Workers of all countries, unite!

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TOPICS OF THE DAY

Inspiring Tasks

It was with unflagging interest that the Soviet people followed the proceedings of the Eighteenth All-Union Conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), held in February of this year. This Conference will go down as a landmark in the history of the struggle for Communism conducted by the Bolshevik Party and the entire Soviet people.

The land of Soviets has become a mighty industrial country, a country which is not subject to economic crises. The Party of Lenin-Stalin has insured the independence of the national economy of the Soviet Union. And the Soviet people are justly proud of the results of their labors.

The Conference summed up the results of the country's development in the two years that have elapsed since the Eighteenth Congress of the Party and criticized the shortcomings and weaknesses in industry and transport. At the same time it stressed the manifold and durable gains and successes achieved in fulfilling the Third Five-Year Plan, in carrying out still further the Stalin policy of peace.

In 1940 the output of Socialist industry increased by 11 per cent as compared with 1939. The steady growth of industry, and in the first place of the industry producing means of production; the increase in capital investments from year to year; the rise in labor productivity; the fact that the grain problem has in the main been solved; the rise in the living standards of the working people; the achievements in the sphere of training personnel, in particular the formation of mighty state labor reserves—all these bear witness to the progress of Soviet society. And this progress is due in no small measure to the fact that the Soviet peoples are working in peace insured by the Stalin policy of the Bolshevik Party.

The Conference elaborated a concrete program for realizing the objective set by the Eighteenth Party Congress, namely, to overtake and surpass the advanced capitalist countries economically as well. This program—a program insuring further, steady and rapid Socialist reproduction—is embodied in the decisions adopted by the Conference, providing for improved methods, organization and leadership in industry and transport.

Further intensive development of the national economy, in the first place of industry, is indispensable for enhancing the defense capacity of the country, a requisite for the transition from Socialism to Communism.

Raising as it did problems connected with the development of industry and the national economy as a whole, the Conference has a significance that extends equally to all fields of human endeavor. And Soviet literature, too, is now faced with a number of new and important tasks, tasks that follow from the tremendous role it plays in shaping the world outlook of people and in stimulating human endeavor.

Soviet literature is a powerful instrument for the Communist education of the masses. J. Stalin said of the leading Soviet writers that they are "engineers of human souls." And A. Zhdanov, Secretary of the C.P.S.U.(B.),

in his speech at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers (1934) gave the following definition of the duties this title imposes upon writers:

"Comrade Stalin," he said, "has spoken of our writers as engineers of human souls. What does this mean? What duties does the title impose?

"In the first place it means the duty of knowing life so as to be able to depict it truthfully in works of art, depict it not in a dead, scholastic way, not simply as 'objective reality,' but to depict reality in its revolutionary development.

"In addition to this the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic portrayal should be combined with the ideological remolding and education of the working people in the spirit of Socialism. This method in imaginative writings and literary criticism is what we call the method of Socialist realism."

Soviet writers can play an important part in materializing the decisions of the Eighteenth Party Conference. Lenin, taking exception to the writers who separated literary activity from the general practical work of the Party, pointed out that literature should become a part of the general work of the proletariat.

"No one disputes," Lenin wrote, "that literary activities are least amenable to mechanical regulation, to leveling, to majority rule. No one disputes that in this field it is absolutely necessary to insure greater scope for personal initiative, and personal inclination, full play for ideas and imagination, form and content. All this is indisputable, but it only goes to show that the literary side of the proletarian Party work cannot be mechanically identified with the other phases of proletarian Party work. All this in no way refutes the proposition, so alien and strange to the bourgeoisie and to the bourgeois democrats, that literary activities must absolutely and categorically become a part of Social-Democratic Party work, linked up inseverably with the other phases of this work." (Lenin, *Party Organization and Party Literature*, *Collected Works*, Vol. VIII.)

It is from its inseverable ties with the life of the people that Soviet literature derives its strength and hence it is in duty bound to deal with the problems that interest the people. The reader wants to know about the heroic activity of Soviet men and women, about their work: he wants to see the finest representatives of the Soviet people portrayed in literature.

A great deal has already been accomplished in the matter of depicting the history of the land of Soviets, the history of the Civil War and its heroes. Last year saw the completion of such major work as Mikhail Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don.* Alexei Tolstoy is completing his *Road to Calvary* trilogy.

The everyday heroism attending the development of the Arctic and the successes of Soviet aviation have been depicted in quite a number of books, such as, for instance, B. Gorbatov's *Everyday Arctic*, and the books about the great pilot Valeri Chkalov, the first to make the flight to America across the North Pole.

The great task that faces the Soviet writers is that of describing the transformation of the U. S. S. R. into a mighty Socialist industrial country. The majority of the works already published on this important theme relate to the period of the First and Second Five-Year Plans, that is, 1928-1937. Among them are M. Shaginyan's *Hydrocentral*, M. Ilyin's *Big Conveyor* and F. Gladkov's *Energy.*

Of the later works dealing with Socialist industry mention should be made of Y. Krymov's *Tanker Derbent* (published in *International Litera-*

ture, Nos. 10-11 and 12, 1938), B. Polevoy's *Hot Shop* and P. Nilin's *A Man Up Hill*. The Soviet reader expects new works of this kind, since the development of Socialist industry furnishes splendid themes and excellent material for novels, tales, plays and poems.

The great Russian writer Maxim Gorky conceived the literature of Socialist realism as heroic, epical literature, with the man who works as its principal hero. Gorky never tired of explaining and stressing the point that "As the principal hero of our books we ought to choose labor, *i. e.*, man who, organized by the processes of work, in our country is armed with the full might of modern technique—man, who, in his turn, so organizes work as to make it easier and more productive, raising it to the level of an art. We must learn to understand work as creative efforts." (From his report at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers.)

An idea that runs persistently through all of Vladimir Mayakovsky's post-revolutionary poetry, from *Decree to the Army of Art* to *At the Top of My Voice*, is that there is a close similarity between his work as poet and the labor of the worker. This idea reflected his deep-rooted conception of the creative nature of human labor, of his reverence for the labor of the industrial proletariat, of his no less deep-rooted awareness of the leading role of the working class in all the spheres of social life.

Mayakovsky asserted the right of the poet to stand on an equal footing with the proletariat; his comparison of the work of the poet with the labor of the worker is an expression of his exceptionally high regard for social labor under Soviet conditions. The all-pervading glorification of labor in Mayakovsky's poetry was one of the factors that enabled the poet to become a genuine innovator in art.

In the literature of Socialist realism the theme of the new, of innovation, is inconceivable apart from the portrayal of people who work, of the creators of the material and spiritual values of society.

The thoughtful and observant Soviet writer for whom the interests of his country are his own interests, and who is not a captive of his, to use the words of the great Russian critic Vissarion Belinsky, "bird songs" which he alone understands, finds a wide choice of worthy and vital themes in the life of his country.

When Maxim Gorky branded the literature of the past as having become ever more detached from labor, from the material basis of society, he did so with full justification. Towards the beginning of the twentieth century this "isolation" of poetry from the sphere of human labor, this contempt of the poet for everyday work, had even become a sign of good—nay, refined—esthetic taste. Gorky rightly considered the detachment of art from labor to be a direct expression of the decay of the art of class society, the art which betrayed the traditions of folk art, whose particular charm consists in its glorification of human work, energy, daring and bravery.

The very nature of class society deprives labor of its true poetry and charm; for in that society labor is reduced to slavery, to exploitation, something that cripples and dulls man. And it is precisely this predominantly negative aspect of labor that was portrayed by the Russian writers of the past and by the best writers of the West to this day.

The Socialist revolution emancipated labor, made work a matter of honor, glory, valor and heroism. Work has again assumed its truly creative character and a genuinely poetic meaning; it has become the principal theme of the new art that has arisen since the Revolution. In order to portray the new man of Socialist society the writer

must grasp and depict the new attitude of man to work, man's conscious creative participation in social production.

"Our Party has always been strong by virtue of the fact that it has combined a thoroughly business-like and practical spirit with broad vision, with a constant urge forward, with the struggle for the building of Communist society. *Soviet literature should be able to portray our heroes; it should be able to glimpse our tomorrow. This will be no utopian dream, for our tomorrow is already being prepared for today by dint of conscious planned work.*"

These words pronounced seven years ago by A. Zhdanov have the significance of a program for Soviet literature. They are particularly important in the light of the tasks set by the Eighteenth Conference of the Party.

An urgent problem on the order of the day, a problem that literature cannot pass by, is that of a profound study of the economics of Socialist society. Unless the writer delves into the essence of the social-economic relationships that determine his hero's actions, he will find himself giving only a superficial portrayal, and this cannot but reflect on his writing.

Imaginative writing, of course, has its own specific features: in literature, economics and its laws are always shown through the medium of people, through human relations. It is an instructive fact that the works of the majority of the great masters of the past are distinguished by a deep penetration into the social and economic relations of their period. In his letter to Margaret Harkness, the English writer, about her novel *The City Girl* Engels stated, among other things, that from Balzac's *Human Comedy* he had "learnt more, than from all the professional historians, economists and statisticians of the period together."

Other examples are numerous: Zola truthfully depicted life at industrial enterprises of his day; Lenin drew attention to the profound understanding of the inner laws of economics, displayed by Chernyshevsky, Saltykov-Shchedrin and Uspensky; the subjects of a number of writings of Gorky, Serafimovich and Mamin-Sibiryak are linked with industrial-economic problems. All this, of course, enhances the value of the work of these authors.

In one of the footnotes to his remarkable work *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, Lenin made special mention of Mamin-Sibiryak's tale *Fighters*. Here is what Lenin wrote:

"Cf. the description of this rafting in Mr. Mamin-Sybiryak's tale *Fighters*. The works of this writer picture in bold outline the specific features of life in the Urals, which resembles that of the pre-Reform period,[1] with the disfranchisement, ignorance and downtroddeness of the population tied to the factories, with the 'thoroughgoing infantile debauchery' of the 'masters,' with the absence of the middle stratum (the intellectual commoners) that is so characteristic of capitalist development in all countries, Russia not excluded."

Russian and foreign classic literature has contributed a great deal to bring out the economics of capitalist society. New Socialist economics ought to find a profound reflection in Soviet literature. Here is a vast field for Soviet writers to display their powers of creative observation and of artistic depiction of life. The splendid people of the land of Socialism, with their will to work and their constant urge forward—these are the main heroes and themes of Soviet literature.

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[1] The period prior to 1861, the year when the serfs were "emancipated" in Russia. — *Ed.*

DERENIK DEMIRCHAN

Two Comrades

The village in the mountain gorge looked like an orchard. Above it were fields of waving vats.

The balcony of the little house gave on to the yard. A faint light from the smoky lamp lit up a table at which three men were sitting—the black-bearded Davtyan, the commander of a Red detachment, Reuben, the second-in-command, and Avet, the man in charge of political work. After a prolonged discussion, Avet concluded:

"Well, as you like of course, but I regard these two partisans as suitable in every way."

"I know them. They're plucky lads," Reuben agreed.

Davtyan stroked his beard meditatively and stared out into the darkness without speaking.

"Pluck isn't enough," he said slowly at last. "There's one of Denikin's men, Colonel Asaturov, at the Dashnak[1] headquarters. He must have set a guard on the bridge, though the bridge is in the rear of his forces. We can't possibly send a big detachment there. What we want is two men, two brave, trustworthy men who know the locality well. They'll have to steal through the enemy's lines and get to the bridge by some means. What are your lads like? Can they handle explosives — That's the point."

"Yes, I'm sure they could blow up the bridge," Reuben replied. "They've both worked in the mines."

"Do you know this for certain, or are you just supposing it?"

"I know it for certain."

"Can they read and write?"

"They graduated from the parish school," Avet explained, with a touch of pride.

"Call them in, then."

Reuben rose and left the room.

"If we blow up the bridge," said Avet, "the situation will at once change in our favor both here and on the other side. I'll send some propagandists there right away. But are you sure the enemy artillery won't cross the bridge before we blow it up?"

"Why, it may," said Davtyan, "and in that case we'll lose. Everything depends on the blowing up of the bridge. Oh, well, it's no use trying to guess. When the lads come in we'll see."

Avet smiled, recalling something amusing in connection with the men who were expected. Then Reuben came in followed by Gondi and Gydil. Davtyan looked at them and there was approval in his eyes, although he frowned.

[1] A bourgeois nationalist counter-revolutionary grouping in Armenia, eliminated after the establishment of Soviet power.

"Where do you come from?"

"We're from Vernashen," Gydil replied.

"What kind of people do you come from?"

"Poor folks."

"We're in the young Communist League," Gondi volunteered, smiling.

"Why didn't you say so at first, then?" Davtyan said with relief. "That's good. Now tell me, did you ever have to handle explosives?"

"Of course we did," said Gondi, evidently surprised at the question.

"Why 'of course'? Where did you get the chance to learn about them?"

"In the copper-mines, anybody can tell you that, Comrade commander."

"Splendid," said Davtyan. "Now, here's a job for you. You have to deliver a very important letter hidden in the soft part of a piece of bread to Comrade Vardan in Vernashen and bring me his answer. That's one thing. The second is: you have to blow up the Shushanadzor Bridge in the rear of Colonel Asaturov's troops. You'll go together, and I give you three days to do the job. Do you think you'll be able to manage it?"

"Yes, we'll do it," said Gydil.

The commander decided to try them.

"If you don't think you can do the job properly, don't take it on."

"If we can't, you'll never see us alive again," said Gydil.

Davtyan frowned.

"We want deeds, not words. You won't let anything stop you, no matter how risky it may be?"

"No," said Gydil quietly.

"No," said Gondi, not to be outdone by his friend.

Davtyan looked at them closely for a moment and he liked their youth, their simple acceptance of danger.

"Very good," he decided. "Go and talk to the sappers now, they'll tell you what to do. Here's the letter. It's written on cigarette paper. You have to hide it in the soft part of some bread, see? That's all. Now you can go. But—wait a second! Remember—you can't be too careful. See you don't fall into the enemy's hands."

"Why should we fall into their hands?" Gydil asked in an offended tone.

Davtyan scrutinized him for a moment.

"Why shouldn't you? Sappers do get taken prisoners sometimes, don't they? What will you do if you're caught?"

"We'll die, both of us, but we'll never give anything away."

"Yes, we'll both . . ." Gondi chimed in.

"You're not tied to one another, are you?" interrupted the commander. "What I want to know is, what exactly would you do if the emergency should arise?" He turned to Gydil.

"We'll kill each other, Comrade commander . . ." said Gydil.

A faint smile flitted over Davtyan's lips.

"I see you can't get on without each other, no matter what."

"They've been friends ever since they were little," Reuben chuckled.

Davtyan stood up.

"I'll be very glad to see you both come back alive. You're plucky lads. But remember, that bridge has got to be blown up and that letter delivered."

"You can depend on us, Comrade commander," Gydil flared up, "we'll go through fire and water, but we'll obey orders."

Davtyan laid his hand on Gydil's shoulder.

"I believe you . . . You're to take the lead in this."

Then he turned to Gondi.

"And if anything should happen to him, you're to carry on. See? Don't forget that you're both sons

of the people and members of the Young Communist League. Now, good luck to you! Take them to Levon, the sapper," he added, turning to Reuben.

"Right, Comrade commander," said Reuben.

Night had fallen when the two friends left the camp and set out for the enemy positions. The bridge they were to blow up was thrown over a gorge between two high mountains. The tracks over the mountains were practically impassable for the artillery that the enemy intended to employ against the Red Army units.

The two comrades had climbed for a long time from boulder to boulder before Gydil declared that they had gone far enough. They had reached the point, he said, from which, according to his calculations, it would be safe to descend to the bridge. It was the opening of the Shushanadzor Gorge, a comparatively shallow cleft through which a mountain stream flowed. As it sloped downwards the cleft gathered unto itself the waters of still narrower clefts, and spread and deepened. Below were the dark wooded slopes, where scarcely perceptible tracks wound upwards till they were lost in the snows of the summits.

These were the tracks used by the nomads, so the two friends decided to avoid them and stole cautiously down the mountainside. When they entered the woods they sat down to rest. The night was waning. If they did not succeed in blowing up the bridge at day break it would be too late, and they would have to hide in the woods until night-fall. Gydil was vexed with himself and with Gondi, too, for, though the road suggested by Gondi had been the safest, it had taken up nearly half the night. They should have gone the way he, Gydil, had thought of at first. And there was Gondi, lying down, fast asleep and snoring.

"Sleeping like a top, and never thinking of all we've got to do," Gydil grumbled, looking up at the stars with anxiety. He calculated that it was another hour's walk to the spot. They would have to hurry. The enemy artillery might cross the bridge any moment, and then there would be no sense in blowing it up.

"Here, wake up, you!" he shouted to the sweetly-slumbering Gondi.

Gondi did not hear. Gydil shook him.

"Get up!" he cried. "You're not dead yet, are you?"

"M-mn . . ." Gondi muttered in his sleep.

"Come on, or we'll be too late."

Gydil took a deep breath of the humid air of the woods. The cool leaves brushed his face, and the juicy, fragrant grass lulled his drowsy senses and drew his heavy head down to the earth. Had he laid it down for a moment, he would have fallen fast asleep and all would have been lost.

He stood up with an effort and going over to Gondi, kicked him.

"How long are you going to lie there snoring? Get up!"

Gondi started and grabbed his revolver, but, seeing Gydil's familiar face before him, calmed down at once. They set out, Gondi in front. The soft grass deadened the sound of their footsteps. The woods slept, as though under a spell, but at any moment the spell might be rudely broken by a shot from a lurking foe.

From time to time Gondi halted and listened. As the gloomy gorge opened wider, it filled with a mysterious whispering.

"Where are we?"

"Above the dam of the bridge," Gondi replied confidently.

Gydil shook his head disapprov-

ingly, and asked: "What's that noise?"

"It's a mill."

"You're thinking about bread, I suppose, and that's why you fancied it was a mill," Gydil jeered.

"Well, what is it, then?"

"The river."

They emerged into an open space. A light glimmered far ahead of them. Had they kept a little further to the left, they would have fallen into somebody's hands. And who could that somebody be?

