leader: Much obliged, but what kind of services do you mean?

Gentleman 2: We offer ourselves as your seconds.

Mannequin leader (*interested*): What seconds?

Gentleman 1: As your seconds. In your duel with Monsieur Lavoisin.

Mannequin leader: Duel? What kind of duel?

Gentleman 2: This is just what we do not know, whether you will use pistols or swords. The choice of weapon belongs to you, as the injured party.

Gentleman 1: That is, since in this case the point as to who really is the injured party is not quite certain, we should be glad to investigate and settle this question. In a case like this, when it is a matter of a first degree injury, the husband of the seduced woman feeling he is the guilty party, has not the prerogative of choosing the weapons.

Mannequin leader: Who is the seduced woman you are talking about?

Gentleman 2: He-he-he! It's a technical term. In this case, Madame Lavoisin. A lady, being incapable of giving satisfaction, cannot according to the code of honor, be a seductress. She is always the one being seduced. Irrespective of the actual circumstances in the case.

Mannequin leader: What did you say?

Gentleman 2: In matters of honour you may wholly rely on us.

Gentleman 1: The colonel is renowned as an authority in matters of honor and as an expert referee in most intricate conflicts arising on this ground. You may with absolute confidence entrust this case to him.

Mannequin leader: Gentlemen, I haven't the least idea what case you are talking about. What makes you think that I intend to shoot into Monsieur Lavoisin or to pierce him with the sword?

Gentleman 1: Oh, we understand perfectly well that as a socialist you consider, and with good reason, such encounters as vestiges of feudalism. Nevertheless, in such cases this is the simplest and least troublesome way of settling matters. In my opinion, it would be best to go through with the encounter immediately, to-night, in one of the remote salons in Monsieur Arnaud's mansion. Two shots, two holes in the air — and the thing is settled. The relations between you and Monsieur Lavoisin will automatically revert to their former intimacy, to the greatest satisfaction of Monsieur Lavoisin, and I take it, I am not in error if I say — to the greatest mutual satisfaction.

Mannequin leader: And now listen here, gentlemen, what I can't get into my head is why it is so necessary that I shoot into Monsieur Lavoisin, why it seems so important to you. Is it because Monsieur Lavoisin struck me, and you therefore think that I am angry with him? I am not at all angry, I assure you. Do you perhaps think that it was painful? Let me tell you a little secret: it was not painful at all. If Monsieur Lavoisin thought that he would hurt me by striking me, he was greatly mistaken. And now I don't know why in addition to everything else I have to shoot at him.

Gentleman 1: He-he-he: Monsieur Deputy is inclined to be jocular. We understand perfectly that as a socialist you can very gracefully accept our bourgeois notions. But this whole affair will never go beyond these walls, and this will be to the advantage of both parties involved. The point is not only in that you — allow me to have recourse to your very witty remark — should "shoot into Monsieur Lavoisin", but also in that — to paraphrase your expression — Monsieur Lavoisin should shoot into you. You won't, we hope, deny him this pleasure!

Mannequin leader: What? That I should allow Monsieur Lavoisin to fire into me for his own pleasure? Never!

Gentlemen 2: I fear, Monsieur Deputy does not take the whole affair seriously enough. Monsieur Lavoisin has not the least intention of shooting into you, just as you, I hope, have no intention of shooting into him. It is all a matter of keeping up appearances. Each of you will have a shot in the air, and that's all!

Mannequin leader: But how do you know what intentions Monsieur Lavoisin may have with regard to me? Once for no reason at all he banged me in the head, there is no telling but that he may just as suddenly make up his mind to shoot into me, particularly since it will afford him pleasure.

Gentlemen 1: Monsieur Deputy likes to jest. He-he-he! For no reason — is good! After all he did find his wife in your arms, and what's more she was rather *déshabillé*. We all know, *entre nous*, that Madame Lavoisin has never been distinguished by the strictness of her morals. Had he found you together without witnesses around, you may rest assured that, as a cultured gentleman, he wouldn't have started any row over such a trifle. However, it was entirely different when he found you in the presence of so many witnesses. He had nothing else to do but to react exactly as he did react. Monsieur Lavoisin had already expressed to us his profound regret over this entire unpleasant incident. Monsieur Lavoisin would like, in the name of your common interests, to liquidate this unpleasant affair. That is why the encounter must be arranged immediately. After the duel you will shake hands, and the whole thing will be settled. Really, there is no reason for your feeling unfriendly toward him. It would be more appropriate for such a feeling on your part toward Monsieur Arnaud who after all has publicly requested you to leave his house. Such an insult even a pistol shot can scarcely redeem.

Gentleman 2: And so you will allow us to transmit your challenge to Monsieur Lavoisin. The choice of weapons and all other details kindly leave to us. All these are mere formalities. At such a distance a bullet even if it hits the mark will at worst only perforate the suit.

Mannequin leader: A fine business! I am not at all anxious to come back to the atelier, that is, I mean to say, home, in a perforated frock-coat.

Gentlemen 1: Monsieur Deputy is still in a jocular mood. I guess you have already made your arrangements. You must have authorized somebody else to represent you. Is that right?

Mannequin leader: Take it as you will.

Gentleman 1: So I have guessed right. Allow us then to apologize to you for our persistence and to hasten to reassure Monsieur Lavoisin that you are not at all angry with him.

Mannequin leader: I am not in the least angry; you may tell him that.

Gentlemen 1 and 2 bow and withdraw to the ball-room.

SCENE 5.

Almost at the same time gentlemen 3 and 4 appear at the left door. Both advance towards the leader.

Gentleman 3: Monsieur Deputy Ribandel. We fear that we have been anticipated. We should like to offer you our services if this privilege has not already been granted to somebody else.



Mannequin leader: And what services do you offer.

Gentleman 4: We would like to offer you our services as seconds in the forthcoming encounter.

Mannequin leader: And where did you get that idea?

Gentleman 4: We've come partly at the request of Monsieur Arnaud. Monsieur Arnaud, as you may well imagine, is very grieved by the sudden turn affairs have taken. His only consolation is in the hope that you understand that in the presence of so many witnesses he could not act otherwise. Do not think for a moment his request that you leave his house was meant seriously. Monsieur Arnaud would be happy to see this regrettable affair settled as soon as possible. An immediate duel will settle the question.

Mannequin leader: What? Does Monsieur Arnaud also want to shoot into me?

Gentleman 3: Not at all. The point is that you fight a duel with Monsieur Lavoisin. By removing the insult and by satisfying the generally accepted social customs, you will enable Monsieur Arnaud to take his words back. Believe me, this state of affairs is not less distressing to Monsieur Arnaud than to you.

B. Jasiensky
Ball of the
Mannequins

Mannequin leader: What's all this talk about something distressing some one? Monsieur Arnaud requested that I leave his house? With the greatest of pleasure! All I want is that they open the door and let me out of here. I'll go immediately.

Gentleman 3: Monsieur Arnaud will be extremely grieved and upset if we repeat your words to him. They seem to intimate that you still feel offended, and that you refuse to take into consideration the peculiar predicament in which he finds himself. Really you are not quite just to Monsieur Lavoisin. The injury you have inflicted upon him cannot be redeemed even by a shot from a pistol.

Gentleman 4: This is the most opportune moment, the guests are tired, and many of them have gone to sleep in the remote rooms. We can find pistols and swords in Monsieur Arnaud's study. As to the place? (*looks around the room*). Well, this room is as good as any (*measures the stage by steps*). A little over 25 steps. Among the guests, there are three physicians, one of them is a surgeon. That's luck for you!

Mannequin leader: And what do you need physicians for? Has somebody taken ill?

Gentleman 4: Well, surely there cannot be any duel without a physician. I would decline to serve as a second, if there were no doctor. You know how it is, any little scratch or wound needs immediate medical care. It is my firm principle not to participate in a duel when there is no experienced doctor at hand.

Mannequin leader: It sure is a good principle.

Gentleman 4: You may wholly rely on me in this affair. Can you handle a sword?

Mannequin leader: Handle a what?

Gentleman 4: A sword. No? In that case it is best to use fire arms. Leave it to us. You just sit down and take a good rest after this sleepless night. Right here in this arm-chair would be best. I will send you a glass of champagne to refresh yourself with (*forces the mannequin leader into the arm-chair*). Please don't disturb yourself any more. It will all be over in a minute.

Gentleman 4 (*from the door*): We'll be back with the pistols in five minutes.

Both gentlemen rapidly withdraw to the right door.

Mannequin leader (*jumps up*): Just what do you mean with the pistols? I beg your pardon! Just a minute!

Both gentlemen are gone.

Mannequin leader (*enraged, brings his fist down on the table, and unwittingly presses the electric bell*): Not on your life!

SCENE 6

Lackey 1 (*in the right door*): Monsieur Deputy, have you rung the bell?

Mannequin leader (*in confusion*): Yes... it seems... unwittingly.... Rested my arm on it.

L a c k e y 1: That's all right! (*Pause*,) Monsieur Deputy, may we move the furniture?

43

Enter Lackey 2. The two servants begin to move the furniture to the wall, clearing the centre of the stage.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: What is all this moving about?

L a c k e y 1: Monsieur de la Grange has ordered us to move the furniture to the walls and to clear the center of the salon for a distance of twenty five steps.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: Twenty five steps? When has he managed to tell you all that?

L a c k e y 1: Just now. He was running up-stairs and on his way he gave the order: "Clear", said he, "the foyer, take away the furniture, don't permit any of the guests to enter the adjacent rooms. Guard the floors. I'll run up for the pistols".

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r (*to lackey 1*): Listen, dear fellow, before Monsieur de la Grange returns I must run out for a minute to attend to some private little business. Would you mind opening the door?

L a c k e y 1: It can not be done, Monsieur Deputy. Even if we allow Monsieur Deputy to walk out, he'll be detained by the police. The order is not to allow anyone and under no pretext to leave.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r (*nervously walking up and down. After a short pause*): Tell me, do they often shoot in this place?

L a c k e y 1 (*amazed*): Shoot?

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: Well yes! Shoot into one another or fight with swords?

L a c k e y 2 (*wonderingly*): Swords?

L a c k e y 1: Does not Monsieur Deputy mean to ask whether any duels ever take place here?

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: Yes, that's it. Is it absolutely necessary that it take place at every ball?

Lackey 1: Oh, no, of course not! Here in Monsieur Arnaud's place it never happens. This is an exceptional case. But my former employer. Count d'Armenoville, in his place there wasn't a month without someone shooting someone else. Now it is for women, now for horses, now for some other thing, once they fought even on account of dogs: as to which of the dogs jumped better. Some Spaniard shot a couple of fingers off the hand of the Count's son.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r (*glances nervously at his hand*): Fingers?

L a c k e y 1: And whenever the young fellows went into the woods at sunrise to fight with their swords, they would often come back minus something or other. One marquis once lopped off the young Count de la Toure's hand. They stitched it again and again, but nothing came of it.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: Lopped off his hand? Entirely? (*Feels nervously his left hand makes a few gymnastic exercises with his hand*).

L a c k e y 1: Slashed right through.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: And have you ever been involved in this kind of shooting match?

L a c k e y 1: Me? (*Laughs*): Monsieur Deputy likes to make jokes! We are simple folk. We settle such matters in simple fashion. Somebody cracks you in the jaw, and you wallop him back straight in his mug so that he sees stars. And that's the end of it.

Mannequin leader: My dear fellows, I have very urgent business, I'll return immediately. Please open the door. With the police I'll fix it up somehow.

Angeli que (*enters by the left door; to the servants*): You may go.

Servants exeunt.

SCENE 7

Angeli que: Monsieur Ribandel, listen to me. After what has taken place here you must have surely thought that I won't care to speak to you any more. You'll be surprised, I am not in the least angry with you! I know that it is all her fault. Please don't take father's words too seriously. In his place you would have acted exactly the same way. It will all be arranged. And now that you have sent your seconds to Lavoisin...

Mannequin leader: Me? But I have...

Angeli que: Please, don't deny. I know everything! You have behaved as a gentleman should. The injury inflicted upon you by Lavoisin removes any possibility of you ever having relations with him again. This certainly makes it easier to arrange your reconciliation with father. Your duel with Lavoisin opens to my father the door towards making peace with you.

Mannequin leader: I am very glad. But first of all I would like some one to open the door for me. Nobody seems to be willing to do it.

Angeli que: The duel shall open it for you.

Mannequin leader: Much obliged for your kindness, but then it may be too late.

Angeli que: Why? Do a few hours mean so much to you?

Arnaud appears at the door from the ball-room. Lavoisin appears simultaneously at the right door. Both of them fail to notice Angeli que who is screened off by the back of an arm-chair. Both walk toward the mannequin leader.

Arnaud and Lavoisin (*together*): Monsieur Ribandel!...

[Notice each other, cough. Arnaud sees his daughter.]

Arnaud: Angeli que, please leave us, my child.

Angeli que (*rises and walks out. Passing her father she mutters*): What the devil brought you here? Who called for you? I would have fixed him up all right...

Mannequin leader whistling demonstratively leaves by the left door.

SCENE 8

Arnaud (*by the window, after a short pause*): It's going to rain to-day. It's cloudy...

Lavoisin: What I would like to know is how long we will have to stand the siege. Some muddle!

Arnaud: In any case you wouldn't have been able to get back home. The police have ordered all the automobiles to draw away from the doors, so that they might not obstruct the streets and arouse the rabble.

Lavoisin. It seems to me, the police have been a little too zealous in this affair. They could have liquidated this whole business without any noise, and without fanning a little disturbance into a great storm. That a strike was expected in your plants, this was known even to the sparrows chir-

ping in the trees — however, I doubt whether your mansion is really exposed to any danger.

Arnaud: Of course: Particularly since no strike will take place in my plant, however much some people may wish it... By morning all this will be liquidated.

Lavoisin: By morning? This sounds a little too optimistic. Of course, if the directorate meets the demands of the workers, well, then of course it is possible.

Arnaud: Not necessarily. There are other ways out. For instance, the workers may waive their demands.

Lavoisin: Of course, such things are possible, but of late they have been happening rather rarely. True, they say, miracles happen, but this is a matter of faith.

Arnaud: There are "miracles" which contain nothing supernatural. (*Telephone rings. Arnaud takes the receiver.*) Yes!.. What?.. Are you gone mad! What proclamation?.. Who signed it?.. When?.. How much?.. Are you crazy?.. It's impossible... What?.. Hallo!.. Hallo!.. Hallo!.. Damn it! (*Bangs violently at the telephone.*) Hallo!.. (*Throws the receiver.*) Disconnected...

Lavoisin (venomously): Well, how now? You still believe in miracles?

Arnaud: That's inconceivable. Where is that man?

Lavoisin (through his teeth): In view of the present economic situation faith in miracles, even if they be not supernatural, is something quite illusory as you see. You will recall how I warned you against such a cut-throat game and proposed that we handle this business together. In your calculations you forgot one simple truth, namely, that proverbs are the crystallised wisdom of the race, and that there is an old saying "He laughs best who laughs last."

Telephone rings.

Arnaud (hastily grabs the receiver): Hello!.. Who?.. Lavoisin? (*Hands Lavoisin the receiver:*) For you.

Lavoisin (takes the receiver from Arnaud): It's me... Yes!.. Who is speaking?.. What? .. Are you mad?.. Which proclamation? Signed by Ribandel? When?.. Five francs increase?.. You've gone crazy!.. Declared? You are delirious!.. At what time?.. At three?.. I spoke to him personally at half past two... Well, yes!.. He gave me absolute guarantee... What's to be done now?.. What in hell do I know?.. No, he hasn't. He's here... Ring ten minutes from now. I'll clear it up in the meanwhile (*throws down the receiver*). It's inconceivable! Where is that man?

Arnaud: He was here a minute ago.

Lavoisin: He went out through this door.

Both of them dash to the left door, on the threshold they knock against the mannequin leader.

SCENE 9

Mannequin leader (politely stepping aside): I beg your pardon!

Arnaud (seizes him by the shoulder): Monsieur Ribandel! There is some misunderstanding. I've just received a call from my plant. Your union has gone out on strike, and its demands are twice as great as those of the communists. They maintain that the order was signed by you. They say that long before the incident which took place here to-day delegates from the union had come here for instructions. This was at three o'clock. Is that true?

L a v o i s i n (*tears the mannequin leader out of Arnaud's hands and shakes him*): Monsieur Ribandel, there is some misunderstanding. I've just received a call that your union has declared a strike in my plant. They demand an increase. They maintain that all this is taking place by your order. Is this true?

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r (*freeing himself from his hands*): Excuse me, gentlemen, but you better keep your hands to yourselves. Only a minute ago you did not wish to speak to me.

A r n a u d: Monsieur Ribandel, this is no time for nonsense. Please tell me that all this is untrue.

L a v o i s i n: Please, tell me that it is not so.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r (*retreats before the advancing Arnaud and Lavoisin*): Gentlemen, please, I beg of you, keep your hands to yourselves. I won't stand for such jokes much longer. If you strike my head once more, I'll wallop you in the mug so that you'll see stars.

A r n a u d (*roaring*): So it's the truth?

L a v o i s i n: It's the truth? Speak up immediately!

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: Have I ever told you an untruth? Of course it's the truth.

A r n a u d: What? And what about the money you took from me?

L a v o i s i n: And from me...

A r n a u d: Give back the money.

L a v o i s i n: Come across with the money.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: Hold on. I cannot return the money, I've given it away.

A r n a u d: Given it to whom?

L a v o i s i n: That's a fake!

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: I beg your pardon! I gave it for the purpose for which you had given it to me. I gave it to the strike committee.

A r n a u d and L a v o i s i n (*together*): — What?

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r (*to Lavoisin*): Haven't you yourself said that you were contributing the money for the strike fund?

L a v o i s i n: Don't pretend to be an idiot.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r (*to Arnaud*): And haven't you, Monsieur, given me this money as a contribution to the fund of the first rational strike in your plants?

A r n a u d: Embezzler!

L a v o i s i n: Faker!

A r n a u d and L a v o i s i n (*together*): *Canaille*

Enter six gentlemen: four seconds, referee, and physician. The seconds carry a case of pistols.

SCENE 10

The seconds hasten to take apart the quarreling gentlemen.

G e n t l e m a n 5: Gentlemen!

G e n t l e m a n 3: Gentlemen!

G e n t l e m a n 4: This is unheard of. The opponents never converse before the duel, let alone quarrel!

G e n t l e m a n 5: Quiet, quiet, control yourselves gentlemen!

Gentleman 6 hurries in with two glasses of water. Hands one to Lavoisin and one to the leader.

M a n n e q u i n l e a d e r: Thank you (*takes the glass*).

46 L a v o i s i n (*rudely pushes the gentleman with the glass aside*): Leave me alone! Enough of this comedy!



Gentleman 5: Monsieur Lavoisin, you are insulting the second. I was certain that you would show much greater self-control before the encounter.

Lavoisin. (*in a rage*): Give me this god-damn gun, I'll shoot him like a dog.

Gentleman 5: Monsieur Lavoisin, all outcries and threats on the duel ground are an indication of bad manners. Please, restrain yourself (*to everybody*). Gentlemen, be so kind as to take your places. I am measuring the space (*measures the stage with his feet*). One, two, three... (*to himself*). Twenty four, twenty five. Now to your places, please.

Mannequin leader. —But I... I am not at all...

Gentlemen 3 and 4 force him to his place.

Gentlemen 3: Stand here, Monsieur Deputy.

Gentleman 4 (*puts a pistol in his hand*): The trigger is cocked: please, don't pull it.

Gentleman 3: We'll count three. Yours is the first shot!

B. Jaslensky
Ball of the
Mannequins

Gentleman 4: Please raise your pistol. So. When we count three, you lower your pistol and shoot. Then you lower the pistol and remain motionless until your opponent shoots.

Mannequin leader: Should I stand until he shoots?

Gentleman 4: Yes. Absolutely motionless. It's just a minute (*raises the lapels of the leader's frock*). Now, when the sign is given, you shoot first.

Mannequin leader: Yes! but I can't shoot!

Gentleman 4: That's nothing. One doesn't need to know how. You simply press your index finger against the trigger. (*Grasps his hand*). Not now, you mustn't yet! When you hear "three".

Mannequin leader: And does he know how to shoot?

Gentleman 4: He most likely doesn't know either. Besides, I have told you already that it really doesn't matter. Those who can't shoot generally hit the mark surest.

Mannequin leader: Very delightful prospect!

Gentleman 5: Attention!

Mannequin leader: If he would only shoot into the head, that wouldn't be so bad.

Gentleman 4: On the contrary. What are you saying? God beware!

Mannequin leader: Oh, if I were sure that he'd strike the head, I wouldn't worry at all.

Gentleman 5: Attention! I am beginning to count. When I say "three", Monsieur Ribandel shoots.

Gentleman 4 (*in a whisper*): Attention! I'll let you know.

Gentleman 5 (*counts*): One... two... three. (Silence.)

Gentleman 4 (*whispers in despair*): Now shoot! Shoot now!

Mannequin leader (*shoots; pause*): Well, of course I haven't hit him. I knew beforehand. And he'll hit me for sure. If it were only in the head!

Gentleman 4 (*reproachfully*): Monsieur Deputy, why such melancholy thoughts? Let down your hands. So. Now you must stand perfectly motionless for one minute.

Gentleman 5: Ready? I am beginning to count. When I say "three", Monsieur Lavoisin shoots. Attention! Please, do not change your position under any circumstances. One...

Suddenly the lights go out. Darkness.

Voices in the dark: Turn on the lights! What's up?

Voice of the lackey: Gentlemen, do not be disturbed. The electrical station has stopped working.

Voice of gentleman 3: Bring candles!

Voice of gentleman 2: This looks like a general strike!

Voice of Lavoisin: These communist scoundrels, it seems they are not asleep.

Voice of gentleman 4: Bring some light here!

Voice of the lackey: Just a moment, gentlemen.

Enter lackeys carrying candelabra. In the light it becomes evident that the mannequin leader has opened the window and was making ready to leap out. Gentleman 1 seizes him by the tail of his coat

Gentleman 1: Monsieur Deputy, what are you trying to do?

Mannequin leader: Me? Just for a minute. I want to get some matches.

Gentleman 1: We have candles here. The illumination is quite adequate. We may proceed. **49**

Mannequin leader: I am afraid he won't see well enough.

Gentleman 3: It doesn't matter. There is quite enough light here. He'll see all right.

The lackeys bring in more candelabra.

Mannequin leader: Shouldn't we perhaps postpone it after all?

Lavoisin: Oh, you son of a bitch! First you start up, and now it's too dark for you. No, dear fellow, you won't leave this place alive!

Gentleman 5: Monsieur Lavoisin. I warn you that threats during the duel are forbidden. This is the first time in my life that I participate in such an encounter. Gentlemen, please resume your places. I am beginning to count. When I say "three," Monsieur Lavoisin shoots. One...

This minute the window is crashed open, and a headless man leaps into the room— this is the real leader Paul Ribandel.

Gentleman 5: Two...

Leader: Halt! (*General confusion*). Gentlemen, don't believe him! It's a terrible delusion! I am Deputy Paul Ribandel. He who makes believe that he is me, he is not a man at all, he is a mannequin. These scoundrels have robbed me of my head. I am Deputy Paul Ribandel!

Lackeys (*appearing at the right door*): Gentlemen, please don't pay any attention to him. He is tipsy. He is apparently returning from a restaurant (*approach the leader and attempt to get hold of him*).

Mannequin leader (*raises his hand*): A minute please! This gentleman is right! (*to the leader*). Dear leader! You are just in time! I almost have not recognised you. (*Shoves the pistol in his hands and pushes him to his own place*). Please, this is your place. (*With a rapid gesture he removes his head like a hat*). Here, please, here is your head! (*Hands the head over to the leader*). Take it. Take it quickly! I had enough of it! I am sorry I was ever tempted to take it! I had won a head and I thought I was happy. I thought I had found a treasure. Go to the blazes with your head! Now I know what you need your head for. It was not for nothing that we had decided to chop it off. (*Points to the leader*). But what's the use? It is impossible to cut all your heads off. There won't be enough scissors. Besides this is not our business. Others will come who shall do it much better than we can. We thought that it was only us whom you were torturing. It turns out that there are others who will do the reckoning. It looks as if now they really mean business. You haven't more to wait! But in the meanwhile, since they all have their heads, why should you be different. Have it. (*Places the head on the leader's shoulders. Slaps it down with the palm of his hand so that it may fit better. Fixes the neck tie, and raises the lapels of the leader's frock coat. To all present*). Gentlemen, you may continue. Leader, you have had your shot. Please, remain absolutely motionless. Monsieur referee! (*Waves his hands*). Three. Monsieur Lavoisin's shot. (*Leaps through the window*).

Curtain.

(Illustrations by D. Moor)

B. Jasiensky
Ball of the
Mannequins

CHMYKH

1

The March night was heavy with the first spring dampness. There were no stars, just as if they had melted into the swollen clouds.

"A good night!" thought Chmykh and began to urge on his mare. On such a night the village sleeps soundly, without turning over. The soft spring roads no longer tipped the sleighs' runners-up, but the wheels were still in sheds bestuck with hen dung. The horses were scraping off their winter fur on rough corners and were nibbling at one another's itching backs. The dogs were celebrating their marriage, they made away from the farmyard and rambled in packs over the fields behind the threshing-floors.

"A good sort of time!.."

Chmykh whipped the mare on her touchy flank and she gave a leap, tossing up her head.

But here the wood began to thin out. From the darkness came upon him white raggy patches of snow, scattered among the trees. Chmykh came to the outskirts of the wood, slid down from his saddle and tied the mare to a tree. With a rope he tied the horse's warm mouth so that she could not even think of neighing.

He gave one more pull at the halter — tight! — and shuffled away through the underbrush with a hasty sweeping gait.

In a gully near the village Chmykh sat down on a small stump and lighted a cigarette. He inhaled it several times; the cigarette burned up with a blue flame and scorched the tough skin on his sinewy fingers, thick like shoe-leather... The tiny blaze lighted up Chmykh's black drooping whiskers and his hooked nose, which protruded vigorously from the midst of the mass of black, curly hair.

The moon broke through the clouds, as if a huge horse's eye were looking down on Chmykh.

Between the barns, across the hemp-field Chmykh leaped like a light nocturnal bird, and became silent. Directly in front of him rose the tousled roof of the farm. Occasionally the moon glistened on the icicles which hung like a necklace along the cornice of the roof.

It is quiet... The village sleeps. Chmykh lightly clambered over the wattle-fence, and by means of the logs piled in a heap by the wall, crawled up onto the roof. In a flash he became motionless, listened hard and jumped down the pitch of the roof into the farmyard.

Everything was as it had been three months before, only then the dogs had not been celebrating their weddings and, damn their hides, had stubbornly refused to leave the farmyard, digging themselves into the warm straw of the summer-corn.

Chmykh, his impatient fingers undoing the cord round his drab peasant's coat, bent his ear to the wall of the *izba*¹. Within, all was still. He pressed a nine-foot fire-log against the wicket-gate, and, as though in his own farmyard, went up to the barndoor and took down the bolt. The doors, with a creak, opened wide of themselves.

The creak of the doors froze Chmykh to the ground... There, the peasant is already awakening from his drowsy torpor, hearing through his dreams the complaining, evil signal, and, axe in hand, is slinking to the porch, from the porch into the farmyard...

Chmykh kept quiet, just behind the lintel, snatching up a bolt drawn from a waggon.

Well?

No, that only seemed so... Everything is still. His sleep is narcotic, the sleep of early spring cannot lightly be broken. The peasant is sleeping.

Releasing the grip of his fingers which had frozen to the waggon-bolt, now unnecessary, Chmykh again reached for his rope. From the numerous odours his nose fished out the smell of the stable, the only one dear to his heart. By the thickness and spiciness of the smell Chmykh, could tell without looking how many horses were in the cattle-shed, but, even without that, he knew that a pair of sorrels were standing in the stable — one with triangular markings, a twenty-year old ramshackle, and another, with a thick, flowing tail and mean eyes.

With a tuft of hay in his hands Chmykh edged into the horse-shed. He smacked his lips loudly, snuffed his nose, and rustled the hay. Right now the foal, greedy for food, will step out of the darkness and, slanting his eyes, will pounce on the crunching hay.

All is silent.

Chmykh's heart began to beat harder. Feeling along the wall with his hand, he moved forward to meet the horse, testing the ground with his outstretched foot.

Could they have gone somewhere? No, the sleigh is at home.

Chmykh, holding back his breath, listened intently.

There, behind the wall, you can hear the cows chewing their cud, the sheep irregularly stamping their hoofs and the hogs sleepily grunting, but here it is as still as in a cellar. And, all of a sudden something came toward him out of the dark and fell in a ball at his feet, rending the quietness with a babyish, squealing cry.

Chmykh rushed headlong from the cowshed, leaped across the farmyard and tore out of the gate. The gate swung wide with a rising creak and with a slam again banged shut. Somewhere a dog began to bark. A cock, awakened by the noise, began to crow at that untimely hour.

Chmykh sprang across last year's vegetable beds, catching his feet in the cabbage stumps. Sometimes he went into a hole up to his knee and, swearing by the devil, Chmykh furrowed the softening snow with his hands.

The failure discouraged Chmykh: instead of hustling along to the clearing by the shortest path he made a useless detour and came up wringing wet to where his mare stood.

She was standing there, drooping to the ground her muzzle tied with the cord.

Chmykh tossed his lanky body onto the horse, with a sharp jerk of the bridle brought her head up and began to lash her on the belly, on the eyes, on the ears with the cord, with his feet and fists, just as if the mare were to

¹ *Izba*, peasant hut.

blame for his failure. Maddened, she tossed and spun in the glade, fell to her knees, kicked out with her hind feet, but Chmykh, like a tick, seemed to have grown tight to her back. Distending the whites of her great, round eyes, the mare rushed off down the road at a mad gallop.

2

It was with difficulty the dawn forced its way through the panes, overgrown with filth and soot, to fill the izba with its grey, turbid light.

The ancient izba had grown thin and lame, its tumble-down walls had to have huge logs tucked under them, since they were ready to give way at any minute and expose all the secrets of Chmykh's way of life.

The floor had grown into the earth, the ceiling, pursuing the retreating floor and creaking from time to time, bent down as far as the stove and there stuck, as if deep in thought. And when Chmykh went to bed on the stove, he was obliged to make a great effort to squeeze his great body between the drooping girder and the heated bricks.

Only Ksiusha and Sanka, grey-eyed and lively like cockroaches, were at ease on the stove; in winter they stayed there from morning to night, it was here their friend, the tomcat Barin, found shelter from the cold; they would harness him to a bast-shoe; there also lived a cricket, a tireless violinist, who by his music lent variety to the children's lives.

Chmykh slammed the door, but no one started up to meet him and that made him angry. He unlatched the noisy oven-door and lighted up its black insides with a match: isn't there something to eat? But there were only some leggings flattened out, the children's wet bast-shoes, and a kettle drying bottom up.

He slammed the oven-door with a bang and crawled over to the cupboard, found a crust of stale bread and began to gnaw at it greedily, at the same time sipping water.

Chmykh stared intently at some fixed point and ate. His devouring nose moved too, as if taking part in his eating.

"You've come back? But I thought you'd dropped out of sight again for a week or two," his wife raised her head, rubbing her eyes.

"Well, don't you see? Gone blind?"

Suddenly Chmykh felt injured to think that here he is struggling, striving, and then nothing to bite one's teeth on... And he howls out:

"Sleep and rot, damn you! Well, what do you think you're staring at? Wha-a-at?..."

Chmykh got heavily up from the table and silently crawled on to the stove. Shoving the children aside in order to make room for himself, he blundered on to the warm, soft cat-fur.

And suddenly it flashed on his memory: the dark horse-shed, the torturing search for the sorrel foal and the wild, child-like cry from under his feet. So, it was cats who cried out so, celebrating their March love!

Barin suddenly flew into the air and, goggling his green eyes, began to howl. His tail was being twisted with unbearable pain. The cat fought and scratched, but Chmykh only squeezed his fist all the tighter.

Ksiusha and Sanka woke up and half drowsily began to vociferate, staring with frightened little eyes. Ksiusha grabbed the cat's paw and began to pull it toward himself.

"Pa-apa-a, don't beat him!"

"Pa-a... pa-a," Sanka repeated her words.

His wife jumped up.

"Stop it, you heathen! Cut out the kid's tricks! You'll kill it!"

"And I will!"

Chmykh like a wild beast was squeezing the slender neck of the cat, avenging his defeat of that night.

The cat had already stopped yowling, and was only breathing hoarsely, stretching, out its little tongue, like a little piece of rose-colored ribbon.

"Pa-a-pa, dont beat! Pa-a-a..."