"Gondi!"

"What's up?"

"I'll show you 'what's up' in a minute. You see where you've led us?"

"Where?"

"Oh, never mind. I told you we should have gone through the gorge. Now here we are right in the enemy's hands."

"Go on, there aren't any enemies about here! That light over there is the shepherds' fire."

"Oh, yeah! Perhaps they'll even treat you to some *shashlyk?*" and he looked at his friend with reproach. "Do you know where we are?"

"No."

"Just above Sakan's field."

"No, surely we're at the mill."

Gondi's obstinacy irritated Gydil.

"Oh, get out of the way and let me lead," and he turned to the right, towards the mill.

Gondi, realizing that he had been mistaken, followed him without further argument.

They groped their way cautiously down the side of the gorge. The light they had seen went out suddenly. No voices could be heard. The two young men halted just above the well-trodden path leading downwards. The night was almost gone.

Gydil looked about him.

"Do you see that?"

"What?"

"That's Sakan's field down there. The bridge is away on the other side. We'll have to go back, but it'll be morning before we get there."

Gondi looked at him in surprise.

"Then we won't have time to blow up the bridge?"

"I don't know. Let's hide the dynamite now and go and have a look round. If we don't meet anyone we'll come back for the dynamite and blow up the bridge. If we do fall in with anyone we've saved the dynamite, at least."

Gydil started down the gorge. Gondi, who was much more easy-going than Gydil, shook his head doubtfully. He forgot for the moment the reason for his being here and let his thoughts wander back to the days of his childhood, and all his memories were bound up with Gydil, who now reappeared out of gloom.

"There's no one down below."

"Then let's go."

"Do you think I'll ever listen to you again?" Gydil growled, stooping to recover the dynamite from where it lay hidden among the stones.

His tone surprised Gondi, who had been thinking fondly of the times they had had together, and was in a softened mood.

"What are you finding fault with me for?"

"Hold your tongue, or I know what I'll do with you," Gydil returned in an angry whisper. "If I hadn't listened to you we wouldn't have got into this fix."

"Well, since we have, there's no use talking about it. Let's have a try at blowing up the bridge and see if we can do it."

Gydil glanced at him out of the corner of his eye.

"And supposing we can't do it?"

Gondi looked grave for a moment.

"Well, what's to be done, if we've made a mistake?"

"I don't know, but I'm going to blow up that blasted bridge, even if I have to blow myself up along with it."

"I'll never leave you, Gydil, my dear boy," said Gondi, throwing his arms around his friend and kissing him on the brow.

"Get out or I'll brain you!" and Gydil pushed him away.

Gondi tittered.

"You've been snarling like a dog at me all night." An indignant snort was Gydil's only reply, as he gathered his things together. Then he remembered something and hid the dynamite and the instruments behind the boulders again. "We'd better take another look first and see if there's anybody about here."

They had almost reached the gorge when they started back in alarm. Shadows detached themselves from the sides of the gorge and moved swiftly towards them. They had been observed. The two friends turned and ran for cover to the nearest hill, from where they intended to make for the woods and thence to the mountain-slopes.

"Halt!"

A shot rang out.

It was not very far to the woods. Gondi turned and fired. It seemed to stop pursuit for a minute. Then the shadows closed in around them.

"Take them alive!" roared a deep voice.

It was impossible to distinguish the faces in the dim light but the two men could hear their captors panting as they dragged them into the gorge, holding them in a fierce grip as though they had been wild beasts. Gydil and Gondi were led towards a huge boulder on which two men were sitting. They were big men and they wore sheepskin caps and, across their breasts, cartridge belts. About fifteen armed men surrounded Gydil and Gondi now. One man tried to break through the close circle and drag the prisoners out.

"Which of you fired?" he shouted.

"Stop! Bring them nearer," came in a stern voice from one of the men sitting on the boulder.

"Were there only two of you?" he asked them.

"Yes, only the two," Gydil replied.

"You seem to be very nice, decent sort of lads," the man went on in a tone that rang false. It was clear now that he was a *khimbapet*, the chief of a Dashnak detachment. "Well, now, if you'll tell me where the others have gone and how many of them there were, I give you my word that nothing will be done to you."

"Why did you fire at us?" came the voice from the ranks again. It was evident that the man had been injured by Gondi's bullet.

"Go away, Serob," the chief ordered. "There's always shooting when it's wartime. That's what you've got to expect. Never mind as long as they tell me how many of them there were and where they've come from."

Silence.

"So you're not going to tell us?" the *khimbapet* persisted.

Gydil and Gondi said nothing, waiting in silence for death or blows. But the *khimbapet* suddenly softened again.

"You're acting very unwisely."

Then, turning to the soldiers, he said:

"Take them to the colonel. You'll be responsible for them, Gevorg, so see that they get there alive. Understand? You'll answer for their lives with your own. And I would advise you two young fellows to tell the colonel the whole truth. Take them away!"

The soldiers bound Gondi and

Gydil and pushed them roughly ahead of them.

"Have we far to go?" Gydil asked a soldier after a while.

"Get on and don't ask questions," the man replied, striking him in the back with the butt of his rifle.

At that Gondi made a sudden movement as though to free his hands. He had an impulse to strike the soldier. The latter noticed it and levelled his rifle at him.

"What do you think you're doing squirming about there, you reptile?"

"What right have you to hit him?"

"Ah, so you want a taste of it, too? Well, here you are!" and he struck Gondi a heavy blow.

Gydil stood still.

"You better stop that nonsense!" he said sternly.

The soldier, incensed, thrust the barrel of his rifle into Gydil's face.

"Want me to finish you off just now?"

"Stop this nonsense, I'm telling you!" Gydil shouted, and ground his teeth.

At this juncture Gevorg, who had been put in charge of the prisoners, interfered and forbade the others to talk to them. Then, seizing Gydil by the shoulders, he pushed him on.

"Quick march, and no back-chat from you, do you hear!"

As they approached a village, a light glided slowly through the darkness and vanished. The streets were deserted at this hour, not a soul was about, except for a sentry who stood at the door of a big house in the square.

"Who's there?"

"We've brought two prisoners. Call someone."

The sentry gave a low whistle; it brought a man out of the house.

"Give the password," said the man, coming up to the escort and their prisoners.

"Garden," said Gevorg, and then: "Where have I to take them?"

"Take them to the cowshed for the present."

As in a dream the two young men went with their captors round to the back of the house, where they were pushed into a shed and left alone.

"We've botched up the job," said Gydil gloomily, flinging his cap on the ground.

"Yes, it's all up with us," Gondi agreed. Then there was silence.

They heard the first cock crow in the yard. It was the hour when usually the creak of the first wagons and the beat of horses' hoofs roused the peasants. No one was hurrying to work that morning, however. The village was wrapped in slumber. Gydil listened. What was going on in the village? Was anyone coming for them, early though it was?

The *khimbapet*, an elderly man, was sitting in the house. From time to time a lean, gloomy-looking officer entered the room. The lamp on the table lit up the black, sooty walls.

"Tell me, captain," said the *khimbapet* at last to the officer, "what is the colonel intending to do? Are we to go into action soon or not?"

"We're waiting for reinforcements," the other muttered absently, as he rummaged among the things in his suitcase.

"But the enemy and the traitors will close in on us both from the front and the rear before they can get here." The *khimbapet* blew the smoke through his thick mustache and then added thoughtfully:

"Every day more and more go over to the enemy!"

"If you can catch the deserters, bring them here."

"I've got two. I was going to finish them off but I thought better

of it. I sent them on here, maybe we'll be able to worm something out of them."

"Yes. They're here now—in the cowshed."

"Is the colonel asleep?"

"No, he's only just had his supper."

The captain, who up to now had been absent and gloomy, suddenly smiled and said in a pleading tone:

"Look here, Seiran, I need a good horse. Get one from the peasants for me, will you?"

"Very well," said the *khimbapet*, straightening himself. "I'll find you a horse."

The door leading into the other room opened, and the colonel, a heavy broad-shouldered man, with a puffy, repellent face, came in. He was tipsy. With a searching glance at the officers, he sat down at the table.

"Devil take these Bolsheviks!" he growled. "They're actually going to dig themselves into trenches now. This partisan movement is going to be the end of us." Then, turning to the *khimbapet*: "Any news?"

"A terrible lot of desertion going on, colonel. We've caught two."

"Haven't you shot them yet?"

"No, I was saving them to be interrogated."

The captain went out at this moment.

"Whereabouts did you catch them?" the colonel asked in a drowsy voice.

"By the mill. If we hadn't overtaken them they would have gone over to the Bolsheviks."

The captain came in again, followed by Gydil and Gondi, with their wrists still bound.

The colonel's lips twisted into the semblance of a smile.

"Ah, gentlemen, glad to see you, I'm sure." He bit his lips and swallowed audibly.

The *khimbapet* looked at the prisoners and began:

"See here, boys, you had better make a clean breast of it to the colonel. If you tell the whole truth, I'll speak for you and ask him to spare your lives."

"Where have you come from, and who are you?" the colonel asked.

Gydil and Gondi stood staring at him, but vouchsafed no reply.

The colonel made a great effort to concentrate on the matter in hand: "You were caught in our rear," he said. "Where were you going? Tell me at once, do you hear?" his voice rose and he was about to threaten them, but restrained himself.

"We have nothing to tell," said Gydil.

An ominous silence followed. The captain and the *khimbapet* looked at the colonel, but he was evidently not out of patience yet. He began again in a coaxing tone:

"You oughtn't answer me like that, you know. Tell me what village you're from and all about it, and where you were going and what takes you to the Bolsheviks. Tell us everything in turn—and first of all, how many of you there were . . . Don't be afraid, we won't hurt them. You heard the *khimbapet;* he'll take you into his own detachment and you'll fight against the enemies of your country."

"Yes, I promise to take you into my detachment," the *khimbapet* said. "It's a pity for plucky lads like you to have to sit at home doing nothing. I quite understand how it was: you were misled, fooled. People told you that our men would come and destroy the village and that we're no better than wild beasts . . . Well, now, you see for yourselves. We talk decently and kindly to you. Tell us the whole truth and then go your way. Now then, boys, speak up."

But the boys said nothing.

The colonel began again as patiently as before:

"We'll be your friends and you'll serve in our army. Only you mustn't conceal anything from us. Why should we kill you? Your death is no benefit to us. Soon we'll clear the Bolsheviks out of Armenia—and that's the main thing. Now, tell us all about it."

But the boys kept stubbornly silent, and at last the colonel lost patience and shouted: "Now then, don't play the jackass with me! You cowardly young whelps!" Then, drawing his revolver out of his pocket, he laid it on the table before him.

"So you won't speak? I know why: you're frightened out of your wits."

The prisoners made no reply to this.

"Speak up at once!" the colonel roared, beside himself with fury now. "I'll make you open your mouths, you two sons of bitches! I've made better people than you speak in my time," and with that, he seized his revolver and pressed it against Gydil's head.

"Now will you speak, blast you!"

He made as though he were going to shoot, but instead of doing so waved his weapon first over Gydil's head and then over Gondi's. After a moment he lowered it and shook his head.

"Well? Aren't you terrified? Aren't you shivering in your cowardly skins? Of course you are?" he roared. "When you go out to war, you sons of bitches, you've got to fight. Die like a soldier should. What? You thought fighting was child's play, did you? You thought it's like eating pilau? Now, which of you is the eldest? I'll let the one who tells me go." He laid his revolver down on the table again. "So you won't talk? Well, then, I'll teach you something. I'll have you shut up in the cowshed and give you a revolver, and the one who kills the other will go scot free. I give my word of honor as an officer. And if one of you isn't shot by morning, I'll tell them to hurl you from the cliffs. Now then, march!"

The captain, who had been looking on with some amusement at the scene, took out his revolver and was preparing to lead the prisoners away to be shot, when the colonel stopped him.

"Do exactly as I say! Leave just one bullet in the revolver and give it to them. Take them away."

The colonel's plan struck the captain and the *khimbapet* as extremely funny and they burst out laughing. Seeing the state the colonel was in, however, the captain was certain that the "joke" would only last till morning.

"Come along," he said to the prisoners with a gloating smile as he unloaded the revolver except for one chamber.

Gydil and Gondi went out and were led away to the cowshed by the soldiers outside.

The *khimbapet* filled his pipe thoughtfully.

"I don't think there's any point in dragging things out, colonel," he said. "You ought to have finished them off. Surely you don't really hope that one will kill the other?" he said.

The colonel gave him an angry look.

"Yes, I do. And they'll give away the rest of the crowd as well."

The *khimbapet* thought for a moment before he spoke.

"The one of them who has the guts to do that will be our man, and I'll take him into my detachment." With that he rose and went out.

The colonel brought out a bottle from under the table, drank some of the vodka and then spat in vexation.

"To hell with the whole lot of them!"

The captain came in again. There was a sly smile on his face.

"Babakhanovich!" the colonel said.

"Yes, sir."

The colonel filled his glass.

"Sit down," he said, "and have a drink with me."

The captain obeyed. The colonel frowned, then his lips twisted into an ironical smile.

"Yes. We talk about our country! We're 'defending our country.' Humph! 'Our country,' forsooth! It's gone to the devil—the whole of Russia along with Denikin and the 'united, indivisible empire!'—and all the rest of it." He tossed off a glass of vodka and the captain followed his example.

"Let's chuck it all up, Babakhanovich," he struck the table a blow that made the glasses ring. "We'll clear out to Constantinople, do you hear, to Constantinople! We'll go to Kars first, then from there to Trebizond and from there to Constantinople. We'll go to Europe and be waiters there. To hell with this dusty Armenia! Nothing will come of this mess, anyhow!"

"That's true," said the captain, with a heavy sigh. "We've turned into *khimbapets*. We want a cleaner kind of work."

"Well, alright, then—waiters, that's what we'll be; as for all this rubbish and the *khimbapets*, let's send them to the devil."

They filled their glasses again and drank. The *khimbapet* came in and sat down at the table without saying anything. The colonel looked at him with anger in his tipsy eyes and poured him out some vodka.

The *khimbapet* took it, raised it slowly to his lips, drank and lowered his drowsy gaze.

The captain went out and after a moment or two the *khimbapet* followed him.

"Listen," he said, overtaking the captain in the passage. "Are you really thinking of letting the one who turns out to be the murderer go?"

The captain looked at him coldly.

"You ask me if I'm going to let a devil go free? I wouldn't let a fly slip through my fingers, much less a Red devil."

"Do you know why I asked you? Because one of them would be very useful to me for scouting. I'd like to take him into my detachment and talk him over."

"Talk who over?" asked the captain, with a sarcastic smile. "Talk a Bolshevik over? You can't talk a Bolshevik over. And don't you imagine for a moment that one of them will shoot the other. Bolsheviks don't do that sort of thing. And whether one shoots the other or not, it's all the same to me. I'll finish them off."

"They're frightened now," the *khimbapet* went on. "One of them may kill the other to save himself. If this happens, don't touch the one who is left, I'll take care of him."

A faint smile flitted over the captain's lips.

"Try it. Talk to him. We can shoot him afterwards."

"Very well. We'll have a try."

It was quite dark in the cowshed. The prisoners sat down on the stone floor, and leaned against the post. They strained their ears for voices from without or for any sound that might give them an inkling of what was going on. Then they caught a slight noise outside the door. They started up.

"It's nothing . . ." Gydil murmured, still listening. "Someone's climbing on to the roof. Do you

see that crack? . . They're going to watch us through it."

They stared up at the little crack. Then Gydil said quietly:

"Things have turned out badly."

"Oh well, there's no use talking about that now. We only have to die once, anyhow!" Gondi replied, trying to sound casual.

But Gydil was turning something over in his mind.

"No," he said very emphatically, "don't talk like that. There are different kinds of death. Sometimes people live great lives and sometimes it is in death that they become great."

"Nonsense. Death is death, the same for everyone," said Gondi impatiently, then he went on, thinking aloud: "What is life? Do you remember how once, when we were children, we went to the woods for pears?"

"M-mn," Gydil mumbled absently.

"Oh, what the devil's the matter with you? Can't you listen when I'm speaking to you? Remember that time?—the rain came on and we sheltered ourselves under a tree, and we wanted to light a fire, but we hadn't any matches. So we sat down and held each other tightly. And do you remember what we said that time—that we'd die together?"

This drew a smile from Gydil and he said:

"Yes, I remember that quite well." He fell into a reverie, thinking of those far-off days.

"You see—it's come true," said Gondi.

With downcast eyes, Gydil began: "Ah, well, we grew side by side, and lived side by side, and went into danger side by side, and now it's clear we're going to die side by side. "

"Listen," said Gondi suddenly. "I don't want them to part us after we're dead and fling our bodies away far from each other . . . Let's bind ourselves together."

He picked up a length of rope lying on the ground nearby and turned to Gydil.

"Come, let me put it round your neck."

But Gydil struck him with his cap. "Leave me alone."

"What's up, Gydil? Listen, I want to tell you something," Gondi persisted, laughing.

"Leave me alone with your tales, I tell you. We've got to think, Gondi, we've got to think of what we're to do. We can't get out of here, that's plain, they'll kill us both."

"To hell with them!"

"And then there's the bridge . . ."

"Forget about it."

"How can I forget it? People are waiting for us, expecting us."

"All right, think about it as much as you want to then. How are we going to blow it up?"

Gydil seized Gondi by the shoulder. "You remember where we left the dynamite, don't you?"

"Yes, I'd know the spot again."

"Well, you'll go there by yourself and do the job."

Gondi stared at him in astonishment.

"You must be crazy!"

"No, I mean it. You'll go and do it. I've made up my mind about it. Take this," he held out the revolver to Gondi, "and listen to me while I tell you what you have to do."

"Oh, so that's what you mean, is it?" Gondi said jestingly. "Then give it here," and, taking the revolver, he pretended to aim at Gydil's head. "Tr-rakh! Now fall down dead like an actor does." He lowered the weapon. "Listen," he said after a moment, "if that drunken hog lets us go we'll be actors, shall we? What do you think of the idea?"

Gydil made a grimace of dissatisfaction.

"This is no time for nonsense."

Gondi gave him a sharp glance out of the corner of his eye and said, half-joking: "You don't mean to say you believe that drunken beast? He's playing with us like a cat with a mouse, just to see what we'll do. A tipsy counter-revolutionary is playing a joke on us, and you believe him."

Gydil was thinking exactly the same thing as Gondi, but a last faint spark of hope still burned in his breast. Who knew, perhaps something would come of his plan.

"A member of the Young Communist League should take advantage of even the merest chance to serve the cause. It's a good thing that rascally colonel gave us time to think of it. He was tipsy and so he wanted to amuse himself with us. But we'll go one better and find some way out."

"Oh, what's the use of talking? There is no way out," cried Gondi, losing patience.

"No, we must do something. As soon as we fire a shot, there'll be a hullabaloo here, and perhaps we'll get a chance to run for it." He was silent a few moments. Then: "We've got to get out of here, no matter how we do it. That bridge must be blown up!" he ground his teeth in exasperation. "Now, come on, the colonel's waiting, you know."

"Let him wait, curse him! Here, I'm putting this damned revolver down on this spot where whoever is on the roof can see it. They can all come and look in if they want to. If they wait till one of us kills the other, they'll wait for ever. There are no murderers here!"

"The bridge has got to be blown up!" Gydil insisted.

"Stop talking rubbish!" Gondi cried.

"I'm telling you, we've got to blow up that bridge."

Suddenly light broke in on Gondi and he understood what was wanted of him. The thought turned his blood to ice.

"Maybe you've got it into your head that I could bring myself to the point of shooting you?" he asked in a hollow voice. "I wish you may burst right where you're standing if you think such a thing of me!"

"It makes no difference," said Gydil calmly, "if we don't finish each other off, they will."

"What of it? That's their business!" said Gondi. He peered up at the crack in the roof and called out: "Hey there, you counter-revolutionary swine, get out and be damned!" and he laughed. "But what terrible things you think of, Gydil."

"I don't know about that, I only know I've got to do something."

Gondi stood up.

"So what is it you want of me? I'm not going to shoot, that's straight!"

"There's no other way that I can see. They'll kill us anyway . . . Sometimes death is needed more than life. I'll shoot myself and you will say that you did it."

"What a pity we didn't die at the front!" Gondi whispered. He stared at Gydil with dazed eyes. Then, as if in a dream, he heard the loud report, like a dry, hard cough. He fancied at first that the bullet had struck; then he saw his comrade stagger and fall backwards. "What's that? Is he joking?" A thin stream of blood was trickling down Gydil's temple. Gondi rushed over to him, but at that moment there was a noise outside the door. It opened and the sentry came in, followed by a crowd of soldiers.

"Hands up or I put a bullet through you!" shouted the sentry.

Then the crowd of soldiers parted to let the captain and the *khimbapet* pass. The former came up to Gondi and demanded coldly: "You killed him by his own wish?"

"I'll only answer the colonel."

The colonel entered the shed. He glanced at Gondi and chuckled.

"There's a brave fellow for you! Well done! I told you they were all cowards." Then, to Gondi: "Go with the *khimbapet*. He wants to talk to you."

The *khimbapet* laid his hand on Gondi's shoulder.

"Life's sweet still, sonny, you see. You did right. Now come with me, I'll take you into my detachment, where you'll make a good soldier. You'll tell me everything."

"Yes, I'll tell you everything," said Gondi in a muffled voice, as they went out of the shed. His throat felt dry and parched, he could hardly control his excitement. He had noticed a clump of low shrubs a few yards away on the slope and a track leading from it to the mountain beyond. The plan that had flashed through his mind seemed simple enough. Then the wave of excitement ebbed, and with perfect coolness he gathered himself together and reached the shrubs at a bound.

The *khimbapet's* jaw dropped and he pulled out his revolver. The sentry ran after Gondi and a shot rang out in the bushes.

"Did you kill him?" the *khimbapet* called after the sentry. But instead of the answer he expected there was silence. Then several shots rang out, but he guessed that the sentry was firing at random.

Gondi hardly felt the ground beneath his feet as he hastened out of the village. It was broad daylight now. He plunged into the depths of the woods, found a dark, sheltered spot and lay down. No sooner had he done so than leaden sleep weighed down his eyelids. But he slept badly, for nightmares tormented him. He woke at noon with a start as though someone had roused him. It was time to be moving. He got up, and rubbing his eyes, went on his way. He was thinking over a plan of action, as he walked on quickly. The death of his friend had stunned him, blunted his feelings until this moment, when the full meaning of the catastrophe sank into his consciousness. Only now he realized what had happened and grasped the significance of things he had not thought of before. Had he, Gondi, been the cause of Gydil's death? Of course not. But it might look like that. Gondi could have been the first to shoot himself, yet he had not done so. His friend had done it first. And now he himself was in the power of his own conscience. What was he to do?

There was only one way out for him, he felt. He had to do the job they had been told to do. That would ease his suffering a little. He would blow up the bridge and deliver the letter. It was for the sake of this that his dearest friend had done himself to death. And this is what he, Gondi, must do now. There was no room for doubt. As he went on his doubts gave way to resolution and certainty.

The wood he was passing through now was familiar to him; here was the tree under which he and Gydil had once sheltered from the rain, and there was the big boulder with the hollow in it that gathered the rain—water he and Gydil had drunk. In that little cave nearby they had baked some potatoes in the ashes and eaten them. Gondi's whole life had been bound up with Gydil's, and now that

Gydil was dead his friend would carry on the work he had given his life for. Gydil had died that Gondi might escape and finish what they had begun together.

The track he was following was intersected by another leading into the mountains. A boy, probably from their own village, was coming down it towards him.

"Where are you coming from?" Gondi asked him kindly.

"From the mountains."

"Do you know Artak?"

"Which Artak?" the boy asked, looking at him more attentively. "I don't know anyone of that name."

"The one with the clipped ear, you know, Sakan's son."

"Oh, yes, I remember. Of course I know him."

"Well, now, hurry down to the village, find Artak and tell him that their calf is lost and wandering about on the slopes of the gorge and that he ought to come and get her."

The boy was frankly curious as he scrutinized Gondi, but he said nothing and went on his way.

"You'll tell him what I said, won't you?"

"Yes, of course I will."

Gondi followed him at a little distance and when he reached the open space, lay down in the thicket on the fringe of it. Would the boy do as he had told him, he wondered. Time dragged, time oozed through the stones like precious blood, but there was nothing he could do; he had been obliged to ask help from the first person he met, and that—in an affair that called for the greatest discretion and for reliable people, particularly after Gydil's death.

Evening was drawing on but Artak was still nowhere to be seen. Had the boy done as he had been told? And was it likely that Artak would believe him? Or perhaps other people had got wind of it and were even now scouring the woods in search of him?

A shadow fell upon the track the lad had taken. Now it was lost among the trees, now it appeared again.

Gondi watched it. It might be Artak or it might be a stranger.

It proved to be Artak, and the lad who had been sent for him. They were hurrying in the direction of the gorge. Gondi kept cover and watched them as they halted and looked about them. He was waiting for the boy to leave Artak, but the former showed no intention of going. Then suddenly people appeared on the path. They were coming from the direction of the mountains. As soon as he caught sight of them Artak pushed the boy into the thicket and followed him.

When the peasants had passed, Artak and the boy crept cautiously out of the bushes again. Gondi understood now that the lad was as reliable and discreet as Artak, Gydil's brother. At that moment Artak gave a long, low whistle as a signal, but still Gondi could not make up his mind to show himself.

Time was passing . . . Artak might go away, and then there would be no way of getting him back. Gondi had taken many risks in his life, but this time he resolved to carry out orders to the letter and be careful to the very end.

Then his problem was solved for him, and his doubts were dissipated. Artak, guessing apparently that the person who had summoned him here would hardly care to let strangers see him, sent the boy in the direction of the gorge. When the boy was out of sight Gondi peered out from his hiding-place, and, assuring himself that no one but Artak was about, went up to him. Before Gondi could speak, Artak said, as though he

had been expecting the question:

"That was the Communist Manuk's boy."

"Why did you bring him here with you?"

"So as I'd be able to find you quicker."

The answer calmed Gondi's fears and he went straight to the point without further delay.

"Where's Manuk?"

"At home in the village."

"Go and bring him here and tell him to fetch guns with him."

"All right. He'll fetch one and I'll fetch another."

"You'll come along, too, won't you?" Gondi asked.

"Yes, of course I will."

"Good. And send that boy away somewhere. I don't want him hanging round here."

"All right."

"Now go and come back as quick as you can."

But Artak seemed loth to go.

"Why don't you tell me where Gydil is?"

"We've no time for talking now," Gondi broke in sharply, "I'll be waiting here in these bushes for you. Now go."

Artak obeyed.

Three figures stole through the night. In the east the starry sky was paling. Soon, all too soon, it would be day-break. The three reached the boulders in the clearing at the mouth of the gorge.

"This is the place," said Gondi, examining it attentively. He could see nothing suspicious, however.

"I'll get the dynamite, while you two keep a look-out and see there's no one watching."

Manuk, a man of about forty years of age and an experienced hunter, carefully examined his gun.

"Let's have a look at yours as well," he said to Artak. Though the weapon was loaded, Artak handed it over without a word to be examined, for Manuk always verified things himself.

Manuk and Artak started down the gorge, Gondi following them at a little distance with the dynamite. They moved cautiously, often stopping to listen. But all was silent. So they went on until they reached the bridge. Manuk kept to the right, Artak to the left. Gondi stopped him suddenly.

"Listen, Artak," he said, "if things should end badly, I'll whisper a thing or two in your ear. You'll let our people know. But if you hear an explosion, run back to the village at once." Artak looked into Gondi's pale, anxious face and asked:

"And aren't you going back there, too?"

"No, I've got to go to another place."

"Back to Gydil?"

Gondi did not reply.

"What is the matter? Is anything wrong with Gydil?"

Gondi still kept silent.

"What is it? Is he dead?"

"No," said Gondi in a low, almost indifferent tone.

This was more than Artak could stand.

"Look here," he protested, "Gydil's my brother. Is this a military secret or something? Why mayn't I know where he is?"

"You'll know when the time comes."

"Listen, Gondi, I'm coming with you."

"No, you're not, you're going back to the village." He sighed. "My road lies in another direction."

Something in his tone made Artak look at him closely.

"What's the matter? There's something queer about you."

"Nonsense, there's nothing queer about me at all."

"Yes, there is and I know why it is, too. It's because Gydil's not here. You're never yourself

when you're away from him. You know, Gondi, I've always said that the two of you will either live side by side till you're old men or you'll die together. But you can't live without each other."

Gondi gave a convulsive shudder.

"Leave me alone! You understood what I told you, didn't you, you'll do what you're asked to do?"

"You don't let me do anything, as far as I can see."

Manuk came up at that moment.

"Is there artillery anywhere in sight?" Gondi asked him in an excited whisper.

"No."

"Then go to your place, Artak."

Artak obeyed in silence.

"You've changed, young man," Manuk said. "It's the war—it changes people. While you were with Gydil, there was no frightening you! Now, I can see you've grown very cautious."

There was silence. Gondi was listening.

"Where can Artak be?"

"What was the idea of taking that boy with you?" Manuk asked, as he sat down on a stone.

"I had to. Who else could I have trusted from the village?"

Manuk could not get to the bottom of the alteration in Gondi, whose mood was strange, incomprehensible. He wondered why a restless young fellow like Gondi was entrusted with a dangerous task like this.

"Let's go and lay the dynamite, I'm telling you."

At that moment Artak ran up.

"Soldiers are coming across the bridge!"

"Sentries?" Gondi asked in despair.

"I warned you," Manuk said in a reproachful tone. "But you're so stubborn. Now we're too late."

Gondi jumped up and ran in the direction of the gorge.

"He'll go crazy before we finish this job," said Artak. "What's the matter with him?"

"You're only a child still, you don't understand," said Manuk calmly, taking out his tobacco-pouch and filling his pipe. Then he remembered that it would be dangerous to smoke just now, and put it back again.

Gondi, pale and agitated, returned at that moment.

"There are four of them," he said, "but there may be more any minute. We can't put it off any longer." He turned to the boy. "Listen, Artak. Gydil is dead . . . killed, you know."

Artak sprang towards him.

"Who killed him?"

"Someone . . ."

"What for?"

"For the cause . . ."

Artak seized Gondi by the arm.

"Tell me who it was . . ."

Gondi flung off his hand.

"There's no time to talk about it now."

Artak threw himself down on the ground clutching his head.

"I could see it . . . it was in your face."

"Get up this minute!" said Manuk. "And take your gun in your hand." The harsh voice sobered him and he obeyed.

"Let's go," said Gondi firmly.

He took up the dynamite, and Manuk and Artak carried the tools. They filed into the gorge, Manuk keeping a sharp lookout all the time. When Gondi and Artak reached the bridge they began to lay the explosive. But though they worked quickly, the rock was stubborn. Gondi felt as if he were acting in a dream. He kept fancying that he heard distant footsteps, and that shadows lurked behind every boulder.

"Will you be long?" Manuk's voice asked.

"We'll be through in a minute, Manuk . . . in a minute."

Gondi was hastily drilling the

rocks. When he had finished one he went on to another. Manuk was fidgety now. Things seemed to be going all right, but who knew what might happen at the last minute.

"Ready! I'm going to fire it. Run for your lives!" came Gondi's muffled warning.

Manuk and Artak ran up the sloping wall of the gorge. Gondi set a match to the wick and watched the flame. It burned well. A kind of pleasant indifference came over him. It was all the same to him now whether he was blown up together with the bridge or not; at any rate, he had carried out orders and done as his friend had wished. He climbed the slope slowly. "Now . . . now . . . this very minute . . . it should blow up . . ."

The mountains were shaken to their foundations by a terrific explosion that echoed far, far away in the depths of the gorges.

"Now for the mountains!" Gondi shouted in high glee. He rushed forward, only thinking now of the letter and how to deliver it to its destination as soon as possible.

The slope was stony, boulder-strewn, deserted. They met no one, and went on in silence, each absorbed in his own thoughts, till they came to the village of Vernashen, darkening in the valley.

And now Gondi quickened his pace, for he was impatient to carry out the last of the tasks laid upon him and then . . . and then . . . he would have leisure to think things over, to think about all that had happened to him in the course of the last few days.

He stepped out at a brisker pace, worrying more and more about himself. Supposing he should be taken prisoner? . . . What was to be done with the letter then? He could, of course, hand it over to Manuk or Artak beforehand, but how could he be certain that they, too, would not be caught and shot on the spot, as he might be? His mind grew more and more confused and agitated. In a kind of delirium he passed down the valley and approached the village. Like shadows the three men glided through the street and knocked at the door of a hut.

Vardan, a young fellow of about twenty, of a stern and rather gloomy cast of countenance, scooped the letter carefully and unhurriedly out of the middle of the bread and after reading it, put it in his pocket.

The room was in twilight. Gondi had told Vardan about the explosion, but the news evidently produced no impression on him. He made no comment on it but only asked:

"What time did you blow up the bridge?"

"I don't remember the time."

"Are you sure that the artillery hadn't had time to cross the bridge before it was blown up?"

"Yes, I know that for certain."

A long pause. At last Vardan rose.

"Splendid!" he said, but in a thoughtful tone, as though he found it difficult to grasp that the bridge was really blown up and the enemy artillery could not pass.

Manuk gave him a long look, full of understanding.

Then Vardan glanced into Gondi's eyes for the first time.

"You'll wait here till you get an answer to deliver. Manuk, you show him where to wait."

"Very well," Manuk agreed.

Vardan left the room. Gondi was deeply offended. Why had Vardan told him nothing of his plans? And then, what did it all mean? What was the point in hiding Gondi away somewhere while they were preparing the answer? It was not as though he were just an ordinary postman. Ah, if that grim-faced fellow only knew what Gondi had gone through these last two nights! . . .

So he was not to know what was being decided here. Naturally, they would not consult him when they were writing the answer.

While he was pondering these things someone brought him some black bread. The haystack outside was to be his bed. It was a safe spot, for on one side there was the barn and on the other the garden, but still Gondi felt reluctant to lie down there. He could not sleep for a long time. Though he knew that in wartime it was bound to be like this and that he had no right to expect a friendly conversation from Vardan, the strain of the past two days told on his nerves and made him morbid. Nature gained the upper hand at last and he fell asleep.

The day dragged. It was intolerable. Gondi lay hidden in the hay. The heat was a torment, and suspense made it still worse. What was to happen to him? What were they talking about in there? When would it all end and he be free to go? They brought him food, black bread and some string beans. It was obvious that there was a great scarcity of food in the village. He could see the flat roofs of the houses, and an old woman, as yellow and bony as a skeleton, descending from one of the roofs by the ladder.

A dog crawled feebly past in the shadow of the cowshed, but there was no other sign of life. It seemed a village of the dead.

At long last darkness fell and Manuk came to call Gondi back into the room. Besides Vardan there were several other young people who evidently never appeared in the village except at night. Their presence surprised Gondi; it was strange that the cautious, reserved Vardan should have gathered so many people in the room at one time. The faces were lean and weather-beaten, the hard life of soldiers in the war had left its mark on them. Gondi guessed that Vardan wanted to raise his comrades' spirits by showing them a man just back from the front.

"How are things here in the villages?" asked Gondi.

"Oh, they're all right. We'll do everything that's necessary," said Vardan quickly. Then, turning to the others, he said: "You can go now, boys."

They went out singly, each waiting his turn. Only Vardan and Gondi were left. Vardan took out a lump of soft bread and handed it to him.

"The reply's in this. Give it to Comrade Davtyan. Be quick, though, there's very little time left. There might be trouble in some of the villages. If there seems to be any great danger give the letter to Manuk—let him deliver it. Now, go. Good luck!"

"Goodbye!" said Gondi, holding out his hand. Vardan gripped it hard.

"Bear in mind, comrade. you can't be too quick and careful this time . . ."

Vardan's stern, gloomy eyes looked warmer for an instant, but anxiety, deep thought and will-power were so clearly written on his countenance that Gondi understood in a flash the situation in the villages.