"A-a-a... Pa-a-a..."

Ksiusha and Sanka with their tiny bodies fell on their father's fierce hand, trying to take the cat away.

"Take it, you, take it!"

Chmykh of a sudden flung Barin upon the floor, and the cat whirled about on the threshold.

Ksiusha jumped down from the stove and covered the animal with a dock-cornered little handkerchief.

Chmykh crawled in under the black beam, pressing against the bricks, but the stove, now growing cold, did not warm his chilled feet.

He kept turning from side to side. He coughed, spat on the floor, muttered something to himself in his beard and again went on rolling uneasily from side to side.

Where had the horses got to? Sold?.. But would a peasant part with his horse just before the plowing? Died? No, then the peasant would certainly have been roving sleepless and mournful about the farmyard. No, a farmer like that couldn't sleep without waking up!..

Well, where had they gone to?! Yes, and this had happened quite recently: Chmykh recalled soft horse-turds trampled by his feet in the stable.

"And they have announced a meeting for the evening... Heard them talking again about a collective farm..."

Chmykh did not stir at the melancholy voice of his wife. He did not take any interest in farming, and it was all one to him. Shutting himself off in his solitude from the village, fleeing their meddlesome glances, Chmykh began to burn with a dull hate toward the village noises. Even the single little window he had stopped up with rags, so that the hostile peasant eye should not penetrate the muddy panes.

Perhaps Chmykh hid because these noises and the early spring neighings of the horses at the drinking-places reminded him of those days when he too was just such a peasant, greedy for land; when his farmyard also smelled of the manure of cows and sheep? But the cows had died! and the village jeered at Chmykh when he dragged them to the gully.

And the first horse Chmykh succeeded in stealing created a deep impassable abyss between his hut and the thousands of straw roofs which surrounded his tumble-down farm.

There began an uneven and cruel combat. Chmykh persecuted the village, penetrated through its thatched huts and, like the autumn wind, disappeared into the fields, clinging to the horse's mane. The village raced after Chmykh to tear its enemy to bits with blows of their stakes.

That was a life...

His own village he did not touch, just as the mother-wolf does not touch the sheep of a village close to her lair. His fellow-villagers were rather afraid of Chmykh and hated his farmyard, beittered by the winds. Chmykh paid them back in their own coin.

And now, a new-fangled idea: collective farms or some such... He had many times heard the word "kolkhoz", and it had always irritated him: with this word were connected unending meetings, hub-bub and anxiety.

Kolkhoz... Kol... khoz. And suddenly Chmykh saw before him: one peasant after another brings sorrels, blacks, greys, browns, pie-balds. The barn-doors creak... The horses neigh. The earth flies from under their feet. They lead the horses through some tremendous new door or other, and over the door is a sign:

Kolkhoz

The long string of horses disappears into the black gulf of the doorway, and it becomes so still around that you can even hear your eyelashes flutter over your sleepless eyes.

So that's where the horses went to!

Chmykh hastily jumped down from the stove and went out on the street.

He stopped the first passer-by, uncle Akim, with the question:

"There's a kolkhoz in Chernetovka, eh?"

"A kolkhoz there is, brother... Heard tell they've gone into a commune, the fools... And in Pershina a kolkhoz... And in Teliatkina also... And in Mokhovaia Guta... Devil knows what's going on, brother!"

Uncle Akim winked, but it seemed to Chmykh as if he meant: "Well, brother, and now you'll have no place to steal horses?"

Chmykh returned to his izba and sank down on the stove in silence.

He felt as if something unconquerable and mighty like a thunder cloud were moving against him. There Chmykh received his first real blow at Chernetovka. "And in Pershina... And in Teliatkina... And in Mokhovaia Guta"...

What will come of it in the future? Chmykh lay with eyes closed and whispered to himself: "Kolkhoz... Kol... khoz..." It seemed to him as if they were driving gigantic stakes all around his izba, shutting Chmykh off from the world as if in a cage, so that he would have no place to go now to carry on his trade.

Now they are building long barns like those the landowners used to have, they hang huge locks as big as a horse's head, they set watchmen with guns — go and steal if you dare!

Chmykh even quaked in fear after this discovery.

Something hated and powerful seemed to be overtaking him — the same as getting away from pursuit. Chmykh often felt at his back the panting of the infuriated peasants and the rapid beat of the horses' hoofs, but, elusive, he always slipped away in the night, into the thickness of the forest, into the roadless morass of autumn fields. But now where could he get to?

Kol... khoz!

Furious, he rasped his throat.

No, you can't do Chmykh down!

He would shatter locks as big as a horse's head and give the watchmen with guns what-for! Chmykh will get what he wants!

He began to cheer up. He sprang down from the stove and, whistling a little song, set to cut out with his knife a boy's trick from a small plank, then wormed a piece of tow from the wall; in Chmykh's hands the piece of wood came to life: a lively steed kicking up his legs and bulging his eyes, flutters to the breeze a marvelous, fluffy tail...

3

The puddles of spring water turned to rose, reflecting the April dawn, full of sap smelling of the awakening earth. Throaty roosters crowed, somewhere dove-colored smoke already streamed from chimneys hidden in the thick straw.

Shpak walked along the street with a slow, sticky step. He noted the half-asleep morning face of the village, and frowned... All these same izbas, flattened against the earth, that same impassable mud sucks in Shpak's boots and gurgles as if alive... But this is the commune and Shpak is president of the commune. Just now at home Shpak may have snored hard enough, but here he must not...

He turned the corner. At the little wing of the house, tousyheaded and crook-nosed, Churba was puffing at a cigarette.

"And where to have you let yourself out so early? Or don't you sleep well on a peasant's bed?"

Churba's voice was mocking and venomous.

Shpak stood still:

"Evidently, Churba, sleeplessness came to visit you? Thinking about the soil?"

"About plowing, president... If the earth isn't used to that kind of treatment, it might roll up like a hedgehog... So many people crawl out over it at once, it'll take fright. It, the soil, requires quiet handling... And the horses again... Is that any way to do things? They've driven them all into one shed, but there's no way out".

Churba cautiously put out his cigarette and waved his hand hopelessly.

"But why don't you look after them yourself?"

Churba turned half way to the side, as if avoiding looking at Shpak.

"We a-are loo-oking. Yes, sirree..." And he became silent, pressing his dry lips tight.

Shpak felt a little as if yesterday's sensation of vexation and anger at the stubborn weight of these short words were coming upon him again. They stick to the brain, as this impenetrable spring mud to his boots.

He looked down at his feet, loaded with mud, at his city clothes and again frowned. He glanced at Churba and caught sight of his envious eyes.

"But you must certainly exchange your pants... In your riding-trousers you scared the village dogs out of their wits..."

Churba, smiling spitefully, felt the cloth of Shpak's trousers.

"Good wear in them, by gad, uh?"

It seemed to Shpak as if, along with Churba, the awakening izbas with lightening eyes were feeling him, and the crows on Churba's willow-tree were looking at him extremely sharply. And, guessing Churba's wish, he asked gaily and unconcernedly:

"Well, don't you think I'll exchange?"

"Wha-at?" Churba drawled out in delight.

He jumped away and quickly brought a pair of home-spun pants with a white fir-tree pattern and a piece of suet into the bargain.

Right there, in the wing of the house, Shpak took off his riding-trousers and pulled on Churba's pants, shrunk from washing.

And when Shpak with much jerking was pulling on the damp boots, Churba expressed himself approvingly on Shpak's new boots. Shpak, as if afraid of something, hastily stepped off down the street. Having gone along a little away, he wheeled about and called out:

"It'll soon be plowing-time, Churba!"

"We'll give it a good stirring up, comrade Shpak, so that the juice'll go into the ground! We'll stir it up!" Churba called out to him in a young, mocking voice.

Shpak, laughing, walked through the village to the end where the long stable of the kolkhoz rose up on a dry hillock. From a distance Shpak could already hear the stamping of the horses' hoofs on the planking of the floor

and a dry scrunching, just as if in this many-colored and spacious building, so unusual in a village, there were a big machine strenuously and confidently at work. Shpak stood on the hillock, lovingly looking over the yellow expanse of fresh straw roofs. There it is — the commune... In this long barn is the result of Shpak's long efforts, nights of hubbub and smoke-filled meetings; there down below is the former village, scattered among two hundred and forty-seven little worlds, shut off by wattle fences, wooden barriers and planks, but here a many-legged machine is already working and rumbling to the tune of two hundred horse-power... Here is the heart of the commune.

Shpak walked through the horse stables with the air of a proprietor and the warmth of the stable and the titillating smell of horse's urine swept over him.

In the stalls, separated by poles, horses' heads, heads... heads without end. And look there is one, dropped down, become leaden.

"What's wrong with him?"

The stableman, old Anisim, flipped his fingers in his tobacco-box, dropped a pinch of the greenish snuff into his wide-open nostrils and sneezed straight at the weary muzzle of the horse, but, as before, the horse was uninterested and still.

"I suppose his owner is plaguing him of nights. After a night he's all of a froth, I hear they drove him a hundred versts... But Terekh — this is Terekh's horse — cries out, I'll take him away home, you and your commune, devil take you! That's how it is, the owner plagues him, the Domovoi¹ has paid a visit, that's what..."

"We must cure him, we don't need any house-spirits!"

Shpak look at the drooping head of the horse.

"Of course, we must cure him, yes sirree..." and he stammered, frowning with his bushy eyebrows...

Shpak tramped helplessly around the sick horse.

"... But if glanders should strike us of a sudden? That'd be an end to the stables, an end to the commune. Everything would cave in at once..."

From the fields gradually turning dry and dark-colored, a warm breeze was wafted into the stable, reminding Shpak of the approaching plowing.

At dinner-time Terekh came, swearing like the devil. He roped up his ailing gelding and led him away to his own farmyard.

At dusk a man came up to Terekh's izba, stood under a birch which guarded Terekh's early slumber, and stood there motionless. The wind swayed the tree and caused its long, bare arms to wave above the dark windows. The izba stared at this man with alien eyes. In the dark a bushy-tailed carved cock turned to blackness upon the roof, and the man recalled how quite recently tying himself to the chimney, he had nailed this cock to the high ridge-pole of the roof. He shrank up, as if from cold, and rubbed his hands.

From the court he could hear the horse's neighing, and, although he knew beforehand that it was not his horse, the man gave a start, drew himself up and silyly tittered. If Terekh had not been asleep, he would have heard, in the souging of the wind, the man's sighing whisper:

"So... so... Let's go... A bold beginning is a job half done."

But Terekh slept peacefully on, and the man, hugging the ground wolf-fashion, hastened to Churba's hut. He stood still for a minute, listened hard and cautiously, into stillness, and banged at the glass...

And alarm ran through the commune: the women fidgetted, nagging at the peasants, the members of the commune wandered from hut to hut: we

¹ "Domovoi" — a house spirit, inhabiting each house, always threatening misfortune and requiring to be appeased.

must take our horses away... Shpak flew hither and thither, sensing the approaching catastrophe...

But at night Churba came blundering into the administration hut. For a long time he rummaged the hut with uneasy eyes, was silent for a bit, and suddenly boomed out, shaking from Shpak the sweet weariness of slumber:

"Nothing good will come of it, comrade!.. Nothing at all. Is that the way to do things: worrying the horses to death? I notice my foal too for some reason or other is pining away more and more every day; there won't be anything to plow with, and that's that!"

Shpak looks into Churba's eyes and sees in them smouldering anger and fear. And this fear with its poisonous acid soaked into Shpak's heart.

Shpak had worked with a pneumatic hammer at assembling car-frames and thought, as he finished off rivet after rivet in the racket of the shop, that peasants are just like rivets, only of a different size. And it seemed to him as if a kolkhoz was also a heavy-weight train car, and the peasant was in it like a rivet in a car... In the beginning it turned out something like that too. But now Shpak sees that the rivets have again begun to stir and are starting to fall out of their holes.

But Churba went on with what he had to say:

"I see perfectly well the horse has become thin-ribbed. Although the food's all right, but so, from pining... A beast is an animal, and accustomed to man. I'll take him away to my farmyard, comrade, and that's that..."

Here's Terekh... And here's Churba... The rivets are loosening, Shpak's heavy-weight train car is falling to pieces.

Suddenly the crack and sound of glass.

"Comrade Shpak! An ill-day! They have taken the horse away!!"

The lamp blazed up smokily and went out from the wind. Shpak, bootless and hatless, rushed into the farmyard, into the April darkness, into the impassable mud, as sticky as glue; he runs, gurgling steps through the wet mush, and shouts:

"Comra-a-ades... a-a-ades... a-ades!"

Churba, waving his arms and gasping, tears straight across the vegetable gardens, like a night bird in alarm. Terror and dread for his sorrel foal bear him along with wild swiftness.

From the frantic izbas, like wasps from nests which have been disturbed, the peasants, members of the commune, came leaping out, and, half-asleep, running upon bark and logs, they tore along up to the stables.

The stables were shaken by a whirlpool of human and equine bodies. Neighing, shouting, stamping of horses, anger, curses... Then, all at once they gushed out through the wide gates, into the night, and the earth resounded under their hoofs.

But a misfortune happened to Chmykh — the horse went lame.

He can't get away now. From behind, the gallop of many horses is growing in strength, he can already hear the loud yells and the neighing of the horses striding in full heat.

In a minute the sorrel will call out, give voice — and that's the end of Chmykh! A tatter of his coat — one! And into the distended maw of the horse, with his fist, as into a deep hole — and a cord around his muzzle, with a knot so tight it cut the skin.

The sorrel lunges, rears and falls to the ground... Into the gully... Wait for them to go by... Meanwhile conceal one's self... Let them follow the spring wind down the roads...

Chmykh crouched in the gully, which was deep and still. The mother-wolf, with low hanging belly, was wandering in the brush, and her eyes shone

like two greenish stars. Hunger twisted her insides, dried her throat. A famished shudder clamped her jaws. She wanted to howl long and evilly. The noise and shouting reminded her of the horrors of the beating-up and, sorrowing about the fate of her unborn wolflings, turning her long-eared head to the black sky, she howled a long drawn out and shuddering howl.

Chmykh swore in his drooping moustaches, took firmer grip of the rein, sat on top of the sorrel, which was quivering from fear and pain, and began to think.

...Oh, well he had won... The locks had not kept him out, the watchmen had not given the alarm, and their old, rusted rifles had traitorously been silent. But there is no joy in Chmykh's heart. Like a ring the members of the kolkhoz have the gully in their grip...

The horse has lost the use of his legs... It will soon be dawn... Now you can't jump off forty versts before morning in order to hand over the horse into Maksimka's sure hands. Spend the day in the woods? But suppose of a sudden, that Maksimka too is in this... kolkhoz?

Chmykh felt as if his back were suddenly turned damp and beneath his cap his wet hair seemed to melt.

There, he seemed to be riding up to Maksimka's remote farmstead, but above it was a huge signboard:

Maksimka's kolkhoz

From everywhere, from every side this dreadful word is moving in on him, irresistible and terrible as death. The maddened sounds of the chase come ever nearer.

In the sky towered up a black cloud unseizable by human eye and with shaggy claws put out the stars. Look, there is a handful of stars left, look, ten or so of them, but look again, a single one is twinkling pitifully, the last of them.

Hunger tortured the wolf's throat with a prolonged howl.

It is close-by and melancholy... Anger at himself boiled over and struck Chmykh with its hopelessness, but somewhere within him, beneath his heart, there grew and swelled a mad daring.

Chmykh, laughing, released the horse's maw from the gag, and the sorrel, trembling and quivering convulsively, neighed long and loudly into the April night.

4

In the morning, the chase, hoarse, foam-covered, besplashed with spring mud, returned empty-handed, and the gloomy Churba, sliding down from his horse, beat the ground with his tousled head.

But from the window of the administration comrade Shpak looked out at him and laughed.

He looked at the window, moved his eyes in the direction of the hook-nosed peasant sitting opposite on the bench and again laughed.

Yes, and how could he help laughing when about him there were such wonderful doings and wonderful people!

There, a man, huge of stature, is sitting across from Shpak. On his shoulder a tear, his eyes bored into a corner, and their steel, grey light is deceptive and concealed. But, come along you! He came along before the dawn.

"Who is chief boss among you? Is this your horse, perhaps? If it hadn't been for me, your horse would have croaked out... Here it was standing in an aspen-wood, tied to a tree, lame and hungry."

He sighed, and stroking the horse with the air of a proprietor began to curse at Shpak:

59

"You don't seem to keep an eye on your horses... but horses like being looked after. Here, take him, only I expect a bottle from you of course..."

Shpak opened the window and shouted out:

"Churba! Quit knocking the earth with your old bean! Your horse has long since been chewing oats in the stable... Oh, they're queer ones, these peasant-collectivizers!"

What should he say to this hook-nosed fellow? But the hook-nosed chap simply sat there and would not go away. He smoked, spat and kept still.

"Shall I arrest him?" thought Shpak and right then called himself an idiot. "Arrest him for bringing the horse? Where has that ever happened?" But that man is somehow right enough, yet impossible to understand. Shpak had never yet met such. "We-e-ell..."

"But what sort of a man are you? What trade do you know?"

The hook-nosed fellow wriggled his funny-looking nose and looked at Shpak apathetically.

"Well horse-shoeing... I have been a horse-smith. I can let the unclean blood out of a horse. A bad horse, I just twist his tail, recognize him in a flash..."

"We-e-ell-!" Shpak lighted up.

"And I know a spell against the foot-and-mouth disease... And I can chase away the house-spirit, so he won't come back for a century... I can... and make foaling easier..."

"House-spirit?! Oh you, specialists! That's the kind of specialist we need! Ha-ha-ha! Please cast your spell, and I'll get the better of these house-spirits. Ha-ha-ha! I can't get on with them no how! What do they call you?"

"They call me a letinary, well..."

"Oh you, clown! Letinary! Clever! Well and there's work for you... You have a look at Terekh's horse: he's gone wrong somehow. Will you take a look? That's fine luck!"

Churba entered the hut. His eyes shone joyfully in his yellowed face, and he had a festive air.

"There's whom you have to thank, Churba!" Shpak pointed with his finger to the corner. "And give him money for a drink or so..."

Churba looked around, caught side of Chmykh and suddenly clouded over. With half closed eyes he looked Chmykh over from his bastshoes to his shaggy cap, and it was plain he did not trust this long-legged, hook-nosed stranger.

They brought vodka and Chmykh poured it down greedily from the mouth of the bottle which he kept all the time to his lips.

He stared at Churba independently and blusteringly, and it seemed to Shpak as if they were testing each other's strength like cocks before the fight. Then Churba turned about heavily and spitting went out. With the light gait of one accustomed to long marches, Chmykh stepped along behind him, grinning and showing his horse teeth.

5

Shpak opened the tight door and stepped into the porch. In the big well-lighted izba everything seemed empty and bare. Terekh's scanty goods and chattels did not fill its spacious corners. Terekh did not even turn about on the bench before the little window but stiffened like a motionless ball.

"Well, how about it, Terekh, your gelding? Is it getting better?"

V. Ilienkov

Chmykh

Terekh was silent, combing his beard with his hand.

"Why did you take the horse away? Trying to be original?"

"Well, let it die in its own farmyard — and no more said..."

Terekh with a mean thrust flung the little window open.

"I thought it was too early to bury the gelding, Terekh! We've found a horse-doctor, we'll cure it..."

Terekh bent to get up from the bench.

"A doctor! City people can't understand that business: it's not that sort of a sickness, brother..."

Shpak remembered his conversation with Anisim the stableman and laughed out loud.

"No, indeed... We've dug out one, a real one, you bet! We've found such a curer that no house-spirit can resist him."

"Well?" Terekh began to take some interest.

"One of your horse-doctors... And a real, curing sort of mug, too. Only the understanding is, bring the gelding to the stable, on the hill... We'll cure it there".

Terekh's eyes again became dull. In indecision he moved his hair-covered lips.

"Have a look yourself Terekh... Next week we begin the plowing. Do you think you'll dig up the ground with your fingers, eh?"

Terekh's eyes thoughtfully wandered all over the izba, brushing against Shpak with their distrustful glance.

"Uh, Terekh! You ought to be the first to stand firm like a mountain for our commune! You see, what sort of an izba they put you in, why it's a regular summer-resort with sanatorium. Brought you late in life with your old woman to live happily in the kulak's hut. But you keep spinning things out..."

Terekh slowly, unwillingly took down the bridle from the wooden peg by the door and went out of the izba, staringly fixedly at the corner adorned with saint's images.

In the stable there were so many people, you could scarcely force your way through. They surrounded the sorrel foal, examining the hero of the night's events, yes and they were curious to have a look at the "letinary".

Chmykh, drinking a little bit and merry, had got poultices ready from hay chaff. He purposely slowed down his movements, acted importantly and, looking the crowd over, drawled out his story:

"Well, tha-a-at's how... So I am going through the wood, I am very late, ye-e-es. But it is night, why there is a horse, a black one. And the wolf is howling as if greedily... We-ell, that's what... Just look, the ho-orse is there in an aspen-grove, near the road. It makes me feel creepy, I somehow have a feeling. Only no, I hear it piss, a horse, by gad! I go-o-o up to it, feel it over".

The people stood still, holding their breath, listened to Chmykh's exciting story.

Only Churba, stroking the sorrel, frowned more and more and with searching eyes tried to penetrate behind the wattle-fence of flexible and some how sly words, by which the hook-nosed "letinary" was shutting himself away from Churba... But the hook-nosed fellow wove his story on and on, winning the attention of the people with his sing-song, slightly nasal voice. Churba saw the essence of the "letinary" hiding away from him, became angry and shouted:

"Well, haven't you seen all you want? You only hinder us from curing the horse..."

But the crowd even more tightly ranged itself around Churba, the sorrel and Chmykh.

Chmykh needed hot water. While they ran for the water, Chmykh again began to relate:

"We-ell, that's how... I felt it over..." And he drawls out this word so that Churba even began to twist and turn uneasily, as if he actually felt someones' cold hands feeling him over under his shirt.

"But the ho-orse, I see is you-ung... I see it by his teeth..."

"How is that, at night, and you recognized it by the teeth?" Churba took alarm, and an uncertain surmise caught his throat. Churba did not say anything aloud, his eyes merely lowered more and more, stopping on the dark, hook-nosed face.

They brought the water. Chmykh made a poultice for the sorrel, and turned his attention to Terekh's gelding. He pulled him by the tail, kneaded his swollen stomach, opened his mouth, at which the gelding showed his old, quite triangular, yellow-grey teeth. In each of Chmykh's movements Churba saw a confirmation of his surmise, but he restrained himself, griping his teeth, and turned a shade darker.

The members of the commune watched the hook-nosed horse-doctor with respect.

6

For a whole week Chmykh had been nursing Churba's sorrel and Terekh's gelding. They fed Chmykh well. Whistling merry tunes and delighting in the pleasant movement of food in his erstwhile famished stomach, he would loll on the bed in Terekh's spacious izba where Shpak had settled him.

His home, his family, the old, tumble-down hut had become bedimmed by dove-colored smoke, and Chmykh snored on, free of care. But soon his peace of mind came to an end. And Terekh and Anisim and Churba, sitting for long periods in the hut, pierced him through and through with their suspicious eyes.

Then Chmykh would go out to the stables and because he had nothing better to do would look the horses over. He felt easier with them. He understood the look of their big, round eyes and by the movements of their sensitive ears he could grasp their horse thoughts. Chmykh would walk about the barn and from among the horses would pick out his favorite breeds, their restive eyes and their tails as thick as tousled flax. You could feel every quivering sinew under the short spring coat, and Chmykh could even hear their enormous, equine hearts pounding under their ribs, pouring the blood in and out.

With his birdlike eyes he noted the chronic illnesses of the horses — in Anisim's mare he remarked malanders and terrified the old man.

"Neglected the disease... Very harmful... You'll lose the horse."

After that Anisim courted Chmykh every day and treated him to snuff. But Chmykh would snarl back:

"Well, what have I to do with you, anyway, signed on, or what?"

And on the day when Terekh's gelding, thrusting his emaciated muzzle into the crib, began to devour hay greedily, and Churba's sorrel began to buck-jump merrily at the watering-place, Chmykh came to Shpak to square accounts.

"Well what does this mean brother? Going away?" Shpak asked anxiously.

Chmykh, belching from plentiful eating, was silent.

"How is this that you are going away?" Shpak thoughtfully fixed the sentence which had stuck to his tongue. "Where are you driving off to?"

"Yes, that's it... Came to fix accounts with you and me..." He said that carefreely, and suddenly as if from nowhere the old, dilapidated izba, the bare farmyard and the shabby cat Barin swam into memory. He belched from plentiful soups, from nice-smelling bacon, and from the same unknown leapt out the empty, black kettle in the cold stove.

"Going back to the farm..." Chmykh added in a cracked voice. He did not believe his own words.

"But where are you going to? To your stove, like a bear, to suck your paw? Stay here... We'll give you a salary..."

Shpak noticed how the hook-nosed "letinary" shuffled his long legs, how his birdlike eyes jumped along the ceiling, as if he were examining something there, something unexpectedly found.

But there was Anisim at the threshold.

"Listen here, president, let him cure the mare... She has the malanders... He helped Terekh with his remedy... He practically made another leg for Churba's foal, but doesn't want to help my mare. Is my mare any worse than theirs? Well, I guess I'm just as good a member of the commune, begad..."

"Do you hear?" Shpak fixed his eyes on Chmykh.

Chmykh dropped his eyes.

"Yes, each of them cares only about his own, but they don't see that the stables are full of such mares. Yes and what about me? If they only wouldn't hinder me. But one wants one thing, another some-thing else... Well, once I say it, I'll do it".

"You'll do it, veterinary! Agreed! Cover your card! Bring things into order!" Shpak jumped about merrily. "Only your muzzle doesn't please Churba, that's all. Ha-ha-ha! But there's no going by faces! Isn't that so?"

"There are different sorts of muzzles in the world... What's your mug got to do with it...?" Chmykh took offence and grumbling, went out with Anisim.

Shpak saw from the window how Anisim ran along in front of the hook-nosed chap and tried to prove something to him, but the "letinary", long-legged and awkward, walked along with lowered head, independently and proud.

Chmykh only went away to spend the night in the separate quarters given to him—the whole long spring day he jostled about the stable. He showed himself among humans seldom: he did not like the human crowding and curious eyes.

In the stable Chmykh was boss and commander.

"Hey, letinary! Manka's belly is troubled with wind somehow..."

"Hey, letinary! Wrangel refuses water for the second day..."

Chmykh hustled from one end of the long stable to the other, impregnate with spicy odour of horses; he busied himself about and, by various nostrums, cured both "Manka" and "Wrangel". And so the day passed.

Yes, if only to give each horse the once over, the day was too short — two hundred tails! In two rows stand white, black, sorrel, tall, short lean and puffy, smooth and shabby. But they chew up in one day as much hay as would last another peasant for a whole year.

They were pleased with Chmykh. Shpak could not praise him enough.

Only Churba grumbled that Shpak had no business hiring people who came from god knows where.

Often, watching Chmykh from afar, Churba would boom out: "You, keep an eye out! A muzzle like that... A suspicious-sort of man, strange, doubtful man..."

Chmykh sensed Churba's smouldering hate, and scrutinising his wrathful figure, read in Churba's eyes somewhat as follows:

"I don't believe you... I don't believe... I hate your birdlike eye and wolfish gait. You can't deceive the peasant's heart."

And then Chmykh frowned, turned angry, and beat the disobedient horse on the legs with the knout, till it hurt. Then you could hear from the street Chmykh panting hoarsely and sending god and his soul and his heart to the bloody devil.

But Churba only went on lisping:

"Do you hear? That's a were-wolf, not a man... Mysterious... a rough fellow..."

Chmykh couldn't sleep in the new place, just as if something were missing. Chmykh tosses from side to side and remembers: there was a time when Ksiusha with Sanka squirmed about under his side, like the kittens under a cat... And suddenly he was alarmed: well, what if Ksiusha or Sanka tumbles down on the ground at night? Then he reflected that the stove was not high, and they would only get scratched.

He couldn't get to sleep.

Chmykh got up and went out into the spring darkness, to the stables. The lanterns burned dimly in the passages, pouring their yellow light over the horse, cruppers. The hay crunched between the horses' teeth, as if an enormous machine were working uninterruptedly. A horse with a cold coughed painfully, with a whistle and rasp.

Chmykh stood still in the middle of the stable, and his greedy nostrils inhaled the sweet-smelling warmth of the horses' stalls. Well, there are two hundred horses standing there: take your pick, Chmykh, of any breed, any age... Chmykh loves sorrels, with a golden glint along their coat and mischief in their eyes... Well, there's a good 'un! And there's a better! It holds its neck like a trump, has a grim eye, it snorts, — a touchy horse. Its muzzle is right beside him; Chmykh even feels his warm breathing on his face. Here's the way to seize hold of his mane, and then put on the bridle. Chmykh is attracted to the horse, as to an awful precipice, and his hands of themselves stick to the horse's muzzle...

The sorrel snorted, but feeling the caressing tickling along his neck quieted down. Open the doorway, Chmykh, the guards are asleep, trusting the "letinary"... Faster, Chmykh, on to the smooth back... The heels clatter lightly on the wooden planking... There beyond the doorway, the spring night, narcotic, sleepy... There, many roads, in every direction...

Chmykh leaped on to the sorrel, pinching his warm belly with his trembling knees. And suddenly that last, ill-starred night rushed before Chmykh's eyes... The gully... The sickening cry of the wolf... The stars trembling in the sky... And again there swam before his eyes out of the darkness a huge red sign, and on it in white letters:

Maksimka's kolkhoz

Chmykh shuddered... The horse shuddered, reared, moved backward and neighed. And at once, two, five, ten horses burst out into an alarmed and sonorous neighing.

The air trembled and resounded, and it seemed to Chmykh as if the roof would at once burst from this wild neighing, and again the trembling stars twinkle above him. It seemed as if the wind whisked Chmykh from the sorrel, and the bridle, with its tinkling iron chains, flew off somewhere into a dark corner.

The sorrel foal came out of the darkness under the lantern, and bulging his tail with a whisk, looked in perplexity at Chmykh. In him there was

something childish, reminding him of Ksiusha, and Chmykh lovingly patted his soft mane, which was standing on end.

7

"Letinary! Shpak demands you at the stables... He says, why has Little Star split a hoof?"

Chmykh lies there, with long, black eyelids closed over his eyes, and as if asleep. A fly tickles him with its legs sucking at the eye-cavities, but Chmykh does not stir, just as if death had seized him.

"Letinary! Listen!"

Anisim the stableman stands over Chmykh and persistently awakens him with a stubborn, jarring voice.

"Is he dead, or what?" thinks Anisim and pulls at Chmykh's foot.

"Well, you cling like a gadfly to the mare, damn you!" Chmykh half rose and sat upright. "You all go shouting for the letinary, letinary... You don't give a man a chance to die..."

Chmykh pretends to be annoyed, but his voice betrays a pleasant self-satisfaction.

"Right away!"

Anisim goes out, but Chmykh again drops back on the bed, Anisim's entry scattered his interrupted thoughts more than ever.

"There's the sort of a week Chmykh knocks off in the commune. Not bad living... It's long since he ate so plentifully and slept so sweetly as here. But the chief thing is that they all come to Chmykh! No sooner does something happen in the stable, a horse falls ill, the peasants fall to wrangling, they run for the letinary: 'Come, brother boss, bring things into order.' And this is pleasant to Chmykh... How many years had he lived in his village without anyone's needing Chmykh. Everyone got along without Chmykh, and he was used to getting along without everyone. In his life, lopped off from all sides, there was left only the daring of his nocturnal adventures and the delight of feeling the hot blood under the horse's quivering coat... And here, in the enormous stable, among two hundred horses, some invisible force had seized hold of Chmykh and holds him. He wants to leave and he can't... You only change your mind and see..."

"Letinary... Still loafing away the time, egad?"

Anisim pushed his tousled head through the little window.

"Well he blew up! I'm coming... They're used to roaring..." grumbles Chmykh. "What have I to do with you, as a matter of fact..."

Chmykh thrusts his long legs far in front of him and Anisim stamps along after him with his sparrow-like, old man's tread.