Manuk was waiting for him outside the garden. They set off in the direction of the mountains.

"Splendid!"

Davtyan, the Red commander, laid down the crumpled letter.

"Splendid!" he said again to himself.

Davtyan stared thoughtfully out of the window, then at a map, then at the letter. For a second his gaze rested on Gondi. Their eyes met.

Davtyan looked Gondi over from head to foot as though he were seeing him for the first time. And Gondi, pale as death, stood there

before him, waiting to hear what the commander had to say.

"Was the bridge completely destroyed?" asked Davtyan quickly.

"Yes, the whole thing fell into the gorge, Comrade commander."

"Did the artillery have time to pass over to this side?"

"No."

"Did you find out for certain?"

"Yes."

"Very good. We'll see about it."

He took up the letter again but did not read it. He seemed to recollect something and he looked up at Gondi with sudden curiosity.

"Where's your comrade?"

"He was killed," said Gondi, hanging his head.

"Killed?"

Davtyan said nothing more for a moment. Then he asked:

"Where was he killed?"

"It happened like this," Gondi began. His agitation was rising and his breath came in gasps. While he was telling his tale Avet and Reuben came in. Both were in good humor.

"Here he is," Avet cried gaily when he saw Gondi. "Have you told the commander all about it?" and, going up to Davtyan, he sat down beside him.

"Well, you had a hard job of it, boys. There was no other way out of it." Then Avet turned to Davtyan and asked him what news he had from Vardan.

But Davtyan looked at Gondi attentively.

"Well, since it's happened like this," he said, frowning, "tell us, who was the first to make up his mind to die?"

"He was," Gondi replied in a scarcely audible whisper, feeling that the most difficult moment had arrived.

"You didn't suggest to him that he should kill you?"

"No."

A lump rose in his throat. The three—Davtyan, Avet and Reuben—sat looking at him a long time. And he stood there like a prisoner at the bar.

He choked suddenly, and could not speak for the spasms in his throat. Then he managed to say:

"Comrade commissar, it torments me to think that I let my comrade shoot himself, but I never thought he'd do it!"

"Don't be so downhearted," said Avet kindly. "When all's said and done, what he did is a part of that great cause we're fighting for. He was a brave comrade and we'll always remember him and honor him."

"You're free," said Davtyan, as he lit a cigarette.

Gondi went out. He walked over to the house where he and Gydil had lived for a fortnight. As he entered the room, his gaze fell on Gydil's bed. There was a bundle on it containing a khaki military shirt he had got somewhere. Gondi undid the bundle and, taking out the shirt, pressed the sleeves to his cheek. He fell face downwards on the bed and lay like that till daybreak, when the bugle-call of the departing regiment aroused him.

Translated by Anthony Wixley

DAVID BERGELSON

The Telephone

The field telephone hung on the wall of an inn that stood in the frontier zone at the edge of the slumbering marshy forests.

Red Army man Fyodor Zozulya had been left in charge. He had a snub-nose and thin tow-colored hair, and there was a thoughtful look about his rather watery eyes. In moments of profound reflection his upper lip and his upturned nose had a comic way of looking in the same direction.

Over the telephone he spoke earnestly, almost desperately, evincing a stern loyalty to his duty; many a time he had reprimanded the man on telephone duty at the neighboring post when the latter had used the telephone for personal calls.

Zozulya was filled with a sense of his worth as custodian of the telephone, for he was deeply conscious of the importance of the post to which he had been assigned.

Although he had learned to read fluently since joining the Red Army he still had the habit, formed in his semiliterate days, of stopping in front of posters or proclamations and reading them aloud unembarrassed by the amused glances of his comrades.

His speech was flavored with Russian and Ukrainian words. When he spoke about the Revolution and all that was associated with it he used the Russian words he had acquired during his years of service in the regiment. Ukrainian words served him to express that which pertained to the fields, the forests and human nature; for that was the language he had spoken when he had worked for the Kharkov landlord first as cattleherd and then as stableboy.

He felt the Red Army needed him, as indeed it did—for he was a courageous fighter and had shown his mettle on many a front . . .

It was Pilsudski's legions who now had to be fought.

At first there had been eight Red Army men besides Zozulya guarding this post. The marshy woods had provided excellent shelter for the remains of scattered bands who robbed all and sundry without discrimination, and often the low murmur of the forest had been pierced by human cries of anguish.

The inn was filthy. The eight Red Army men had spent their days sitting around the table, rifles between their knees, listening to

Zozulya air his opinions as to why the French had been ousted from Odessa and why the English were still sitting tight in Archangel.

In the summer the Polish Whites had threatened to surround the forest. The eight Red Army men had been recalled to a remote post and Zozulya was left alone in the inn.

He devoted himself to his duties with the zeal of a man who has come to an understanding of things through his own experience.

Zozulya listened attentively to the Red Army signal service man who explained to him how to operate the telephone.

"I get you, comrade! You talk into it and it answers you back. It needs battery like a horse needs oats. When one gives out you put in another. Right? You'd better leave me plenty of them things, and you don't need to tell me any more. I've got the hang of it now!"

For Zozulya the telephone meant being in direct touch with the Red Army and the Revolution. And since that was the case it had to be guarded. Of course, it wasn't exactly alive, but it wasn't quite inanimate either. It had its own whims and caprices.

When there was no breeze in the fields, you could talk softly into the receiver without straining yourself, just using your normal voice.

But when the wind bellowed outside you had to yell for all you were worth until the perspiration streamed down.

Only one thing bothered Zozulya. Life was terribly dull at the inn. He had never lived among Jews before and he did not know their language.

And so the telephone came to be his only consolation, a sort of half-animate comrade to whom you could walk over several times a day and have a pleasant chat about the Red Army and the Revolution. True, very often the comrade seemed to be hard of hearing, and there were times when he appeared to be losing his memory into the bargain.

You'd walk over to it and spin the handle around:

"Ting-a-ling!"

And you'd yell right into its ear:

"It's me, Fyodor Zozulya! Post Number Three, one hundred-and-first mile! What's that? Louder! Can't ye hear me!"

Two weeks passed. Zozulya slept beside his telephone in a corner of the inn, covered with his battle-stained greatcoat. During the night he would go outside and fire into the air just to let people know that the post was guarded. Out of boredom he read and re-read the scraps of paper he used to roll cigarettes. He longed to talk to people, to assert himself, to let them know that he knew a thing or two and that he could hold his own. True, his regiment had left but it couldn't be far away. Just let anyone try to get funny, he, Zozulya, would be at the telephone in a jiffy . . . That's why he had to be on the alert all the time.

The words with which he would begin the conversation were always at the tip of his tongue:

"Now, we all want to live better than we do, ain't I right?"

But here at the inn no one ever responded to his attempt to start a conversation; they all seemed tongue tied, and they stared at him curiously. And when he would give up in disgust and stroll off toward the kitchen someone would cry out sharply to the little servant girl:

"Zelda! What are you doing?"

"Zelda, don't you remember what you were told?"

Which meant: "Why don't you follow him into the kitchen? Go along, look lively, and see what he's doing!"

But when speaking among themselves about Zozulya in a language

he could not understand they were all agreed:

"He'll never touch a thing!"

"No, not even if it were gold under his feet!"

And others would remark:

"He believes in them as in God!"

"That's the trouble!"

"The Reds themselves used to say about him: 'Zozulya's all right. He's one of the best. The Red Army can trust him!'"

"If only the Lord would take him away from here!"

2

One of the inmates of the inn was a little, wizened old man who was waiting for death. His hearing was bad, his knees shook and bent under him, and he gave off a bad odor. Every day the old man would climb painfully onto the bench, wind the clock that hung on the wall and peer at the calender to see whether it was Lent. If it were Lent he would have to fast.

Zelda, the young girl with the thick black hair and large dark-gray eyes, was his granddaughter. Her father and mother had been killed in a pogrom. Zelda had been taken in by her aunt and uncle but they made her work hard for her keep. No hired servant would have endured the life she led.

The innkeeper and his wife were a childless, morose couple. They were busy from morning till night with the affairs of the inn and the small plot of land attached to it.

Of late they had begun to look greatly depressed. Ever since the Red Army men had hung that field telephone on their wall trade had fallen off. No more mysterious looking people crossing the frontier stopped in for the night. And no more people meant no more tidy little sums for a kettle of tea, for lodging and for food.

Sitting at the table the sullen innkeeper and his wife would jabber in their own language, casting hostile glances in Zozulya's direction when he shouted into the telephone. When he stopped shouting they stopped their chatter and sighed deeply instead. From Zelda's sympathetic glances in his direction, Zozulya understood that the innkeeper and his wife would be glad to see the last of him.

One day, wishing to show them that while he bore them no malice neither did he stand in any awe of them, Zozulya attempted to launch a conversation.

"Clever things, telephones," he began, with a wink in the direction of the apparatus, "serves the Revolution, it does . . . Hangs there quietly on the wall so you would never think it can hear what's doing a thousand miles away!"

The innkeeper and his wife exchanged glances.

"Huh!" muttered the wife through her teeth, "that's what you get when he does open his mouth!"

"What do you care?" the innkeeper growled at her. "Let him talk till the Messiah comes if he wants to!"

Zozulya, who understood nothing of their conversation, felt nevertheless that he had offended his hosts.

And now he continued in spite:

"Through that telephone," he went on, "I can talk to the whole Red Army, to the Revolution, to Moscow, why, to the Kremlin itself! I only need to shout 'Red Army man in danger!' and help will come in a jiffy. A telephone is a Red Army man's right hand, so it is."

"Hmph!" grunted the innkeeper's wife scornfully. Then, unable to contain herself any longer she blurted out in Russian: "You and your telephone! Why, every single house abroad has a telephone!"

"That's as may be," replied the imperturbable Zozulya. "Only they are not like ours. In our telephone

you can hear things you couldn't hear in theirs!"

"Shut up, for goodness' sake!" the innkeeper barked at his wife and this admonition ended the conversation.

Zozulya felt that Zelda alone understood him. Her large eyes looked at him with gentle amusement.

There had been no new faces at the inn for many a day with the exception of Kharchevnikov, the tar-works proprietor, who had been ordered by headquarters to transport food supplies to the Red Army posts. His eyes had the troubled look of a man who has just been awakened from a bad dream.

As soon as they heard the creaking of cartwheels the innkeeper and his wife ran out to meet the newcomer, firing questions at him.

"Stepan Vasilyevich, tell us, are people still crossing the frontier?"

Outwardly Kharchevnikov was calm, but he raged inwardly.

"Are they?" he repeated irritably, without looking at the innkeeper and his wife. "Are they? Sure they are. A few at a time."

"Is that right, Stepan Vasilyevich? Just as it was before? Every day?"

Kharchevnikov heaved a sigh.

"Every other day isn't so bad either," he replied.

"Then they take the long road?"

"Sure they do. Past Keidanov's inn. Don't expect them to fly in the air, do you?"

"Are there many lodgers in Keidanov's inn?"

Kharchevnikov studied the wheels of his cart, took a deep breath and replied in distinct and angry tones:

"In Keidanov's inn they're paying with gold pieces!"

"Why have they forgotten us, do you think, Stepan Vasilyevich?"

"Forgotten you?" Kharchevnikov threw a significant glance in Zozulya's direction. "*That's* why!"

"But he's the only one around here."

"It's all the same . . . Enough that he has that contraption of his by his side . . ."

"And what's the news from town these days, Stepan Vasilyevich?" inquired the innkeeper, winking in Zozulya's direction. "How long are they going to hang around here? I hear the long peaks[1] are coming."

"Maybe they are but they haven't got here yet!"

"This inn used to be a gold mine," whined the proprietor. "What will become of us now?"

"Who knows?"

And the innkeeper and his wife returned to their seats and resumed their sighing as though they were the chief mourners at someone's funeral. The sound of their strange tongue echoed in Zozulya's ears in a monotonous buzz.

To escape his wife's nagging tongue and the sight of Zozulya at his telephone, the innkeeper would go out to the dark storehouse and sit there for hours by himself.

Whereupon his wife would begin to nag the poor, half-crazed old grandfather.

Rolling himself a cigarette, Zozulya would cast a look at his hosts from under his brows. It seemed to him that their talk held some kind of threat to the Red Army that had left him here to guard the post. And Zozulya felt that he was not doing his duty by tolerating such things. A vague uneasiness had long since begun to gnaw at his vitals: had the army perhaps forgotten him? There had been surprisingly few calls from the nearest post, which seemed to indicate that they had other things to worry about. Sometimes too it happened that the phone would ring incessantly and when Zozulya would dash over, lift

[1] Nickname for the Polish legionnaires.

off the receiver and call his post there would be no response from the other end.

The solitude weighed heavily on Zozulya. Formerly a cavalry patrol would occasionally stop at the inn, or some army units would march by. Now there was nobody.

To hide his uneasiness, Zozulya would feign absent-mindedness and talk aloud as though to himself:

"Yes! Big doings, heavy fighting going on most likely . . . Soon things will be looking lively over here too."

Sometimes he happened to wander into the storehouse and found the innkeeper puttering around. Zozulya would try to engage him in conversation:

"Hallo there, boss. Working, eh? Well, keep at it! You can take all the bread you want, but the rest belongs to everyone, like the land, you know. Things aren't what they used to be . . . I used to work for the landlord, but that's all over and done with. That's what we, the Bolsheviks, say. That's what Lenin says. And that means it's true. That's what I say, too . . . "

But of late the innkeeper had been more surly than ever.

He seemed to be saying: "Go on! Talk till you're blue in the face! It doesn't concern me."

Zozulya's feeling of alarm grew. He would return to the inn, sit down at the empty table and, resting his head in his hands, hum a melancholy air, staring at the old man sitting motionless on the bench.

"Eh, but you're a queer old card!" he would ejaculate, in a vain attempt to draw the old man out. "Some old fellas like to tell stories. They'll tell you what a hard time they had in the old days. Or about the Jews, and how the priests invented all sorts of lies about them and fooled the people with these stories. But you, if you'll pardon my saying so, you sit there with your eyes popping out, muttering something under your nose and if you knew, pardon me, what a miserable sight you are. You ought to look at us Red Army men, that ought to make you feel good . . . To think we started with our bare hands, not a decent rifle among us . . ."

But the old man would sit silent, his aged head shaking as though in feeble but stubborn negation: "No, no, nothing of the kind, nothing of the kind."

And when after a while Zozulya would stroll out into the kitchen again, the old man, following the younger people's example, would call to Zelda in his croaking voice:

"Get out into the kitchen and see what he's doing there!"

Zozulya would hear Zelda make some bitter retort and it seemed to him that she was taking his, Fyodor Zozulya's, part.

Zelda was being scolded more violently all the time. The innkeeper's wife was the worst offender, although Zelda did all the heavy work in the house. One day, when he returned from inspecting the post, Zozulya came upon Zelda in the yard beside the kitchen door. Her face was hidden against the door jamb and her shoulders were shaking.

"Eh, the swine!" cursed Zozulya, "the sons of bitches! Why don't they leave the kid alone!"

"What's the matter now?" he inquired, taking Zelda gently by the shoulders and turning her round to face him.

The girl raised her eyes to his face. Her thick black hair shone and her face was wet with tears.

"I can't stand it," she said, her shoulders drooping.

Her eyes narrowed as she gazed into the distance.

"And there's no one to complain to!" she added with a sigh.

"What do you mean no one?"

Zozulya felt that he had slipped up on the job somewhere—had he not been left here by the Red Army to see that no one came to any harm. Zozulya was incensed. To add to his indignation, when he went inside he saw that someone had been at the telephone in his absence: instead of resting quietly on the hook, the receiver was hanging helplessly by its cord, almost touching the floor.

"What's this?" he inquired in threatening tones. "Who has been fiddling with the telephone?"

The receiver swung faintly to and fro in mute protest.

"No one is to go near this telephone, I tell you!" Zozulya cried in a rage to the innkeeper's wife. "I am here on duty! And here's another thing: you'd better keep your hands off that girl, see! When we Red Army men had to retreat once on the Denikin front we took the women and children into the railway cars with us. They rode behind us in the saddles! See!"

And did the mistress let go that time! She jumped on her husband and on Zelda, cursing him for a lazy good-for-nothing. Why didn't he go and find protection somewhere, why didn't he do something? And again the inn rang with angry raucous squabbling in the strange tongue. With a gesture of disgust, Zozulya turned for consolation to his telephone, his only friend, his only link with the Red Army that stood for deliverance for him and for all toiling people on earth. Perhaps his comrades had been obliged to leave the neighboring post and move to a more remote station. What did it matter if all he could hear in the receiver were indistinct sounds, they were nevertheless music to his ears just the same.

Ekh, if only he could be back there among his own people, dying with them if the Revolution demanded it, fighting shoulder to shoulder with hundreds of others, Red Army men like himself, his rifle gripped firmly in his hands . . . That would be infinitely easier and more pleasant than to be pining away here at this distant post.

It was in the evenings that Zozulya was most drawn to his telephone. At such times he imagined he heard the sound of far-off shooting, and shouts of "hurrah," and perhaps the echo of a marching song, as if Red regiments were advancing somewhere not far away to the triumphant accompaniment of horns, drums and cymbals.

In the evenings he fancied the dark marshy forests were closing in on all sides, the woods swarming with bandits, and he, Fyodor Zozulya, was here all alone. The telephone was his only link with the other world, the world illumined brightly by the flame of battle. There, rifle in hand, men were fighting for their rights against a ring of enemies. Telephone wires stretched over vast distances to that other world. Sometimes that far-off realm responded to his call, sometimes it was cold and silent. Everything depended on the weather and on how the people over there were pressed with work.

But why then had he been tormented of late by the awful suspicion that that world was receding farther and farther every day, that it had forgotten him, Fyodor Zozulya?

Sometimes he actually thought he heard voices answering from a distant post, but they were strange voices made deliberately unintelligible and they seemed to be making fun of him . . . He began to feel that here in the inn too they looked at him mockingly as he shouted into his receiver.

Late at night when Zozulya, utterly exhausted, left the telephone and walked away, all conversation broke off. The lamps were lit and no

one took any notice of the Red Army man. Only Zelda glanced at him from time to time. Had she something to tell him?

Zozulya sent back warm friendly glances and gradually a sort of mutual understanding arose between the Red Army man and the young girl.

3

The innkeeper and his wife were busy in their own rooms. The senile old grandfather was dozing on a bench. He no longer distinguished day from night. Zozulya sat alone at the table thrumming on a balalaika his comrades had left behind when they went away.

Suddenly a soft voice spoke behind him.

"Comrade Zozulya!"

The Red Army man stopped thrumming and his upturned nose tilted itself questioningly toward the ceiling.

"Eh, what's that?"

"Comrade Zozulya." It was Zelda looking at him through the kitchen door, "do you think they would take me in the Red Army as a nurse?"

"Sure they would, my dear!" Zozulya replied with a merry wink.

"Really?"

"Why, of course! Like a shot, they would!"

"And I thought it would be hard . . ."

"Hard? Nothing's hard. I knew a nurse once myself. Served in our regiment, she did."

"Was she . . . like me?"

"Just the very image! We were pushing through the Denikin front to Chernigov that time . . . Had an armored train, and two echelons with it. The Denikin men had torn up the line ahead of us. So we piled out of the cars with all our baggage, set up our guns and blazed away for seven days at Denikin. He was stuck there in the town. Just about that time the spotted typhus was playing ducks and drakes with us. There were some fine lads in our regiment and we got along famously, but here they were knocked down by the typhus one after another. We had a gunner called Abrasha Chernykh, dark as a Hindu he was, and the songs he used to make up! Of course, it makes you good and sore when fellas like him have to die. Our doctor used to get mad as anything. Mendel his name was. A serious looking chap. Came to us on the Korostenko front. He was a good sort, tough, but as kindhearted as they make them. 'Listen here, boys,' he used to say, 'either you get me some camphor or I'll shoot the hospital chief, and myself too while I'm about it.' So two of us got together and decided to get through to the town where the Whites were and find some camphor. One of them was called Yoney, a Jew too. Just a kid he was. And along with him went the nurse, rigged up like a nun. Her name was Pasha. Well, off they went. It was grand to see them . . . they looked like a newly-engaged couple!"

"Well!" asked Zelda listening breathlessly. "Did they get it?"

"Why . . . er, no . . . Afterwards we found out all about it. First the Whites beat hell out of them. Then they undressed them and marked off strips on their naked backs with red hot coals, and then started tearing the skin off strip by strip. Tortured them something devilish . . . Wanted to make them tell all about the regiment, and how many men there were. Well, they skinned them strip by strip . . . But they wouldn't open their mouths . . ."

"And . . . and what happened after that?"

"What happened? Eh, you're just a baby yet, sis. There wasn't much could happen after that . . ."

Zelda fell silent.

"And I've been waiting," she said thoughtfully as though pursuing some broken train of thought, "waiting all the time for the Reds to pass by again! I thought I'd go with them."

Then she told Zozulya what news her uncle, the innkeeper, had brought back from town where he had been gone for the past few days.

"First he said the Bolsheviks had driven the Poles all the way to Warsaw, nearly, but now they say the French are helping the Poles. And the Reds are being pressed from all sides. They are retreating along the railways and roads. And here there's nothing but woods and marshes so they say the Bolsheviks will never come back here again."

"Who said that?"

Zozulya threw down the balalaika and leapt over to his telephone.

"Don't you believe a word of it," he said in great agitation. "They're lying, they're lying!"

All these days the phone had been ringing frequently as though making a game of Zozulya. He would press his ear to the receiver and it seemed to him that someone was calling him from a great distance, trying to tell him something of grave importance, something frightfully urgent. And then cold, mean voices would intervene immediately and prevent him from hearing. Strange mixed sounds, strong and weak, merged in a dull cacophony that drowned out the one voice Zozulya wanted to hear. How he hated those strange, unwanted noises!

The innkeeper and his wife continued to keep silence in his presence. Only Zelda kept her eyes glued on him when he hung up the receiver, waiting tensely to know whether he had received an answer. And the innkeepers were growing more nervous as time went on; they obviously had something on their minds. They kept up a constant flow of talk in their own language and Zozulya could not tell whether they were rejoicing over something or just reproaching one another.

Zozulya lived in a daze.

One evening the lights were not lit at all. The innkeeper and his wife did not close their eyes all night. Feigning sleep they listened intently for sounds from the forest. And there were all sorts of strange sounds that night: but whether it was human voices or just the wind moaning in the woods it was hard to tell.

By morning shots could clearly be heard.

Zozulya kept tearing himself away from his telephone, running outside to listen and then dashing back over to the receiver again.

"It's me, Fyodor Zozulya!"

"Can't you hear me!"

But the telephone was deaf and dumb, and all Zozulya's yelling was of no avail. There was no answer. Only one sound, faint, unintelligible and remote seemed to come from the very heart of the silent forests, but even that faint moaning sound was music to Zozulya's ear.

The whole next day Zozulya spent at his telephone which he did not leave for a moment. He kept on ringing and ringing.

He guessed that the innkeepers were talking about him.

And he was not mistaken.

"Look how hard he is trying!"

"Let him try—he can't resurrect the dead."

"What do we care? Let him yell."

His voice hoarse and cracked, Zozulya continued to plead with the telephone:

"Answer me, d'you hear!"

"Hello, hello!"

In these weary cries there was the anguished note: "Brothers, don't leave me! Just say one word, pals, just one word!"

By evening Zozulya could hear nothing at all, however hard he pressed the receiver to his ear. Even that dim, vague sound was gone.

And now he realized what had happened: the line was broken somewhere.

Zozulya went outside and listened to the night, staring into the darkness as though he would force it to yield up its secrets.

Dead silence reigned supreme. The innkeeper returned and began to whisper something to his wife, who waited for him at the gates. As she listened her face brightened and she cast a furtive glance at the Red Army man.

The lights burned brightly at the inn; the lamps had been cleaned, and the conversation was louder than usual. Zozulya's presence was utterly ignored.

Just for spite Zozulya went over to his phone and started ringing again.

4

The tables and benches were carried out into the yard.

The innkeeper and his wife were bustling about as though preparing for a holiday.

Pillows, featherbeds and blankets were taken out to air. Clothes that had been hidden in trunks saw the light of day.

The walls were swept clean. Furniture was polished. Floors were scrubbed.

They scrubbed and cleaned as though preparing for the coming of important guests.

Zozulya looked at all this fuss and pother with surprise and disgust.

The disgust changed to anger when all the modest belongings of the post were thrown out into the yard.

"Hey, what are you doing!" he cried.

No one bothered to reply.

The more they scrubbed and rubbed the clearer it became to him that they were trying to get rid of him and his telephone.

"Listen you! You'll get into trouble for this!" he threatened.

The mistress was busily whitewashing the walls and as though by accident she splashed some whitewash on the telephone apparatus. It seemed to Zozulya that the apparatus looked at him with reproach.

He felt more forsaken than ever. How forlorn and isolated they were, Zozulya and his telephone, from which thick drops of whitewash were now streaming like tears.

"You keep away from here!" he yelled fiercely to the mistress. "Don't you touch my corner, you hear? I'll clean it up myself!"

But the woman paid no attention to him. She dipped the brush into her pail and fresh blotches stained the apparatus.

"Oh you would, would you!" Zozulya shouted in a frenzy.

He grabbed his rifle. The veins stood out on his forehead, his muscles were tense. Scared out of her wits, the woman leapt aside and stared at Zozulya with eyes wide with fear. Her lips trembled.

"Don't touch him!" growled the innkeeper. "Leave his corner alone, let him be . . ."

And all was quiet again in the inn.

As he washed the white splashes off his telephone Zozulya muttered under his breath: "I'll get even with you, one day . . . You'll answer for this!"

There was no one around but the old grandfather, who sat as usual by the stove, his lips moving in a soundless whisper.

"It doesn't meddle with anyone,"

Zozulya shouted in the old man's ear. "So why bother it?"

The old man looked at him and smacked his lips.

A wave of desolation swept over Zozulya. He slouched over to his own corner and remained there, guarding his telephone.

A few days later Kharchevnikov came and brought two people with him. They were going to cross the border. Zozulya looked the new arrivals over, grinding his teeth.

They were landlords, heavy jowled, fat and well-groomed. They sat motionless without removing their thick overcoats, keeping a wary eye on their baggage and not saying a word even to each other.

The sight of them raised Zozulya's gall. There was a fierce gleam in his eye as he looked at them.

"Parasites! Swine! Grabbed what they could and now they're beating it!"

The frightened landlords avoided the eye of the Red Army man standing at his telephone. They were clearly anxious to get themselves off as quickly as possible.

Next day new carts arrived bringing new people.

Timidly, making sure she was not observed, Zelda motioned Zozulya outside. He found her at the back of the storehouse where she was beating out a mattress.

"The missus says the wires are cut," she whispered. "She says it's useless your ringing. You're only trying to make folks believe the telephone is working . . ."

"That's what she says?"

"Yes, and she says the Reds are far away from here now. They didn't have time to let you know because they were in such a hurry to leave themselves. And then she says the Poles will be here today or tomorrow. And they'll hang you, she says."

"She said all that?"

"Aha. Maybe you'd better go away?"

"Nay, girl, that's not the thing to do at all. That would be against the regulations. You can't leave your post until you're relieved."

With hands grown numb Zelda began beating the mattress again.

Zozulya's fingers trembled as he rolled himself a cigarette.

"I've got an idea, sister," he said after a pause. "I've been to the woods and listened to where the firing is coming from and I didn't see any sign of Poles. About seven miles from here the wires are cut, but beyond that, I have a hunch, it's okay. I've got to fix the line. But I haven't any wire . . ."

They were both silent for a while.

"I've been thinking, sis," Zozulya whispered, "maybe you could help me to get some nails? And an axe. I saw one in the storehouse. A pair of pliers would come in handy too . . ."

Nursing his hatred for the guests and never opening his mouth to any of them, Zozulya continued to turn for solace to his dumb friend. He did this each time the inn was filled with people.

His ruse worked. The guests were severely frightened. The food stuck in their throats and they sat motionless, afraid to utter a word.

The innkeeper and his wife had to reassure them.

"Eat, eat, please. Don't pay any attention to him . . . There's no use his using that phone. Let him ring all he wants!"

Zozulya called the innkeeper aside.

"Listen here, man," he said. "Our fellas, the Reds, that is, are not far. They'll soon be here. I got the news today. And let me tell you that telephone's got to stay there on the wall. Let it hang, see? You didn't put it there and it's not for you to take it off. And if any of your guests asks you about me, you tell them I'm just

someone who's been staying here for a long time, see?"

The innkeeper and his wife did not believe a word he said.

But the seed of doubt had been planted in their hearts: "Who knows . . . Perhaps it's best not to annoy him."

The mistress was not to be reconciled, however.

"Let him show a little respect, then! Why can't he help around the house!"

One day she told him to carry some guests' luggage into the house, but she soon wished she had never thought of it. The blood rushed to Zozulya's face, his hand rose threateningly as though to strike. But it did not fall.

"Ekh, you!" he said with a sigh. "And we thought some good would come of you . . ." The mistress never asked him again.

Every evening Zozulya went off to the marshy woods, with a sack of tools over his shoulder and an axe and some boards in the crook of his arm.

He did not come home till morning.

During the night he removed the wires from the poles that led in the direction of the enemy and repaired the line leading to the inn.

5

The old grandfather climbed onto the bench every day to look at the calender until at last *Yom Kippur* came.

The inn was crowded, all the rooms occupied. Outside carts were loaded with piles of heavy bundles and trunks.

Zozulya looked on with pain and bitterness gnawing at his heart, but there was nothing he could do about it.

In the evening the large table was set for supper. One of the arrivals, a young merchant, asked that the candles be lit.

"Lent is over," he insisted. "Don't you think we can pay?" he added scornfully.

Here so close to the frontier his tongue was loosened.

"I've sent everything to hell! No, thanks, this is not for me! I'm accustomed to silk underwear, you see. I wear it now and intend to continue wearing it in the future. Here, try it yourself, pure silk."

Among the guests was a young Russian violinist, silent and depressed. He spoke to no one and went about holding his precious, carefully packed instrument.

He had arrived together with a fat priest, a landowner and a rich elderly lady who had owned an estate.

The arrivals also included a fat woman dressed in caracul. With her were three plump daughters like herself, also in caracul. The daughters kept scented handkerchiefs pressed delicately to their noses, for they could not endure the stuffy air of the inn.

Two lanky Jews got into a lengthy argument and did not permit the candles to be lighted until darkness had fallen. From time to time they called the guests into the next room to pray.

The merchant who had boasted about his silk underwear tried to laugh it off.

"And what do I get out of it?" he laughed sourly.

But he followed the rest into the next room where one of the guests, dressed in ceremonial robes, stood at a small table with burning candles and intoned prayers.

The inn echoed with the weird sound of incantations, as though the dead were being mourned.

The rich mother in caracul wandered nervously from room to room.

Zozulya stood in the doorway looking at the burning candles and listening to the prayers and there

was hatred in his heart. He felt something behind all this that was hostile to himself and his Red Army comrades, he felt in it some hidden threat to his hopes for the future.

Throwing his sack of tools over his shoulder he slipped out of the inn and went off into the woods to repair the line. There were only a few sections to connect up now, and they not far from the house.

Merrymaking at the inn lasted all evening. The long white-clothed table was loaded with delicacies. Kerosene lamps and candles afforded the illumination. The guests ate and drank and sang songs.

The plump girls in caracul begged the violinist to unpack his precious instrument. The merchant with the silken underwear was trying to get the priest and the carter drunk, but it was the innkeeper who succumbed first.

Suddenly one of the girls jumped—the telephone hanging on the wall behind her started to ring.

"Oh, you are just imagining things!" the mistress of the inn reassured her. "Don't pay any attention to it!"

But the faint peals of the telephone continued to break through the hubbub of noise in the room.

"Zelda!" roared the innkeeper, "take a blanket and cover up that telephone! Can't you hear what I tell you? Bring a blanket at once!"

But the girl had vanished. The moment the telephone had come to life again she had dashed out of the house in search of Zozulya. To the light of a new moon Zelda ran through the forest calling the Red Army man.

She stumbled as she ran, knocking into trees, now and again she fell but picked herself up and then ran on, calling his name.

Inside, the drunken innkeeper was dancing. The din rose, the singing grew louder, the laughter more ribald, and heels beat a noisy tattoo on the floor.

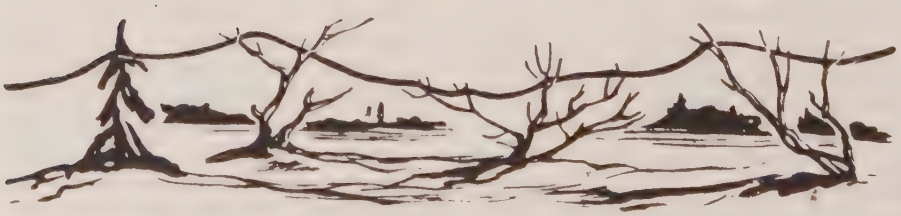
When Zozulya rushed into the room he had to fire a shot into the air for silence.

The telephone was now ringing loudly and incessantly.

Zozulya walked over to it, solemnly took off the receiver and pressed it tenderly to his ear, as one presses a dear friend to one's heart after a long absence. In a voice that rang out clearly and triumphantly he reported into the apparatus like the armyman he was:

"It's me, Fyodor Zozulya! Post Number Three, one-hundred-and-first mile. We've got a full house of speculators here! I'll detain them all. Don't worry, they won't get away. Send over a detachment!"

Translated by Rose Prokofieva



POEMS

JOHANNES R. BECHER

THE BALLAD OF THE TWO SOLDIERS

So there I lay a-firing; as I lay
I glanced around and saw—'twas day! 'twas day!

Green forests, fields and meadows 'fore me spread,
A silv'ry stream wound in its distant bed,

The fragrance of the flow'rs and hum of bees
To me were wafted by the summer breeze.

In groves of trees, whose branches spread out high,
The birds their symphony sang to the sky.

But I just lay there firing left and right.
'Twas such a day! Ne'er dawned a day so bright!

The sky was cloudless, crystal clear, that day—
I fired and picked my victims as I lay;

And as I lay a-firing there, I gazed—
And suddenly, I know not how, amazed,

I ceased my deadly fire and lay stockstill,
And looked in wonder, fascinated, thrilled.

I drank the beauty of the distant view,
And there I saw—where brushwood densely grew—

Another one, like I, a-firing lay,
And round him—I could see—'twas day! 'twas day!—

All round him were the hills, and where he lay,
A fragrant path—I saw it—wound its way

To where dogs barked and children merry leaped,
And thence to fields with pungent dung new heaped.

'Twas harvest day, and sheaves were being bound;
But he—he only fired, nor turned around . . .

Then, suddenly, he also ceased his firing
And both of us gazed far ahead, enquiring;

And then it seemed I lay now in his place,
And he in mine. There was I face to face

With him; and we in turn did ask: "Wherefore
And whence this war? Who is it wants this war?"

"Who wants this war, then?" We each other eyed:
"Not I! Not I!" in unison we cried.

And then we both enquired: "If this the case,
Who wants the war?" We scanned each other's face . . .

* * *

It seemed to me, that we two onward pressed
To seek HIM—War quite close must dwell, we guessed.

We stopped and asked the people on our way:
"This town—is this the seat of War, please say?"

Two cities we did thus investigate,
Enquiring whether War there lived in state.

And so we wandered; I enquired, then he.
O how like HIS my city seemed to be!

And how his city seemed to be like MINE!
'Twas day! A brighter day did never shine!

Some people said, that WAR with GOD did dwell.
We laughed at them: "Your joke—we see it well."

"War," others said, "with us will ever stay."
But, as we turned about, we cried out: "NAY."

Of War's abode it seemed, none was aware—
Do ye not know? Did War your city spare?

Then heard we angry shouts that rent the air:
"Go seek WAR in that city over there!"

The other town let loose a fearful shriek—
"Return to whence you came and there WAR seek!"

We thus were driven o'er the country wide,
With fear by many men and women eyed—

They thought that surely we must be insane.
We clasped each other's hand and marched again.