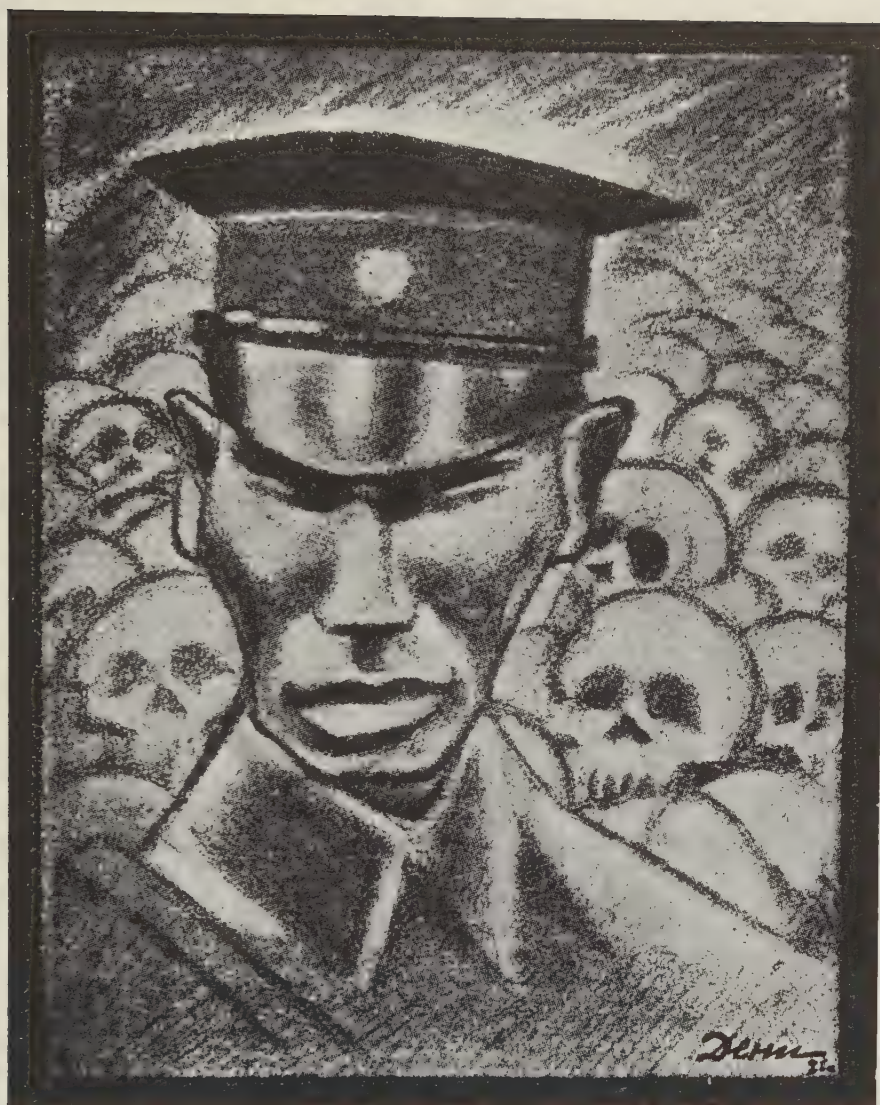
"Well, what can you do? Once you're tied to the job... Once power is given to you..."

"Po-o-wer..." unconcealedly pleased, Chmykh draws it out and somehow straightens himself up as he walks along. He bears his head high and scornfully, and it seems to him as if the izbas had been built in two rows in order to look on Chmykh, the boss of the horse division.

They were getting ready for the plowing...

The harness was being mended slowly. The plows, dumped into the barn had become red from rust and from the heap of this sick-looking scrap pile stuck up the plow noses, worm eaten by the plowing. The harrow points had fallen out of the old, rotten frames. The pitiable peasant gear, dragged out into the clear spring sunlight, exposed all its decay, rust, brokenness.

They began feeding oats, preparatory to the departure for field-work. The pigeons flew down into the food-troughs, packed their gizzards with oats



On the chinese stage

Drawing Deni

and then cooed loudly on the roof and fluttered their wings, warming themselves under the April sun.

Chmykh was sorting out the horses, dividing them according to strength into several brigades: round and with strong rears for the plow, the young and thin-ribbed for the harrow, but the old fellows with drooping lips for hawling, for every odd sort of requirement. There they brought up Yegorka's mare, hump-backed and sodden.

Chmykh looked her over with a businesslike air, felt over her maw, squeezed her throat, and when she coughed, giving the heaves, he called out: "Put her in for the hawling, to recover!"

And Yegorka gratefully treated Chmykh to tobacco, boasting of him: "That's a right sort of peasant, yes sir!"

They obeyed Chmykh without dispute, and he, enraptured by power, became kinder, sauntered about the stable with a mild smirk on his face.

8

In the quietness of the night the hasty words arose.

"... Do not chastise me, queen of heaven, have mercy on me saint Nicolas... For forty years I went out every spring behind my own plow, with prayer and piety went to my work, as to Christ's eucharist... But nowadays I must break Christ's law, I've been appointed, oh lord, to hold the front of the plowing line... The people are going out to plow to-morrow but my conscience feels like making the sign of the cross, because we have a commune; saints... oh Lord, have mercy, Lord, have mercy... mercy".

Terekh's head thumped the floor loudly, and his arms shurred like cockroaches, as they darted about in his invisible, constant crossing of himself...

It was a long time since Chmykh had prayed, he had become quite disused to reverend saints; he didn't need them, he himself found a way out of every difficulty. And hearing the strange prayer, Terekh's nocturnal depression seemed ridiculous to Chmykh.

Chmykh, holding back his breath, flattening down on the warm stove, caught up with greedy ear Terekh's uneasy words, but already an irresistible laughter was tickling his throat, and in order to restrain himself he hung till it hurt on to a tuft of his beard.

"Strengthen with thy hand, oh Lord, thy slave Terekh... pardon his unlawful thoughts, wrongful acts... I have violated thy sacred teaching, oh Lord... Do not covet your enemy's wife, nor his ass, nor his farmstead nor his cattle, and do not offend your neighbour... They have driven Potap, oh Lord, from his hut, but have put your sinful slave Terekh into that hut. It has come about that I have tasted the sweetness of life in my old age, but I feel... great is my sin, not to be put away by prayers, saint Nicolas our intercessor... Oh Lord have mercy... Lord have mercy..."

And the invisible water, storming in Terekh's breast, gurgled.

The bed creaked sharply, — Terekh's wife rolled over from the side on which she had lain long, onto her back. A cockroach dropped from the ceiling and got mixed up in Chmykh's thick beard, but Chmykh did not stir. In the indistinguishable, thick darkness Terekh's voice throbbed and died away:

"Not I alone, your slave Terekh, sinned and violated your eternal laws... The entire village has been changed, oh Lord, its whole life topsy-turvy, Nicolas our intercessor... To-morrow at dawn Churba goes out to plow with my gelding, and I with Churba's... Everything has been turned all ends about, oh heavenly queen... Make wise and enlighten thy slave Terekh..."

And again Terekh's old head beats the floor with a dull sound.

Chmykh almost went off to sleep, but then the window rattled slightly — starting with surprise, Terekh fell silent.

A second time the glass began to rattle.

"Who's there?"

Terekh, annoyed, pushed open the half of the little window. A suppressed tenor's voice asked:

"You're not sleeping, hey?"

"But you, obviously, are not dreaming on your feet?" Terekh answered sarcastically, with feeling. "Well, what?"

"I'm thinking about the horse, Terekh... How will he come out? A young horse, squeamish... doesn't like the knout... No, no".

"That hook-nosed devil's asleep, is he?"

"He's pounding the pillow all right..."

They fell silent. Chmykh could hear Terekh wheezing with effort as if he were carrying a burden up a hill.

"Listen, Terekh, my sorrel is reckoned into your column... Listen, you look after the colt... One bad hour, and they'd spoil him... Why did I come? You take him yourself, plow with him, I trust him to you... But otherwise they will spoil him right away..."

The voice faltered — the wind bore it away from the window.

"Yes, well, as for me... I won't.. I'll look after him".

"Fine, fine. You're a steady-going peasant, dependable... The main thing is not to use the knout on him... You only shake the reins on him, say: "Come along, old sorrel!" and he'll go... A knowing beast! But the main thing, not to use the knout, so that..."

For the third time someone knocked at the little window.

"I went up to the stables... I threw down a little hay for my horses and for your gelding..."

Chmykh could not hold out any longer, a thundering laugh broke from his throat, and filling the izba, flowed out through the window on to the street.

He rolled on the stove end, gasping from laughter, coughed and spat.

"Oh, you swamp devils! Oh-ho-ho-ho-ho! Ach, may the unclean spirit seize you! Ooh-hoo-ooh!..."

His stormy roar, it almost seemed, had broken the walls of the izba, the panes rattled as if frightened...

Terekh gone clean out of his head, ran about the hut, raved in the dark corners, and shouted in a frenzy:

"Control yourself, you unclean man! Shut up! Hear me?"

But Chmykh, just like a split bag of barley went on pouring out his mad laughter.

Terekh's wife half-asleep made the sign of the cross and groaned aloud; the chickens, taking alarm, began to cackle in the hay; the little dog yelped long and high under the window.

"Shut up! Do you hear, damn you!"

Terekh whispered hoarsely, tired, exhausted, burying his head in the pillow.

Chmykh ceased his roaring laughter and began to think. Much that surrounded Chmykh he could not straighten out in his head. Thoughts, like peasants at the village-meeting, clashed, wrangled together, were beaten down together into a disordered crowd.

The village bubbles and whirls, like high water in spring, and Chmykh, like a horse-turd from the winter's road, swirls in that flood, drawn along by its stubborn and powerful urge. Here's Terekh, in old age, when he can't sleep, meets the unfamiliar life with nocturnal prayers. Across the way, in

the administration hut, one electric light is still burning — that is probably Shpak, a city man, he is scratching something on paper... Churba skulks up to the stable to throw down an extra wisp of hay for his colt, but the stableman Anisim is probably swearing because he is violating the equality among the horses... But they all, Churba and Terekh and Anisim and Shpak in the morning will all go out together to stir the soil, and the brigadier Yegorka will act important, as he directs the column of horses... A wonderful time.

Chmykh sighed and turned over.

“Terekh!”

In the izba quiet had settled down, only the cockroaches moved overhead with a light scurring sound.

Terekh did not respond. He was emptied and kneaded flat by Chmykh's laughter. Ashamed of his midnight praying, Terekh was still, and with sleepless eyes watched the glass as it grew greenish.

The morning of the kolkhoz stirred in the fields.

9

The earth moved to meet the sun, turning over to be dried her side dampened during the night. The warming air leaped and played above the fields, and Shpak, looking at its quivering, bent his head mournfully...

Everything was ruined. There was left about an hour for the commune to get its plows ready and pull off to the fields, and then the awful thing happened...

As always, it happened almost unnoticed, skulking up, and quietly penetrating into the peasants' hearts and suddenly it upset everything: the columns and the plowing and the horse section — the entire commune, all of life.

And it happened thus.

They were harnessing the horses to the plows, evening the traces, twisting an extra knot on the stays. The horses, loth to work, bulged out their cruppers, stamped and neighed with displeasure, rolling their eyes. The colts pushed in toward their mothers' groins, greedily sucking the swollen tits, hindering the harnessing, getting tangled in the reins, causing annoyance.

A fair-haired lad drove away the sorrel colt a couple of times but the colt stubbornly went on trying to drink at his mother's udders. Then the lad angrily rushed on the colt. The knout gave a short whizz, and on the crisp coat of the colt a thick welt swelled up. The colt, going mad from pain, rushed away, got tangled up in the traces, and falling, let out a wild neigh. The mare in terror lunged to one side, the plow bucked, its mould-board glistening in the sun, and its sharp, pointed end went into the quivering sorrel belly... The blood spurted out.

Its owner or was it a neighbour — just try to find in a river that last drop, the force of which breaks the dam — struck the fair-haired lad straight in the face with his knout. The boy, screaming and showing his teeth, fell upon the offender. Gripping each other in anger as burning as the blow of the knout, they tussled on the ground, gripping each other's throat, rolling their noses in the warm horse-turds.

The peasants came running from every side, striking against the others' chests, and their arms convulsively sought the neighbor's throat.

“You will beat the horses? You lie!”

“No such rights are given to anyone”.

“You beat your own, but don't dare touch mine! Don't touch it, I tell you! You such and such!”

V. Ilienkov
Chmykh

"Take that! Take that!"

The knouts whistled, the peasants bitinglly welted each other with them. The horses plunged, and the plows leaped along horribly behind them, threatening them with death. The women howled, straying in fearful groups. The boys scattered among the wattle fences like flocks of frightened sparrows.

Shpak, hatless, tore out of the administration hut and cut right into the heart of the confounded crowd.

"Stop! Comrades, stop! One minute!"

The shouts, curses, thudding blows drowned out his voice. Shpak grabbed the fair-haired lad by the sleeve, dragged him off to one side and outdoing the racket of the crowd, shouted:

"What the hell do you think you are? But did you think up out of your stupid head?!"

The boy with his sleeve wiped his face smeared with dung and blood. He was shaking with fear and his broad, blue pants were quivering as if in the wind. The broken knout hung pitifully and weakly in his hand.

"Tell, you son of a b..., who gave you any such rights?"

Shpak bore with glittering angry eyes into the white-head, and the latter involuntarily backed away toward the barn.

"Kill him, the scoundrel!"

"Give him one in the snout, Shpak!"

"Where did you come from, you high-handed boss!"

"The knout, give it to him with the knout!"

The dishevelled beards, their hair, torn to whisps and in the scuffle, their sweaty shirts, fused into one iron ring, surrounding Shpak and the lad.

"I remove him from the plowing! I appoint him to clean the manure for a week in the stables! Is that right, comrades?"

Shpak was looking for a way out. He had to find some discharge for their accumulated anger, to break the ring about them.

"Right!"

"That's what serves him right, let him scrape manure!"

"Oh, what a scoundrel!" a powerful bass called out in honest astonishment.

The lad, in dismay and dread tried to back away, but the crowd pressed on him from every side.

Then Churba burst into the circle and brandishing his fists called out with his clear, tenor voice:

"Brothers! Peasants! We've had enough! Lead your horses away to your farmyards! I can't stand it any longer! Is such ill-treatment of a horse reasonable? Take your horses away!"

His cry swayed the crowd, squeezed it in a difficult point, and again roaring and hubbub foamed up to the sun.

"They urged, the leaders! They beat the horses to death! Who has fixed a trick like that? They killed a colt! Take them away!"

And the crowd rushed for the horses. Shpak saw the commune going to ruin: the peasants were seeking out their horse and hastily leading them off to their farmyards; the plows, thrown down, uselessly pecked at the ground with their sharp noses; the sun mockingly glittered in the dulled iron of the mould-boards... There were five men left on the square. Not knowing what to do with their horses, they looked at Shpak in indecision and gloom... The wounded colt was struggling nearby.

Chmykh came running up, Shpak was already standing alone on the square trampled up in the scuffle, with drooping head.

The earth rushed to meet the sun warming its sides fed by the spring moisture, but now the sun was unnecessary and out of place.

Chmykh hurried along the street of the village, senselessly poked into the farmyards and again rushed about the village. He saw the flood of horses scattering to the farmyards: that was the ruin of his horse department.

As if not believing what had happened, Chmykh ran up to the stables. The stalls, separated by birch rods, were empty. The pigeons cooed loudly and pitifully on the high rafters. The wooden lanterns, hung from thick supporting posts, seemed useless to Chmykh... Only now did he understand the senselessness of what was happening and feel acutely how pitilessly it was ruining the horse world which he had been running.

The cribs stretched out mockingly, filled with hay, the warm smell of fresh horse dung rose, creating bitter anger.

Chmykh tore a lantern from its post and shattered it into the corner. The sound of the glass and the alarmed flight of the pigeons sobered up Chmykh in an instant, he looked about himself and hastened energetically down upon the village.

On the square, stretching out his long legs, he brandished his fists and howled out:

"Hey, you swamp devils! Fools!"

And then Chmykh noticed the sorrel colt: the colt was trying to stand up, falling, beating the dust with his hoofs and intermittently, pitifully whinnying.

Chmykh jumped over to the colt, straightened out his leg, and noticed that his horse's blood was beating out in a black stream.

From the strenuous movements of the colt the wound was widening and in the aperture, the grey guts were coming into view. Chmykh recognized the colt — the witness of his last ill-chanced raid. In front of him the miserable remnant of the ruined stable was struggling from pain.

"Oh, you rascal... Got into trouble. Do you hear?"

Chmykh tore off his shirt and grabbed it in two places. With a rip the rotten linen threads parted. He cut the shirt hastily to shreds along the strips, bound them into a long band and, holding the colt by his knees, began to twist into shape his torn belly.

Bandaging the wound, Chmykh hastened. Sensing some dark connection between the colt's accident and his own fate, he thought that the main thing was not to let the colt die.

The colt submissively laid his head on Chmykh's knee and breathed fast, wriggling his furry ears. The mare anxiously whinnied, striking the ground with her hoof.

After binding up the wound, Chmykh caught up the colt in his arms and went down the road to the stables. The mare dashed along after.

The fair-haired boy, feeling himself at fault, took by the bridle the horse which someone had abandoned and went on behind Chmykh. The five peasants, not knowing what to do, looked at each other, at Shpak, at Chmykh, bending under the weight of his burden, and they too led their horses after him.

The widow Avdotya, standing with her shaggy bay horse by the end of her house, also joined them, recalling that she had nothing in her own farmyard with which to feed the bay.

The members of the commune came running out on to the village-street, crowded together, shouted, looking at the yellowing roof of the kolkhoz stable.

The stubborn procession toward the stable of ten plow-horses or so clove the members of the commune into two, they quarreled, cursed, and the village began to boil with a new rough-and-tumble.

Anisim, the kolkhoz stableman, threw his thin arms about, trying to convince the doubters:

"Yes, in a whole century you'd never see a stable like ours. Look, Sidor, at that stable, just look!"

Anisim twisted his dry finger toward the hill, and Sidor in a muffled voice, grumbled:

"Well, what's that to me? I'll do like the rest... And just think with whose strength we built that mansion, broke our backs in the forest, drove our horses to death in the trackless mud? So that the sparrows could make their quarters there?"

And Sidor resolutely swung open the creaking doors, and led out his old grey horse with the black specking.

Yegorka, appointed director of the column of plowmen, had scarcely slept during the night before the plowing, he spent all the time thinking about his being commander of the horse brigade, but his neighbours kept sticking little pins into him:

"Comrade, commander of the brigade, do you order the artillery to be harnessed?"

And of a sudden Yegorka's "artillery" had vanished.

It would be a scandal to go out on the street the people would say: "A-ah! Your Excellency, General Yegorka!"

Yegorka stood in his farmyard and examined his battered mare dismally. Then he poked her in the belly with his bastshoe and dragged her along to the hillock, to the stable, catching up with the rest.

The procession stretched out along the street in a long column, sometimes a grey, sometimes a dun-colored horse catching up. The column grew and grew, its tail wound along the street, when Chmykh was already fixing up the sorrel colt on the soft spring straw in the stable.

The fair-haired boy was repenting and excusing himself over and over;

"Well, honest to god, I didn't mean to... That's the way things go to ruin!"

Chmykh swung his huge fist in front of the lad's nose.

"Do you see that? I'll crack you on the spot if you ever beat the animals again!"

The lad looked respectfully at Chmykh's bony fist and was silent.

Shpak rushed about the village, his voice, growing hoarse, was to be heard resounding now at one end of the commune, now at another. At the wattle-fence he caught Churba who was trying to scuttle off.

"Stop, stop!.. Sto-op! You knew how to talk well, see if you know how to give a straight answer... Did I beat the horses? Say!"

Churba turned his eyes away.

"Well, did I speak about you?"

"Well, fine. Did the letinary beat the horses?"

"He's a strange fellow... He hasn't got a real peasant's core to him... Well, he is good to the horses".

"Well... Fine... Who did beat? Whitey, the son of a b..! What did he beat him with? A knout, the damn idiot! Well now read this!"

Shpak shoved a paper out at Churba. Mistrustingly sliding his eyes over the lines, Churba read aloud:

"Extraordinary Session of the Management of the Commune Ilych's Ideal

There was heard:

About the beating of a colt and the ruin of the commune.

It was decided:

1. For his crime against the horse of the kolkhoz, to exclude citizen Zaitsev from the commune, to sentence him to clean the stables every day for the period of his punishment.

2. To forbid the use of knouts for urging on the horses, for which there are the reins, which are to be used for this.

3. Every member of the commune must behave courteously with others' horses, because all the horses are his own, that is, the kolkhoz's.

4. In case of violation, to exclude them from membership at once.

5. The mother of the wounded colt to be released from the roster until complete recovery, for which the kolkhoz's veterinary will take care.

6. Carry on agitation day and night for collectivizing the horses, because the plowing cannot wait."

"Is that right? Or not?" Shpak moved close up to Churba and waited for his answer. "It can't wait, do you get me?"

Churba was offended.

"Well! why are you always nagging at me? Well, it's right."

"That means, bring your horse at once... Do you hear?" — Shpak did not wait for the answer. He went off.

Churba waited till evening and when the darkness rendered people indistinguishable he led his horse by backyards to the stables.

Till late at night, Chmykh poked in and out of the huts, notifying each member of the commune of the decree and collecting signatures.

"Here are our rules for the horses... Sign there, boss."

And the "boss" put down his crooked signature, promising to respect the horses of the kolkhoz.

Dashes, crosses, and straggling signatures grew in numbers, filling up the sheet of paper, and Chmykh joyfully bent his ear to the straining scratch of the pen, strengthening his ruined life.

Deep in the night Chmykh returned to Terekh's izba and by habit poked at the wicket in the door, but it did not give under the pressure of his knee. He pulled at the wicket, rapped irritably and listened to the scraping of the door which led from the hay-shed into the farmyard.

"What have you done now, you old devil, set up new rules, locked the gate with a bar?"

Terekh opened the bar. To Terekh he looked like a white spot in the dark.

"I locked up because I can't do otherwise... The horse is in the farmyard, you see..."

He carefully put up the bar and shuffled over to the shed. From there could be heard the neighing of the horse.

"Ah, it never occurred to me... You dragged the gelding along to your farm... The horse's head has brought good fortune to the peasant. But as a matter of fact, look sharp that the horse doesn't get driven away..." Chmykh burst out laughing.

Terekh rustled the hay and went into the izba.

"For heaven's sake, they won't drive it off..." he growled in displeasure as he crawled on to the stove.

"Have a care. Terekh, Happy relied on Lucky, and both of them tumbled into the ditch... It would be less worry in the stable... In other words, do you want to sign your name here?"

Terekh did not answer, he only sighed and turned away toward the wall.

"Well, you don't have to!"

Chmykh poked the sheet with the signatures of the commune-members behind the box of saints' images and lay down on the bench.

"You're a stubborn peasant, Terekh... Although it's true, success loves a bold hand, but there is a whole people of bold-handed men, of your brother! the peasant... I used to know one horse-thief... Ho, a bold thief! Everything was easy for him... no matter how you would lock things up, he always took everything, that was coming to him. He could walk on eggs without breaking a single one... Well, once he played a trick..."

Chmykh lay there and aloud recalled his campaigns, but Terekh keeps turning from side to side, as if the hot bricks were baking him brown. Terekh's former dread for the gelding, breathed upon by Chmykh's yarn-tellings, attacked him again. But what if the misfortune should happen?

Terekh listened intently to the quiet of the night, alarmed by Chmykh's slightly hoarse bass, he caught with timorous ear the nocturnal sounds and could not go to sleep.

"Where are you going to?" Chmykh rolled over, hearing the creak of the hoards.

"Oh, yes... To have a look at the wind..."

"Somehow you've taken to running to look at the wind quite often, old man! You, brother, don't you sham! I know you peasants... To have a look at the horse? Ha-ha... They got the cat by the belly that time... You go and have a look, Terekh!"

Terekh skipped out into the yard, listened for a minute and came back. Chmykh had become silent, snoring a little in his sleep.

Terekh lay down, and thoughts began swarming on him again like flies on molasses. Success loves a bold hand... That is true. Let the others take their horses to the stable. Terekh will not take his. Let it be as Terekh had lived for tens of years. Let everything be as it was in the old days...

He smiled with delight, remembering that his gelding was there, behind the wall, chewing hay...

In the old days... That means, Potap Fomich will return to his izba? No, how can that be so? That must not be...

Terekh started, all sweaty, distracted. That means, Potap comes back to the izba, and Terekh goes out of the izba? And then Terekh imagined the sly, pudgy face of Potap. He comes out, hunching his shoulders, to the village-meeting and begins his speech insinuatingly: "You have received your horses back again, citizens, permit me to receive back what belongs to me..." Terekh rolled on to the floor, with a tremble in his old legs, went up to the little window and nestled up to the pane.

The moon stirred in the gnarled branches of the birch as they swayed, and suddenly Terekh noticed a man standing under the birch. Doubling up, he pressed against the trunk, as if getting ready to jump.

Something familiar flashed before Terekh's terrified eyes and with a voice fainting from dread he whispered:

"Letinary! Quick! Dear friend! They are taking him away... Potap..." He shook Chmykh's foot and breaking out into a sweat, spoke in a husky voice. "Singe him, oh heavenly queen... Singe him..."

Chmykh burst out scolding and roared at the entire izba:

"Well, what the devil? Doesn't sleep himself, and won't let others".

When they ran out on to the street everything was quiet, only the anxious moon was twisting the bare, thread-like branches of the birch.

Terekh was trembling, seized by fear and wind. Sleeplessly he tormented himself throughout the night, but in the morning one more little cross, made by Terekh, was added to the very bottom of the list.

From the hillock, from the stables, Chmykh could observe a spectacle never seen before.

The entire road from the village to the copse was stirring and roaring; dully the horses came on; tossing their heads in brave array; the earth burst into dust under the ploughshares; colts, jumping about in the equine flood, dashed about aimlessly, and their whinnying resounded in the transparent April air. Behind the light plows went the peasants, in measure scraping their bast-shoes over the drying earth; along the sides of the road, mixed with the dogs the boys went leaping, and after the columns of plowmen the women crowded along in a many-colored flock.

All this living flood was hastening on to the drying fields, and it seemed to Chmykh as if the earth were groaning from the shouting of the people, from the neighing of the horses and the barking of the dogs, and the air were trembling and quivering.

Chmykh got up from the logs, spilled about the stable, nervously shuffled about on one spot, again sat down, only to hop up again after a minute.

The commune was going out to plow. Chmykh himself had taken part in getting ready to this day, labored with the horses, argued with the peasants, but what he now saw was unexpected and astounding.

Looking frequently at Shpak, Chmykh saw his anxiety, impatience and could by no means understand from what this strong and sinewy chap was chafing. He was annoyed when Shpak poked his nose into matters affecting horses, but, submitting to his firm and serious voice, he laughed to himself, not believing in Shpak's devices.

And so the commune was moving off to the fields, but in advance, also behind a plow, impatiently jerking the reins, walked Shpak.

Chmykh took a look into the stable. It was empty, and only the sparrows were stirring in the cribs, and in this stillness, intoxicated with horse smells growing chill, Chmykh felt his solitude. He disgruntledly drove the sparrows away, skipped out of the stable and hurried to the field. His long legs wove together in a fast gait, he kept stumbling, speeded up his pace, almost ran.

Under his bare feet Chmykh felt the dense, warm earth, hungry for the plow. On the run he caught up a clod of earth, and breaking it up with his hard fingers, felt the indestructible scent of spring.

It was a long time since Chmykh had plowed — he had even forgotten how you straighten up a plow. In spring, when the spring plowing began and the peasants wandered solitarily over the fields, Chmykh skulked on the stove, ashamed before the peasants and hating them still more on those days. His strips covered with trash and grew up with careless weeds. Chmykh in those days became furious, hid from people and served his time in this ill-humored solitude, shutting himself off from the village and from the sounds of the fields. But then he rushed out into the dark night, dissolved into its black gulf, to emerge somewhere far away astride of a stolen horse.

Seized by curiosity and intense hate for people, Chmykh hastens to the horses he has looked after, to the place where the commune is plowing. From the hillock Chmykh can see how the columns of plowmen stretched out in even little lines, dissolving into a living, slowly crawling ribbon, how the earth turns its black core outward, how the flocks of rooks poked about in the furrows, flashing with the black lustre of their plumage.

There it is, the village... Those are the same peasants and shaggy horses, the same sweetening spring earth, but now Chmykh no longer can restrain his oppressive solitude and runs, as if afraid of being late for something or

other, or that something may happen without him there at a plowing unlike any he had seen.

Chmykh stood at the edge of the field — the column of plowmen moved toward him. Ever clearer and clearer he hears the earth hissing under the plows, the pebbles clicking against the mould-board.

The horses breathe noisily and strenuously, bending their mushroom-like necks toward the ground, pressing toward the plowing with straining legs, whisking their tails about. And the familiar warmth of equine breathing pours over Chmykh — there Churba's sorrel colt is confidently and energetically leading the furrow, but the plowman is not Churba, but old Terekh, turning young again. Hurrying, toward the plow, he groans aloud as if to help the horse.

"Come, come, my little sorrel! Ho-ho-o!"

"Brothers! the management has come down!" shouted Terekh. "To our letinary a profound, collective greeting!"

"A-ah, Letinary!"

"Hook-nose!"

"Mare-doctor! How's your colt?"

One after the other, breathing with effort, the horses went along, and each plowman tried to outdo the other with a sharp-pointed word. But in these shouts Chmykh felt neither anger nor suspicion and, putting his arms akimbo, he silently let the column go past. As if on parade the peasants and horses went past him in an endless string, the plows scraped in annoyance, and from the damp, dark seams of plowed land, from the horses, from the peasants, members of the commune, there arose a disturbing odour, restoring to Chmykh the taste for April soil, which he had lost.

Chmykh looked with an owner's eye at the horses as they went past, recognized each one by signs known to him, and his chest heaved faster and faster, in time with the strenuous breathing of the horses.

He looked around...

The field of summer corn was stirring around him: ten columns from different sides were attacking the land, horses of various breeds were dragging the plows amiably together, the colts neighed anxiously and sonorously, describing circles over the plowed land, the land rustled and conquered, submissively bared its fruitful womb to the sun.

Chmykh impatiently squeezed into one of the columns...

But toward evening, when the earth, satiated with warmth, was turning away from the sun, slowly going away into the April twilight, Chmykh returned from the plowing, holding the plow with tired, earthy hands.

Translated from the Russian by *P. Mosely*

HEROISM

1

Amankol is a past master in the art of gossiping. His crimson, bulging eye pries into every nook and cranny of the city. His mother o'pearl ears, wide open like a mouth, keep guard on every crowd. His alert brows resemble the outstretched wings of a hawk ready to swoop upon its victim before it has time to fly out of its nest.

He is always to be seen in the caravan-serai at that time of the day when the sweltering heat drives everyone into the shade; when tea-pots are laid on the mats and people are disposed to listen and obey.

With a pious and polite smile Amankol sits down by somebody's mat. He tells his beads and mumbles. If one were absent-minded one might think that this is a saintly old man and that he is saying his prayers; one might attribute his gentle demeanour to kindness and goodness. But who does not know this venerable old man? Whom does he deceive anyway? Who does not know that he beats his wife because she is ugly and barren and, so they say, because he is not able to use her any more.

Amankol once had three wives. Is not that perhaps the reason for the old man's fondness for bazaars and male companionship and his dislike of home?

The monogamist prefers his wife to the bar,
While the bigamist abandons his home for the bazaar.
But three wives are enough to build one's mazar.¹

On noticing a game of chess being played, Amankol there and then takes up his position beside the players. He never plays himself, but watches the moves intently, telling his beads and whispering devoutly:

"Bosi-raft" (the game is lost).

When the players hear this they become irritated. Each thinks the remark applies to himself. This uninvited spectator annoys them and they have nicknamed him Bosi-Raft — the lost game. And Bosi-raft answers to his nickname with as much unconcern as if it were his given name.

Bosi-Raft is a poet. Once he wrote a poem about syphilis. If our children's children read it they will think of our generation as incorrigible, depraved and inherently rotten. When they read it they will pass judgement on our epoch as we judge the Middle Ages by the Decameron. To the future reader of Bosi-Raft our epoch will appear covered with hideous ulcers, eaten up with falsehood and incapable either of love or loyalty, with Bosi-Raft as one of the bright spirits of the age, a bitter iconoclast, a fearless preacher of the truth, a pious and venerable old man. But whether our children's children will read Bosi-Raft's poems is extremely doubtful.

A diligent scandal-monger and eaves-dropper, a pimp whose services are at everyone's disposal, he can always be relied upon to relate what he knows and to ruin or make another's reputation. In his hands he holds the threads of human conduct. He trades in these carefully. He is shrewd and artful. He

¹ *Mazar* — tomb.

speaks with you so politely, so gently, you are ready to open your whole heart to this good-natured old man.

But if you trust him with the slightest word not in accord with the Koran he will use it profitably. For a trifling matter some inquisitive good-for-nothing will give him a cup of tea. If you relate something in greater detail he will sell it for a dish of pilau (stewed rice).

There he is now, sitting in the shade, telling his beads and thoughtfully muttering. He is undecided with whom to begin to-day's round. At last he comes over and sits down by us. Before us lies a chess-board, and a plate full of salted pistachios.

"Bosi-Raft", says the old man.

"You are right", answers Ferzin, my partner, "your game is lost, right enough".

"Yes, that's so".

But Bosi-Raft has a convenient habit of not hearing any remark that might displease him. He waits until Ferzin rises and goes over to another board. Now he is ready for the pistachios and story-telling.

I put in a word of warning:

"You understand people so well. You do not perceive their faults alone, do you? Tell us about the most remarkable hero you have ever known in your life".

2

It is not easy to speak well of people. That is why critics so eagerly await the appearance of some obscure poet and rejoice in the downfall of a satellite.

I believe that is just the reason why Bosi-Raft seems so reluctant to speak. He tries to look as if he had nothing to tell.

But after pausing to reflect and search his memory, he appears to have found one among the many who is worthy.

"We both know one youngster", says Bosi-Raft.

"He doesn't want to name his hero. He wants to intrigue me and thus have an excuse for coming to see me tomorrow. Then he will unravel the mystery he intends to weave now", so think I.

"You know this youngster well", he says. "What do you think, he runs away from home, leaving his fine, upright father in tears and joins the Red Army. You see, he wanted to kill the "Basmachi".¹ They put a sabre in his hand, a horse under him, and a red star on his forehead. He gallops away into the hills. He there discovers a regiment of Basmachi, investigates the lay of the land, and returns. Then he goes to the Djadidi (bolsheviks) and leads them (this was in Lokae) to the spot.

"See here", he says, 'I know the customs of Usto-Bek, the kurbasha, very well. Send me a machine-gunner to the Shad hill.'

"From its summit the distant hills, valleys and pathways lie open to view. Standing there on the height they could see that not far away at the foot of the bottomless Naryn abyss, stood, *oi-roy*, such a large regiment! They gazed and measured the distance and how many do you think there were? No less than a thousand Basmachi!

"Then our lad shows them the roundabout way to the spot where the Basmachi were stationed. And while he was leading the djadidi by the roundabout path, the machinegunner rained a tattoo of bullets on the Shad hill.

"The whole thousand Basmachi leaped on their horses and rushed toward the machinegunner at a gallop.

¹ Central Asiatic bandits.

"He sits there all by himself and operates the gun. And while the Basmachi were climbing up the hill, the djadidi jumped on them suddenly from the side. So unexpected was their attack that the whole thousand Basmachi turned their horses backward and fled. The stones loosened by their horses' hoofs flew into the ravine. It is said this ravine is so deep that a stone cannot reach the bottom but remains suspended in the stillness like a bird in the air.

"Only a few managed to get away. The djadidi fell on the rest, surrounded them and flung them along with their horses over the brink to their death.

"That's the sort of manoeuvre this youngster planned. Well done, eh?"

"Usto-Bek was one of those who managed to escape unhurt and he wanted to know: 'Who was it that located my regiment and thought out the manoeuvre?' 'So-and-so' he was told. 'I'll have to remember him'.

"And he did. Not long after when our lad was journeying through the mountains, he was surprised in a dark pass by the Basmachi. His companions were slain, but the kurbash desiring to tackle this fearless youngster himself, engaged in a fierce battle with him, cutting open his chest in a frightful wound. It was only when he saw the staring eyes of his young opponent that he rode away.

"Well, the djadidi came along and saw their hero unconscious. They lifted him gently into the saddle and took him away to the hospital. There they washed, bandaged and revived him.

"He lay there for some time and when he felt strong he said: 'Put a sabre' in my hands, a horse under me and a star on my forehead'.

"Well, they didn't only give him that, but a whole regiment into the bargain.

"At that time there was a terrible shortage of horses in the Djadidi army. So great was this shortage that half of the djadidi had to walk on foot which made them about as useful as a crowd of old women.

"Away went our lad with ten comrades into the hills. It was already winter. Raw cold night had set in. And a winter's night in the hills is as dull as a bachelor's sleep. So the warriors decided to turn in at the Naiza-Bulak kishlak (settlement). They knew this kishlak and the road that led to it very well so that they were rather surprised when they sniffed a warm breeze, smelling of good pilau and heard the whinnying of many horses coming from this sacked and deserted spot.

"The djadidi slowed down to a trot, and crept stealthily up to the walls of the stables. Three of them entered the kishlak and started shooting out of the dark from three sides. But over where the horses were standing all was quietness. Oh, what a commotion ... was here in the Naiza-Bulak kishlak! Groups of Basmachi ran in the direction from which the shots had sounded, shooting into the darkness for all they were worth. The whole night was awlirl.

"Under cover of the confusion and noise, the djadidi led all the horses away from the stables and galloped off. The darkness aided them. The Basmachi were afraid to venture after them, fearing their overwhelming numbers. So they shut themselves inside their houses and shot out of the windows. When the sun rose next morning they look around and — there wasn't a soul in sight, nor a horse either! Eighty fine stallions had been stolen from them. Well, what do you think of that? Not so bad, eh?"

"Usto-Bek was wild with rage. He stamped about, roaring: 'Who was it that surprised us in the night? What is his name?'

"Well, of course they found out his name and told him. 'No', he yells, 'it can't be him. That one killed myself and the dead don't rise.' 'Yes, but the dead don't steal horses, either!' someone reminded him.

"Usto-Bek then gave orders to let it be known on every hill, in every kishlak, and every pass that he, Usto-Bek would give 200 Afghan rupees in reward for the head of this young djadidi.

"But time passed and no one brought him the head.

"Usto-Bek doubled the price. Quadrupled it.

"No one answered his challenge. But many eyes shone when they glanced at the wall where Usto-Bek's promise was proclaimed to all.

"Now the head is priced at a thousand rupees! One thousand five hundred! The youth brandishes his sabre under the very noses of the Basmachi but always manages to slip through their fingers.

"The price rose to three thousand. Many a living wife could be purchased for the price of this one dead head. Reward-seekers ride secretly up and down the hills looking for luck. Not a few of them leave their own heads under the hills, their horses returning with empty saddles, riderless.

"And one day Usto-Bek receives a letter:

"I have learned of your intentions with regard to my head", ran the letter. "I consider the price set as satisfactory. I propose to you, esteemed Usto-Bek, that you buy this head from me. We are both here in the hills. Send the money to town, to my father who is a poor and lonely old man. And the very same day I will come and bring the head to you myself, to which I swear by the Koran."

"To which Usto-Bek answers: 'In the name of god the merciful, I agree. I have sent the money to your poor and lonely father and impatiently await your arrival. Accept herewith my respects and assurances that we are all eager to see your grinning sneer on a pike, your frothing lips forever silent, your lying tongue swollen and your eyes closed so tightly that not even the most beautiful girl could induce them to open. I, Usto-Bek, swear to this on the Koran.'

"And at the appointed hour the youth appears. He leaves his horse at the gates; gives his sabre to his host and his cap with the red star to the stable-boy. They lead the hero away under escort to the tower and lock him up in a dark dungeon. They put four locks on the door and a guard of 40 men. The guard tramp up and down, stamping their heavy boots, their Afghan turbans rustling, their English rifles clinking.

"And the prisoner gazes at the stars through the narrow slit in the wall and waits for the moon to pass. The window is scarcely wide enough to squeeze a head through. A few stars shine into the dungeon but the constellation is hidden from view.

"All night long the guards stamped, rustled and clinked outside the door, arguing in hoarse whispers as to what the head would look like when stuck on a pole.

"At dawn next day they opened the dungeon... And found it empty! The padlocks were intact, so were the walls, the guards were all at their posts, but the bird had flown.

"There you are, that's the kind of chap he was? Not so bad either. You'd have to go a long way to find his equal. And the secret of his flight was as simple as a kiss. The window in the wall was small, 'tis true. But still, large enough to stick a head through. And a normal person can always crawl through a hole which is big enough for his head. A little skill and common-sense, that's all.

"That morning Usto-Bek stuck forty Basmachi heads on poles."

3

"Enough for the present", says Bosi-Raft. "Is it worth speaking of Usto-Bek himself? Uninteresting."

"Will you speak well of him or in your usual style?"

"I'll tell you about him in any way you wish."

"Tell me the truth".

"So. I have too much respect both for myself and for you. It is impossible to relate the truth. There is plenty of time to be bored. I'd better tell you about Usto-Bek as I told you about the youth. Do you agree?"

"Let it be so".

"Usto-Bek, the Kurbasha had a lover in Buhara. She lived in the Kaf-len quarter of the town. She was the wife of a merchant.

"One day her husband left on a journey to Termez. On the road he was caught and killed by the Basmachi. They slew him brutally. First they castrated him, after which they cut off his hands and only then did they pierce his heart, plunging the bayonet through his body till it broke. And that was how they found the corpse — nailed to the ground.

"Many were the guesses made about this murder. The wise understood that the man had not been slaughtered for nothing. There was a personal motive behind it. The name of Usto-Bek was bandied in this connection too. He had been seen prowling about these regions. Usto-Bek had been wont to frequent the Kaf-len quarter too. To avoid further visits from him, the relations of the beautiful widow carried her away from the place and hid her.

"Shortly after this there was a parade on the Registan (the chief square in the city of Buhara). The anniversary of the Buhara republic was being celebrated. Faizulla Khodzhaev stood up by the gates of the fortress and delivered a warm, rousing speech. He addressed the citizens of Bukhara as the 'glorious descendants of Timura' and urged them to be firm in their fight against the Basmachi. The whole city garrison was there too.

"Suddenly a lame old man hobbles up to the commander and cries: 'Chief! Chief! The Basmachi are here in the Kaf-len quarter!'

"The cavalry rushed headlong in the direction of the Kaf-len quarter. In the house where the merchant had lived they found the corpse of his brother pierced in three different places. Mad from grief the man's relation told how Usto-Bek had just forced a confession from them that Aim-Sherim, the merchant's widow was concealed in the Shir quarter.

"They made for the Shir quarter and started a search. Each house was examined, even the women's quarters were searched. But the search there was perfunctory in respect for the ancient custom which shuts the women away from curious eyes.

"In the house where Aim-Sherim had lain in hiding, they found some rifled chests and a blanket. The servant said that a man in a *khalat* (green robe) had rushed through the women's quarter and that a moment ago two women had emerged from there. The man they couldn't find and two women had obviously been overlooked. One of the women was small and nervous looking. The other tall, supple and sure of movement. But the faces of both had been veiled.

"Well, they returned to the barracks and there they learned that two women had run up to a crowd of peasants who had been sitting peacefully all day outside the barracks. One of them had thrown aside the *parandja* and proved to be a man. And the peasants suddenly produced arms from under their robes, killed the sentries and took possession of the horses and drove away carrying the woman with them.

"Pursuit was of no avail.

"Seven months elapsed, if I am not mistaken, after this happened. The Basmachi had no more luck. They were driven into the hills; some of them fled beyond Ame-Daryo into Afghanistan; others surrendered.

"Shortly afterwards Aim-Sherim suddenly reappeared in town. And, what do you think, she went straight to the *Zhenotdel* (Women's section of the Town

Soviet) and offered her services for the emancipation of women. She herself unveiled. But no one knew why she had left Usto-Bek. She asked for defence in case of revenge and was of course promised assistance. Her veil she discarded publicly on the Registan on a revolutionary holiday. Before her stood a crowd of people and delegations of veiled women with banners and flags. She turned toward them and tore off her veil revealing straight brows artificially extended to meet over her fine, aquiline nose, piercing blue eyes, intensified by a slight darkening, and a little black spot over her lip.

"She said: 'My whole life I have longed to liberate myself from the slavery we are forced to suffer by the jealousy of the prophet and the hypocrisy of our men. I was foolish enough to hope for liberation from the menfolk. I was deluded and now I intend to rectify my mistake. I am setting out on the road to the future and I call upon you, veiled and enslaved ones, to follow in my footsteps.'

"And when she climbed off the platform, a woman stole up behind her, stuck a knife in her back, and disappeared in the crowd. Some had time to notice that the woman was tall, supple and sure of movement. The blow which pierced Aim-Sherim's heart had been struck by a firm hand and with masculine strength.

"Another few months elapsed. The Basmachi movement which, as you know had begun by proclaiming itself 'for the Islam faith against the heretic djadidi and the trampled rights of the people', began to lose sway.

"You probably remember that people's Assembly at Lokai when the inhabitants of Lokai met and sent the well-known collective letter to the Basmachi.

"The people are tired', they wrote, 'the people have been ruined by the Basmachi and demand immediate surrender of arms in return for which all the djigiti and kurbashi will be pardoned by the Soviet Government...'

"And Usto-Bek himself, one of the most famous of the Basmachi and the most unconciliatory, surrendered his arms, came back to his native town and took up peaceful work..."

4

Is not Bosi-Raft the most tactful of old raconteurs as he finishes his tale? He understands perfectly that having drunk a kettle of tea with his friend and eaten up a plateful of pistachios, it is not polite to linger. The friend might imagine that Bosi-Raft expects more tea and pistachios! So he rises and nods his farewell. But he has omitted to name his hero.

"Reflect a little", he urged, intriguing me to the point of distraction.

I climb up to the upper terrace. It is hot. The doors of the little rooms are open on to the shade. I pass by the doors of Shir-Had, beyond Mashed-Ali and Mashed-Manofa. But I stop in surprise before the room occupied by the tailors' cooperative. Why is there no movement here to-day, I wonder?

The room, with its wide carpet spread over it, seems smaller than it really is; the walls are hung with ready-made robes, and the room seems filled with these flaring, brilliantly designed garments which by their very colourfulness appear to take up more space.

In the middle of the room, seated calmly on the carpet sits a pale, young man of short stature with a squint. His round face is hairless save for a slight, sparse mustache. His hair, which is very straight, has been allowed to grow long.

Slight of build and mild of nature is Usto-Fatto, the young tailor who sits there cleaning the dirt from under his nails with a sharp scissors.

"Why are you not working?" I ask him.

"Don't you know? Usto-Yudgor is getting married to-day".

Usto-Yudgor is the master-tailor, Fatto is his assistant. They are both famed throughout the town for their skill in cutting and seaming. Their working day begins after first prayers are said, when daylight has scarcely come into its own, and finishes when like a piece of sugar, the day melts into the dark stream of night. Even then they endeavour to lengthen the day by straining their eyes to the light of a kerosene lamp.

On working days Fatto sits on the carpet with a long scissors in his hands; like petals from a flower-garden, the clippings of heavy silk and light cotton fabrics scatter softly around him.

Pale Fatto sitting on his carpet, immobile and calm, feels the whole world. Instinctively guessing where to bend his sharp-edged scissors, Fatto deftly cuts the cloth. This is one Fatto. But his hands are facile and skilled, he cuts faultlessly, although his senses are not concerned with his work. They are busy with singing. In a low, mournful voice he hums tune after tune. This is the other Fatto. These are tunes he has known from childhood, they flow easily through his veins of themselves without any strain on his memory.

A prickly sensation runs through his swollen limbs. Fatigue. Fatto lets his head droop just a little, because it is pleasant to greet fatigue with a happy little bow.

Many are the emotions which beset this man during his work as he sits on the wide carpet in the middle of the room surrounded by bits of cloth.

In the corner near the sewing machine on the only chair in the room sits the silent Usto-Yudgor. He has the power to compress all his emotions with such force that they merge and become one single emotion which takes whatever form Usto-Yudgor desires. Screwing up his eyes carefully and swiftly he pushes the cloth under the needle along the marked line pressing the finished seam with slightly spread fingers to guide the direction. In tense moments he purses up his lips, disclosing his teeth and lowering his head. But the moment passes and his head bobs up again in relief, his lips shut close and his face once more becomes a dark, expressionless mask.

Usto-Yudgor's head is smoothly shaven; his beard flecked with grey, is immaculately trimmed; even his oval eyes, fringed with dark lashes, are precise and neat. He himself is supple and light. He only smiles when customers come, to assure himself and them that the order has been properly understood. Whether engaged in fitting a customer with a new garment, or intent on an alteration, Yudgor is so light and supple that one would imagine his movements had been planned beforehand by choreography.

The master-tailor and his assistant sit opposite each other day after day and month after month and seldom exchange a word. Fatto sings, repeating his songs faithfully. Usto-Yudgor listens intently and sympathetically. Sometimes he bridges the stream of song with a few words anent the work;

"This silk ravels, be careful with it, Usto-Fatto. Learn to tell from the fabric not only the name of the weaver but his mood when he wove it".

"Keep the design in mind. No matter how complicated the pattern don't spoil it while cutting. Bind it up by a straight seam like a bouquet of flowers but make sure that the blossoms don't wither".

"The customer is old; he is cramped by memories. Sew his garments loosely".

"Everything European is ornamented from without. Everything Asiatic — from within. Sew a homespun robe on a silk lining. Remember the custom; the best robe is worn underneath, the less magnificent on top; let it be thought that the body it covers is still better, and the heart concealed beneath the body the most wonderful of all that the robe enfolds.

"Remember how an Asiatic house is built. Outside it is smeared with plain clay. Inside it is ornamented lovingly and with much taste. The European, on building his house, takes great pains with the exterior, putting everything on show in the street. The rooms of his personal life are the most mean and ugly in his house. Remember that when you sew for a European.

"One must learn to live unencumbered by any of the constraints imposed upon us by life. Our clothing must touch our body lightly like a caress".

Thus year after year the master-tailor and his assistant sit facing each other, the one squatted in the middle of the room on the big carpet, the other on a high chair at the sewing machine. On seeing them, one feels that not their work alone, but their whole lives are bound closely by one common effort, lifted up by one aim and given wings by one joy, the joy of work well done.

And into the lives of these two, woven so closely together, a third life is spun, a silent and invisible phantom.

Justo-Yudgor is being wed to-day.

That is why the sewing machine is silent under its hood. Fatto has stopped singing. And the scissors instead of swooping swiftly over the gleaming silks are scraping the dirt from under the hard nails of the assistant. It was dusk. The shadows of evening were softly enveloping the dying day when the clear, sweet voice of a lone flute was heard faintly in the distance. And as if in echo to the flute came the frequent throb of drums and the sound of trumpets, playing a sad, passionate melody, the voices of the instruments in the distance blending like smoke and intertwining like the braid of a woman's hair.

Through the darkness, amid the flare of torches and a throng of curious guests led by the band, the bridegroom is on his way to the house of his bride. He rides on a richly caparisoned steed. The crowd is vociferous in its praises of the lucky groom. Now the little procession has swerved into a by-street, and is hidden from our view, the reflection of the torches painting the darkness in the distance. Only the sad, far-off sound of the flute is heard through the dying roar of trumpets, drums and male voices.

I go back to Usto-Fatto. He is standing tip-toe on the carpet, his arms outstretched, lighting the hanging lamp.

"Usto-Yudgor paid 80 rubles for his bride", Fatto tells me, "with ten robes, a sack of sugar and a couple of sheep thrown in. That's the average price of a Mussulman woman. Yet he had never seen his bride's face".

The hanging lamp, still swinging slightly, is alight and Fatto takes off his shirt to sew up a split seam. He is always so busy working for other people that he hasn't much time to think of his own clothes. So now he seizes the opportunity to put in a few stitches on his own account. For some secret reason which he does not divulge he has refused to attend Usto-Yudgor's wedding.

His arms in the sleeves, Fatto slips the shirt over his head. In the ruddy glow of the lamplight and the multi-coloured robes around the room, his pale green body glows ever greener, marred only by a violet-hued scar crossing his chest in a wide, jagged sweep.

"Usto-Fatto!" I exclaim, "Was it not about you that I heard today? Did you not..."

And I repeat to him the whole story of Bosi-Raft's nameless hero.

Modest, thoughtful Fatto, that hero awarded the star of the Bukhara republic for bravery, confesses it is he.

"But who could have told you? Who could have known? I don't like to remember the war".

"Why, Amankol, our incomparable narrator, told me. But only after much hesitation, for some reason or another. He doesn't like to relate pleasant things about people. But of you he spoke with such rapture".

"Rapture? Are you sure? As a matter of fact, although few know it, that old hypocrite is my father. He cursed me when I ran away from him to join the Red Army. Although, to be sure, he didn't refuse the money Usto-Yudgor sent him. He made good use of it, all right. But I always believed he had cast me entirely from his thoughts."

Fatto sat silent for a while. I interrupt his thoughts.

"You say — the money he received from Yudgor? What has Yudgor to do with it?"

"Don't you know that Usto-Yudgor was a Kurbash by the name of Usto-Bek? To say the truth, I didn't suspect it myself when I came to the tailors' cooperative three years ago to work as his apprentice. He was famed for his skill with the needle even before the war".

"Did he accept you at once?"

"Oh yes. And only once did he mention the past. He asked me, how I managed to escape from the prison cell without breaking the lock or loosening a stone from the wall..."

"Now he is wedding a young girl, a very young girl with a soft voice like a flute. Trembling, she starts her life-song. Will the master-tailor begin a new song as well, I wonder?"

"Whom is Yudgor marrying? Do you know her?"

Fatto's smile strikes me as curious.

"I knew her slightly", says he "I used to see her when she was a child. Her grandfather often took her for walks near our well and he liked to stop and exchange a few words with me. She was a bright little kid. And her grand-dad loved her dearly. He died, afterwards. I recall how she used to catch sight of a bird in the sky and exclaim: "Grand-dad, grand-dad what is it?"

"And the old man would never answer her direct:

What is that as white as snow,
Black as the night,
Swift as an arrow
Yet slow as Prince?

And she, remembering, would cry, delightedly: "A stork, a stork!"

"When I came back from the war, the girl was already veiled.

"Now Usto-Yudgor has probably reached her house", I remark, the uproar having faded almost completely into the distance.

Fatto smiles enigmatically.

And suddenly his smile seems disgusting to me when I think that the soft-voiced girl is perhaps weeping silently under her gay, festive veil.

I ask no more questions of Fatto. He looks pale and wearied. He said he doesn't like to think of the war... And I suddenly feel with revulsion that the scar resembling the mark of a suspicious ulcer, must have an evil odour.

It is already late. On the streets, all is dark and quiet.

Only from afar where the lights of the wedding torches still show red against the darkness, comes the faint roar of voices topped by an occasional shriek. The roar does not diminish. The shriek is repeated. And then suddenly the sound of voices is more distinctly heard, and in particular one hoarse voice makes itself heard above the rest.

Over there from the dark, distant alleys comes the disorderly crowd. They drew nearer. Some are already passing the walls of the caravan-sarai. They are conversing animatedly and angrily about something; some jocularly.

"They are returning from the wedding", think I. But then I stop short in perplexity.

"But why", I "asked, are they all so excited and disturbed?"

Someone is walking down the street quickly, the heels of his shoes clinking sharply in the silence.

"Now his robe must be flapping softly in the breeze", I muse.

Suddenly the footsteps stop at our gate, and a sharp, impatient knock sounds on the door. He is admitted.

Almost at a run, he bounds up the stairs into the light of our door and enters the room.

"Usto Yudgor!!?"

"Fatto, listen!"

Biting his lips, his face pale with fury, he explains that the bride has disappeared.

"Where shall we seek her, Fatto? What shall we do?"

Transfigured with rage, Usto looks more like one to whom the clash of arms is sweeter than the hum of a sewing machine.

He tells us how on reaching the bride's house he found the place a scene of tears and confusion. She was nowhere to be found. The women confessed that someone had called for her an hour before, thrown her onto his saddle and was gone before they could stop him. Someone, they said, had clutched bold of the rider arm in an attempt to stop him. He galloped away but had torn his shirt.

"If I only had a piece of that torn shirt! I'd find him, I would find him!"

"He stamped about shouting: 'Now she is probably somewhere in the Women's Department! Somewhere...'"

"Yes, in the Women's department", said Fatto, "Go and notify the Militia".

And it was not merely the irony of the counsel itself that made the meaning of words quite clear.

But Usto-Yudgor had already stamped down the stairs and on to the street without turning round.

And long afterwards the sound of the stamping could be heard in the direction opposite to the Militia... in the direction where the house of the famous tailor stands alone.

Fatto has finished mending his shirt, has turned down the light and is spreading out his modest blanket for the night.

And even now as I take leave of him I catch sight of his enigmatic smile. But I no longer feel any resentment about it. And I ask no more questions.

The next morning saw the work-shop of the tailors' cooperative at its usual tasks, the machine humming, and the scissors glinting to the soft accompaniment of Usto-Fatto's song.

ART AND SOCIAL LIFE¹⁾

1

The question of the relation of art to social life has always played a most important part in all literatures which have reached a definite level of development. In the past as well as at present this question has been answered in two utterly opposite senses. Some have maintained, and still do that man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for Man; not Society for the artist, but the artist for Society. Art must promote the development of human consciousness and better the social structure. Others vigorously reject this view. In their opinion, art in itself is the aim; and to transform it into a means whereby any subordinate aims may be achieved, no matter how noble, is tantamount to lessening the dignity of any artistic production.

Which, then, of these two diametrically opposed views on the function of art may be regarded as the sound one?

In undertaking to solve this question, one must begin with the statement that, in the first place, it is badly formulated. As in the case of all like matters it is a question which cannot, must not, be regarded from the viewpoint of "duty". If the artists of any country in any given period hold aloof from the storm and stress of life and at another time may, contrariwise, eagerly throw themselves into its battles and all the agitation of mind that means, it is not because somebody else prescribes certain obligations (say they "must"), in different epochs; but because under certain social conditions they are overwhelmed by one kind of mood or feeling, and under other conditions are overpowered by another kind of outlook altogether. Such being the case, if we are to reach any sound view of the whole matter we must not glance at the question from the standpoint of what ought to be, but from the angle of what actually has been and is now. We should therefore prefer to put the question this way:

What are the most important of those social conditions under which an inclination towards art for art's sake appears in, and takes hold of artists and other people deeply interested in the arts and such creative endeavor?

Once we get nearer to a solution of this question it will not be difficult for us to solve still another question closely bound up with the first one, and one of no less interest, namely: — what are the most important of those social conditions under which artists and others taking a lively interest in the arts and creative endeavour espouse and foster what is called the utilitarian view of art, that is, an inclination to attach to its productions the "significance of a judgment on Life's phenomena"?

¹ The next number of "Literature of the World Revolution" will contain an article dealing with the mistakes made by Plekhanov in this article. It will express the opinion of the editorial board and be based on the recent discussion of Plekhanov's views on literature held in the Communist Academy.

Save for a few exceptions, the French romanticists of Pushkin's day were ardent supporters of art for art's sake. This is how Theophile Gautier¹, possibly one of the most consistent of them all, struck his fell blow at the defenders of the utilitarian view of art:

"No, ye stupid; no, ye goitred cretins! Out of books you will never make an isinglass soup, nor a pair of welted boots out of a novel... I swear by the guts of all the popes of the future, the past, and the present — No! and ten thousand times No!! I am of those who hold the superfluous to be necessary; and my love of things and people is in inverse ratio to the services they can render"².

In a biographical note on Baudelaire the same Gautier highly praises the author of the "Fleurs du mal" for having advocated "absolute autonomy for art" and refusing to admit that poetry could have any other aim save itself or any other mission except that of awakening in the soul of the reader the feeling of the beautiful in the absolute sense of the word.

The following extract shows how closely Gautier's conception of "Beauty" was linked up with political and social considerations.

"I would most joyfully (*très joyeusement*), repudiate my right as a Frenchman and citizen of France to see a genuine picture by Raphael or a naked beauty".

Farther than that no one can well go. Yet it is highly probable that all the Parnassians (*les Parnassiens*), might agree with Gautier, although here and there one or two among them would possibly make certain reservations as regards the too paradoxical form in which he expressed the demand for the "absolute autonomy of art", particularly in his youth. Whence emanated this frame of mind among the romanticists and Parnassians of France? Could they, by any chance, have felt themselves out of tune with the society of their time?

In an article published in 1857 on the reappearance at the Theatre Français of de Vigny's³ play "Chatterton" Gautier discussed its first presentation to the public on the twelfth of February, 1835. And there and then he tells us that:

"The pit to which "Chatterton" made his bow was filled to overflowing with pale, long-haired youths firmly convinced of the fact that there is no worthier occupation than that of inditing poems, or painting pictures, or looking at the "bourgeois" with a scorn which is probably greater than the scorn in which the Fuchses of Heidelberg and Jena held the philistines"⁴

Who were these loathed "bourgeois"?

"They included practically everybody", answers Gautier, "— bankers, stockbrokers, solicitors, merchants, tradesmen, and the like — in a word, everyone who did not belong to the mystic "cenacle" (by which was meant the circle of the romanticists, *G. P.*), and whoever gained his livelihood by prosaic means"⁵

And there is yet another witness. In the comments to one of his own "Odes funambulesques", Th. de Banville⁶ admits that he had also experienced this loathing for the "bourgeois". In doing so he throws some light on those dubbed by this term.

The romanticists employed the word "bourgeois" to denote "a person worshipping only the five-franc piece and possessing no other ideal beyond that of

¹ French poet, novelist, and critic (1811—1872).

² Preface to the novel "Malle Maupin".

³ Count Alfred Victor de Vigny, French poet and novelist (1799—1863).

⁴ "Histoire du romantisme", pp. 153—154.

⁵ "Histoire du romantisme", p. 154.

⁶ "Les odes funambulesques", Paris, 1858, 1 p. 294—295.

...saving his own skin, a person who loved the sentimental in poetry and the chromolithograph in the plastic arts”¹.

87

In mentioning this point de Banville asks his readers not to be surprised that in his “Odes funambulesques” which, be it remembered, appeared in what was already the latest period of romanticism — the bourgeois are mistreated as the lowest scoundrels, although they were people guilty merely of having led a bourgeois manner of life and failed to bow down to the genius of the romanticists”.

This documentary evidence is quite sufficient to show that as a matter of fact the romanticists were actually out of tune with their environment, to wit: bourgeois society. Though it is true that in this dissonance there was nothing dangerous for bourgeois social relationships. To these circles of the romanticists belonged young men of the upper middle classes who had nothing whatever against these same relationships, yet were at the same time disgusted with the dirtiness, the appalling tedium, and utter banality of bourgeois existence. For them this new art by which they were so powerfully attracted was a refuge whither they fled from all filth, tedium, and vulgarity. In the closing years of the Restoration and the first half of the reign of Louis Philippe — that is to say, in the hey-day of romanticism — it was all the more irksome for the youth of France to become accustomed to the dirt, dull prose, and boredom of bourgeois life for the simple reason that shortly before this France had passed, through the terrific storms of the Great Revolution and the Napoleonic period which had stirred all human passions to their depths². Once the bourgeoisie had come to occupy the dominating position in society and their lives were no longer warmed by the fires of the struggle for liberation, only one thing remained for the newer art: to idealize the negation of the bourgeois manner of life. That is what romanticist art was — an idealisation of this kind. The romanticists endeavoured to express their disapproval of the moderateness of the bourgeoisie both in their art productions and in their outward appearance even. Gautier has already told us that the youths who filled the pit at the first-night of “*Chat-terton*” wore long hair. And who has not heard of the red waistcoat of Gautier himself which used to give the horrors to all “decent folks”? The fantastic suits and long hair they wore were intended by the young romanticists to serve as a means to distinguish themselves from the hated bourgeois. The pallor of their complexion was meant for the same purpose: it was, in a sense, a protest against the beefy smugness of the middle-class. As Gautier says: “At that time it was all the rage among the adherents of the romanticist school to display if at all possible a pale, even greenish, almost corpse-like color of skin. This gave the pale possessor of such a complexion a Fate-fraught, Byronic appearance; bore witness to the fact that he was being tortured by deep-reaching passions and rent by the prickings of an overfine conscience; and made him appear interesting in the eyes of women”.³ Gautier also tells us that only with difficulty could the romanticists forgive Victor Hugo his conventional appearance and that in intimate talk they more than once expressed regret for this weakness of the great poet “which brought him nearer to Man and even to the bourgeois-

¹ Theodore Faullain de Banville. French poet and writer (1823—1891).

² Alfred de Musset, poet, dramatist, and writer of fiction (1810—1857), thus describes this dissonance: “Des lors se formèrent comme deux camps: d’un part les esprits, exaltés souffrants; toutes les âmes expansives, qui ont besoin de l’infini, plièrent la tête en pleurant, ils s’enveloppèrent de rêves maladifs, et l’on ne vit plus que de frères roseaux, sur un océan d’amertume. D’une autre part, les hommes de chair restèrent debout, inflexibles, au milieu des jouissances positives, et il ne leur prit d’autre souci que de compter l’argent qu’ils avaient. Ce ne fut qu’un sanglot et un éclat de rire, l’un venant de l’âme, l’autre du corps. (“La confession d’un enfant du siècle”, p. 10.)