"If it is WAR you seek," a child then said—
"Go ask those women, mourning for their dead."

And one of them, unhesitant, us led;
She went with us a little way, and said:

"Now go straight on and turn unto your right—
Your search's end will then be just in sight."

We went as we were bid. And, lo, give heed!—
We palace saw on palace. Here, indeed,

Dwelt WAR; and he in many guises went:
Now young and vigorous, now old and bent,

Now frock, now gown, now uniform he wore.
It was a day—a day as ne'er before!

We saw him take his early morning ride,
And to the sessions step with sedate stride

Stock-broker, landlord, financier was he—
We each then could but whisper: "Yes, I see."

As Archbishop, as Judge, as General—
He stood before us in his mirrored hall,

His decorations pinning on his breast—
He like a picture shone in glory dressed.

His ribbons fluttered gaily in his face,
His stately back did also do him grace.

With thousand hands he raked from every side
Huge fortunes by war profits multiplied.

The poor to kill each other there he sent—
Their death, you see, increased the dividends.

And so the wealthy grew still richer. We
Could only stare at this and say: "I see . . ."

We drank the details of the distant view:
Court-martial held in secret we saw too,

And we ourselves we were the prisoners there
Because to ask his origin we dared . . .

Before the city gates we stood once more,
Recalling all the bygone wars of yore,

And wondered how long HE would tarry, ere
War's declaration once more rent the air . . .

* * *

And there I lay, gazed far ahead and lay . . .
And round about me, brothers, dawned a DAY—

A holiday!—the First Day of a Year!
Nor did another day e'er dawn so clear.

And he, who gazed at me across the way,
Now suddenly right by my side he lay—

So close, so close he lay to me, that we
Could nor divided nor distinguished be—

Two soldiers of one army, I and he.

Translated from the German by Louis Zellikoff

THE WINNERS OF THE STALIN PRIZES

In December 1939, on the occasion of Stalin's sixtieth birthday, the Soviet Government instituted a number of Stalin Prizes to be awarded for outstanding achievements in the sciences and the arts, for inventions of national economic importance, and for outstanding achievements in the field of military knowledge.

Special importance was necessarily attached to the prizes awarded this year. This being the *first* time the Stalin Prizes were awarded, the event summed up, as it were, the achievements in the respective fields of endeavor for a number of years past. According to the decision of the Government, the prizes this year were awarded for the best works in the field of science, technology and the arts during the past six or seven years. The awards were made on the basis of the recommendations of a special Committee composed of leading authorities in Soviet science and the arts, whose findings were the result of a thorough study of the works of Soviet scientists, artists and inventors recommended by various organizations.

In extent and the wide range of subjects they cover, the Stalin Prizes are unique in the history of science and the arts the world over. According to the Government's decision the awards this year comprised 84 First Prizes of 100,000 rubles each, 113 Second Prizes of 50,000 rubles each and 26 Third Prizes of 25,000 rubles each. Beginning with 1941, the Stalin Prizes will be awarded annually for the best scientific and artistic achievements of the year.

The institution of the Stalin Prizes has served as a further stimulus for the development of scientific research work, inventions and artistic activity in the Soviet Union. Thus, over a thousand scientific works and inventions, selected and approved by scientific institutions and People's Commissariats, were submitted to the Stalin Prize Committee this year.

The Stalin Prizes are an additional manifestation of the great esteem in which the intelligentsia is held in the Soviet Union. They are an expression of the appreciation shown by the Soviet people for works of talent, which are rewarded in accordance with the principle of Socialism: from each according to his ability, to each according to his work.

The award of the Stalin Prizes has shown once again that the individual finds full play for his abilities under Socialism. At the same time they have shown how individual achievement becomes enhanced as a result of collective work. A number of the Prizes were awarded to groups of scientific or artworkers for achievements which were the result of their joint efforts. However, in the case of those who received prizes individually, too, their achievements were as a rule made possible by the collaboration of groups—scientific institutes, theaters, motion picture studios, etc.

The policy of the Bolshevik Party

and the Soviet Government, the success of Socialist industrialization, the rise in the material and cultural standards of the masses in the land of Socialism, the efforts of the people, and Stalin's leadership have enabled the Soviet Union to reap a rich harvest of valuable scientific, technical and artistic achievements.

In tsarist Russia—as in all capitalist countries—the masses were deprived of the opportunity of developing their powers, talents and abilities. Science was the monopoly of the rich and the mighty. Even secondary education was, for the most part, beyond the reach of the children of the common people—the "children of cooks," as a tsarist Minister of Education once remarked with contempt. But even in those dark days the Russian people gave the world a number of outstanding scientists. Lomonosov, Lobachevsky, Sechenov, Popov, Mendeleyev, Pavlov, Timiryazev and numerous other Russian scientists hold a place of honor in the Pantheon of world science.

The Great October Socialist Revolution has placed education within the reach of the whole people. One of the great achievements of the Soviet power is that it has fostered the rise of a numerous, new, Soviet intelligentsia. Over 100,000 people are engaged in scientific research work in the numerous scientific institutes and laboratories all over the vast Soviet Union. The Academy of Sciences of the U. S. S. R. alone includes a network of over 200 scientific institutions, observatories, laboratories, etc. The Soviet Union has more than 1,500 scientific-research institutes. Over 4,000 people were awarded scientific degrees in the first six months of 1940.

In the Soviet Union science, in the words of J. Stalin, "does not segregate itself from the people, does not keep aloof from the people, but is prepared to serve the people, to place all its achievements at the disposal of the people."

An important feature of Soviet science, which has been particularly emphasized by the award of the Stalin Prizes, is its close contact with practical activity. It is science with a purpose, scientific activity which does not concentrate on what is called "pure theory," on bare abstractions divorced from life and devoid of all practical significance. The achievements of Soviet science, even in the most abstract fields, have a direct bearing on the aims of Socialist construction.

Another feature brought to light by the award of the Stalin Prizes is the harmonious work of three generations of Soviet scientists.

Sculpture of Lenin. This is one of the two works for which S. D. Merkurov was awarded a First Stalin Prize

Among the Prize-winners are scientists of long standing, with many decades of work behind them, as well as the "middle" and younger generation of scientists. Alongside the names of scientists who have always conducted their researches in the big cultural centers, are those of scientists who carried on their activity in remote parts of the country.

Among those who received a First Prize for achievements in physics and mathematics, we find the name of I. Vinogradov, Member of the Academy of Sciences of the U. S. S. R. Academician Vinogradov elaborated original methods in the analytical theory of numbers, and this enabled him to solve a number of problems which had remained unsolved for many centuries. Among others, he provided a solution for the famous Goldbach problem, a problem which dates back to 1742, requiring proof to show that every odd number is the sum of three prime numbers. The solution of this problem is of great importance for the development of mathematics.

P. Kapitsa, Member of the Academy of Sciences of the U. S. S. R., awarded a First Prize, evolved a new principle for the liquefication of gases, including helium, and invented a machine which makes it possible to obtain liquid oxygen in vast quantities and on an industrial scale. By means of an apparatus of his own construction, Academician Kapitsa discovered a new property of helium when brought down to a temperature close to absolute zero—the property of su-

"At an Old Urals Plant," painting by B. V. Iohanson, which won him a First Stalin Prize

Portrait of Academician I. P. Pavlov, by M. V. Nesterov. He was awarded a First Stalin Prize for this painting

perfluidity which is closely connected with another very important property, superconductivity.

N. Semyonov, Member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., who is also the recipient of a First Prize, elaborated a theory of the burning of gases—the first theory based on the laws of chemical kinetics. His work is of great importance for the study of the processes taking place in internal combustion engines.

A. Frumkin, Member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., recipient of a First Prize, heads the school which he initiated in the sphere of Soviet electrolytical chemistry. Academician Frumkin is the author of important works on the study of the processes taking place in galvanic elements and accumulators, on the theory of the corrosion of metals and on the creation of new chemical sources of current. The result of his work has made it possible to tackle one of the most important problems of modern science; how to obtain electric power directly from fuel.

Academician A. Bach, also a recipient of a First Prize, presents a vivid example of the combination of scientific theory with practice. His studies of the mysteries of the structure of matter led Academician Bach to the elaboration of a number of practical discoveries applicable in the bread-baking industry, in the tea industry, and in viniculture. He also solved the problem of drying insufficiently ripe grain, which is of great importance for agriculture.

Academician L. Sobolev, a brilliant young Soviet mathematician, recipient of a Second Prize, has elaborated a practical method of prospecting for mineral deposits. He applied his investigations on the distribution of oscillations in elastic media to the problems of seismology, and has thus laid the theoretical foundation for the elab-

oration of seismic methods in the prospecting for mineral deposits.

A First Stalin Prize for biological sciences was awarded to V. Komarov, President of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., an outstanding botanist. He created an integrated doctrine of plant species as a separate biological system, and edited *U.S.S.R. Flora*, a work of many volumes, containing a description of 15,000 different species of plants found in the U.S.S.R.

Academician T. Lysenko, who was also awarded a First Prize, is known for his remarkable discoveries and innovations in the agricultural sciences. He has elaborated means of making winter wheat ripen in the summer; he has bred a new sort of rapidly ripening cotton which is now grown in the Ukraine; his method of summer planting of potatoes has doubled the size of the crop.

Soviet medicine also has a number of outstanding achievements to record. Academician V. Filatov has elaborated a method of transplanting the cornea taken from the eyeball of a dead person. The practical application of this method has served to cure thousands of wall-eyed people who have thus regained their eyesight. Academician Burdenko, Chief Surgeon of the Red Army, is renowned for his methods of performing operations on the brain and the nervous system, and for his achievements in the sphere of field surgery. Professor A. Lurie, of Kiev, has devised a method of rendering childbirth painless. This method is extensively applied in the lying-in hospitals in the U.S.S.R.

A group of medical workers, headed by Academician E. Pavlovsky and Professor A. Smorodintsev, has discovered the virus of the dangerous infectious disease of encephalitis, which is often fatal or ends in severe paralysis. Braving the dangers attending their work in the primeval forests of the Far East, the Soviet "microbe hunters" tracked down the virus and found effective means of curing the terrible disease. All these scientists have been awarded Stalin Prizes.

Right: The Kiev Station of the Moscow Metro, designed by D. N. Chechulin, one of the two projects which earned him a First Stalin Prize for architecture
Below: The pavilion of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic at the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition, designed by A. G. Kurdiani. He was awarded one of the Second Stalin Prizes for this pavilion

Act II of the opera "Almast" at The Erevan Opera and Ballet Theater. Stage settings for this opera earned one of the Second Stalin Prizes for painting for M. S. Saryan, the Armenian artist

Several prizes have also been awarded for important scientific works contributing to the strengthening of the defenses of the land of Socialism. Among the Prize-winners are Major General P. Gelvikh, professor of the Academy of Artillery, and Major General A. Blagonravov—the latter for his scientific work on the production of automatic armaments.

Frederick Engels pointed out that the progress of science depends to a vast extent on the state and the requirements of technique. Once a technical requirement has made itself felt in society, he said, it furthers the progress of science more than a dozen universities. Under Socialism the requirements of technique are practically unlimited. Socialist industry requires ever more perfect machines, ever more advanced scientific methods—and these requirements act as a powerful stimulus for the development of technical thought.

The award of the Stalin Prizes for outstanding inventions has served to emphasize the fruitful results of the close connection between science and production in the Soviet Union. There is hardly a branch of industry which has not benefited by the work of Soviet scientists, designers and inventors. Among those who have been awarded Stalin Prizes for inventions we find the names of renowned scientists, such as A. Favorsky, Member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., who elaborated a method of manufacture of synthetic rubber from coal on an industrial scale; or Academician E. Paton, who elaborated a method and designed the machinery for rapid automatic electric welding. We find among the Prize winners engineers and designers who have been awarded prizes for inventing new grades of steel, or a new type of tractor, or a Diesel motor of a new design, or a new

Sculpture of Galina Ulanova, who received one of the First Stalin Prizes in the field of ballet, done by E. A. Yanson-Manizer

heat bearing finder, new astronomical and optical apparatus, an apparatus for ultra-sound communication, or the elaboration of a method of obtaining gas by underground burning of coal, or an industrial method of weaving and spinning fibres made of glass, etc.

Among those who have been awarded Stalin Prizes we find also a number of factory workers, such as G. Axelrod, who invented an automatic tool for the production of Gall's chains—an extremely fine chain the links of which can be seen only through a magnifying glass—an invention which relieves the U.S.S.R. of importing Gall's chains from abroad; D. Semyonov, foreman at the Caliber Works in Moscow, who invented a machine tool to perform an extremely intricate process (the final precisioning of Johansson's surface plates) which in the particular branch of industry helped to increase productivity fiftyfold.

Among other winners of the Stalin Prizes are S. Ivanov, who invented the stereoscopic spectacleless cinema and A. Shorin, known for his inventions contributing to the improvement of sound films, and designer of a new type of sound-recording apparatus.

A number of prizes were awarded for outstanding inventions in the sphere of military science and the defense industries, inventions which are of particular importance in view of the international situation. Among the inventors who have been awarded Stalin Prizes are Heroes of Socialist Labor V. Degtyarev, N. Polikarpov, B. Shpitalny, A. Mikulin, F. Tokarev, V. Klimov, V. Grabin, and others, who have designed new types of armaments, planes, engines, etc., thus helping to strengthen the defenses of the land of Socialism. A. Yakovlev, Hero of Socialist Labor, is the designer of planes which enabled Soviet fliers to establish fifteen international records. He is also the designer of new types of high-speed chaser planes, which are the pride of the Soviet Air Force.

The award of Stalin Prizes for brilliant successes and achievements of Soviet technical thought shows one again how inexhaustible are the resources called to life by the union of science and production, the union of science and labor, which is being realized in Socialist society.

The Socialist Revolution opened up vast opportunities for the development of literature and the arts in general. In the Soviet Union art has begun to play its true role—that of a great social force, a mighty weapon for the education of people, helping them to understand one another—a mighty weapon in shaping the new, Socialist man. The important role of the arts in the Soviet Union has been emphasized in the award of Stalin Prizes for the most outstanding works and achievements of Soviet music, painting, sculpture, architecture, theater, opera and ballet, cinematography, fiction, poetry, dramaturgy and literary criticism.

In bourgeois countries art—devastated, devitalized or corrupted by capitalism—is experiencing a severe crisis. The Muses, to paraphrase the old Latin saying, are silent amid the exploding aerial bombs, or else they have been drafted, dressed in military uniforms and made to serve in the various war propaganda services.

Soviet art is in close touch with the people, with popular lore—that inexhaustible source from which it draws its strength, themes and inspiration. It is young, and being young it breathes vitality, the very joy of life, and optimism. It derives its strength from its Socialist realism, which has become the banner of Soviet art. It is art with great expressiveness, art with a great purpose, imbued with the fervor of Socialist construction and with profound love for its country and its people.

Among those who have been awarded the Stalin Prizes for art and literature, are representatives of numerous nationalities inhab-

Scene from the film "Shchors," directed by P. Dovzhenko, for which he and his co-workers on the film received one of the First Stalin Prizes

A. N. Tolstoy *N. N. Aseyev* *M. A. Sholokhov* *A. Y. Korneichuk* *K. A. Trenev*

iting the Soviet Union and of many of the republics making up the Union. For the culture of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., national in form, is throughout Socialist in content.

Of the Soviet composers, the following were awarded Stalin First Prizes: N. Myaskovsky, for his Twenty-First Symphony, recently completed; Y. Shaporin, author of the opera *The Decembrists* and of the symphony-cantata *On Kulikovo Field*; D. Shostakovich, the young Soviet composer whose First and Fifth Symphonies and the recently completed brilliant piano Quintet gained him fame throughout the world.

The following composers have been awarded Second Prizes: A. Bogatyrev, a young Byelorussian composer; U. Gadjibekov, Azerbaijan composer, author of the opera *Ker-Ogly*; G. Kiladze, a Georgian composer; A. Khachaturyan, an Armenian composer, and A. Revutsky, of the Ukraine, author of a number of exquisite symphonic pieces and the popular *Song of Stalin*.

Of the numerous Soviet painters, the following have been awarded prizes: A. Gerasimov, author of the canvases *Lenin on the Rostrum*, *Stalin and Voroshilov in the Kremlin* and a number of other works which were exhibited in the Soviet pavilion at the World Fair in New York: B. Iohanson; M. Nesterov; V. Yefanov; N. Samokish; M. Saryan, renowned Armenian artist; I. Toidze, a young Georgian artist; F. Fedorovsky, who designed the settings for the opera *Prince Igor*, now playing at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow.

Foreign readers are acquainted with some of the works of the two Soviet sculptors who have been awarded Stalin First Prizes. They are S. Merkurov, creator of a monumental figure of J. Stalin at the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition, and Vera Mukhina, author of the sculptural group *Worker and Collective Farm Girl*, which crowned the Soviet Pavilion at the International Exposition in Paris in 1937.

Among the architects awarded Stalin Prizes we find the names of V. Zabolotny of Kiev, D. Chechulin, designer of several of the famous Moscow subway stations; A. Shchussev, and Academician B. Iofan, who designed the Soviet pavilion at the International Exhibition in Paris in 1937.

Dramatic art is one of the most highly developed in the U.S.S.R., and the Soviet theater enjoys well-deserved fame abroad. The 885 theaters of the Soviet Union give upwards of 200,000 performances a year. The guest performances periodically given in Moscow by the theaters of the various nationalities testify to the efflorescence of the theater in all

A. S. Novikov-Priboy *K. K. Krapiva* *A. T. Tvardovsky* *S. V. Mikhalkov* *G. N. Leonidze*

the republics of the Soviet Union. Soviet opera boasts a number of outstanding singers, and the Soviet ballet is considered the best in the world. Among those awarded Stalin Prizes are A. Tarasova and N. Khmelyov of the Moscow Art Theater; V. Barsova, M. Mikhailov, M. Reizen, and I. Kozlovsky, singers of the Moscow Bolshoi Theater; the ballet dancers O. Lepeshinskaya, G. Ulanova, N. Dudinskaya and M. Semyonova, the Uzbek dancer Tamara Khanum.