³ “Histoire du romantisme”, p. 31.

sie¹". It is in general true that the social relations of a given epoch are always reflected in men's efforts to give themselves this or that particular kind of appearance. Indeed, quite an interesting sociological study could be written on this subject alone.

Since the young romanticists took up such a stand towards the bourgeoisie they could not but meet with indignation the suggestion of "useful art". In their eyes to make art useful meant to make it serve the selfsame bourgeois they despised so deeply. This explains the heated attacks made upon the preachers of useful art by Gautier and the way he vilifies them as stupid, goitred cretins. It likewise explains his other paradox, that he considers the value of men and things in inverse ratio to their usefulness.

The Parnassians and the first French realists (the de Goncourts,² Flaubert³, and others), also fiercely detested the bourgeois society that was the environment of their time. They, too, inveighed against the "bourgeois" they abominated so. And if they did print their works, it was, they made out, not for any broad reading public at all, but only for the select few — for "unknown friends", as Flaubert says in one of his letters. They were of the opinion that only a writer lacking any outstanding talents could please anything like an extensive reading public. It was Leconte de Lisle's⁴ view that real success was a sign that the writer himself stood at a low mental level. It is hardly necessary to add that, like the romanticists, the Parnassians were whole-hearted supporters of the theory of art for itself.

One could produce many, very many, examples of this kind. There is, however, no real need to do so. We have already seen clearly enough that the leanings of artists towards art for art's sake naturally appear where they are out of harmony with their social environment. Yet no harm will be done if we describe this dissonance with finer exactitude.

At the end of the eighteenth century, in the epoch immediately preceding the Great Revolution, the foremost artists of France were also in conflict with the state of "society" which then prevailed. David⁵ and his associates were opponents of the "old order". This cleavage was, of course, absolute in the sense that between them and the old order reconciliation was utterly out of the question. Moreover the cleft between David and his friends, on the one hand, and the old order, on the other, was incomparably deeper than the conflict between the romanticists and bourgeois society. David and his friends strove to thrust the old order aside, while Theophile Gautier and his followers had, as I have already said, nothing whatever against bourgeois social relationships and were merely concerned in getting the bourgeois order to give up its adherence to the manners and morals of the bourgeoisie⁶.

But in rising against the old order David and his friends well knew that behind them in close formation marched the columns of the third estate which was soon to become all, as the famous expression of the Abbé Sieyès has it. It follows, therefore, that the feeling of discord with the ruling order was supplemented in their case by a feeling of sympathy towards the new society.

¹ "Histoire du romantisme", p. 32.

² Edmond Louis Antoine Huot de Goncourt (1822—1896).

Jules Alfred Huot de Goncourt, (1830—1870).

³ Gustave Flaubert, French novelist (1821—1880).

⁴ Charles Marie Leconte de Lisle, Parnassian poet (1818—1894).

⁵ Jacques Louis David, French painter (1748—1825).

⁶ Theodore de Banville states quite distinctly that the attacks of the romanticists on the "bourgeois" were not in any way aimed at the bourgeoisie as a class (see his "Odes tunambulesques", Paris, 1858, p. 294). What we have in their case is a *conservative* revolt—typical for the romanticists—against the "bourgeois", which did not in the least apply to the foundations of the bourgeois order.

which was taking shape within the shell of the old order and was preparing to make a fight of it. Now, matters stood quite differently as far as the romanticists and Parnassians were concerned: they were not at all anxious to see and did not await any changes in the social structure of the France of their day. Their feeling of dissonance with their social environment was, therefore, an utterly hopeless, meaningless piece of sentiment ¹.

I believe I can now supplement my previous conclusion and put the matter thus:

The leanings of artists and persons taking a lively interest in artistic creative endeavor toward art for art's sake arise as the result of the hopeless dissonance between themselves and the social environment in which they live.

That is not yet all, however. The example of David and his friends, who were no less firmly of the same belief, shows us that *the utilitarian view, so-called, of art, that is, the inclination to give its productions the significance of a judgment on the phenomena of life which it always accompanies with a joyful readiness to participate in society's battles, arises wherever there exists a mutual bond of sympathy between a considerable section of society and the people more or less actively interested in art and its creations.*

To what extent this is actually true is forcefully illustrated by one fact I would just like to mention.

When the refreshing storm of the February revolution of 1848 burst over France a great many of these French artists who had previously held to the theory of art for art's sake repudiated this view altogether. Even Baudelaire, whom Gautier subsequently cited as an example of what an artist should be and as one unshakably convinced of the necessity of the unreserved autonomy of art, immediately set to on the publication of the revolutionary magazine, "Le salut public". It is true the magazine in question soon afterwards ceased publication, but as late as 1852 we find Pierre Dupont Baudelaire in the preface to the "Chansons" calling the theory of art for art's sake puerile and proclaiming that art ought to serve social aims. It was only the victory of the counter-revolution that finally brought Baudelaire and other artists back for good to the puerile theory of art for art. One of the rising young leaders of the Parnassian school, the great Leconte de Lisle himself, revealed with extraordinary clarity the psychological meaning behind this return to their old stand, in the foreword to his "Poèmes antiques", the first edition of which appeared in 1852. Here we read that poetry will no longer continue to give birth to heroic actions and to inspire the social virtues because in their times — as in all epochs of literary decay — its sacred tongue can give expression only to the narrow personal experiences of life (*mesquins impressions personnelles*)... and is no longer capable of teaching men (*n'est plus apte à enseigner l'homme*). Discussing the poets of his day, Leconte de Lisle remarked that humankind, that same race of Man whose teachers they once had been, had outgrown them. In the words of the great Parnassian, it was now the duty of poetry "to give an ideal life" to those who no longer lived a life of reality (*donner la vie idéale à celui qui n'a pas la vie réelle*). In these profound words there is revealed the whole psychological secret underlying the inclination towards art for art. Later on in this paper we may have occasion more than once to return to this quotation from Leconte de Lisle's preface.

¹ A like hopeless lack of harmony with their surroundings in society marks the moods of the romanticists of Germany, a point ably expounded by Brandes in his "Die romantische Schule in Deutschland" which forms the second volume of his great work, "Die Hauptströmungen der Literatur des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts". (Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature).

To finish with this side of the question, I may add that every given political power will always prefer the utilitarian view of art insofar as it gives the matter any thought at all. Why that should be so will be readily understood: it is in its own interest to harness all ideologies in the service of the cause it itself is serving. And since political power, which sometimes happens to be revolutionary, is most often conservative or even entirely reactionary, it is at once to be seen that there is no reason for assuming that the utilitarian view of art is held preferably by revolutionaries or by people of progressive ideas generally.

Such a typical representative of absolutism as Louis the Fourteenth, was firmly convinced that art cannot serve as an end unto itself, but ought to promote the moral upliftment of men. And all the literature and the whole of the art produced in the famous Louis the Fourteenth period was soaked through and through with this strong conviction. Similarly, Napoleon the First would have looked askance at the notion of art for art's sake as just another of the obnoxious figments of hostile "idéologues". He, too, wanted literature and art to serve moral aims. And he was so successful in this direction that, for instance, the greater number of the pictures displayed at the periodical exhibitions of that time (the famous "salons"), dealt with the military exploits of the Consultate and of the Empire. In this respect his young nephew, Napoleon the Third, followed in his footsteps, though with far less success. He also was actuated by a desire to make literature and the other arts serve the cause of what he called morality. This urge of the Bonapartes to foster an art after their own heart was bitingly ridiculed by the Lyonesse professor, de Laprade¹, in his satire, "*Les muses d'Etat*", produced in November, 1852. He predicted a time soon to come when the State Muses would subordinate the human mind to military discipline and there would prevail a regime under which not a single writer would dare to express any discontent whatever.

Il faut être content, s'il pleut, s'il fait soleil,
S'il fait chaud, s'il fait froid: "Ayez le teint vermeil.
Je déteste les gens maigres, à face pale;
Celui qui ne rit pas mérite qu'on l'empâle", etc.

I may add in passing that de Laprade lost his professor's chair on account of this clever satire. The government of Napoleon the Third would not tolerate any ridicule of the "Muses of the State".

Let us leave these governmental "spheres", however. Among the French writers of the Second Empire there are to be found men who repudiated the theory of art for art out of what were by no manner of means progressive considerations at all. Thus, Alexandre Dumas, the younger, proclaimed point-blank that there was no sense whatever behind the phrase of art for art. In his plays "*Le fils naturel*", and "*Le père prodigue*", he was following well-known social aims. He considered it his duty to support by his works the "old society" which according to his own words, was collapsing on all sides.

Writing in 1857, de Lamartine² regretted, in taking stock of the literary activities of the then lately deceased Alfred Musset, that they had not served as an expression of religious, social, political, or patriotic faiths (*foi*), and reproached the poets of his day with forgetting the sense of their productions for the sake of the rhyme or the metre. Finally — to indicate a far less outstanding literary figure in the person of Maxime Du Camp³ — he exclaims in condemnation of this all-absorbing partiality for form:

¹ Pierre Marin Victor Richard de Laprade, French poet (1811—1883).

² Alphonse Marie Louis de Lamartine, French lyric poet, miscellaneous writer, politician, and orator (1790—1869).

³ Maxime Du Camp, French author (1822—1894).

He thereupon attacks the head of the romanticist school in painting. "Like certain writers in literature who accepted art for art, Delacroix¹ invented colour for colour's sake. For him History and Mankind serve merely as the excuse for combining certain well selected shades of color". In the same writer's opinion, the school following art for art's sake had outlived its day for ever and aye².

It is just as difficult to suspect de Lamartine and Maxime Du Camp of anything in the nature of destructive aims as it is Alexandre Dumas the younger. They repudiated the theory of art for art—not because they desired to replace the bourgeois order with some other new social order, but because they wanted to strengthen bourgeois relationships, which had been considerably shaken by the proletariat's movement for liberation. In this respect they differed from the romanticists, and particularly from the Parnassians and the first realists, merely in that they made their peace with the bourgeois mode of life incomparably better than the latter. The one set were conservative optimists where the others were just as conservative pessimists.

From all this it follows indisputably that the utilitarian view of art crops up just as frequently among people of a conservative outlook as it does among people of revolutionary sentiment. An inclination towards such a view necessarily presupposes only one condition: a lively and active interest in a certain—it does not matter which—social order or social ideal; and it disappears wherever this interest vanishes for any particular reason.

Let us now consider which of these two utterly divergent views on art is the more likely to aid the advancement of art. Like all questions of social life and social thought, this is one which does not allow of an unconditional decision. In this regard everything depends on the conditions of time and place. Let us assume that Theophile Gautier, Théodore de Banville, Leconte de Lisle, Baudelaire, the Goncourt brothers, and Flaubert—in a word, all the romanticists, Parnassians, and the first French realists—had reconciled themselves to their bourgeois environment and surrendered their Muses to the service of those same gentlemen who, as Banville puts it, valued before and above all the sight of a bright five-franc piece. What would have been the result? And here, again, it is not difficult to supply the answer. The romanticists, the Parnassians, and the first French realists would have fallen very low indeed. Their productions would have become far, far weaker, far less truthful, and far less attractive.

Which has the higher artistic value: Flaubert's "Madame Bovary" or Ogier's "Le gendre du monsieur Poirier"? The question is superfluous. And the difference is not one of talent only. Representing as it does a regular apotheosis of bourgeois moderation and accuracy, Ogier's dramatic banality inevitably pre-supposed utterly different methods of creative effort from those employed by Flaubert, the Goncourts, and other realists who scornfully rejected these same qualities of moderation and accuracy. Finally, there is also a reason for the fact that the one literary current attracted far greater talents to its side than the other.

What is proved thereby? There is a point with which the romanticists—especially those of the type of Theophile Gautier—could never on any account agree; namely, that the worth of an artistic production is, in the final

¹ Ferdinand Victor Eugène Delacroix, French painter (1799—1863)

² See also A. Cassagne's fine book, "La théorie de l'art en France chez les derniers romantiques et les premiers réalistes", Paris, 1906. pp. 96—105.

analysis, determined by the "specific gravity", if I may use the expression, of its content. Th. Gautier maintained that poetry not merely proves nothing, but even tells us nothing, and that the beauty of the poem is made by its musical qualities and rhythm. Truly, a big blunder! Quite the contrary: poetical, and in general all artistic creations always have something to tell their reader for the simple reason that they always express something. It is true, of course, that what they "express" is done in their special manner. The artist expresses his ideas in images, whilst the publicist proves his arguments by means of logical conclusions. And if instead of images the writer turns to logical conclusions, or if he invents images for the purpose of proving a certain point, he is not an artist but a publicist, even though he writes not investigations or articles but novels, tales, or plays for the stage. It is just so. But it does not therefore follow from all this that in a work of art the idea possesses no significance. I would go further: there can be no artistic production without any ideological content. Even those works whose authors value only the form and care nothing for the content must express some sort of idea. As we all know, Gautier (who did not trouble himself as to the ideological content of his poetical productions), has assured us that he was prepared to sacrifice his political rights as a French citizen for the pleasure of beholding a genuine Raphael or a naked beauty. The one was closely interwoven with the other: the great care which strained after form was conditioned by socio-political indifferentism. As I have already explained, those works whose authors value the form only always express a certain hopelessly negative attitude on the part of their authors towards their social environment. And herein lies the idea common to them all and expressed by each of them in divers ways. Now, while there is no such thing as an artistic production deprived of any ideological content, it is also true that not any and every idea can be expressed in an artistic production. As Ruskin has aptly said: "A young girl may sing of a lost love, but a miser cannot sing of lost gold". He justly observes also that the worth of a work of art is determined by the heights attained in the mood it expresses. Ask yourself concerning any feeling which has overpoweringly mastered you, he says somewhere in his writings, whether it could be sung by the poet or might inspire him in a genuine positive sense. If it cannot be sung, or can only inspire in the direction of the ridiculous, it means that it is a low feeling!

Nor could it be otherwise. Art is one of the means of spiritual communion between men. And the higher the feeling expressed by the given artistic production, the greater facility will it reveal — other conditions being equal — in acting its part as a means of such communication between people. Why is it that the miser may not sing of his lost gold? For a very simple reason: because if he were to sing of his loss, his song would move no one; which is to say that it could not serve as means of communion between him and other people.

I may be referred to the songs of war and be asked: Surely war does not serve as a means of communion between different people? My reply is that whilst expressing hatred for the foe, the poetry of war praises the self-sacrifice of the warrior, his readiness to die for his native land, for his State, and so on. Precisely to the extent that it expresses such readiness does it serve as a means of communion between people within those limits (those of the tribe, the clan, or the State), whose breadth are determined by the level of cultural development attained by Man, or rather by the given section of Man affected.

Turgenev, who was bitterly hostile towards the preachers of the utilitarian view of art, once said: The Venus of Milo is more indubitable than the principles of 1789. He was quite right. But what follows as the result? Certainly not what I. S. Turgenev wished to prove. There are very many people in this world who not only "have their doubts" as to the principles of 1789, but who actu-

ally possess no conception of them whatever. Just ask a Hottentot who hasn't been through a European school what he thinks of these principles. Obviously he has never heard of them. But the Hottentot knows nothing either of the principles of 1789 or of the Venus of Milo. And if he were to see her he would "doubt" in her at once. He has his own ideal of beauty whose representations are frequently to be met with in anthropological works under the name of the Hottentot Venus. The Venus of Milo is "undoubtedly" attractive for only a certain part of the people of the white race. For this part of this race she is in actual fact more indubitable than the principles of 1789. But for what reason? Only because these principles express such relationships as correspond merely to a certain phase in the development of the white race — the times which saw the founding of the bourgeois order in its struggle against feudalism¹, while the Venus of Milo stands for an ideal of female beauty which corresponds to many phases in that same development. Many... but not all. The Christians had their own ideal of female beauty. It may be found on the ikons of Byzantium. All are aware that the worshippers of such ikons "doubted" greatly in the Venus of Milo or in any other Venuses for that matter. They considered them she-devils and destroyed them wherever they had opportunities to do so. Time wore round, however, until the she-devils of the Ancients again began to please people of the white race. This change was prepared for by the emancipatory movement going on among the burghers of Western Europe, that is, precisely by the very movement which was given shape to with the greatest clarity in the aforesaid principles of 1789. Despite Turgenev, therefore, we can maintain that the Venus of Milo became all the more "indubitable" in the Europe of the newer time, the more the people of Europe matured for the proclamation of the principles of 1789. This is no paradox, but a plain, unadorned historical fact. The whole meaning behind the history of art in the epoch of the Renaissance — regarded from the standpoint of the conception of what constitutes beauty — lies in the very fact that the Christian-monastic ideal of human beauty is thrust into the background by the earthly ideal whose rise was conditioned by the movement for liberation of the towns, the elaboration of the ideal being helped on by the memory of the she-devils of the Ancients. It is Belinsky who quite rightly maintained in the closing period of his literary activities that "nowhere and never" had there ever been "pure", unconditional art, art cut off from this earth's cares, or, as the philosophers have it "absolute art". He admitted, however, that the "productions of the art of painting of the Italian school of the sixteenth century did to a certain extent approach to the ideal of absolute art", since they were a creation of an epoch in which "art was the main interest exclusively occupying the educated strata of society". By way of example he mentions Raphael's Madonna, that "chef-d'oeuvre" of Italian sixteenth century painting, that is, the Sistine Madonna so-called in the Dresden Gallery. But the Italian schools of the sixteenth century simply cap in themselves the lengthy process of the struggle of the earthly ideal against the Christian-monastic ideal of beauty. And no matter how exclusive might have been the interest in art evinced by most educated sect-

¹ The second Article of the Rights of Man, the famous declaration passed by the French National Assembly in its sittings of August 20-26, 1789, reads „Le but de tout association politique est la conservation des droits naturels et imprescriptibles de l'homme. Ces droits sont: la liberté, la propriété, la sûreté et la résistance à l'oppression". The anxiety as to property rights bears witness to the bourgeois character of the upheaval that was taking place; while the recognition of the rights "to resist oppression" shows most plainly that the revolution was still being completed but had not yet been finished owing to the resistance it was meeting with from the civil and Clerical aristocracy. In June 1848, the French bourgeoisie no longer recognised the citizen's right to resist oppression.

ions of society in the sixteenth century¹ the fact is not to be disputed that the madonnas of Raphael represent one of the most characteristic artistic expressions of the victory of the earthly ideal over the Christian-monastic ideal. This may be contended without any exaggeration with regard to even those which were painted while Raphael was still under the influence of his teacher, Perugino, and on whose works there appears to hang an expression of purely religious feeling. But despite the religious exterior of Perugino's paintings they express so great a power and such vivid joy in a life purely of this earth that there remains nothing in them that has anything in common with the pious Mothers of God produced by the Byzantine masters². The productions of the Italian masters of the sixteenth century were likewise no creations of "absolute art" any more than were the productions of all previous masters. Actually nowhere and at no time did any such art ever exist. And if Turgenev referred to the Venus of Milo as a production of such art, it was solely because, like all idealists he took a wrong view of the real course of the aesthetical development of mankind.

The ideal of beauty prevailing in any given society or given class of society is rooted partly in the biological conditions governing the human race (which, *inter alia*, create racial features as well); and partly in the historic conditions making for the rise and continued existence of this particular society or class. Herein also lies the reason, why it is always very rich in its perfectly definite and anything but absolute content. Whoever bows down to "pure beauty" in no way renders himself independent from those biological and social-historical conditions by which his aesthetic tastes are determined. All he does is to shut his eyes more or less consciously to these conditions. The same thing happened with the romanticists as well, Theophile Gautier being taken as a typical instance. I have already stated that his exclusive interest in the form of poetical work was very closely connected with his socio-political indifferentism. Insofar as this indifferentism enhanced the value of his creations it safeguarded him against the danger of being attracted by bourgeois vulgarity and accuracy. But it also lowered their worth inasmuch as it hemmed in Gautier's outlook and prevented him from grasping the progressive ideas of his time. As a case in point, we may take the preface already mentioned of "Mademoiselle de Maupin", which contains such childishly nonsensical attacks on the defenders of the utilitarian view of art. There Gautier is moved to exclaim:

"My God! How stupid this sham ability of Mankind to attain this self-perfection which keeps buzzing in everybody's ears! One might be led to think the human machine may be improved and that by righting some wheel in it or arranging its parts to better advantage we are going to make it perform its functions with greater ease"³.

In proof of his contention that this is not the case Gautier mentions Marshal de Bassompierre who once drank off a whole boot of wine for the health of his guns. He observes that it were as difficult to improve on this worthy marshal in the matter of wine-drinking as it would be for any modern to surpass Milon Krotonski in the matter of eating, that famous gentleman having once

¹ Its exclusiveness — to deny which is impossible — merely signifies that in the sixteenth century there existed a hopeless gulf between the people valuing art and the rest of their social environment. It was then that this gulf gave shape to the urge towards pure art, i. e., to art for art's sake. Before that time say in Giotto's day, neither this gulf nor its consequent urge in the direction of pure art existed.

² It is noteworthy that the contemporaries of Perugino himself suspected him of atheism.. (See the "Sovremennik", — The Contemporary, Book XII, 1912)

³ „Mademoiselle de Maupin", préface, p. 23.

eaten up an entire ox at a single sitting. These observations, perfectly justified in themselves, constitute probably the best characterisation of the theory of art for art as subscribed to by consistent, out-and-out romanticists.

It may be asked: Who set Gautier's ears buzzing with talk of mankind's ability to achieve perfection? It was the socialists, to be more exact, the Saint-Simonians, who were very popular in France quite a short time before the appearance of "Mademoiselles de Maupin". And it is against the Saint-Simonians that he directs his considerations (perfectly correct in themselves), on the difficulty of surpassing Marshal Bassompierre at drinking or Milon Krotonski in gluttony. Yet though perfectly sound in themselves, these objections are entirely out of place when hurled against the Saint-Simonians. The perfection of mankind which the Saint-Simonians had in view has nothing in common with attempts to enlarge the storage capacity of the stomach. The Saint-Simonians had in mind the betterment of the social organisation in the interests of the most numerous section of the population, that is, the labouring and producing section. To dub so great a task the rankest stupidity and to ask whether its solution would lead to an increased ability to bibble wine and devour meat was tantamount to disclosing that very narrowmindedness of the bourgeois mentality which roused the ire of many a young romanticist. How did this come about? By what means did these very bourgeois limitations creep into the reasonings of the writer who visualised the whole sense of his life and being in waging a life and death struggle against these very limitations?

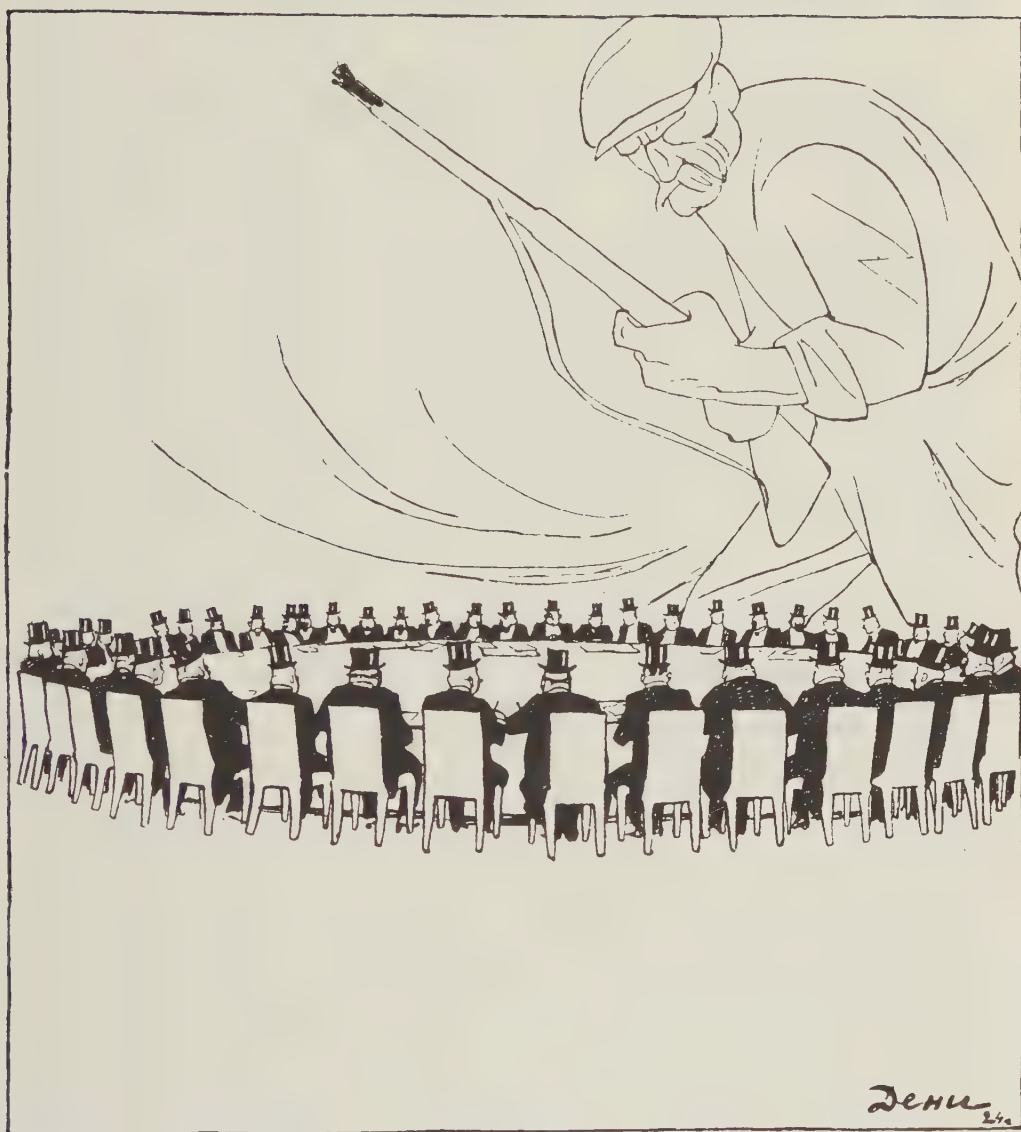
More than once — even though merely in passing, but in another connection as the Germans say — I have answered this question by comparing the moods which swayed the romanticists with the sentiments which fired David and his friends. I said that while revolting against the tastes and manners of the bourgeoisie, the romanticists had no objections at all to the bourgeois social order. We must consider this point in closer detail.

Some of the romanticists — like George Sand during her years of close contact with Pierre Leroux — were in sympathy with socialism and its aims. But they were the exceptions, not the rule. As a rule while in revolt against the vulgarity of bourgeoisdom, the romanticists displayed a very hostile attitude towards all socialist systems urging the necessity of social reform. What the romanticists wanted to do was to change the morals of society without effecting any change in the social order. This, as will be readily understood, is utterly impossible. For this reason, the revolt of the romanticists against the "bourgeois" brought in its wake as few practical results as did the scorn of the Hettingen or Jena Fuchses for the philistines. In its practical aspect the romanticist revolt against the "bourgeois" was perfectly fruitless. But its fruitlessness had literary consequences of no small importance. It gave to the heroes of the romanticists that character of stiltedness and absence of reality in their make-up which ultimately brought about the downfall of the whole school of romanticism. This stilted and unreal character of their heroes can under no circumstance whatever be held to add to the value of their artistic creations, so that side by side with the plus mentioned above we must set down a certain minus. Thus, while the romanticists' artistic productions gained much from the revolt of their authors against the "bourgeois", it is true, on the other hand, that they lost not a little as the result of the supineness of this same revolt.

The first French realists strained every effort to eliminate the main defect of the romanticists' productions: the laboured, stilted character of their heroes. In Flaubert's novels there is no trace of the laboured and stilted nature of the romanticist school; saving, perhaps, in "Salambo" and possibly in "Les contes". The first realists continued the revolt against the "bourgeois", but they revolted on a different ground altogether. They did not counterpose incredi-

ble heroes to the bourgeois boobies, but made an effort to make these self-same boobies the object of a truthful artistic representation. Flaubert considered it his duty to regard the social environment he depicted just as objectively as the naturalist regards Nature. "One must treat men as one would mastodons or crocodiles", he says, "Can one get heated over the long tusks of the one or the huge jaws of the other? Show them; stuff them for the museum shelves; preserve them in jars of spirit—that's all. But don't pass moral judgments on them; aye, and who are you, little toads that you are, to do so?" And to the extent that Flaubert succeeded in remaining objective, have his characters acquired the significance of "documents" whose study is most certainly essential for anyone engaged in the scientific investigation of socio-psychological phenomena. Objectivity was the strongest side to his method; but though remaining objective in the process of artistic creation, Flaubert did not cease to be very subjective in his appraisal of the social movements of his time. As in Theophile Gautier's case, his bitter scorn for the "bourgeois" was supplemented by the strongest ill-will for all those who in any way raised their hand against bourgeois social relationships. Indeed, his ill-will for such is even stronger than was the case with Gautier. He was a resolute opponent of universal franchise which he decried as "a disgrace to the human mind". "Under universal franchise", we find him writing to George Sand, "numbers prevail over reason, over education, and over race which count for more than numbers" (*"argent... vaut mieux que le nombre"*). In another letter he writes that the right to vote is more idiotic than the right to God's grace. Socialist society appeared to him as "an enormous monster which will swallow with in itself all individual action, all personality, all thought, and will direct and do all itself". From this we see that in his opposition to democracy and socialism this hater of democracy and socialism, this denouncer of the "bourgeois", was completely at one with the most narrowminded ideologues of the bourgeoisie. The same feature is to be observed in all his contemporary partisans of art for art's sake. In his biography of Edgar Poe Baudelaire (who had long since forgotten his revolutionary "Salut public"), wrote: "Among a people deprived of its aristocracy the cult of the beautiful can only be spoiled, and dwindle away! "Elsewhere he maintains that there are only three types worthy of honour—"the priest, the warrior, and the poet". This is no longer conservatism, but a reactionary mood. Just as great a reactionary was to be found in Borbey d' Aurivilly. In his book, "Les poètes", he admits when speaking of Lorand Pichat's poetical works that the latter might have been a great poet "if he had cared to trample on atheism and democracy, these two great dishonours (*ces deux deshonneurs*), of his thought".

Much water has flown by the mill since Theophile Gautier wrote (in May, 1835), the preface to his "Mademoiselle de Maupin". The Saint-Simonians who were supposed to have set his ears buzzing with talk of mankind's capacity for perfection had loudly announced the necessity of social reform. Like most utopian-socialists, however they were determined opponents of the class struggle. In addition, the appeal of these utopians was directed in the main to the possessing classes. They did not believe in the self-action of the proletariat. But the happenings of 1848 showed that self-action by that class might become a very threatening thing, indeed. After 1848 it was no longer a question of whether the possessing classes would undertake to improve the lot of the dispossessed, but of who would get the upper hand in the struggle between the two. The relationships between the classes in the new society had been considerably simplified. All bourgeois thinkers realised now that it was a question of whether they would be successful in holding the labouring masses in economic slavery. This fact was also recognized by the supporters of art for "the Haves". One of the most remarkable of their number as regards his prominence in the world of scien-



A spectre is haunting Europe...

(Marx. — *The Communist Manifesto*.)

ce, Ernest Renan, wrote in his "La reforme intellectuelle et morale", in support of the demand for a powerful government "to compel the good rustics to perform our share of the work whilst we gave ourselves over to thought" (*qui force les bons rustiques de faire notre part de travail pendant que nous speculons*).¹

This incomparably clearer grasp by bourgeois ideologues of the meaning behind the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the working class could not but exert the most powerful influence on the nature of the "speculations" in which they lost themselves. Ecclesiasticus aptly says that the wise man by oppressing others becomes foolish.

The discovery by the bourgeois pundits of the secret of the struggle between their class and the proletariat led to their gradually losing the capacity for the quiet scientific investigation of social phenomena. This did much to lessen the intrinsic value of their more or less learned works. Where previously bourgeois political economy was able to push to the fore such a giant of scientific thought as David Ricardo, the tone was now set in the ranks of its representatives by such chattering dwarfs as Frederic Bastiat². In philosophy the idealistic reaction began to get an ever-strengthening grip, this reaction consisting essentially in its conservative efforts to harmonise the successes crowning modern natural science with the old religious traditions, or to put the matter more exactly to reconcile prayer with the laboratory.³ Nor did art escape this fate. Later we shall see to what absurd lengths certain of the modern painters were led by the idealistic reaction. Meanwhile I wish to say this.