Motion picture art also holds a place of honor in the Soviet Union. Many Soviet films have become renowned throughout the world. Thirty-five Stalin Prizes were awarded for outstanding achievements in the cinema, especially for the films: *Lenin in October*, the Maxim trilogy, *Chapayev*, *Peter the First*, *Minin and Pozharsky*, *Alexander Nevsky*, *Suvorov*, *We Are From Kronstadt*, *Yakov Sverdlov*.

Compared with other countries literature in the Soviet Union holds a special place of honor. What cements every literary production, different though it may be in theme, style, composition and expression, is the one conception that it serves the cause of mankind, the cause of Socialism. The award of the Stalin Prizes has once more drawn attention to the outstanding works of Soviet literature.

Alexei Tolstoy was awarded a First Prize for his *Peter I*, of which Maxim Gorky wrote that it was "the first real historical novel in our literature." It is a broad picture of historical events, and is distinguished for the profundity of the problems dealt with in it, for its masterly style and the spirit of love for the country. It has already been published in 46 editions.

One of the best known works of Soviet literature is *And Quiet Flows the Don* by Mikhail Sholokhov, who has always lived among the masses of his native Don. Permeated with a spirit of profound humanism, and depicting life in all its force and truth, Sholokhov's novel is at the same time a powerful indictment of social evil, of the old system of life. Its fresh and colorful language, the real language of the people, a fine feeling for nature, and fascinating character drawing—all these qualities place Sholokhov's novel among the great works of world literature. *And Quiet Flows the Don*, volume four of which was published in 1940, has been translated into many foreign languages. In the U.S.S.R., it has so far been published in 86 editions, and the number of copies sold has almost reached the 5 million mark. It is for this novel that Sholokhov has been awarded a Stalin First Prize.


S. N. Sergeyev-Tsensky


P. G. Tychina


Y. D. Kupala


N. F. Pogodin


I. E. Grabar

S. Sergeyev-Tsensky has been awarded a First Prize for his novel *The Ordeal of Sevastopol* which deals with the defense of Sevastopol in 1854-55. It is an epic about the heroism displayed by the people in defending their country, a truthful picture of the people of Russia at war, a hymn to life amid death.

Three novels earned their authors Second Prizes. They are: A. Novikov-Priboy's *Tsushima*, well-known to readers abroad—an historical novel dealing with the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05; N. Virta's *Loneliness*, dealing with the period of the Civil War, and *Gvadi Bigva*, by the Georgian writer L. Kiacheli, the scene of which is laid in a collective farm village.

The First Prizes for poetry went to Nikolai Aseyev, well-known Russian poet, Yanka Kupala, Byelorussian poet, and Pavel Tychina, Ukrainian poet. Poets of remarkable force and originality, they are bards of the great revolutionary epoch, combining poetical mastery with ideological and political profundity.

The Second Prizes for poetry were awarded to Jamboul, famous folk poet of Kazakhstan; V. Lebedev-Kumach, author of numerous popular Soviet songs; S. Mikhalkov, author of poetry for children; G. Leonidze, a Georgian poet; and the young Russian poet A. Tvardovsky.

A. Korneichuk, gifted Ukrainian playwright, is the author of a number of plays which have been included in the repertory of most Soviet theaters. Korneichuk's plays are distinguished for their truthfulness, subtle humor, fine lyrical qualities, and their colorful language. They always deal with important political or cultural problems. His *Platon Krechet* is a stirring drama dealing with the life of the Soviet intelligentsia and showing the struggle for Socialist science. His recent play *Bogdan Khmelnitsky* is an historical drama depicting the heroic struggle of the Ukrainian people against their Polish oppressors.

Lyubov Yarovaya, by K. Trenev, one of the first plays dealing with the Civil War in Russia, may be said to have become a classic. It is often produced on the Soviet stage, and has also been shown in a number of countries abroad.

N. Pogodin, one of the most prolific Soviet playwrights, is known as the author of plays dealing with life in the Soviet Union. One of his most outstanding plays, *The Man With the Gun*, was the first Soviet play to depict Lenin.

Korneichuk, Trenev and Pogodin have been awarded First Stalin Prizes for dramaturgy. Second prizes were awarded for the following plays: *Vagif*, by the Azerbaijan poet S. Vurgun, the story of an Azerbaijan folksinger of

Samed Vurgun *V. I. Lebedev-Kumach* *Jamboul Jabayev* *L. M. Kiacheli* *N. E. Virta*

the eighteenth century; *He Who Laughs Last*, a comedy of contemporary Soviet life, by the Byelorussian playwright K. Krapiva; and *Field Marshal Kutuzov*, by the Russian poet V. Solovyov, an historical drama of the War of 1812.

I. E. Grabar was awarded the First Stalin Prize in the field of literary criticism for his book "Repin."

The Stalin Prizes, which will be awarded every year, will be a stimulus for ever greater achievements in all fields of Soviet science and the arts. In a letter published in the Soviet press, this year's prize winners write:

"Never and nowhere has art flourished so fully as in our country—art for the masses, accessible to the people and loved by the people. It is art depicting the great truth of life, it finds its themes in our heroic times and is nurtured by the life-giving sap of folk art.

"Emulation in the field of art is continuing. We call upon all Soviet intellectuals to take an active part in this emulation so that progressive Soviet science may flourish even more exuberantly, so that the defensive might of our country may be enhanced from day to day and from hour to hour, and so that the spirit of joy may pervade even more fully our Soviet art which is called upon to sing and glorify the greatness and the triumph of the ideas of Communism."

BORIS MIKHAILOV

V. A. Solovyov *A. Y. Kapler* *P. A. Pavlenko* *P. F. Nilin*

The last three writers were awarded Stalin Prizes in the field of cinematography for scenario writing

Excerpts From Evgueni Vakhtangov's Memoirs

In the as yet unwritten history of Russian stagecraft the name of Evgueni Vakhtangov as a producer will go down next to the great names of the renowned regisseurs K. S. Stanislavsky and V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko.

And it was not by mere chance that Stanislavsky, that eternal seeker and experimenter, entrusted Vakhtangov in 1911 the mission of secretly preparing the young actors of his theater for the opening of the First Studio, which can well be called the laboratory of the Moscow Art Theater and in which Vakhtangov's talents for the first time received free scope for development.

It was not as a timid and obedient apprentice that Vakhtangov undertook this work. "K. S.'s (Stanislavsky's—*Ed.*) system will have to be verified by ourselves. Accept it or reject it. Correct it, supplement it and exclude any false notes," he wrote in his diary for that year.

Only a man confident of his ability could write like this. And indeed, he did not copy Stanislavsky's system, but extended it, creating something truly original, "Vakhtangovian," in theater art. This is evidenced by the theater he founded and by the plays he staged there—especially his last play, *Princess Turandot*. It was after the first showing of this play that Stanislavsky exclaimed to the cast: "In the 23 years since the Moscow Art Theater was established there have been few such triumphs. You have found the very thing that many theaters have so long sought in vain."

Vakhtangov's career as a theatrical producer began in January 1913 with a production of Hauptmann's *Reconciliation* in the First Studio.

This play immediately attracted attention by the freshness and originality of its presentation, and Vakhtangov's name became widely known. The same year Vakhtangov became the leader of a group of young students who desired to devote themselves to theatrical art. This circle of amateurs gradually grew into a new studio called at first The Students' Dramatic Studio and taken over in 1920 by the Moscow Art Theater under the name of The Third Studio of the Moscow Art Theater. Four years after Vakhtangov's death, in 1926, the studio received its third and final name, by which it is known to this day: The Vakhtangov State Theater.

These two studios and the Jewish Habima Studio were the scene of all the work, both of the stage and in play production, done by Vakhtangov, the innovator and creative artist. At the First Moscow Art Studio, besides *Reconciliation* Vakhtangov staged Berger's *The Deluge* and Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*. Here he also appeared as an actor, in the role of the toy manufacturer Tackleton in Dickens' *The Cricket on the Hearth*, in the role of Dantie in Heyerman's *The Wreck of "Hope,"* in the role of Fraser in *Deluge* and Brendel in *Rosmersholm*.

These roles were brilliantly played with outstanding skill; at the same time the talented actor was almost completely absorbed in his strivings to produce plays—or rather, not only produce plays, but also create new theatrical organizations. This is why, even during his illness, he could not give up the opportunity of organizing still one more studio and reorganized the Jewish Habima Theater.

It was in the Habima Theater that Vakhtangov produced with exceptional brilliancy and inspiration An-sky's play *Hadibuk*. His was an unquenchable thirst for the creation of ever new plays and studios, and only his death (May 29, 1922) cut short this irrepressible and passionate creative power.

After Stanislavsky had expressed approval of his work in the Habima, Vakhtangov made the following entry in his diary: "Well, I have already given the world my second

studio. Now onward!" This word "Onward" essentially expresses the essence of Vakhtangov, his whole nature as an innovator and creator.

It should not be thought that Vakhtangov's progress was smooth and untroubled. By no means. He went through all the temptations of individualist ethics in the spirit of the teachings of Tolstoy (under influence of Sulerzhitsky) and of seclusion as an artist "within himself." Here are some of the thoughts he put down in his diary: "To drive the theatericality out of the theater . . . To forget the public. To create for myself. To take delight for myself." While producing Berger's *Deluge* he thought that in the moment of danger all the evils of capitalism would disappear: "Joy and appeasement. Everybody has been purified. Everybody is honest . . . Man has been purified through love of man." But even at that time the feeling of abatement and self-satisfaction were foreign to Vakhtangov's nature and he was seeking for ultimate truth in art.

The Great October Socialist Revolution was a deciding factor in Vakhtangov's crystallization as an artist.

Despite the remarkable mastery manifested in his productions, Vakhtangov did not until 1918 go beyond the bounds of that system of psychological realism developed within the Moscow Art theater—a system which was at that time experiencing a crisis both ideological and artistic. The "old men" of the Moscow Art Theater, according to Stanislavsky's own admission, were somewhat perplexed by the arrival of entirely new, Soviet playgoers, with their new psychology and new perception of art, but Vakhtangov took new wings during this stormy period, and his best plays were staged during these years. He rapidly came to realize the greatness and significance of the new era, and entered in his notebook during 1919 a number of remarkable thoughts about the people's theater. They are published in this issue of *International Literature*. We need only add that Vakhtangov was the first among the Russian play producers to point out the indissoluble bond uniting art with the popular masses, to point out that the Revolution must regenerate the artist by bringing him in touch with the "mother earth" of Antæus. At this time too, in March 1919, Vakhtangov wrote that "everything old is finished forever" and that the theaters, "if they do not want to become 'old theaters,' 'museum theaters,' must make some radical change in their lives."

And Vakhtangov fearlessly and resolutely got rid of his self-centered seclusion, his studio complex, his work for the few; these traits now gave way to the most unreserved aspiration to reach the new audience, the people. This was the source of his passionate enthusiasm for the idea of a Popular Art Theater (such a theater was set up by the initiative of Vakhtangov's studio during the 1918-1919 theatrical season). It was this, too, that lay behind the more pointed satirical treatment of bourgeois society in his presentation of Maeterlinck's *Miracle of St. Anthony* (1921) and his turn towards "theatricality" as the form most understandable to the broad masses.

All this arose from his desire to supplement the Moscow Art Theater system, the system of "deep feelings," with a system of presentation which would give the most striking expression to the nature of the theater, so splendidly expressed by Pushkin in his article "The Drama": "Laughter, pity and horror are the three chords of our imagination which are played upon by the magic of the drama." And Vakhtangov writes in his diary: "Naturalism on the stage must die!"

Vakhtangov himself clearly understood the connection between his new esthetics and the Revolution. He put down the following thoughts in his diary: "It is the Revolution that demands from us good voices, scenic qualities, a special sort of temperament, and everything else relating to expressiveness. It is the Revolution that demands that we sweep philistinism off the stage. It is the Revolution that demands magnitude and clear-cut lines."

It was this idea of a new theatrical feeling and consciousness that dominated his last productions: Chekhov's *Wedding*, Strindberg's *Erik XIV*, the revised production of Maeterlinck's *Miracle of St. Anthony*, An-sky's *Hadibuk*, and especially *Princess Turandot*, Vakhtangov's swan song, sang to the glorification of life, laughter and human joy, when he himself was dying and wasting away. It was thus that Vakhtangov responded to the "call of the Revolution"—by the blossoming of his creative powers and the affirmation of a new realism, a realism drawing its colors, its methods and themes from the life of the people. It was this that earned him a place on the roll of honor of the best sons of the Soviet land.

VAKHTANGOV'S FIRST YEAR IN THE MOSCOW ART THEATER (1911-12)

(From Vakhtangov's Note-Book)

March 4, 1911.

Conversation with V. Nemirovich-Danchenko.

"Take a seat, if you please. We-ell, what can we do for you, and what can you do for us?"

"I want to get from you all I can, but I have never thought of what I can do for you."

"What exactly do you want?"

"I want to master the work of a producer."

"Only that of a producer?"

"No, I shall do everything you want me to."

"Have you been long interested in the theater?"

"All my life. I began to work seriously eight years ago."

"Eight years? Well, what have you been doing?"

"I have some experience: I have acted, produced plays in dramatic circles, I am about to graduate a theatrical school and I am teaching in another. I worked a lot with L. A. Sulerzhitsky[1]—I was with him in Paris."

"Really? What did you do there?"

"I helped him a little."

"All that is good, only the salary you named is too high."

"?"

"I can offer you forty."

"Forty rubles will suit me quite well."

"Let us work it this way: from the fifteenth of March till the sixteenth of August you will get forty rubles; then we shall see, we will get to know you better by your work."

"Thank you."

"That is all."

March 10, 1911.

Today I received my first notification from the Art Theater.

March 11, 1911.

First talk with K. S. Stanislavsky. Suler (Sulerzhitsky) introduced me to him.—"What is your name." "Vakhtangov."—"I am very pleased to meet you. I have heard a lot about you."

VAKHTANGOV'S NOTES, PLANS AND INSTRUCTIONS AS PRODUCER

(1916-1917)

The First Studio of the Moscow Art Theater had what was called a "Book of Impressions." Each performance was

E. Vakhtangov and K. Stanislavsky on January 30, 1921

watched by one of the workers of the studio, whose duty it was to write down his impressions and criticisms of the performance. The producer of the play also entered his impressions. Below we publish Vakhtangov's entries after seeing a performance of "The Deluge" [2] *on September 21, 1916. They include a formulation by Vakhtangov of his basic artistic principles as developed after several years of close contact with K. S. Stanislavsky and L. A. Sulerzhitsky, and as the result of his own work as producer, actor and teacher.*

This chapter also contains Vakhtangov's letter to A. I. Cheban.

FROM THE "BOOK OF IMRESSIONS" OF THE MOSCOW ART THEATER

September 21, 1916.

"THE DELUGE"

A man's personality develops in the course of the succession of days alloted to him by life. It imposes on him his features and determines his physiognomy. His whole spiritual make-up and approach to life are also developed day after day.

And for this reason, this or that person naturally reacts to this or that event precisely as he must react. A person does not have to be concerned with expressing himself consistently, in accordance with the logic of the features of his inner physiognomy. Nature herself looks after this, and the process of reacting is an unconscious one. The man possesses the kernel of his personality. There are moments in a man's life when he wants to live with particular intensity, and delights in his being a part of life. The man becomes wide-awake; he exhibits the good or evil in him with especial intensity.

At such moments the man becomes inspired; his eyes shine with a festive gleam; his whole being is filled with strong desire and thirst for action. It is a holiday for the man.

So it is with the actor.

Day by day, from rehearsal to rehearsal, develops the image of his role in a given play.

Everything the actor finds for the image is deposited, particle by particle, in his soul, without his being conscious of the process.

Then comes a succession of performances, during which the work of forming the kernel of the image continues.

But the time comes when this kernel is ripe and the actor need not concern himself with the logic of expressing the features of the inner and outer physiognomy of the image. The actor's artistic nature will look after this itself.

The one thing needed is that holiday.

The joy of feeling the stage.

The overpowering desire to "express," in other words, to create.

Then the actor need not "act."

He only has to fulfil the objectives of the image. He has to be active in fulfilling these tasks.

How can the actor develop in himself the certainty that all this is so?

How can he develop in himself the ability to call forth "creative self-feeling?"

To these problems of the stage our Studio should devote itself this year.

On these problems we should approach K. S. (Stanislavsky).

When there is no holiday spirit—there is no performance worthy of the name.

All our work then is futile. There is nothing which can carry away the audience.

I have been unfortunate. I have seen a performance in which there was "acting."

The actors were trying to force an acceptance of the roles.

The actors tried for all they were worth to prove that they were this, not that.

It was but shades of the past that they acted.

The effect was weak and lifeless.

The first act seemed unnecessary, drawn-out, lacking in content and repulsive.

From the contours of the second one got an inkling of what it should have been.

The third was presented well.

The line of the roles was clear: in the case of Smyshlayev[3]—objectives and spontaneity (he should not sway so much when drunk, it is even better not to sway at all in the second act).

In the case of Baklanova[4], only in the first act.

In the second act she has no right to make a fundamental change in the mise en scène; it disturbs the integrality of her scene, its sculptural perfection, so to speak.

In the case of Sushkevich, I agree with N. N. Bromlay.[5]

Let Geirot [6] speak to K. S. Stanislavsky about the second act.

He is so frigid that I do not know how and by what means to bring forth his temperament.

I am very anxious that some day could be found which we could devote entirely to *The Deluge*.

E. Vakhtangov

LETTER TO A. I. CHEBAN[7]

August 3, 1917.

Sasha dear!

I have been in Moscow. I received your wonderful letter and I am most thankful.

E. Berger's "The Deluge," as staged by Vakhtangov in the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theater in 1915

It is easier to live when one grows intimate with a person who is good. You are better and purer and more sincere than I, and for this reason I treasure all the more your comradely confidence—and if at bottom I am rotten generally, I am quite certain that towards you I shall never be rotten. I am always that way with people who are good. When I am engaged in a struggle with myself, a continual, painful struggle, I am nearly always defeated in the long run, but I never allow myself to be defeated in my relations with people like you, even if I do not appeal to them. I am an enthusiast by nature and could keep on in this strain for a long time. So I must put the brakes on and write about objective things.