The conservative and to a certain extent reactionary mode of thought of the first realists did not prevent them from making some fine studies of their environment and creating things of outstanding value in the realm of art. But there is not the slightest doubt, however, that it greatly circumscribed their field of vision. By turning aside from the great emancipatory movement of their time, they struck out from the number of their "mastodons" and "crocodiles" the most interesting specimens, those with richest inner life. Their objective attitude to their environment really connoted a lack of sympathy for that environment. And, of course, they could show no sympathy for what in view of their conservatism was alone accessible to their investigations — the minor thoughts and the lesser passions born in the dark slime of the daily existence of smug John Citizen. But this absence of sympathy in the objects investigated and invented speedily caused, and were bound to cause, a falling off of interest in these same objects. As Huysmans⁴ puts it, the naturalism of which they laid the first foundations by their remarkable productions soon landed in a "blind alley, a tunnel with a barred exit." As the same novelist remarks elsewhere, the "naturalists" might take anything at all as their subject, syphilis included.⁵ But the modern labour movement was a closed book to them. I recall, of course, that Zola wrote "Germinal". But setting aside the weak aspects of this novel, it must not be forgotten that if Zola himself did begin, as he maintained, to

¹) Quoted from Cassagne "La theorie de l'art pour l'art chez les derniers romantiques et les premiers realistes", pp. 194—195.

²) Frederic Bastiat, French political economist (1801—1850).

³) "Without contradicting one's self one may go successively from his laboratory to his chamber to pray", "On peut, sans contradiction, aller successivement à son laboratoire et à son oratoire", said Grasset, Professor of clinical medicine at Montpellier. Here he repeats the idea expressed by such theoreticians as Jules Souris Rourit, author of the "Breviaire de l'histoire du materialisme", written in the spirit of the famous work by Lane on the same subject.

⁴) Joris Karl Huysmans, French novelist (1848—1907).

⁵) In saying so, Huysmans was hinting at the novel, "Le virus d'amour", by the Belgian Tabaran.

have leanings towards socialism, his experimental method so-called if applied to the end would have proved rather unsuited for the artistic study and representation of great social movements. This method of his was most closely interwoven with the viewpoint of that materialism which he called natural-scientific and which fails to understand that the actions, inclinations, tastes, and habits of thought of social man cannot find for themselves sufficient explanation in physiology or pathology, since they are conditioned by social relationships. In remaining true to this method, the artists could study and represent their "mastodons" and "crocodiles" as individuals, but not as members of a great whole. Huysmans felt this when he observed that naturalism had landed in a blind alley and that there was nothing left for it to do but to tell over again the story of the love ties of the first wineseller they ran across with the first shopgirl that came to hand¹. Tales of this kind could only be of interest if they threw light on a given side of social relationships as was the case in Russian realism. But the social interest was wanting among the French realists. As a consequence of this representation of "the love ties between the first wineseller they ran across with the first trifling shopgirl who came to hand" they necessarily became uninteresting in the long run, tedious, or just simply disgusting. Huysmans himself was an out-and-out "naturalist" in his first productions, his "Les soeurs Vatard" being a case in point. But he got tired of depicting the "seven deadly sins" (again his own words), and he gave up naturalism; and as the German expression goes, he threw out the baby along with the bathwater. In his "A rebourse", that strange, in parts boring, but most instructive novel because of its very shortcomings, he has presented us in the person of Dezessente a peculiar man (the last of a line of aristocrats), whose entire manner of life is meant to be a complete denial of the life of the "wineseller and the trifling shopgirl". The creation of such types only goes to confirm the truth of Leconte de Lisle's statement that where there is no life in reality, the task of poetry lies in the creation of life in the ideal. But this Dezessente's life in the ideal is so far emasculated of any human inwardness that its composition did not offer any way out from the blind alley already referred to. So it was that Huysmans got bogged in mysticism which was made to serve as the "ideal" point of emergence from a position which it would have been impossible to from emerge by the road of "realism". Under the circumstances nothing was actually more natural.

The artist who has turned mystic does not neglect the ideological content of his works, but merely gives them a character all his own. Mysticism is also an idea, the only difference being that it is an idea of the darkness, formless like the fog, and ever in mortal hostility to reason. The mystic is not only not against telling us what he has to say: he is prepared even to prove what he has to say. Only he will tell us something lacking "unity", and in his proofs will take his starting point from the denial of all commonsense. Huysmans' example shows once again that an artistic production cannot take shape without an idea as the body of its content. But when artists turn blind to the most important social tendencies of their time, the nature of the ideas expressed in their productions are greatly lessened in their intrinsic worth. The result is that their works as well unavoidably suffer as a consequence.

So important is this circumstance as regards the history of art and literature that we shall have to examine it from various sides. But before taking this task in hand let us summarise the conclusions to which we have been led by the investigation so far.

¹) See Jules Huret's "Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire", in reference to the conversation with Huysmans, pp. 176—177.

The inclination to look to art for art's sake makes its appearance — and strengthens its hold — wherever there exists a hopeless gulf between people engaged in art and their surrounding social environment. This cleavage exercises beneficial effects on the artists's creative work to the extent that it helps him to rise above his environment. That was the case in the epoch of Pushkin and Nicholas I. That was what happened in France with the romanticists, the Parnassians, and the first realists. Instances could be multiplied without end to show that this has always been the case wherever this cleavage has existed. But in revolting against the vulgar morality of the social environment that went to make up their own surroundings, the romanticists, the Parnassians, and the realists had no objections whatever to raise against the social relations in which these banal morals were rooted. On the contrary, while cursing the "bourgeois" they valued the bourgeois order — at first, instinctively; later, fully conscious of why they did so. And the greater the strength of the movement for liberation in modern Europe which was directed against the bourgeois order, the more conscious of their devotion to this order became the supporters of art for art's sake. And the more conscious they became of this devotion of theirs, the more difficult did they find it to remain indifferent to the ideological content of their productions. But their blindness to the new current directed towards the renewal of all social life rendered their views fallacious, robbed them of breadth, made them one-sided, and diminished the quality of those ideas given expression to in their works. The natural result of this was the hopeless position reached by French realism which led to a decadent attraction and inclination towards mysticism among writers who had themselves at one time passed through the realist (naturalist) school.

This conclusion we shall verify in detail in the following section of our paper.

THE SPEED OF SELF-DISCLOSURE

About Trotski, Maiakovski and the "Fellow-Travellers"

The speed of his fall is in proportion to the speed of the progress of our country. The higher we ascend, the lower he tumbles. Moreover, how can he drop farther? He has already passed through the principal phase, and the rest will be its natural conclusion.

It is about Trotski we are talking.

It is difficult to wear a mask for long. Self-restraint inevitably leads to self-exposure. The face behind the mask is disclosed more or less quickly, more or less patently, more or less typically.

The typical in politics is that which is most distinctive in a social sense. The fate of a personality represents an example of the logic of social groups and classes. Trotski's fate is typical. The extent of his waverings emphasizes the definiteness of his social basis. Behind his endless political rushings — each time under the mask of principle and consistency! — behind his turns and runs — every time in the name of consistency! — behind his cowardly manoeuvrings and blocs — always with the roar of drums and noise about the necessity of consistency! — bolshevism could discern one of the petty bourgeois "fellow-travellers" of the proletarian movement.

He compensated for political haziness by endless phrase-mongering, for genuine historical manliness by blustering pretentiousness. To the collectivism of the proletarian revolution he opposed the sectarianism of petty bourgeois intellectualism. His mutiny against bolshevik discipline was based on the shabby banality of the "superman". His vanity was the measure of his contempt for his environment — a contempt, the more comical, the more contemptuously the revolution came to regard this Sancho Panza, who is now trying to play Don Quixote on the vaudeville of the bourgeois press.

It was natural that this man could not for long travel with bolshevism. It is comprehensible why bolshevism could not tolerate him in its ranks for long.

Trotski's "My Life" is such a self-exposure. The lamp of Trotskiism, which formerly burned so dimly, now blazes in everything. Nothing remains of that borrowed light of Leninism by which Trotski shone in the first years of the revolution. The years of self-restraint he is trying to redress by years of self-assuagement on his native soil. This means magnifying himself. As a Philistine he takes the cake: it appears that the discussion of 1923 was lost by Trotski only because he, Trotski, was ill with the grippe, but he was ill with the grippe because he had gone hunting and caught cold. And then they say that Marxism denies the role of personality in history! By the way, this story is told, among others, by reporters, who specialize in chronicling scandals from the lives of the "great".

"The Mysteries of the Court of Madrid" is one of the most brilliant literary predecessors of the genre in which Trotski's memoirs are written. In the back-

yards of history such mysteries are fabricated, the more sensational and numerous, the dimmer and the more hopeless the prospects. The more insignificant the future, the more imposing seems one's past. Not so long ago Trotsky was making himself up as a hundred-percent bolshevik. To-day he no longer tries to fix that up, but the rehabilitation of the history of Trotskism is going ahead at full steam, together with hysterical discrediting of Leninism, and increasingly outspoken attacks on Lenin.

One may suppose that Trotsky wishes as quickly as possible to square accounts with the times of his bolshevist flight — one cannot help thinking that he wishes to buy off his "past sins".

It is no accident that the rate of his transition to counter-revolution coincided with the time of the defense and rehabilitation of the theory of the permanent revolution.

The measure of Trotsky's movement away from the revolution and of the intensification of his struggle against Leninism is the measure of the deepening of the proletarian content in our revolution and of the progress of Leninism toward final victory.

Trotsky was the extreme left of that petty bourgeois intelligentsia which was swept along by the elemental force of the proletarian revolution. Many such people were reeducated by the Party — not without trouble and labor. Many lagged behind in direct proportion to the ever developing progress of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Trotsky's fate has become a reflection of the waverings of the short-time members of the bolshevist party, exaggerated to the point of caricature.

In this very connection his article, "The position of the writer in the Soviet Union"¹, is interesting. It was written shortly after Maiakovsky's suicide.

"It is well known that Maiakovsky left petty bourgeois revolutionism for bolshevism. It is well known that he wanted quite honestly, sincerely and manfully to develop from a "fellow-traveller" of the proletariat into a rank-and-file member of its vanguard. It is well known that he broke down on this difficult road, did not hold out to the end, stumbled when the burden of his mental re-equipment made itself more and more felt on his diseased, shattered organism.

"The eradication of the roots of capitalism in the U. S. S. R. demanded from Maiakovsky, since he wished to become a proletarian poet and grow ever firmer in the true sense of that binding conception, that he make a genuine and final effort to uproot all capitalist vestiges from his inner self. The burden of remaking himself increased: — he who hopes to penetrate proletarian art, should share in its practice. Maiakovsky showed how difficult this was even for Maiakovsky".

So this is how the petty bourgeois "fellow-traveller", now turned renegade, writes of a petty bourgeois "fellow-traveller" who transformed himself into a real revolutionary.

The key to Trotsky's whole position is given by the conclusion of his article: "Maiakovsky did not and could not become one of the founders of proletarian literature for the same reasons which make it impossible to build socialism in a single country."

At the basis of Trotsky's estimate of Maiakovsky lies his "liquidatory" standpoint. His campaign against proletarian literature is inseparably bound up with his denial of the possibility of building socialism in one country.

¹ Published in the bourgeois paper "Die literarische Welt" No 39, 26 November 1930.

Revolution on the wane, in its twilight Maiakovski perishes, not being able, says Trotski, to find a way out from the contradictions of the decline of the October revolution. To Maiakovski's path to RAPW (The Russian Association of proletarian writers) Trotski opposes his own path, abroad via Alma-Ata. He writes: "In January of this year Maiakovski, having been subjected to too many attacks, did violence to himself and entered RAPW, two or three months before committing suicide. This did not give him anything, on the contrary, it plainly robbed him of a significant inner value".

Even the banal varnish of an obituary article cannot hide the ill-will of the renegade in regard to Maiakovski's path from the standpoint of the "fellow-traveller" to bolshevism. Could a baser accusation be flung at the memory of Maiakovski?

Trotski strictly speaking, calls him an accomodator to communism, by explaining Maiakovski's entrance into RAPW as a selfish fear of insinuations.

Trotski's relations with bolshevism were two-fold: a struggle against it, at onetime mingled with self-adaptation to it, nay who believes that he was not conscious of this self-adaptation? The period of Maiakovski's greatest rapprochement to bolshevism is explained by Trotski on the analogy of his own experience: he calls Maiakovski an "accomodator", by denying him even the virtue of honesty to himself.

"At present the official ideology of "proletarian literature" (the quotation marks are Trotsky's — L. A.) is based on a complete failure to understand the rates and phases of cultural development, — a phenomenon which may be observed in art as well as in economics. The struggle for a "proletarian literature" (quotation marks are Trotsky's — L. A.) is something like the struggle for "universal collectivization" (the quotation marks are Trotsky's — L. A.) of all the spiritual and intellectual achievements of mankind within the framework of the Five-Year Plan. At the beginning of the October revolution it still bore a Utopian, idealistic character. It is note worthy that in this sphere even then differences arose between Lenin and the writer of these lines."

In these reflections disappears even that shading which distinguishes Trotskiism from the ordinary run of Social Democracy. The class struggle quickly wipes out the "shades" dear to the intelligentsia!

However, the first thing that strikes one is the straight-forward admission of his disagreements with Lenin. In his brochure on the permanent revolution he openly asserts that Lenin's polemic against his theory is be explained by Lenin's ignorance of Trotski's books. Your Lenin was a fine one indeed, Trotski taunts slyly and ingratiatingly, although continuing however to cover himself with the mask of respect and devotion to the founder and leader of bolshevism. As in the quotation presented above concerning Maiakovski's entering RAPW, the lowness of the thrust is hidden under the unctuousness of the tone.

However, we must be grateful for one thing: what could be pleasanter to read than the acknowledgment by Trotski himself of Lenin's disagreement with his views on literature and on general questions of culture!

One might have thought that Trotski after declaring in 1923 that there neither was nor could be any proletarian literature, would learn or, to be more exact, would be forced to recognize the facts. Such a supposition however betrays a naive belief in human enlightenment: it ignores the inseparable connection between Trotsky's policy of liquidating the revolution and its class roots.

The great sweep of the proletarian revolution he declares to be its "bureaucratic degeneration". In accordance with this he gives to the literature

of the working class the epithet "bureaucratic" and not proletarian. Yes, if the collectivization of the village and the successes of socialist industrialization are bureaucratic degeneration, then the summoning of workers, members of shock-brigades, into literature must be its bureaucratization. Yes, for Trotsky, who preaches the entrusting of the building of revolutionary art to the petty bourgeois intelligentsia, the growth of proletarian cadres seems based on complete failure to understand the rates and phases of cultural development. The inability of the philistine to go beyond the habits and traditions of bourgeois culture, and that in the period of its decline, finds its full reflection in Trotsky's taunts at the struggle for a proletarian culture. Trotsky's taunts sound, however, like the hopeless outcry of a failure who has made a mistake in his calculations. Why, not long ago Trotsky was seriously asserting that at the first difficulties of the revolution they would call him back, why, Trotsky not long since was persuading himself and those akin to him that without their culture the working class could not get anywhere, but proletarian culture, it seems, is getting along splendidly without their "gentleman's" civilization!

The essence of Trotsky's views on Maiakovski is that for the writer of the intelligentsia who, under the present conditions of the revolution, takes new steps toward the "party of bureaucratic degeneration" there is no future. This is the political meaning of Trotsky's article. And just on this account it is necessary to say a few words about it.

At the present time our literature is passing through a difficult phase. The reading of literary productions has increased enormously; interest and attention given to them also; the proletarian literary environment is taking form, definitively removing the petty bourgeois atmosphere that formerly surrounded most literary organizations. There are many new books and many new names. But the demands made upon literature grow even faster than literature itself. Different strata of writers respond differently to these demands: some accept them sincerely, others die away, others more or less openly enter into a fronde. But it is difficult for all writers: the reconstruction of literature must not be achieved at the expense of artistic quality. A period of gigantic socialist offensive must have a great art, not hack-work, numerous, and reddish, good for the day and let it go at that.

"The methods of Marxism are not the methods of art," Trotsky once wrote. Soviet writers now understand that only work in art with the methods of Marxism can guarantee their social fitness and their literary development. It is one thing to understand this, but another to work correspondingly. It is little to set an aim, it must be attained. The crisis is particularly difficult for the group of old "fellow-travellers",—for those who were "fellow-travellers" in the period of reconstruction and now stand at the crossways.

Will the summoning of shock-brigade members and the growth of proletarian writers definitively toss them to one side, or will they, remaking themselves, be able to close ranks with this flood?

The same question confronts the old engineers, the old corps of teachers, the old professors, in all branches of socialist construction. "Within the framework of the Five-Year plan the party is solving and will solve the question of the necessary rates of preparing cadres of people from the working class" (Stalin).

Does the old specialist want to be thrown overboard or will he indeed steer a course for working with the communist cadres and in a communist spirit?

To go to-day along the path of the revolution means to stand for the policy of eliminating the kulak as a class, for a most bitter struggle against sabo-

teurs in industry, for striking a blow at all manifestations of the petty bourgeois element. To go along the road of the revolution to-day means to accept not the part but the whole, it means not to hope that it will switch over to the track of bourgeois democracy, but to fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat. To go along the path of the revolution to-day, in other words, means to be confident of the "possibility" of building socialism in our country. Does the term "fellow-traveller" suit those who thus go with the revolution? Are they not rather allies?

For him who does not go along with the revolution is the epithet "Fellow-traveller" fitting? Is he not rather an adversary, an enemy, the agent of the class enemy?

"Since he was ready to serve his epoch by petty, day-by-day work, Maiakovski could not avoid pseudo-revolutionary institutionalizing, although he was not capable of understanding it in theory, and although he, in consequence, could not find the way to victory over himself", writes Trotsky. Could Maiakovski, says Trotsky, have understood that the Soviet government is the tool of bureaucratic degenerates, could he have opposed himself to it, then those contradictions which tortured Maiakovski would have been overcome. That is true but these contradictions would have been lived down at the price of capitulating before his own past. That is true, but these contradictions would have been overcome along the line of least resistance for a man struggling against his petty bourgeois past. That is true, but these contradictions would have been lived down by the destruction of Maiakovski, the poet of the revolution, that is, by the destruction of Maiakovski the poet as such.

Trotsky wishes the old fellow-travellers, whom he spoiled at their appearance by his liberal articles, to solve the contradictions of the crisis by turning renegade against the proletarian revolution. In other words, in the literary field Trotsky comes forth also as the champion of the anti-October reaction. In this he adapts himself less to communism than in the period when the party had not taken away his ticket of membership in the communist party. In this sphere he talks openly even to-day. But even here he tries to hide behind a mask: there will be no proletarian art, but socialist art will flourish when the difficult transition from capitalism to the new social structure is completed. We are familiar with their methodology: don't build socialism in your country alone, before revolution has triumphed in other countries. The "left" turn of speech completes his exposure.

Our proletarian literature, which is now leading all of Soviet art, took form and grew in the fight against Trotsky and Trotskism, as well as in the struggle against Bukharin and his school, and during the fight with different shades and colours of opportunism. Proletarian literature struggled against Trotsky when he denied completely the right to existence of an art of the working class, and when he was trying to orientate the party on the "fellow-travellers", at the time when he headed the petty bourgeois, decadent tendency after Yesenin's death with his obituary, in which the worst feelings of the petty bourgeois intellectual were scarcely covered over by protective phraseology.

The "fellow-travellers" will find the true road only in the struggle against Trotsky's counsels. From Trotsky's attitude toward Maiakovsky the "fellow traveller" writers must draw one conclusion: Maiakovski was not able to re-make himself to the end, but we can, although it is difficult for us; Maiakovski fell off the high scaffolding of construction but we, though it is difficult for us, will hold out; and comparing the path of Trotsky's policy and the path of the poet Maiakovski, rejecting and condemning Maiakovski's end,

we will choose the direction, not of the island near Constantinople, but of Dnieprostroi, Magnitogorsk, Kuzbass, "Red Putilov", Eletro-factory.

A way out from their contradictions the "fellow-traveller" writers must seek in the hard work of communist education and of organic absorption of proletarian ideology. It seems to Trotsky that there are only two possibilities facing the petty bourgeois writer and in general facing the intelligentsia — superficial adaption to the revolution or a fronde against the soviets. In this his own development corresponds to a law of development in general. In this very literature we have a whole series of examples of genuine rapprochement to us and of transformation of those very "fellow-travellers" who are the most promising in a creative sense, into our allies.

Trotsky's article, although written earlier, sounds like an echo from the trial of the saboteurs. After Ramzin and his followers every one of the workers of the intelligentsia, in technique and in science as well as in literature, is re-evaluating his conduct since the revolution, putting to himself the fundamental questions of policy. Trotsky throws one more little weight on to that side of the scales which tends toward favoring a capitalist restoration.

In contradiction to the laws of nature, does that side of the scales become heavier as a result of this?

Trotskyism, for certain fellow-travellers of communism abroad, was a convenient form of transition to Social Democracy, the form which suited them best. Trotskyism here aroused a certain amount of sympathy among a few intellectual circles precisely because it permitted them to abandon the revolution under frightfully "revolutionary" banners. The justification of desertion, of the longing for rest, the right to an unbridled scepticism, of the legality of individualist self-removal from the revolutionary ranks — that is what Trotskyism was and is for them, and that is why Trotskyism fuses so easily with the right-wing deviation.

"Universal collectivization" of all the intellectual achievements of humanity, — thus the capitalist gentleman mocks, more and more ironically, more and more fearfully. Trotsky sniggers and laughs, encouraging him. Record speed of decline! The swiftness of the self-exposure is significant.

INTERNATIONAL CHRONICLE

GERMANY

TO THE ATTACK FOR PROLETARIAN LITERATURE!

"Dealers in culture" complain about the decline in the demand for all classes of printed matter. It is true that the number of students has doubled since 1913 (90,000 now against 45,000 in 1913) but the greater part of students obtain full satisfaction of their cultural requirements from the "National Observer". And what is there surprising in this? What else can the modern bourgeois youth find in bourgeois literature? While there are no wide horizons in politics and economics, these being at present in a state of great confusion, dull subjects and foolish sensations have wormed their way into literature.

The bourgeoisie neither sees nor cares to see the tremendous enthusiasm that is stirring the proletarian movement. The activities of the workers always becomes more intense at a time of economic crisis, under conditions of unemployment, reduction of wages and intensified terror against the proletariat.

The enormous circulation of proletarian literature, exceeding all expectations, indicates the strength and depth of the proletarian literary movement. The masses thirst for "class war weapons". Witness, for example the growing revolutionary movement here in Germany, where hundreds of thousands insist on a deeper knowledge, a better understanding of their surroundings, and on definite action.

According to data of the Communist Party, over one million pamphlets were sold during the elections. (In 1928 less than one hundred thousand were sold.). And yet the masses were clamouring for more. But the demand remained unsatisfied; the literature was not ready.

This was not the only case, as may be seen from the figures on circulation of mass literature: In 1928, 40,500 pamphlets were published monthly (which makes 486,000 pamphlets for the whole year); in 1929 the monthly issue was 134,000, i. e. 1,408,000 pamphlets during the year. In the first seven months of 1930, about 286,000 pamphlets were distributed monthly which makes 1,716,000 in the first six months). There can be no doubt that the monthly circulation of pamphlets could be brought up to the half-million mark! Six million pamphlets in one year! The communist party is the only party that has actually something to say to the masses. The greatest demand is for literature on the Soviet Union and the struggle against fascism.

Propagandist literature more so than agitational literature shows the growth and depth of the movement. Take the works of Lenin. What other agency except the revolutionary movement could manage to throw on the book market, within a very brief space of time, such a huge body of literature? Fourteen volumes, 700 pages each, published in 101,500 copies within two years! In addition to this, 100,000 copies of separate works of Lenin, such as "Imperialism and Revolution", "Agitation and Propaganda", etc., have been published. Furthermore, during the past few years the Marxian Library has published 154,000 copies of Lenin's works.

The growth of interest in the works of Marx and Lenin may be gauged from the following figures: In 1929 the series "Text Books on Communism" sold on an average 2,100 books per month. This series includes classical works on Marxism, beginning with the "Communist Manifesto" and ending with Lenin's book on "State and Revolution". During the elections

in 1930, 4,500 such books were sold, and in October — 15,000 books.

Facts reveal the great mass urge for serious revolutionary study. At one time it was taken as axiomatic, that the same severe demands could not be imposed on belles-lettres as on propagandist literature, and that literature should take into consideration the petty-bourgeois influence among the proletariat. Pseudo-communist literature began to make headway. This was a sort of "trimmed communism" to suit the bourgeoisie. Just then, however, Soviet revolutionary proletarian literature forced its way into Germany, and penetrated far deeper than the capitalist encampment. Only a year ago the International Labor Publishers began to print proletarian novels, and have achieved great success. The new series of "A novel for a Mark" will undoubtedly add to this success.

It must be said, however, that the business of circulating literature is not, to our regret, sufficiently well organized. The movement is still spontaneous, but it contains enormous possibilities, which are not fully utilized, due to organizational drawbacks. We must urge the development of our literature-distributing staff into an extensive and well-worked organization.

After such political preparations for advancing proletarian literature are made, we will have a new field for our activities. At present we have no books for children, no literature for the youth, no literature for the village or the large centres. We also lack technical and military literature and literature on natural science.

We will find a particularly large field for work in the periodical press. To this we have hitherto not devoted sufficient attention, in spite of the fact that it is a most indispensable means for linking up hundreds of thousands of proletarians with the progressing movement.

Proletarian literature can and must be circulated also among those circles which have until now been remote from the revolutionary movement, but which are now becoming more and more alienated from the bourgeois parties, especially from the social-democratic party. Social-democratic working youth, youth belonging to trade-unions and bourgeois youth societies, are all up and stirring. It is here that revolutionary literature is frequently wanted. A wide field is open for attack. Pro-

pagandists, agitators, writers, poets, worker correspondents, political organizers, publishers, proletarian organisations — all have united in a common cause: to take advantage of the mass movement in order to improve its organization, and assist its advance.

U. S. S. R.

PROLETARIAN POETRY AND MUSIC IN THE SOVIET UNION

During recent years, in the proletarian literary movement of the U. S. S. R. discussion has developed around the questions of creative method in proletarian literature. Such a creative method is the method of materialist dialectics, applied to art. The discussion embraces all phases of the creative process of the proletarian writer and its purpose is to reach a practical solution of the general problems of method on the basis of actual literary productions.

The first results of the discussion were summarized in a letter of the secretariat of RAPW (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) on the development of creative discussion. After that, a series of conferences on methods in various branches of literature was organized by RAPW. Conferences of poets, essayists and playwrights have already been held. Conferences of prose-writers, critics and cinema-workers are on the boards. At these conferences the most prominent "fellow-travellers" took part side by side with proletarian writers, and provincial writers together with the writers of Moscow and Leningrad.

The poets' conference on methods lasted five days (from the 29th of January to the 2nd of February). It discussed the reports of A. Selivanovski on creation in proletarian poetry and of Y. Lebedinski (secretary of the Association of Proletarian Musicians) on the mass song. The reports were preceded by an introductory speech by the general secretary of RAPW, L. Auerbakh, who raised before the proletarian poets and proletarian literature as a whole, the slogan of struggle for improving the quality of artistic production.

A. Selivanovski's report stated that proletarian poetry is the most backward branch of proletarian literature. The country has entered upon the period of socialism; in this country

an acute class struggle is going on; the wiping out of the remaining roots of capitalism is in progress; a new type of productive relationships is being born, and with this a new type of thinking, feeling and morality. Yet, in proletarian poetry petty bourgeois influences still dominate to a considerable extent, — the classes which are being dislodged and eliminated, are carrying on a bitter struggle in the sphere of art, especially poetry. But proletarian poetry, in spite of its relative weakness has, however, a number of great achievements to its credit, a number of the most prominent petty bourgeois intelligentsian poets are gradually coming closer to its position.

What tendencies hinder the development of the method of dialectical materialism in poetry? Such tendencies are: super-class "humanism", the romanticism of petty bourgeois revolutionism, subjective idealism, aestheticism, formalism, etc. Many poets, free from these tendencies, have nevertheless remained slaves to empiricism. They skim over the surface of phenomena, are not able to disclose their essence, — or else they are distinguished by excessive rationalism and schematization.

A. Selivanovski presented for proletarian poetry the slogans of class efficacy, based on objective understanding of reality, organic quality in expressing the thoughts and feelings of the proletarian vanguard in a form highly developed artistically, intelligible and accessible to the millions.

In the creative activity of such poets as Demian Bedny and the Hungarian poet Antal Hidas (his book "Hungary Triumphant" recently appeared in a Russian translation) these slogans receive a graphic incarnation.

At present the numerous cadres of workers shock brigade members are pouring into proletarian poetry; in the future they will be the fundamental, creative core of RAPW.

Proletarian literature is struggling for a great art which, in Lenin's words, will be a new step in the artistic development of mankind.

Y. Lebedinski's report pointed to the reactionary theories, not yet overcome, which deny class content in music and reduce it to a "material combination of sound-elements". These theories are the basis of the efforts being made to infect the masses with the decadent music of Western Europe, including the fox-trot. In spite of these fox-trot theories, proletarian music, and especially proletarian song, is growing stronger.

Most of the prominent proletarian and "Fellow-traveller" poets took part in the discussion of the reports. They all noted that proletarian poetry has not yet solved the tasks set before it by the period of reconstruction. A number of comrades demanded that the proletarian poets take a greater part in the proletariat's daily class work. The former "leftists" — Kireanov and Brik — called attention to the technical weakness of the poetry, pointing out that it was in technique that the roots of the backwardness of proletarian poetry must be sought. The conference did not agree with this point of view. Sayamov, Surkov, Korabelnikov and others pointed out that the principal problem is that of struggling to set up the *Weltanschauung* of the proletarian poet. Only in connection with this can you set on the boards the problem of re-working the heritage of classical poetry. A number of comrades emphasized the importance, up to now underestimated, of the revolutionary, democratic and socialist poetry of Western Europe in the nineteenth century.

The speeches of the representatives of the "romantic" tendency (Svetlov, Golodny etc.) showed their perplexity in the face of the new tasks. Much discussion was called forth by the evaluation of the policy of the representatives of the "constructivist" school, lately dissolved, Sellvinski and Inber — who spoke at the conference.

The conference offered resolute resistance to those comrades who limit themselves to second-hand summonses for "mobilizing" poetry for the struggle for socialism, simplifying and vulgarizing the essence of reconstruction (Bezzyemski).

The conference was able only in the most general way to put on the boards the questions of creative methods in proletarian poetry. It was resolved to arrange such conferences periodically.

THE CONFERENCE OF WORKER AND PEASANT CORRESPONDENTS

An All-Union Conference for discussing problems relating to the worker and peasant correspondents' movement, was held in Moscow in the middle of February.

In his report on the present tasks of the press and of the worker and peasant correspondents' (rabselkor) movement, comrade Savelyev, edi-

tor of "Pravda", pointed out that with the launching of the socialist offensive the army of rab-selkors, almost three million strong, is reorganizing its ranks on a higher level. A worker correspondent is not only an investigator, criticizing whatever drawbacks there are, but also an active participant in industrial and collective-farm construction. The individual worker correspondent (rabkor) is being replaced by the shock brigade, which collectively investigates a factory or collective farm, reports its achievements and exposes its defects in its letters to the newspapers.

The shock-brigade method opens up a possibility for drawing the wide working masses into the rab-selkor movement... The slogan "every shock-brigadier — a rabkor and every rabkor — a shock-brigadier" is being successfully put into practice. The rab-selkor movement is becoming more and more a school of communism.

The provincial and factory press is making steady progress. At the present moment there are 1,500 factory newspapers, 1,000 provincial newspapers and 250,000 wall-newspapers. The comrades who spoke at this conference condemned the opportunistic attempts to place certain limitations on the "big" central press which according to them should confine themselves to politics, while the factory newspapers should write only about local production and life. The provincial and local press is faced with important political problems, and all important political questions discussed by the central press — especially the struggle for the general line of the party and the struggle against various deviations — must find a place in every factory, regional or collective-farm newspaper. On the other hand the provincial and factory papers must provide concrete material, must be able to reflect the process of production in a given factory, collective farm or district and must be able to link up their own local problems with general political problems.

The conference passed a resolution urging the press to devote more attention to questions of production and technique. The rabkors must help the proletariat of the USSR to master modern technique. Factory newspapers must fix the attention of the workers on this problem, and induce engineers and technicians to take part in this work.

Peasants and collective-farmers, delegates to the congress, — exchanged opinions on the

experiences of village correspondents, whose work is organically connected with the problems of mass-collectivization.

In dealing with the question of cadres for the press a number of delegates dwelt on the insufficient promotion of rabkors to responsible work on newspapers. Cadres of newspaper men must be made up of rabkors and village correspondents having a literary and technical training. A suggestion was made to organize special schools for journalism.

Comrade Yaroslavsky touched upon the question of training rabkors for literary work. These rabkor-writers should be able to give a vivid artistic description of socialist construction, shock-brigades, the enthusiasm of the workers engaged in socialist construction and the bitter class struggle in the country.

Excerpts from a letter from a group of village correspondents to comrade Stalin:

"The problems of the third year of the five-year-plan, and the further advance of socialism, demand that we all acquire a much deeper knowledge of industrial, technical, political and economic questions.

We, shock-brigade rabkors, will shoulder the responsibility for the struggle for the general line of the party, for mastering the technique needed in our work, for the fight for the fulfillment of the 5-year plan in the key branches of economy in three years. This we shall do both in the factory and through the medium of the press".

Excerpts from speeches by delegates from the provinces:

Comrade Gurevitch (Editor of the newspaper "Krasny Putilovetz", Leningrad).

The entire staff of the tractor assembly workshop declared themselves worker correspondents during the hard fight for the 3,900 tractors which had to be turned out during the "Special Quarter" (Oct.-Dec-1930). This took place because the most powerful incentive to this struggle was the mass work of the press. In this struggle the methods of organized "surprise visits" and investigations of all parts of the plant as well as the organization of special points for concentration of information etc. were used more than ever.

The iron foundry shop is also a stronghold of the worker correspondents since 50⁰/₀ of the workers take part in the "raids" organized by our paper and by "Pravda", the central organ of the party. The workers of this shop decided unanimously to become shock-brigade workers correspondents and on that very day began to issue a daily wall newspaper.

Veteran workers join ranks of rabkors

Comrade Anuchin (Central Black-Soil Region).

Shock-brigade methods in journalistic-work were introduced in the Central Black soil region shortly after the "Pravda" took a hand in the work among the workers of the Dzerjinsky Locomotive Repair factory. The workers showed keen interest in newspaper work. During the rabkor enrollment campaign, forty veteran workers — participants in the 1905 revolution, joined the rabkors and now take part in the "raids".

A few words on the help given by the rabkors of the factory to the village collective farm (kolhoz) correspondents. Three rabkor brigades from our factory made several trips to the villages. They organized a collective farm, which was named after our factory "Dzerjinetz". We took patronage over this kolhoz and raised the question of repairing a locomotive in excess of our factory plan. The locomotive has been repaired and with the money thus obtained we are now purchasing a tractor for this kolhoz.

The struggle for cotton in Middle Asia

Com. Burkhanow (Tadjik Soviet Republic).

Six years ago we did not have a single newspaper in our republic. Now we can boast of 6 newspapers, and one newspaper in Russian for the Russians who work in our republic, as well as newspapers for the Uzbeks and Kirgiz population of our republic.

We have thousands of rabkors and village correspondents (selkors) who take an active part in carrying out the general line of the party and in all the campaigns conducted by the party. We have 50 or 60 wall-newspapers in the Pamir, and in the course of this year we intend to issue printed newspapers.

In Central Asia, and Tadjikistan in particular, rabkors and selkors fight for the general line of the party and for the fulfilment of our cotton growing campaign. For us the fight for

cotton is a fight for socialism. We are developing our cotton industry in spite of the *bais*, kulaks, right and left opportunists and national-chauvinists. This problem was placed before us by the party as the main problem of the third year of the 5-year plan. In this decisive year it is necessary that the rabkors, selkors and workers fight for the general line of the party, for the fulfilment of the cotton, coal and bread campaigns. We will do this successfully under the guidance of the Leninist Central Committee and the leader of the party — comrade Stalin.

Face toward the foreign workers

Com. Manesko (Stalin factory, Leningrad)

Our factory issues a newspaper called "Rote Front", for the German workers and specialists every ten days. We have a special "Rote Front" editorial board consisting of five persons. Most of the German specialists take an active part in the newspaper, and a number of their suggestions have been put into effect. It helped to rally most of the foreign workers in the factory.

Strengthen the defence of the country

Com. Volovetz (White-Russian military circuit).

What is the attitude of the factory press to the question of national defence? It must be admitted that the press pays very little attention to this problem. The military correspondents of the White Russian region organized a contest with the worker correspondents. The Milkors went to the factories, and the rabkors went to the barracks. The first examined the work of the rabkors, while the latter in turn, acquainted themselves with the methods of the Military correspondents. The results were gratifying. A certain improvement took place in the work of the factory newspapers after this. Such mutual work, mutual aid and exchange of opinion between our red army soldiers and the rabkors is absolutely necessary.

Brigades for improving the quality of production

Com. Stonek (Stalingrad)

The Stalingrad rabkors have come to the All-Union conference with a record of great achievements. The number of factory newspapers has increased, and the army of rabkors has grown considerably.

The foreign delegations have called upon us to establish permanent contacts with them. In the name of the Stalingrad rabkors, I wish to say that from now on we undertake to set up close and permanent contacts with the foreign rabkors.

It is well known that the Stalingrad region can boast of great achievements in the development of its industries. Such industrial giants as the Stalingrad Tractor Plant, the Stalgres power plant, the Chemical combine, and many others have already been built. Rabkors were the leaders and organizers of shockbrigade tempo in the construction of these plants. Now the Stalingrad rabkors have launched a campaign for improving the quality of production. Special rabkor brigades have been organized for this purpose.

These brigades serve as fine examples of how to fight for quality, and furthermore, they hand on their experience to other factories.

Selkors are builders of collective farms

Com. Radchenko (North Caucasus, "Lenins covenant" commune).

By the end of the second "bolshhevik" spring sowing campaign, the North Caucasus must complete the mass collectivization of the region. In the Lenin's covenant commune in the Ust-Labinsky district 85 percent of the peasant households have joined the collective farms. To serve all the collective farm members it is necessary to issue 18 wall-newspapers in the village alone.

We also issue a field bulletin which has a large circulation. Wall-newspapers are issued every five days while field bulletins are issued 3 or 4 times in ten days. The army of selkors is scattered over all the fields where "newspaper posts" are established.

We will build the ural metallurgical base in the shortest possible period

Com. Kolivanov (Urals).

In the Urals the right opportunists tried to disorganize the rabselkor by spreading tales about a "crisis" in this movement. In reality we have a tremendous growth of the rabselkor movement. There were about 25,000 rabselkors at the time of the 3rd Ural district conference (January 1930). Now we have over 40 thousand rabselkors. We have many district and wall-newspapers, which have a large circulation.

In accordance with the decision of the party we must establish a second coal-metallurgical base of the Soviet Union in the Urals. What practical work are we doing to carry this out? We do it by means of socialist competition in the factories. Special control brigades are organized to ensure that the decisions of the party are carried out. I should like to remind you of Stalin's words.

"Worker and peasant correspondents should not be looked upon merely as future journalists or social workers in the factories,—their chief purpose is to detect shortcomings in our socialist society, they fight to remove these defects, they help to mould proletarian public opinion, trying to direct the inexhaustible forces of this great factor to the aid of the party and the Soviet government in the difficult task of socialist construction".

A VILLAGE SCHOOL

... Lessons were going on when I arrived. The whole school was here before me in this one not very large room. Nearby were the teachers' quarters. If it were not for the grey walls, the felt boots and blouses of the children, I would never have believed I stood in one of the usual village schools. Were I to close my eyes I could easily imagine myself in a good city school.

So clear and sure ring the answers to the teacher's questions, so smoothly and intelligently runs the lesson.

"Now, coal. Where are our chief coal deposits to be found?"

"In the Donetz Basin", answer the children in chorus.

"In the Kuzbas, the Kuzbas..." the children answer quickly, racing each other in their replies.

Nor do words like "Promparty", "Shakhtinsky trial" sound out of place here. They are just as familiar to everyone as "kolhoz", "collectivisation", "spring sowing campaign".

As you listen to these bright children you realise perhaps for the first time how far we have advanced from the old school with its narrow, dull text-books and stereotyped lessons. You begin to understand that the best school is life, and life itself a school. And that the dividing line has been removed forever.

It is no ordinary teacher that guides the work of this school we are visiting. Ivan Alexeyevitch Tovitsky is one of the leading social workers in

the village. During his eight years of work in the school, he has risen to a position of undisputed authority. Once at a meeting of parents, the delighted peasants voted that the work of the school be recorded in the minutes as "super-excellent". When the embarrassed teacher objected to this strange wording, the peasants answered excitedly: "Never you mind! Write it down, write it down."

And after all, even if the term does not exactly conform to the rules of language, it does justice to the quality of the work put into the school. Which is all the more creditable since it was done unaided. As far back as 1927 the school received second prize at an All-Russian competition.

Nor does this particular school enjoy any privileges in the way of comforts. It works under the usual conditions. The room is damp and the house old. Four groups study in two shifts in one room. Benches serve as depositories for coats, hats and sundry objects. Very soon a new stove is to be built to make hot breakfasts for the children — and all in the one room.

The walls are bright with posters, diagrams, wall-newspapers. All this is the work of the children themselves. Artists and child-correspondents are almost exclusively pupils.

Collectivisation in the Usmansky region had gone through rather poorly. Until recently only 10⁰/₁₀ of the peasant farmsteads were collectivised. Streletskie Hutor, the village in which our school stands, was the one exception, and it was decided the "take the other villages in tow", as the popular slogan has it. Every day excursions were made to the backward villages and the results were startling. The percentage of collectivisation quickly rose to 40.

The school-children took an active part in this campaign. Each "tow brigade" included at least one pupil, sometimes even two. During my visit to the school one of the children, a lad of 12 years, was telling the class of one such excursion he had made the day before

"The village Soviet called a meeting of the poor peasants", he reported, blushing and stammering slightly, but otherwise unperturbed. "The Chairman of the Soviet and our teacher made speeches. Then I got up and told them about our life in the kolhoz and about our successes".

Later on the teacher told me that the youthful orator had been warmly applauded by his audience. Nor was this the first time that address-

ses by the school-children had been well received by the peasants. In many cases it was just these short speeches of the children that tipped the scales and put an end to the waverings of the peasants. Great is the enthusiasm of the children for this social work of theirs and volunteers are never wanting for brigade-excursions to neighbouring villages, no matter how distant.

To-day it is Misha Leonov's luck to be sent with the village-Soviet brigade. It was this very same Misha who persuaded his father to join the kolhoz. Misha, the boy had been successful where bearded village soviet members had failed.

Since autumn the school has been attached to the collective farm. All the children did their bit when the time to dig beets and potatoes came round. But the school did not limit its activities to this work. When the region had its agricultural exhibition, all the diagrams, charts, posters and wall newspapers illustrating the work of their kolhoz "Iskra" (Spark) were done by the children. In the agricultural exhibit hut there are many examples of their work. There are no limits to the social activities of this school. The village Soviet has come to rely on it for good work.

Drawing, elocution, and singing constitute an important part of the school program.

The school can also boast of an anti-religious "corner", which is just as well attended during religious holidays as at any other time. Ivan Alexandrovitch, the teacher, told me that no particular persuasion on his part is necessary in this respect.

All the pupils of the fourth group and half of the third group are active members of the circle for the elimination of illiteracy.

Due credit for the amazing achievements of this school must be given to the Tovitzky and his wife. This remarkable pair have worked conscientiously and painstakingly for eight years and it doesn't look as if they were intending to leave Streletsky Hutor yet. Tovitzky has often been nominated by the region, council and even the regional committee of the party to the post of inspector of social education, as instructor in the city 7-year school, and similar important positions. But he has invariably declined to leave his school. It is Tovitzky too whom the villagers have to thank for the new school which is being built, and which is to be ready this spring.

"Then the real work will begin", says Ivan Alexandrovitch.

Tovitzky has eleven social jobs besides his main work. He is a member of the village Soviet, of the regional executive committee, chairman of the council for the elimination of illiteracy, etc. etc.

I spent the whole day in the school.

Work was over. Tovitzky sat down to dinner. But he wasn't given much chance to eat. The door scarcely had time to close after one visitor when it was re-opened by another. He was called on urgent business to the village Soviet, pupils came to ask advice on various puzzling questions.

There was no dinner for the teacher that day, and I suspect that this was not the first occasion either.

I learned that the first few years after NEP were hard for him. There was little to eat, the school premises were not heated, the wages were beggarly; even the peasants' attitude to the school was one of suspicion; at times they were openly hostile.

"It cost much effort to overcome all this, and especially to gain the confidence and respect of the peasants for the school; to make it a necessary factor and prove this to the parents".

These words of the village teacher are no empty boast either. Tovitsky's head is full of grey hairs although he is only 30 years old.

I left the village at dusk. Contemplating the vast, white fields stretching far and wide towards distant bleak horizon where cold wintry was setting, I could not help musing on the little school in the quiet village street, and reflecting that here in this remote village with its modest teacher I had chanced upon an example of genuine heroism, all the more splendid that it is unconscious.

Here from the grey-walled, unbeautiful and poorly heated classroom, a new people is emerging.

A. Feigelman.

Streletzky Hutor. Usmansky Region. Black Earth Region.

THE NATIONALITIES' PRESS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE SWEEPING SOCIALIST OFFENSIVE

"The period of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of building socialism in the U. S. S. R. is the period in which the culture

of our nationalities, socialist in content and national in form will come into full flower."

These words of Stalin may be illustrated by the tremendous successes achieved by the Communist party in developing the press of our nationalities.

A year ago, at the time of the Sixteenth Congress of the Party, fifty six nationalities of the U. S. S. R. were possessed of a periodical press in their native languages; at present sixty seven nationalities have their own press. The general network of national newspapers has grown in the last year more than two times over: there are seven hundred newspapers as compared to 349 last year. The newspapers of the national districts by themselves amount to more than three hundred. An entirely new network of local national press has been created to serve the laboring peasantry of the national districts. National newspapers were organized for the first time in the large industrial centres having a large number of proletarians of minor nationalities (the Don Basin, Urals, etc.). The central newspapers of our nationalities have been rapidly gathering strength, and many of them have gone over to daily circulation.

These successes stand out all the stronger if we compare the position of the nationalities' press in the U. S. S. R. and in capitalist countries. In the Soviet Union 48% of the nationalities have a periodical press in their native languages. In capitalist countries only 6% of nationalities have a periodical press in their own languages. In Ireland, with over three million population, there are only two newspapers published in Irish, six issues a month. In Soviet South Ossetia, with ninety thousand population, there are two newspapers and one periodical published in the language of the native population, thirteen issues a month. As much as forty four percent of the nationalities' press of the world is concentrated in the soviet Union. This contrast once again gives witness of the truth that only under conditions of proletarian dictatorship can the solution be found to the question of nationalities in the interest of the economic and cultural development of all nationalities.

However, it would be a crude mistake to restrict the meaning of the nationalities' press in the U. S. S. R. to the quantitative figures

of its growth. Under conditions among us the press is called upon to take an active part in building socialism, to be an active propagandizer and organizer of the masses around the general line of the party. From this point of view the tasks of the national periodical press are analogous to those of the entire press of the U. S. S. R. and fundamentally are included, as the Sixteenth Party Congress defined them, in the task of raising its role in the unfolding of the socialist offensive.

Basing itself on the successes achieved in socialist construction during the first two years of the Five-Year Plan, the December Joint Plenary Session of the Central Committee and the Central Control Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (bolshevik) pointed out that "at the present time the necessary premises have grown to a tremendous degree for speeding up the transition of the more backward districts, for example of certain national districts of the Soviet East, to the path of socialist development." These instructions of the Party mean forcing the advance of building heavy industry in the East (Ural-Kuzbas), strengthening the building up of industry on the basis of the resources of raw materials in the districts of the nationalities, collectivizing fifty percent of cotton-growing households, developing the building of Soviet farms, and so forth. Accordingly the tasks of the press of each national district take on an especially concrete and acute significance.

The chief part of the national newspapers, largely district ones, has made these tasks its own and is struggling to fulfill them with considerable activity. The Kazakhstan "Enbekshi Kazak", for example, cooperated in many ways in building the Turksib Railway and the Aktubinski chemical combine. The Tadzhikistan "Tadjikistani Surkh" has played no mean part in the struggle for cotton and for the collectivization of cotton-growing households.

Reviews, visits and challenges to improve production, travelling newspapers, shock-brigades of worker and peasant correspondents and so forth, — all these new forms of newspaper work among the masses are receiving in the regional press of the minor nationalities wider and wider application, true, far from enough even now.

The chief part of the district national press plays a very great and positive role in develop-

ing the socialist offensive. In such responsible work as getting ready for sowing, grain-collection, building collective farms, the chief part of the district newspapers in the national languages has rendered important assistance to the party organizations. As an example illustrative of such work we may refer to the experience of the newspaper "Kolkhoz" (Bugul'ma), "Marhlevshchina Radzetska", and others. The formation of shockbrigades, the organization of peasant-correspondent outlook posts, trips to different villages and collective farms, all these methods of newspaper work among the masses are receiving wide application on some newspapers.

Important achievements may be noted during the past year in the growth of national non-periodical publications. Thus, for example, the general circulation of the publications of the Tartar Government Publishing House for 1931 is growing to nine million folio sheets of copy as compared with three million in 1930; the general quantity of folio sheets of the Central Publishing Office for 1930 amounted to 81 mill. folio-sheets of copy as compared with 27 mill. in the preceding year. Side by side with the general increase in the volume of work of the national publishing offices, the percentage of publication of original (untranslated) literature has risen, and the publishing of Marxist-Leninist literature has increased.

As one of the most important achievements of the Party in developing the non-periodical press of the nationalities, we must note especially the work of publishing the six-volume edition of Lenin in the languages of almost all the nationalities of our Union.

SHOW THE SUCCESS OF SOCIALISM FIGHT FOR THE CONCRETE SECTORS OF YOUR PRODUCTION

(Decree of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (bolshevik) concerning the reconstruction of the worker and peasant correspondent movement).

1. In the period of socialist reconstruction of national economy and of the mighty advance in the creative activity of the masses the significance of the worker and peasant corres-

pendent movement as an active factor in carrying out the general line of the Party has grown tremendously.

The worker and peasant correspondents, by becoming frontline shock-troops in the struggle for the Industrial and Financial Plan and for the building of collective farms, are "the leaders of proletarian public opinion who are striving to direct the inexhaustible forces of this mighty factor to the assistance of the Party and of the Soviet Power in the difficult work of building socialism" (Stalin).

The present period of sweeping socialist offensive is setting new and more complicated tasks before the worker and peasant correspondents.

In the first period of its development the main task of the worker and peasant correspondent movement was concentrated on the exposure and denouncement of 'minor' defects of the mechanism; in the present period the worker and peasant correspondents must look more deeply into all the most important questions of socialist construction, on every side bringing to light the defects, but also spreading light on the brightest and positive sides of our achievements in building socialism in all its sectors, beginning with machine aggregates, sections, shops, factories, trusts and so forth.

The worker and peasant correspondents, under the Party's leadership, are becoming the organizers of the masses for the cause of socialist construction, for the fulfilment of our plans of production and for a sweeping offensive against our class-enemies.

2. The worker and peasant correspondents must strive to achieve the greatest degree of organization and discipline; a decisive improvement in the quality of the work of all the links in our governmental, economic, and cooperative apparatuses; the resolute implanting in our economic development of the principle of planning and disciplined fulfilment of plans; the further growth of activity and of the improvement of labor among the great masses of toilers (socialist competition, shock-brigade methods, determined fulfilment of a detailed plan of industry and finance).

In fighting against the defects of the governmental apparatus, in exposing and stigmatizing bureaucratic perversions of party orders, right and "left" opportunist distortions of the party line, in giving resolute resistance to our

class-enemies, — the worker and peasant correspondents, besides this, must develop the practise of displaying the achievements and victories in the building of socialism by using the best undertakings as examples, as well as the best collective farms, shops, shock-brigades, etc.; the worker and peasant correspondents must show an example to those who are lagging behind and cooperate in the extensive development of the exchange of experience in production along the entire front of socialist construction.

The worker and peasant correspondents must be in the front ranks in the work of mastering the technical knowledge in production, by struggling stubbornly to fulfil the quantitative and qualitative estimates of the Industrial and Financial Plan, to strengthen the principle of economic accounting and unified management, to develop further socialist competition and shock-brigade methods, to make full use of our internal resources, to rationalize production, to encourage inventions, etc.

In connection with these tasks new forms of mass-work must be spread widely: raids, shock-brigades, towing-parties, reports on rationalization, challenges, etc.

3. The necessary condition for the further improvement of the worker and peasant correspondents' movement and for its successes is the reconstruction of the work of the worker and peasant correspondents.

The worker and peasant correspondents throughout their work must not confine themselves to the general tasks, uniform in all branches of industry, but in fulfilling these tasks (fight against bureaucratism, exposure of defects, denouncement of laggards and grafters etc.) they must make all this concrete and apply it to the various sectors of socialist construction on which they work.

Thus, for example, the worker correspondents of the coal mining industry must fight for the mechanizing of extraction, not forgetting extracting by hand, for implanting new and better methods of work, for transferring the experience of the best mines to the backward ones; the worker-correspondents of the metallurgical factories must fight for the full and rational utilization of blast-furnaces and open-hearth furnaces, for the regular supply and proper sorting of ore etc.; the worker-correspondents of transportation must fight to bring the locomotives into good condition,

to improve the quality of repair work, to strengthen the practice of paired trips, the fulfillment of plans set for transport; the worker-correspondents of new constructions must fight to finish the building in time, to set the machinery and put the plant in operation, to improve the quality of building, to lower costs, to carry out rationalization and the correct use of mechanical means, the preparation of cadres, to look after the cultural and daily life of the workers; the worker-correspondent of Soviet farms and of Motor-Tractor Stations must fight to establish a careful attitude toward the tractor and the agricultural machinery, to liquidate the absence of personal responsibility in the use of machines, to carry out the sowing in time, to organize the harvesting properly, and also to render assistance in production and in cultural life to the surrounding kolkhozes and villages.

The peasant-correspondents of collective farms must stand in the front ranks of fighters for the socialist organization of labor in the collective farms, for planned utilization of labor, for work in brigades, for piece-work, for division of income according to the number of full working-days, transfer of the experience of the best kolkhozes to the backward ones, socialist competition, shock-brigade methods, etc. In struggling resolutely for allround collectivization and, on the basis of it, for the liquidation of the kulaks as a class, the peasant-correspondents must organize the display of the superiorities of the collective farms over individual households, denouncing the manoeuvres of the kulak class and its agents in the person of right opportunists and "left" distorters of the Party line.

4. In raising in every way the political and journalistic training of worker and peasant correspondents, in bringing the best and the most promising of them up to the level of fully qualified journalists, it is essential that the party organizations and the editorial boards of the newspapers, in drawing into the ranks of worker and peasant correspondents new cadres of workers and kolkhoz-members, should develop further the experiment of "Pravda", which has fully proven itself, along the line of forming press-brigades, which have turned into a model of collective work among the worker and peasant correspondents.

These press-brigades, however, on no account must be isolated from the rest of the mass of

worker and peasant correspondents. They must turn into the guiding link of the entire worker and peasant correspondent movement.

5. The Central Committee takes note of the insufficient leadership of the worker and peasant correspondent movement, especially in national districts and regions, on the part of party organizations and editorial boards of newspapers.

The concrete leadership of the worker and peasant correspondents movement must be strengthened from the point of view of differentiating its tasks as applied to the various branches of industry and agriculture (conferences and gatherings of worker and peasant correspondents of factories of the same sort, work with the worker and peasant correspondents of the various trades, discussing with the worker and peasant correspondents, the plans for the work of the newspapers, etc.).

The party and trade-union organizations do not devote the proper attention to the local press at the place of production (printed newspapers and wall-newspapers in factories, shops, trains, Soviet farms, motor and tractor stations and collective farms), despite the fact that this press is now acquiring extraordinary importance. Besides its part in the struggle to carry out the plan of production, the struggle for labor-discipline and socialist competition, these newspapers, at the bottom of the socialist order, must become collective worker-correspondents for the central, sectional, regional and district newspapers.

The Central Committee binds the central, regional and district newspapers systematically to publish reviews of factory, sovkhoz and kolkhoz wall-newspapers and printed newspapers, criticizing their mistakes and showing their achievements, and likewise publishing the most valuable material in their pages.

6. For the guidance of the worker and peasant correspondents and of the local press, commissions must be formed under the party committees, to include the manager of the department of cultural propaganda, the editor of the newspaper, a representative of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, a representative of the government *procuror* (state attorney) and an instructor in press-matters but in addition, instructors of press-matters

are to be appointed under the sections of cultural propaganda of the most important regional party committees. Trade-unions, party-schools, agitators and propagandists must render assistance to the worker and peasant correspondents and to the local press of factories and villages.

The Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (bolshevik) proposes to the editors of newspapers to set seriously before themselves the problem of training and promoting the best worker and peasant correspondents to permanent work on the organs of the press.

7. It is decreed to empower the section of cultural propaganda of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (bolshevik) systematically to check over the work of the various newspapers and party organizations among the worker and peasant correspondents, and likewise the work of educating and promoting the worker and peasant correspondents.

8. The general guidance of the worker and peasant correspondent movement is entrusted to "Pravda".

"Pravda" is permitted to publish once a month a supplement on the questions of work with the worker and peasant correspondents and with the local press of factories and farms.

CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

THE LIFE STORY OF A PROLETARIAN WRITER

(Letter of Worker-Correspondent)

I was born in Prague in 1900. My father worked as a tanner and earned good wages, and I did not stand in need of anything. In school I was one of the three best pupils. My father was a social-democrat but did not take an active part in political or public life.

When I was nine years of age my father died as the result of an industrial accident. My mother was thus compelled to take a job at a factory where she earned only four ducats a week. We were compelled to give up our apartment of two rooms and to rent one small room instead.

My situation became worse and worse. When not at school there was nobody to look after me. I would spend my time on the streets. Bit by bit I began to lose my honored position near the top of the class, and went down to the bottom. Then I began to read detective stories; I also liked books about travel and adventure. I often thought of running away from home.

In my fourteenth year I graduated from school with poor marks, and mother had me apprenticed to a carpenter. Due to ill treatment and hard conditions I ran away three times. My third struggle for freedom lasted three days, during which I roamed the town, but finally on the fourth day I was compelled by gnawing hunger to return home. During that time I had spent the nights in the cellars of various houses. Nevertheless, I finally mastered the art of carpentry.

At this time the world war was at its height. All the workers, including my mother, were in a state of despondency. Mother earned 6 ducats a week and I only 60 kreutzers. Food-stuffs could be bought only in limited quantities by special cards, but even so we often had no money for our share. Together with other hungry lads, I would go out of town into the fields and there steal potatoes, turnips and any other vegetables we could lay hands on. We would also steal coal from trucks; some would do this because they needed coal while others would steal merely to sell again.

In 1917 there began the demonstrations of workers employed in Prague industries against hunger. I took part in one such demonstration, I was the only worker in our factory to do so, and was promptly fired. But through the intercession of my mother I was reinstated. Although I belonged to no political party, I took part in every action of the working-class struggling for our economic interests. My comrades were typical by-products of war; we spent our time stealing, smoking, card-playing, running after girls, etc. At that time we had no definite notion as to politics. My mother suffered, in one way, from material hardships, and in another way from the knowledge that slowly but surely I was being corrupted morally.

Then, in February, 1918, I was drafted into the army. I was enrolled in the 102nd regiment, quartered at Bakeshchabi in Hungary. Drill and hunger were our first preparations

for the life in the trenches. After that came long marches: a month in Shtiria and four months in Italy. So went the strenuous work of transforming us into cannon-fodder. Once, during a review, I had failed to carry out a certain order (to decorate myself with an oak-leaf) the colonel gave me a slap in the face. I then decided to desert, but never got to it. In August we were sent from Italy to Serbia whither the German and Austrian armies were retreating. The Germans tried to make the retreat in good order; trainload upon trainload of machines and equipment were carried away.

On October 5 I surrendered myself as prisoner to the municipality. Our division was in a state of disintegration and the units on Serbian territory were dispersing in every direction. I remained a prisoner for three months. Hunger, lice and cold!

On December 24 I escaped from captivity and set off on foot for home. At Nish, however, I was captured by the Serbs and beaten up well and good, a French officer landing a brutal blow on the face. Then came a concentration camp until January 1919 when I was sent home together with other captive Czechs.

We trudged home with great hopes. While on the road we found that peace had been signed and that an independent Czecho-Slovakian Republic had been set up. The roads had been destroyed by the Germans; it was with great difficulty that we finally reached New Garden, and from there we were sent on by train through Vienna to Prague.

While on military service I had often thought about my position as a worker in modern society and as to my relation towards this society.

When I returned home, Prague was still in a state of intoxication from its "conquered liberty". Nevertheless, despite this "liberty", I and my mother continued to live a hand-to-mouth existence. At this time I joined a social-democratic workers' Sport Organization. Here I received the first clear idea of political life, class antagonism and class warfare. Yet these, my first gropings, were obscure and confused. However, instinctively, I followed the right road and inclined towards the left wing of social democracy which then was taking on the form of a communist movement.

In 1920 I was drafted into the standing army and sent to Beneshof. While in the army I was

constantly in close touch with the local left-wing organization of the Social Democratic Sport Union, and in 1921 joined the Communist Sport Union, which was then organised.

I was given one month's jail by the divisional military-court for participating in a public demonstration of this organization as this was a breach of military discipline. I served my month in the Prague Garrison Prison.

I was then transferred to Budevitze and naturally was marked down as a man politically unsafe and was under close surveillance until the end of my service.

In 1922 I returned home and began to work with the Communist Sport Union. For a long time I was out of work, my mother and I were in great need. Later on I got a job in a coal-storehouse on the railroad.

In 1924 I joined the Communist Party of Czecho-Slovakia and carried out regular work in the local groups at the regional committee.

I had to change my job quite often, I would be no sooner in a job, than I would be fired because of my communism.

In 1926 my mother died. That same year I married; and soon my wife bore me a son.

My material conditions have not improved in the least despite the fact that we had "liberty" and "democracy", if the bourgeoisie and social-democrats are to be believed. The workers are as poor as before, and so I and my family continue to lead a hand-to-mouth existence, half-hungry most of the time.

I am now working in a factory and make 230 kronas a week. Of course I am very active in the Communist Party and the Sport Union, and during the past year I have been busy as a worker-correspondent.

Thus my path towards Communism began in 1919 when I first got into close touch with the workers' organizations.

Such are the facts of my life. Now I would like to briefly describe my worker-correspondent and literary activities. When we first received the news that the workers of the U. S. S. R., after their victorious revolution were building up a workers' State, and that in this wondrous construction the wall-newspaper was a powerful cultural weapon, we decided to issue a wall-newspaper of our own.

The first number we called "The Red Chalende" and was issued in 1925. We hung it up in our club room. In this wall-newspaper,

which has continued to appear up to now, I had many articles published. They were written in a satirical vein and dealt mainly with local topics.

Later on I began to pay attention to other events of wider public life, to problems concerning the life and struggle of the working class as a whole; and when we started the worker-correspondent movement, my friends urged me to send my articles to the central party-press, which I did.

It was with trepidation I sent my first articles to the center; when however, I saw that they had been printed and that such articles written by the workers themselves could be indeed greatly useful to the party and could serve as a weapon for the communist movement, I said to myself: "If really I can do something in this direction, I'll give myself up to this work entirely."

Thus I started to write regularly for the party papers. I had become a full-fledged rab-cor (worker-correspondent). Whenever we had a concert or get-together, I would read my verses from the platform, at first merely to fill up the time, but later on, as a regular part of each program.

My verses would often be accepted for publication though comrade editors would tell or write me that my work was still weak and immature (I fully believe them). They would advise me to go on writing in a satirical vein which seems to come easier for me.

I feel a strong urge to become a revolutionary writer, and always feel that I have missed something by having no literary education. This, however, is by the way. It seems that I am too ambitious, and this is a great shortcoming.

Now, under what conditions do I carry on my work? At the factory my work is almost mechanical. I merely nail up boxes. This requires no mental effort on my part whatever. During this time I think over my verses and when I have completed a verse or two I write them down on a slip of paper, being careful not to let the foreman see. It seems, no other writer has ever worked the way I do.

In the evening I am busy with party work. Besides the regular party work I am also busy in the Communist Sport Union, touch up the verses for the workers' get-togethers and concerts, for the local pioneer magazine "Fire" and the local and central party-press.

This is the whole story of my labor and literary activity.

In conclusion, I would like to mention that I have been invited to help to organize the workers' revolutionary writers, writers of proletarian literature. I give myself entirely up to this work and am delighted with it. I firmly believe that among the working-class are hidden many splendid literary talents, and that we shall succeed in bringing them to the light of day and appreciation. With their aid it will be possible to widen and develop this movement, and to create good proletarian literature that can serve as a weapon for the working-class in its struggle for emancipation.

Prague.

J A P A N

ECHOES OF THE KHARKOV CONFERENCE

The February, 1931, issue of the Japanese magazine "NAPF" contained material on the International Conference of Revolutionary Writers, held in Kharkov. The resolution adopted on the report of Comrade Matzuyama on proletarian literature in Japan, was printed in full as well as articles by Auerbach, Béla Illés and others, and also Selivanovsky's "Results of the Second International Conference of Revolutionary and Proletarian Writers".

"NAPF" and the magazine "SENKI" published the protest of the Kharkov Conference against the persecution by the police of "SENKI" (organ of proletarian literature in Japan) and the arrest of leading Japanese proletarian writers. Other protests were also published: those adopted by the delegations from Germany, America, England and China.

IN DEFENCE OF "SENKI"

At the beginning of this year the Association of Proletarian Writers of Japan conducted a wide campaign in defense of the "SENKI" (Fighting Banner) the very existence of which was threatened as the result of police persecution and the treachery of certain members of the editorial-staff. As a part of this campaign, the Central Committee of the Asso-

ciation of Proletarian Writers of Japan sent out a number of Writers "brigades" to various cities for the purpose of unifying local protests and organizing support of the working masses for the magazine. The first writers-brigade, went from Tokio to Kioto. It consisted of seven well-known writers: Tokunaga, Gakeda, Gyudzo, Kourogzima, Hasegaba, Tanabe and Kubokava. On the next day this group held a mass meeting in one of the largest halls of Kioto, which was attended by over 800, and this in spite of the repressive measures taken by the police (such as compelling all who entered the hall to fill out a form giving name, address, etc.). The speakers were subject to ceaseless interruption on the part of the police, who prohibited "sore" spots being touched upon. The writer Tagi, a member of the local branch of the Association, was arrested. The audience, many of whom were Kioto students, conducted itself orderly, holding itself in hand so that there could be no grounds on which the police could provoke undesired collisions and thus disperse the meeting. But when "SENKI's" Declaration was read, the whole audience arose as one and in thunderous and prolonged applause expressed its willingness to give all possible assistance to the magazine.

The next day this "brigade" arrived in Osaka and another well-attended meeting was held in one of Osaka's large halls, and addresses were made before an enthusiastic audience which had braved a heavy downpour of rain in order to attend the meeting. Half of those present were workers. Three members of the "brigade" were arrested for their speeches (Tanabe, Kurogzima and Hasegaba) but were freed a few hours later owing to the pressure of a big street demonstration organized by participants in the meeting.

IN THE STRUGGLE FOR RAISING THE QUALITY OF THE COUNTRY-PRESS

The Secretariat of the Association of Proletarian Writers of Japan through its organ "NAPF" has issued a circular to all worker-peasant organizations. The association states its willingness to give all possible assistance to the newspapers and magazines published by these organizations, offering to provide them with literary works, to organize literary consultations, etc. The editors of numerous

local workers' and peasants' publications have warmly hailed the initiative taken by the Japanese Association.

PERSECUTION OF THE "NAPF" MAGAZINE

The Japanese Federation of Proletarian Art ("NAPF") has appealed to its readers among the workers and peasants to support the Federation's organ, the monthly magazine "NAPF", by creating their own agencies for distributing the magazine. It is pointed out that out of the four issues from September to December, two were confiscated. The toiling masses of town and country are called upon to fight for the freedom of the proletarian press.

The February issue of "NAPF" devotes much space to Soviet literature and questions of international politics. There is translation of a story by the Soviet-writer Gorbunoff, and a lengthy article entitled "The Five-Year Plan and Soviet Art" by the authoress Gudso Uriko who lived a long time in the U. S. S. R. There are also excerpts from the Soviet press testifying to the indignation shown by the working-class when the counter-revolutionary plots of the Promparty were exposed, and an article by Kitazoka called "Questions of Proletarian-Realism in Soviet Literature". International relations were dealt with in a number of articles on the revolutionary literature of the West.

FOR A PROLETARIAN THEATRE

A society for the study of Japanese proletarian drama has been organized, which is composed not only of members of the Japanese Association of Proletarian Writers, but also of workers in the "left" theatrical groups and the "New Tsukidzi" theater. This society has issued the following declaration:

"The proletarian-theater movement has been developing rapidly during recent years. The theatrical associations affiliated to the 'Association of the Proletarian Theater': The 'New Tsukidzi' Theater, the Masses Theater, and some few other theatrical societies, have played an important part in the proletariat's struggle for liberty, notwithstanding severe persecution by the police directed against travelling-troupes.

"Now, when the question faces us of making the theatrical movement a mass movement, and of giving it a firmer basis, all proletarian

dramatic societies feel very keenly the lack of a suitable repertoire.

„We call upon all playwrights and dramatic critics that accept our program to join us”.

THE PROLETARIAN THEATER AND THE VILLAGE

The Proletarian Theater “Matsue” has organized a travelling-troupe to tour the villages. The first performance was held in the village of Sakayot. There was an audience of over a 100, composed almost entirely of the poor peasants and their families. Three small plays were performed, together with fill-ins of poems and revolutionary songs. The police, as usual continually interfered, prohibiting everything they took exception to, and finally dispersed the assemblage by force. Strong indignation was shown by the peasants as the result of this overhand act.

The Tokio “Left” Theatre likewise sent out a travelling-troupe to perform before the peasants and workers of the countryside around Tokio. Their first performance, before leaving for the tour, was given in Tokio, and its working-class audience gave it a warm reception.

PROLETARIAN FINE ARTS TO THE MASSES

The Japanese Association of Proletarian Artists, which is affiliated to “NAPF” (Japanese Federation of Proletarian Art) is carrying out its slogan: “Proletarian Art to the Masses!” It recently published a third series of artistic post-cards calling them “Proletarian Post-Cards”. This series contains eight post-cards drawn by proletarian artists, dealing with acute political questions of the day, such as for instance: “A Demonstration of the Street-Car Strikers” by the artist Olodsova, “Against Unemployment” by Kida, “Out of the Factories and mills” and “against the Social-Democrats” by Koyama, “The Komsomol Girl” by Taradsima, and others. There were six other post-cards but these were banned by the police authorities.

This Association of Proletarian Artists has appealed to all Japanese artists to keep active in creating distribution agencies for broadcasting proletarian literature and art under the guidance of the “SENKI” magazine (“Fighting Banner”). In a leaflet the Society stresses that the purpose of these post-cards is to serve

as illustrative material for organizers in mills and factories, and as a means of ridding proletarian families of the opium of bourgeois pictures and post-cards, and also to fan the burning militant spirit of the worker-peasant masses.

The publishing-department of the Association recently acquired a lithographic machine and thus is enabled to organize its own lithotypography for the printing of proletarian artists’ pictures. The second and third series of post-cards are already printed in this new shop.

NEW REVOLUTIONARY SONGS

As a supplement, the “NAPF” magazine has published two revolutionary songs issued by the Japanese Association of Proletarian Musicians.” These songs are: “Against Harvest Confiscation” and “Our Spring”. The words of both are written by the poet Tagaki.

The issuing of these splendid songs shows that the Association of Proletarian Musicians which up to now had been the weakest trench in the firing line of proletarian art, is at last taking up its work seriously.

EXHIBITION OF PROLETARIAN PHOTOS

The photo-department of the Proletarian Cinema Society of Japan has recently organized an exhibition of proletarian photos. This exhibition covers a year’s work of the photo-department. In it are represented scenes depicting the life and struggles of the Japanese and foreign proletariat, photos of revolutionary leaders, mountings from films and theatrical-scenes.

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There has just been issued a new book by Yamada Saysbouro: *The Development of the Theory of Proletarian Art in Japan*. The author is a member of the Japanese Association of Proletarian Writers and a celebrated literary critic and theorist. Last year he published a well-known book “The History of Proletarian Literature in Japan”.

The author divides the development of the theory of proletarian literature in Japan into three periods. The first period covers from 1917 to 1925—1926; the period is that of the origin

of the theory of proletarian literature, which brought forward the slogans "Popular Art", "Literature of the Fourth Estate", etc.

The second period is from the second half of 1926 until the beginning of 1928. It marked a turning point in the history of the Japanese literary movement. This period was marked with sharp theoretical differences of opinion, and during it "ukoumotism" (right tendency within the Communist Party of Japan) was finally defeated.

The third period covers from 1928 to the present day, and is characterized by a most severe internal struggle for theoretical unity in proletarian art and for the hegemony of communist ideology.

Recently there was published a new book by the authoress Gudso Uriko *Through New Siberia*. This is her first book since her return from the USSR and is devoted entirely to the grandiose construction of Socialism in the Soviet Union, to the life and struggle for Socialism of the many national-minorities living in the USSR. The writer was in the USSR for three years and during that time was able to see fully and investigate the building-up of Socialism in the Soviet Union. Thus this book of Gudso Uriko's will serve as a most appropriate answer to the campaign of lies and mud-slinging which the Japanese press is persistently carrying on against the USSR. Uriko, after her return from the USSR immediately jumped into the work of explaining to the laboring masses of Japan the achievements of the Soviet Union, publishing a series of articles about the USSR in Japanese newspapers and magazines. In the "SENKI" magazine her article "Why There is No Unemployment in the Soviet Union" was published, and is richly illustrated with photos of the giant enterprises being built in the USSR.

ACTIVITIES OF THE SECTION OF ART, LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE OF THE JAPANESE INSTITUTE OF PROLETARIAN SCIENCE.

The Japanese Institute of Proletarian Science which is similar to the Communist Academy of the USSR draws together all the genuine Marxist forces of Japan for the purpose of the study and theoretical investigation of Marxist problems in various fields of science and art. The work of the Institute is carried on by the various sections: the section of Soviet litera-

ture; the section of the History of capitalism in Japan: the section of Art, Literature and Language etc.

At the beginning of 1930 the Section of Art, Literature and Language formulated its policy as the statement of Marxist theory in the study of art and Marxist investigation of the history of world art and of proletarian art. It was decided to form for this purpose the following subsections: 1) Sociology of art; 2) Modern Art; 3) History of World Literature; 4) History of Literature of the Meidzi epoch; 5) Proletarian art; 6) Proletarian cinematography; 7) Unification of transcription in translations. Of the 7 subsections, however, only 4 have been more or less active during the past year; the subsection of the Sociology of Art and those of Modern Art of the History of Russian Literature and of Proletarian Cinematography.

The Sociology of art subsection organized wide discussions based on Fritche's *Sociology of Art*. A member of the subsection, the well-known proletarian critic Kurahara (now imprisoned on the charge of belonging to the CPJ) made a public report on "Imperialism and Art". The Modern Art subsection has organized a number of lectures, — on the Soviet Theatre, on collective art, on surrealism. The subsection of Russian Literature discussed at its closed meetings three reports on the history of Russian literature beginning with the study of ancient folklore down to the beginning of the period of romanticism and realism. The report called forth a lively discussion.

A report was made by Kitaoko on the recent activities of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers. The subsection of Proletarian Cinematography also organized several lectures dealing with various theoretical problems connected with proletarian cinematography.

Besides this, the section of Art, Literature and Language organised a number of public lectures: "On Bringing Art nearer to the Masses" (by Jamada); "Children's Literature" (by Jemoto); "Problems of Proletarian Cinematography" (by Ivadzaki); "the NAPF and the RAPW" (by Kitaoka).

Not one of these lectures was continued to the end owing to the interference of the police.

The second series of lectures dealt with Soviet culture. These were: "The process of deve-

lopment and growth of proletarian literature in the USSR" (Kitaoka); "Soviet Cinema Art" (Matsudzaka); "The reality of Soviet Cinematography" (Fukuro Innei); "The Soviet theatre" (Kumodzava). All the lecturers mentioned are members of the NAPP.

Besides these lectures the members of the section have published many works (essays, articles and shorter items) on various problems of the theory of Art and literature in "Proletarian Science", organ of the Institute. There were 23 of them published during the past year. Among them were: "The Japanese proletarian literary movement in 1926" (Jamada); "The present problems of the proletarian Drama" (Sugimoto); "Literature, art and language" (Kurahara); "Left flank rationalisation of the social-democratic literature" (Kitaoka); "The antiproletarian character of the Literary front group" (Komia); "A critical view of the social-democratic literature (Nagai); "Maiakovski's funeral" (Sugimoto) etc.

In the work of the sections, covering a period of a year, numerous defects were noticed, and steps were taken to rectify them. One of the principal of these lay in the insufficient organization of the given problems. In most cases the articles, appearing in "Proletarian Art", were in no way connected with the study of the problems under discussion in the section itself. The discussion of problems at public meetings of the different subsections was often dull, even though at their private meetings the same problems provoked a very lively discussion. Up to now 22 themes have been fixed for study during 1931. Among these are: "Historical study of Japanese proletarian literature" (Jamada); "Theory of proletarian cinematography" (Ivadzaki); "Theory of proletarian plastic arts" (Okamoto); "History of Soviet theatrical art" (Sugimoto); "Discussion in Soviet literary science" (The Pereverzev and the "Na Postu" group) etc.

The section of Art, Literature and Language is widely developing its publishing activities and in addition to the magazine *Proletarian Science* the section proposes to make use of the symposiums *Art and Marxism* published every six months; the Library of the Theory of proletarian art", in which the following works will appear in 1931: Kitaoka — *Modern Soviet literature*; Karagut: *Theory of proletarian literature*"; Sogimoto: "Problems of proletarian cinematography"; and finally the

quarterly magazine *Studies in the Sociology of Art*.

The subsection of the History of Russian literature has changed its name to Subsection of Soviet Literature, and in 1931 proposes to publish the following works: "Soviet Proletarian Authors' Series" (14 works of Soviet proletarian authors will be issued at first); *Soviet Dramatical Series* (in 5 volumes); *Marxist History of Art series* (translations of works of Soviet Marxists, dealing with the history of Art). The first works to be published in this series are Fritche's *History of European literature*, *History of Russian Art* etc.

P O L A N D

THE ECHOES OF THE KHARKOV CONFERENCE

The weekly *Wiadomo'ci Literackie* (Annals of Literature), published in Warsaw, is the organ of a group of Pilsudskyist-writers, called "Skamander" — the name of a magazine formerly published by them. Already in its seventh year it is an open secret that this weekly owes its existence to the subsidies of the Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs which also finances a monthly supplement in the French language — "Pologne Littéraire". This latter carries out propaganda abroad about the Polish culture that "flourishes" under the fascist regime. However, the *Wiadomości Literackie* does its best to preserve its appearance as an impartial and informational literary magazine — without being the mouthpiece of any party whatsoever. To prove this, the magazine publishes articles from everyone without exception — beginning with the extreme Rights, the most obdurate reactionaries, irreconcilable enemies of Pilsudsky (Novaczinsky and others), and ending with the "pacifist" Slonimsky who represents the "extreme left". Slander of the Soviet Union in this weekly has always been dished up under a sauce of piquant scandals from behind the scenes, or has been specially provided by the "independant democrats" — the enemies in principle of any dictatorship whether "red" or white. It is significant that the latter, on account of their innate near-sightedness fail to notice the fascist military dictatorship in Poland. Not so long ago, after the scandal over the bogus interview of Babel

which was written up for the *Wiadomości Literackie* by a certain Mr. Dan, — the Editing Board of this magazine shouted from the housetops that the *Wiadomości Literackie* is the one and only magazine in Poland to give its readers "objective and impartial" information on the cultural life of the Soviet Union.

In one of its December issues the *Wiadomości Literackie* published a detailed report from its "own correspondent" in Kharkov on the International Conference of Revolutionary Writers. In this report, discarding its "nonparty" and "impartial" mask, the fascist literary magazine, in a foaming rage, attacks the USSR, and engages in slinging mud at the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. From the account of their "own correspondent" from Kharkov "we learn that the foreign revolutionary writers who came to the Kharkov Conference were under the constant surveillance and escort of Communists, that the Soviet Government purposely organised the celebration of the Thirteenth anniversary of the October Revolution at that particular time in order to show the foreign workers some tens of thousands of demonstrators with flags decorated with Communist slogans, trying to show that this was a spontaneous demonstration of the masses. The truth is that these masses were driven on by all sorts of threats", etc. etc. If one further develops the profound ideas of the "own correspondent", one cannot but come to the conclusion that the Communist Party, in October 1917, "drove" the masses of the people on to the barricades "by all sorts of threats" in order to have something to show off before the foreign writers thirteen years later.

The newspapers of the smaller countries imitate the big Western press, and very thoroughly copy its news, to which they add the note: — "By special wire". Such a "special wire", in coat and trousers, sits studiously at the Editors desk, and for 5 grosz a line, rolls off his work, not at all disconcerted by the distance between him and the country from which the "information is received".

The "special wire" of the *Wiadomości Literackie* is of the same kind. It is a pity, however, that unlike all "real" wires, it is devoid of the slightest imagination, and is only able to repeat those ridiculous inventions that have bored everybody to death, the nonsense hum-

med by the wires of the whole bourgeois world.

It is somewhat tiresome, — gentlemen!

Warsaw, Jan. 1931.

THE BELLS ARE RINGING IN VOLHYNIA

The bourgeois press of Poland on the events in Lutzk

"We have nothing to fear. The pacification was merely a manifestation of force as an answer to provocation. In such conditions sharp handling is inevitable. However, this prevented the further spread of a criminal movement which would have involved many victims. One must understand that had this movement gone a little further Eastern Poland would have been in the throes of Civil War! Is it really in the interests of Poland to have it said, in Geneva, that Eastern Poland is flaring up and ready to leap into flames? Would it be in the interest of the Polish Government and Ukrainian public opinion if a state of siege were declared? True, there are "legalists" in Poland, people who think it would be better in the interests of "legality" to have Courts-Martial sentence the guilty culprits to military execution than have the police flog the insolent provocators. What we want is save our country by using cheap measures and thus avert criminal risings which could be crushed only by real Courts-Martial and perhaps armed struggle. This pacification has saved not only Poland but also the Ukrainian people from a terrible tragedy to which they were being urged on by shameless agents bought over by Berlin and Moscow, or else by madmen."

(*Gazeta Polska*).

"At yesterday's sitting of the DIET attempts were made by communist deputies to open up a discussion on the alleged flogging and torturing of communist prisoners by the police, especially at Lutzk. The Marshal of the DIET stated that such discussion could be permitted only after official investigation of the question.

(*Chwila*, Jan. 15, Lvov.)

"For the past three weeks, rumors have been spread about the torturing of communist prisoners at Lutzk. The communist deputies

placed before the public facts and names and addresses. We may affirm only that the authors of the material have fully supported their accusations by detailed information thus facilitating any desired investigation. Mikola Pavlik, Stepan Boiko, Michalo Sheherba, Evgeni Lovtotzky, Mechislav Viklinsky, Evgeni Kushko, Nina Matulivna and others, all with addresses, etc. are mentioned in these depositions as having been tortured. Their torturers were: Serge Zaremba, an officer of the State Police, Marion Tkatchuk, senior-police-agent, agent Kostecky, agent Pisarsky, a certain "Antos", etc. All this happened at the end of November and supposedly in the local police-quarters of Lutzk. As we see, these accusations clearly indicate who were the torturers. We do not print any description of the tortures themselves; we wait for an investigation, and the immediate punishment of the guilty. Concealment will not solve this question. The white-hot iron of truth and punishment of the guilty alone can save Poland and the Polish government from the brutes holding important positions in the courts, the prisons, and the police-headquarters."

(*Robotnik*, Jan. 15, Warsaw).

"Nearly all the arrested are paid agents of Moscow. In the course of further investigations much has been made public, but there are some further details which must remain secret. The news being circulated abroad about the torturing of prisoners is entirely false. The purpose of this false information is to minimize the importance of the blow struck at these criminals by our Polish Government which thus administered the death-blow to the C. P. W. U. (Communist Party of Western Ukraine) which has for many years been carrying on shameless work along our borders."

(*Illustrated Evening Express*, No. 217, Jan. 17, Lvov).

"According to a statement made last Friday by Skladkovsky, minister of home affairs, a commission has been sent to Lutzk to investigate the charges made against police officials of torturing those arrested for communist activity. This special committee includes Czapinsky of the Department of Home Affairs, Dr. Nagler, an inspector of the State Police, and Dr. Przeborovsky an inspector in the

Political Division of the Department of Home Affairs.

(*Chwila* Jan. 17, Lvov).

"The Polish government is described by some as fascist, and by others as a dictatorship. Poland's progress has been due, chiefly, to highly-gifted individuals, Poland was once fortunate enough to experience the epoch of Chancellor Zamojsky. Now it is making rapid strides thanks to Joseph Pilsudsky",

(*General, Dr. Felix Slawoj-Skladkovsky, at the Plenary Session of the DIET, Fed. 9.*)

"At yesterday's sitting of the DIET the communist deputy, Bouzhinsky addressed the Marshal of the DIET in connection with the communist request for investigation of the Lutzk affair. This matter was not placed on the agenda. The deputy was reprimanded by the Marshal for the uncultured manner in which he addressed him, who stated that the matter could not be heard as the required number of signatures had not been collected. The communist was excluded from that sitting of the DIET and later from three sittings, and finally for a whole month"

(*Chwila*, Jan. 18.)

"The Special Committee sent by the department of Home Affairs to Lutzk to investigate the alleged torturing of communist political prisoners, has already finished its work. Its results will be published in the report to be submitted to the Minister of Home Affairs and the Chief Commander of the State Police."

(*Polish Telegraph Agency*, Jan. 17. Warsaw.)

"In order to pacify public opinion, which has been aroused over the torturing of political prisoners by the police in Lutzk, Mr. Skladkovsky now announces the sending to Lutzk of a commission to investigate the matter. But will anything come out of this investigation? Most of those who were tortured have been sent out of Lutzk to various far-away prisons, such as Plotzk, Lomzha and Sedletz. At the end of December, Ivan Kozar, Stas Bilavka, Nina Matulivna, a certain woman from Drogobitch, and Stepan

Boiko, were lying in the prison hospital seriously ill from the beating they received. Where these prisoners have been spirited off to, no one can find out. Mr. Skladkovsky's commission will find few of the tortured prisoners at Lutzk. It will most likely limit itself to the well-known trick of investigating a misdemeanor by questioning exclusively those accused of torturing: Tkatchuk, Zarembo, Bouri. This matter at Lutzk is nothing new to the police. This very same Zarembo was accused of the same offense by the 151 defendants in the big trial at Vladimirsky. These prisoners described minutely the terrible tortures they were subjected to by Zarembo and his co-brutes. At the trial, the Judge refused to let the prisoners mention anything about this. No investigation was made. And Zarembo and Tkatchuk continued their brutal "work" in the Volhynia territory. But this time, public opinion will not be so easily satisfied ... Public opinion insists that the statements made in the Kovel trial be also investigated now... The investigation of trial records in the Vladimir and Kovel cases, in which Zarembo played the same dirty role as now, may throw important light on the "work" of the police-department in the Volhynia district."

(*Robotnik*, Jan. 18, Warsaw.)

"Nobody denies the government the right to strangle, even in its very embryo, any rebellion or act of terrorism or sabotage. But when rendering harmless terrorist and anti-government organisations... (here 20 printed lines were censored)... No one can accuse us of a desire to defend communists. Their views on philosophy, politics, ethics and even the Jewish question are diametrically opposed to ours. In Russia we Zionists are looked upon as enemies; we are oppressed by barbarous and merciless means; we consider communists to be dangerous doctrinaires, enemies of Democracy and crazy destroyers of the Jewish national culture. Hence, what is important for us is not the defense of the communists; we are interested only in the real defence of Poland. On account of the censorship, we cannot go into any details about Lutzk... (here three printed lines were censored)... which the police investigating committee proved to be true. But is it necessary? Is it really impossible to destroy the communist nuclei; is it really impossible to stamp out communism and to

make law-breakers answer before law... (here two printed lines were censored). Nobody in Europe could honestly say even one word against our police system if those communists who have violated the general order had been punished according to the Polish Criminal Code and had been sentenced to the longest of prison terms... (here three printed lines were censored). It is necessary to appeal to the guardians of public safety, in order that they show a wish to understand this."

(*Nowy Dziennik*, Jan. 26, Krakov).

During the past few days one of the Lutzk police-officials has been in Lvov, investigating the question of the communists in Lutzk jails. Following this investigation a number of communists were arrested, and yesterday they were sent by auto to Lutzk. The question of the imprisonment of the communists now in Lutzk, and the general treatment accorded them there have recently been looked into by the Department of Home Affairs. We have just learned that S. Zarembo, yesterday arrested Dr. Eduard Hermann, son of the Director of the Lodz Gymnasium."

(*Cheila*, Jan. 1, Lvov).

"A black page is now being written into the history of our country's justice. We have been stirred by the recital of those terrible excesses which took place in Lutzk behind the curtains of the police investigation rooms... (here a few lines censored)... the prosecuting magistrate who... (a few lines censored). We are compelled to raise this curtain of secrecy. This we can do with a clear conscience for it is humanly impossible to keep silent in the face of such terrible news. We have facts, names, addresses, etc... and... (here a few lines censored). Of course it is impossible to remain silent when we know that women were raped, that people were cuffed until they lost consciousness, that pitchers of water were slowly poured into the noses of the prisoners, that male generative organs were wrung and mutilated, that people were hunted down with blood-hounds, dragged about by their hair, pricked constantly with pins and needles, forced to drink kerosene when they craved for water! How can we keep silent when some of those arrested were so severely kicked that they suffered severe and permanent internal injuries, that some spat and coughed blood, that some even went mad

from pain and sickness. Shall we keep quiet when we know one of the women witnessing the tortures inflicted upon the other victims, went and cut open her veins, when we know that it was later necessary to send many of the tortured to the hospital to keep them alive, and, that even now some are dying? If we had but the vaguest assurance that all this is merely falsehood or delirious invention, we should not have taken up our pen, so as not to shroud with mist the already gloomy and dark horizon... (here a few lines censored). On the contrary we would have felt deeply relieved if this black page in our history had proved to be merely the malicious fantasy of an enemy. Unfortunately the unlikelihood of this inclines us to pessimism... (here a few lines are censored). It seems that the spirit of the Girondists shed light upon our struggle for liberty and self-government, it had seemed that this spirit was becoming the inherent property of all the Poles. We must not renounce all this for the sake of Karamasovism, or go to the very threshold of that house where, on one autumn night, to the accompaniment of cockroaches' wailings, Smerdyakov, son of Elizabeth Smerdiashaya, hanged himself."

(*Przelom*, No. 5. Feb. 1, Warsaw).

"While unknown, underground organizations are committing acts of lawlessness, while they thus violate public tranquillity and security every ounce of authoritative power must be called upon in the struggle to defend our present order, to persecute those guilty of violations of law. So has it always been in the history of the world—and so it must always be".

(*Dilo*, No. 215, Oct. 27; Editorial in which was discussed the matter of the "pacification" of the West-Ukrainian district).

"At yesterday's sitting of the DIET one of the questions on the order of business for the day, was the matter of additional credit for the Department of Home Affairs. Senator Kopczinsky of the Polish Socialist Party announced that his bloc could not vote for extending this credit. The Senator said... (here his remarks have been deleted by the censor). Thereupon Senator Kopczinsky moved that the further extension, a proposed sum of three million gold zlotys, be refused. Minister Skladkovsky replied: "For quite a long while we have been hearing reports from Lutzk concerning beatings and torturings. While at Lutzk I beca-

me convinced that everything there is not exactly in good order but, Mr. Senator, no one there has as yet died..." Then followed the vote which passed the bill authorizing extension of further credit to the Department of Home Affairs."

(*Chwila*, Feb. 5, Lvov).

"In answer to Senator Kopczinsky's speech, the following statement was made by Minister Skladkovsky: "Gentlemen: for quite a while prison letters have been getting to the Investigation Board at Lutzk. I came to know about them two weeks ago: that a young communist girl was raped, that prisoners were beaten, that water, urine, etc. were poured into their nostrils. All of this I admit did take place: but those guilty have been dismissed from their jobs.

"I decided to follow up these charges. Three different investigation committees were sent out to three towns where I had my doubts as to what was or was not being done. One of these committees went to Torun. Its report shows that charges of misdemeanors there were absolutely unfounded. The second one went to Lodz and brought back a similar report, showing a clean unblemished record in that town. The third commission went to Lutzk. With regard to Lutzk and the police offices there, I will merely remark that I became convinced that all was not as it should be; in cases such as this more cannot be said because it is difficult to discuss such matters before an assembled body. We have heard of rape only from sources hostile to the Polish Government, and even the girl herself, when cross-examined by the Judge, did not confirm the charge. Nevertheless, as I have said, I became convinced that the atmosphere at Lutzk was not wholesome, and therefore decided that the only and quickest way out of the mess was to disband the Bureau of Investigation. This I did ten days ago, upon the return of investigating committee, without waiting for you to appeal to my sense of justice".

(*Wiek Nowy*, Feb. 5, Lvov).

"The newspapers from Germany report that during the past week a new complaint has been filed with the Secretariat of the League of Nations. This complaint deals with 183 new cases connected with the so-called 'pacification' of the West-Ukraine region as well as with the manner in which was conducted the investigation of those imprisoned at Lutzk. Accord-

ding to this document these prisoners were between 16 and 24 years of age. The authors of the complaint urge the appointment of a special committee to look into these cases, and at the same time appeal for help to International Red Cross Committee.

"One paper states: ... The affair at Brest is already formally before the League of Nations. The Minister of Home Affairs in Poland has dismissed the guilty police officials, but this step will not silence their accusers now at Geneva, especially since these latter do not limit themselves to the League of Nations but according to the local press, have also issued their appeal to the International Red Cross — The Polish Government must not only put its house in good order, but must see that a decisive, consistent and purposeful policy is maintained against its internal enemies."

(*Kurjer Posnanski*, Feb. 6, Lvov.)

Brest and Lutzk... These two towns on the Polish border have now become more widely known in Poland, and more so beyond its frontiers. Despite the statement made by the Polish Prime Minister, the disturbances at Brest have not yet been checked, nor have they been settled at Lutzk, where the police meted out such barbarous treatment to the prisoners. It is humanly impossible to write about what went on at Lutzk, and even impossible to repeat the remarks made at the DIET and in the Senate on this subject. The only statement which is both comprehensible and suitable for publication in Poland is that made by Minister for Home Affairs, F. Slavoj-Skladkovsky, in which he said that the investigating committee sent to Lutzk brought to light that "all was not in exact good order there" and that he had disbanded the whole police investigating bureau at Lutzk. But no answer is offered to any questions like the following: On what grounds was the investigating bureau dismissed: were its employees not sent to other districts to continue their humane work; were any of them called to account for their excesses; was even one of them summoned to Court to answer for his criminal acts? Instead of answers to such questions we have been offered merely more or less scrappy descriptions of what took place at Lutzk. Since the whole matter has been hushed in Poland, we are inclined to think that there must be some truth in the accusations".

(*Dziennik Ludowy*, Feb. 8, Lvov.)

"According to a statement made before the Senate by Minister for Home Affairs, great changes have been made within the police investigating apparatus at Lutzk. The acting chief, and Police Agent have been discharged. The latter was proved to have forced water into the lungs of political prisoners, and to have raped a girl under arrest".

(*Kurjer Lwowski*, Feb. 8, Lvov.)

At the sitting of the Diet on Feb. 9, the Minister for Home Affairs said: There was in Lutzk an investigating committee which disclosed petty misdemeanors on the part of employees in the police apparatus, on the part of the political chief and on the part of one of the police agents..." (Interrupted by cries of "Not enough", "Too little"). And in reply to the communist Deputy Rojek, Minister Skladkovsky replied: "I would be greatly obliged if the Deputy Rojek would be more courteous. The honored Senator Kopczynsky received from me due explanations, and it is insultingly daring on the part of Deputy Falkovsky to raise this question again".

(*Chwila*, Feb. 11, Lvov.)

We declare that the fate of the Ukrainian peasants, workers and intellectuals, of the whole Ukrainian population of the Volhynia district is bound with the fate and future of Poland, and that in the development of their national peculiarities, the Ukrainian peoples must have the cooperation of the Polish people in the fortifying and developing of the Polish State ... The Ukrainian population living within the boundaries of Poland knows that no one will dare to lay hands on its property, homestead or land, and it knows that no one will dare to burst into the temple and snatch the sacred bowl from the hands of the priest in the act of blessing. While in the Hell of Bolshevism the blessed churches are turned into Atheist Clubs, in our Volhynia during every blessed happy holiday the bells are ringing and calling the people to divine worship.

(Excerpt from the speech by Deputy Peter Pevny, before the Diet, Feb. 5).

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