The whole Caucasian troupe are in Moscow.[8] They were delighted with the trip and tell all kinds of fairy tales about it. In the studio they are working away on scenery for *Twelfth Night*.[9] It is frightening to contemplate what K. S. (Stanislavsky) has been up to. The decorations will be beautiful and imposing, but worthless and expensive. Six thousand rubles have already been spent on them. And this after what has been said about the principle of simplicity. "There should be nothing superfluous, for the audience never demanded expensive performances with loud effects . . ." K. S. is a strange man! I cannot for the life of me understand who needs all these trappings! It will be difficult to act in such an atmosphere. I believe that superficially the performance will prove very interesting, it will be a success, but the production will not mark a step forward as regards the inner side of the stage. Our system will not gain. The specific character of the Studio will be eclipsed. Not changed, but eclipsed. All my hopes hang on you, my Rosmersholmites.[10] Pure, untarnished, and sincere at heart, with earnest attention to one another, each preserving his individuality completely intact, filled with emotion almost spiritual, not the usual theatrical emotion, but emotion responsive to the most subtle nuances of man's spirit, and identifying ourselves with the throb of the author's soul—we should all unite in this play in the atmosphere of Ibsen's symbolical white horses[11] and convince others that this, though a difficult art, is the most precious, moving and excellent of all the arts.

This is a step towards the mysteries. The outer characteristic is a pleasure-yielding art but to achieve the stage of the mysteries, we must step over the corpse of the merely amusing. No doubt

Vakhtangov as Fraser in his 1915 production of "The Deluge"

the reason I liked your manner of playing the role of the doctor in *The Incurable* [12] is that you preserved your own voice and your own intonations. One should come to the image through oneself and affirming oneself. But as things are we go from ourselves, in every sense of the word "from."

I love the theater in all its forms but I am chiefly attracted not by the elements of everyday life (I love them, too, when they have humor or humoristic tragedy) but by the elements in which the spirit of man is especially alive.

Peace and the quarrel near the Christmas tree in *Reconciliation*.[13] Scenes on act 2 of *The Deluge*. The pause during the panic in *The Deluge*. The whole of *Rosmersholm*. The second half of Act 4 in *The Cricket*.[14] The scene with Toby on the belfry in *The Chimes*.[15] The *Pilgrims*.[16] In this sense I find nothing in *The Wreck of "Hope"*[17] and inasmuch as *Twelfth Night* in its details is not a brilliant carnival cascade, I see no possibilities in *Twelfth Night*, no advance as regards the spiritual (and not merely artistic-scenic) side of the theater.

All this must sound confused and . . . the main thing is that it has nothing to do with what I intended to write—the latest news. But there is none, as a matter of fact.

Where did you hear about Volkenstein's[18] *Tragedy of Love?* I never liked it. Four

characters carry on, I think, for four acts—intolerably tedious. If it were shorter, say two acts, it would not be so bad.

"ROSMERSHOLM"

(1918)

Ibsen's "Rosmersholm" was Vakhtangov's third production in the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theater. Work on the production commenced in August 1916 and continued with intervals for nearly two years. The première was held on April 26, 1918.

Vakhtangov's notes published below were written some time after the work on the play had commenced. Thus, they do not represent a preliminary draft of the producer's plan, but formulate the conceptions he developed in the process of his work during rehearsals.

WHAT I WANTED TO ACHIEVE IN "ROSMERSHOLM"

The Actors

Naturally, I wanted to achieve that which I regard as the actor's ideal. It is impossible to give in a few words a definition of this acme of achievement.

In my opinion the chief factor here is to create conditions under which the actor can preserve his own personality intact, conditions under which the actor going on the stage has no idea how this or that phrase, this or that place, will sound today. Even approximately. He should be able to go on the stage filled with a steady conviction that he will remain himself through and through and even dispense, as far as possible, with make-up. Important features ought to be slightly emphasized, while those which are a hindrance should be removed. Why cannot Rebecca have a face exactly the same as Olga Leonardovna's (Knipper-Chekhova[19]). She is younger than Olga Leonardovna—that is all. This and this only needs to be done to Olga Leonardovna's face—and that not by making it young, but simply by removing whatever would make Rebecca too old. There should be less concern with wigs. In fact, they can be dispensed with altogether. Even in the case of Leonid Mironovich (Leonidov[20]), although according to the author, he should have long hair. Let the actor play his role with the face God gave him and the voice God gave him. His transformation should proceed from an inner stimulus.

The fundamental condition will be his *belief* that *he*, the actor, is placed in the conditions and stands in the relations to others, as indicated by the author, that what is necessary for the characters in the play, is necessary for *him*. If the actor has a good understanding of the image he is to personify; if he *understands* that the steps indicated by the author are logical and could not be other than they are; if, moreover, the actor is *allured* by the idea of being in those conditions himself; if he *falls in love with* (without sympathizing with) something in the play and the roles; if, finally, he is *convinced* of what the given character in the play is convinced of, and *feels the need* of spending a few hours in the atmosphere of Rosmersholm and *prepares for the holiday* which his art gives him—then he will be transformed without any loss of his own personality.

I do not want an actor always to play this or that part of his role equally well or with equal diminution of tone. I want that those emotions and that degree of excitation which will be convincing to-day should naturally, of themselves arise in the actor.

If today this or that part of his role is not acted so well as yesterday, it will yet sound true, it will be unconsciously logical and in the verisimilitude of the general flux, this part will remain in its place.

There is nothing worse than an actor wanting to repeat yesterday's success or preparing himself for a powerful effect in some part of his role. In the majority of cases these powerful parts represent self expression, *i. e.*, reaction to causes lying outside of me, the reaction taking the particular form it does because I am precisely what I am and not someone else, because I, in the sense of the form and strength of my emotional response to causes lying outside of me *cannot* react otherwise than I do. Hence, how can one prepare for this, and how can one remember and desire the repetition of yesterday's even successful form?

I should like the actors to improvise the whole play.

After all, they know who they are and what their relations are with the other characters; they have the same ideas and aspirations—so why cannot they live, *i. e.*, engage in action.

There should be no cliches.

Each rehearsal is a new rehearsal.

Each performance is a new performance.

The actor should: 1) *know what he*

is now doing on the stage and why he is doing it;

2) should *"have a past;"*

3) should develop at the rehearsals the *correct relations* with the other characters;

4) should *wish and engage in action* as indicated by the author (it being understood that these wishes and actions are accepted by the actor as the only ones logical and possible for a given character);

5) should *know the text.*

Nothing more is necessary. I assert this and am prepared to prove it, if necessary. As it is, I think that for us, who were trained in the Art Theater, this is evident and *needs no proof.*

All the rehearsals should be utilized for:

1) subtle, painstaking creative *analysis of the text* (the main idea, the subtext),

2) *determining the objectives and units* (what and why),

3) development of relations (because the rehearsal is a day in the life of the image, a succession of days forms the personality).

4) *organic development in oneself* during the rehearsal of the attitude to life and the conception of life taken and held by the character in question.

Thus, I visualize a group of persons *tained* during a succession of repetitions so as

to adopt the right relations among themselves;

to know the background of the play;

to seek the realization of their aspirations;

to know the inner and external aspects of the play.

Today this group of actors, in order to achieve their holiday, take the situation given by the author and *realize* their aspirations. Along his path towards realization each member of the group encounters obstacles and strives to overcome them. Some overcome them, others are themselves overcome. Let the victor be joyful, but because he emerged victor, not because he must represent joy.

Let the victim be sad, but only because he has failed to realize his aspirations, not because he must play a sad role. Let joy and sadness come of themselves, and let them come with the strength and in the degree possible for the actor *today.*

I want the actors to aspire in earnest, not to pretend that they are aspiring. I want them to need organically what their heroes need. *Them. Need. Organically.* All three words are important and equivalent.

Striving with calm conviction towards their chief aim, towards their life's goal, I would say the actors are unconsciously born again, and it is for the audience who observes them, to determine what kind of people they represent. The actor should not behave on the stage in such a way as to say: "Look at me, this is the kind of person I am meant to be."

I want all the actors to do nothing connected with the theater in the morning and afternoon of the day *Rosmersholm* is billed and not to be asked to rehearse any other plays.

I want *Rosmersholm* to be performed no oftener than once a week.

Setting for "Rosmersholm" Act I. (1918)

I want the actors to love it and feel that the day of its performance is a holiday.

I want them to look forward to each performance of the play, the way people look forward to Easter Sunday on Maundy Thursday.

INTERPRETATION

Brief and simple.

"This is a poetical production dealing with human beings and their destinies."

These are Ibsen's own words.

The action takes place in Rosmersholm, an old family seat, with grand traditions but sunk in inertness, its life come to a standstill and the same old monotonous round of days being repeated from century to century.

In Rosmersholm lives Johannes Rosmer, the last childless leaf of the once mighty branch of the Rosmers. With him lives Beata—his pale, delicate, abnormally passionate wife.

The sense of lofty striving, which began to awaken in him under the influence of Ulric Brendel, has been killed, and he spends his quiet days in poring over books on heraldry and genealogy.

He evidently is a deficient husband, because for some reason his queer wife is always distressed after taking leave of him.

No, he cannot give her a sensuous response.

Things are trying for her. But trying for him, too.

Otherwise everything is quiet and peaceful, as always.

But then Rebecca makes her appearance.

This pastor aristocrat appeals to her.

A woman of unbridled passion, Rebecca is determined to achieve her end. But the pastor fails to notice her passionate eyes or to understand those slightly arrogant, challenging remarks which she seems to drop as if by sheer chance.

Trusting her, he reveals to her the world of his thoughts. Trusting her, he borrows from her books, new and fascinating. Trusting her, he begins to experience new emotions. There awakens in him that which Ulric Brendel had once imparted to him. Tactfully and generously he shares with her the new summer of his soul.

Rebecca is defeated. Selfish desires disappear of themselves. Rosmer's lofty soul has ennobled her.

She now shares his dreams.

The conviction arises in her that Rosmer can and should achieve his dreams.

Rosmer should leave Rosmersholm and take life by the horns.

But what of Beata?

Beata is mere ballast.

Rebecca disposes of Beata in her own way, which she does not regard as sinful.

Rosmer is now free and can go.

Rebecca is to help him.

The first thing he must do is to make known to his old friends through Kroll that he is no longer one of them.

Rosmer finds it difficult to do this.

Then, quite by chance, he receives a fateful visit from his former teacher, Brendel, also a dreamer and also inactive. Brendel breaks with his isolation (spiritual Rosmersholm) and sets out "to take hold of life."

No, there must be no hesitation.

He must act now, at once, as persuaded by Rebecca.

And he utters the terrible words to Kroll.

Kroll is stunned; he leaves, grieved and disturbed.

This is only natural. However, Rosmer will convince them all and they will understand.

But Rebecca knows full well what the rupture implies and what will follow it.

She takes steps to insure Mortensgard's support. True, he is a shady character, but is it essential that the means be pure, when truth will triumph by these means without their being pure?

Kroll leaves the house reminding Rosmer of Beata and the white horses.

Mortensgard leaves the house, also reminding Rosmer of Beata.

Rosmer is shaken. Rebecca must hasten. Quick, quick, if the things they treasure are to be saved.

Their spiritual child, born as a result of their spiritual marriage; may perish.

But Rosmer cannot be saved; he says that his conscience is polluted, for it was he who summoned the white horse which came for Beata.

It is beyond the power of Rebecca, this wretched creature with a dark past, to destroy the idea of conscience which has developed in Rosmersholm.

This means that the burden pressing down on Rosmer's soul must be lifted; she must tell him who brought about the appearance of the white horses.

"Rosmer, it was I who killed Beata."

Now your conscience is clear.

Go out into the new world alone.

It means Rebecca deceived him. It means that for her own personal ends she had wormed her way into Rosmersholm, killed Beata, made him infatuated with her and now calls him away somewhere.

He no longer trusts her in anything.

He must go to his old and tested friends.

Again the old life.

He goes to them and pleads his guilt.

But where will this terrible woman go now?

"Anywhere. It's all the same to her."

"And he?"

"He will put an end to his life, because he does not wish to go on living such a life. It is beyond his power to ennoble people."

Why did she do all this?

"I loved you, Rosmer."

"I do not believe you."

"I felt passion towards you."

"What are you saying?"

"You ennobled me, and the passion passed."

"That is not true. I cannot ennoble people."

"You ennobled me."

"Prove it!"

"How would you like me to."

"Follow Beata."

"I will do it with joy."

If that is true, he will believe her.

"Yes, it is true."

"Then let us die together."

"You with your past and I with mine, we cannot go on living. If we go on living, we would be defeated. We would remain alive condemned to this by the living and the dead."

"But I have a new philosophy: we are judges of ourselves and I will permit neither the living nor the dead to triumph over me."

"Joy ennobles the soul, Rebecca."

"Let us die with joy."

"You are now joyful."

"Yes, I too."

"To remain so, we must die."

And so they die.

The above is a short and deliberately simplified interpretation of the play.

I may be told that this is not an interpretation, but a brief resumé of the play.

No, it is an interpretation but one which offers nothing new or special in addition to what the author intended.

If you read the interpretation of *Rosmersholm* given by Madame Appollonskaya[21] you will look in vain for the substance of the play. She *explains* to the reader that Rosmer stands for Christianity, Rebecca for paganism and that the bridge is the edge that links them. It is all invention and false. In this way one can build up whatever theory one likes and whichever way one prefers.

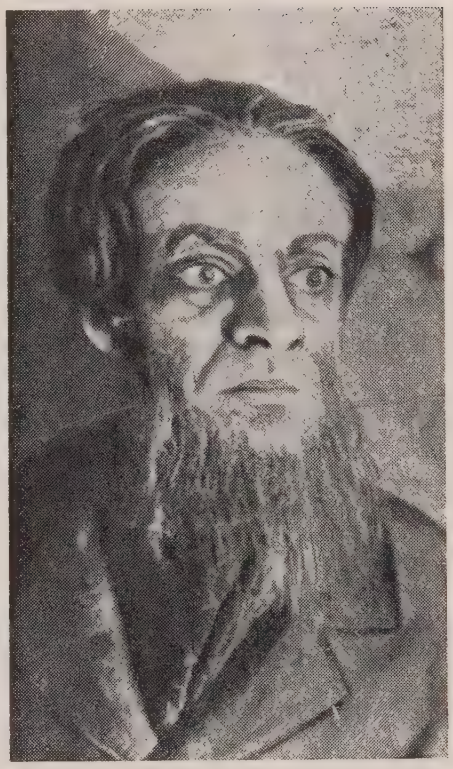
The author said: this is a poetic work *dealing with human beings and their destinies.*

No symbols.

A striving towards destiny.

Here roughly is the through-going action of the play.

Not tense striving but continuous realization of the striving, for the sake of achieving the goal.



Vakhtangov in the role of Brendel in Ibsen's "Rosmersholm," staged by Vakhtangov himself in the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theater in 1918

Rosmer should want a new life (know the old).

Rebecca should also want it. Without this desire it is impossible to determine the through-going action in their respective roles.

The through-going action in Rosmer's role: listening to his conscience and keeping it pure.

The through-going action in Rebecca's role: supporting, to the point of self-abnegation, Rosmer's belief that his conscience is clear.

UNITS OF THE PLAY

These, of course, depend on the fundamental line of the play, on its through-going action.

That should be called a unit which constitutes a stage in the approach of the through-going action's objective to completion.

Through-going action—realizing of the striving toward a new life.

Consequently: the main units of the main action will be

1. Rosmer, under the influence of Rebecca, announces his "recantation."
2. Rosmer has doubts about the cause of Beata's death; Rebecca tries to dispel his doubts.
3. Rebecca confesses her sin so that Rosmer should doubt no longer.
4. Rosmer and Rebecca find themselves unable to accomplish their plans.
5. Rosmer and Rebecca achieve victory in death.

These are the five *principal* situations in the play, whence the five *principal* units.

These are carried out with the assistance of auxiliary units.

This makes clear the significance of such units as Kroll's visit, Brendel's visit, second Kroll's visit, Mortensgard's visit, Kroll's third visit and Brendel's second visit.

Let the audience draw general conclusions for themselves. What they are actually confronted with is life of souls who seek the beautiful and die with joy, to the amazement of all Rosmersholm.

PRINCIPAL LINE OF THE PLAY

The principal line of the play should be sought in the relations between Rosmer and Rebecca.

It is not Rosmer who is the driving axle of the play. Nor is it his striving that determines the through-going action of the play.

It is not Rebecca who is the driving axle of the play. Nor does her striving determine its through-going action.

Fulfillment of the striving of both towards a new life—this is the through-going action of the play.

The point is in the *fulfillment*.

Such fulfillment is necessary for the sake of achieving the new life.

Rosmer, under the influence of Rebecca, conceives the idea that human beings can become happy if the desire to "liberate the mind and purge the will" is implanted in them.

Rebecca induces Rosmer to assume the role of one who is to awaken in people their higher nature.

Rosmer is confronted with the question: can he do this?—to do it he must have a clear conscience, a conscience free of sin. His answer to the question: I can do it because my conscience is clear. Rebecca then urges him to act. He must set about realizing this, in the first place making known his new outlook and breaking with his conservative friends.

Rosmer realizes this.

Rebecca further persuades Rosmer to establish contact with Mortensgard, as Kroll will try to have his revenge and Rosmer must have the possibility of defending himself.

After Kroll speaks out, Rosmer becomes convinced that Rebecca is right, and realizes the establisment of contact with Mortensgard.

But Kroll and Mortensgard have said things that shake Rosmer's belief that his conscience is clear.

The question arises: what was the cause of Beata's death?

Rosmer must answer the question, otherwise the sin will be on his conscience, and without a clear conscience he cannot go to the people as the prophet of the gospel of purification.

And he sets about *realizing* the solution of this "problem."

Rebecca sees the workings of Rosmer's mind, and tries to distract his attention, acting through the force of her conviction; she reminds him of the beautiful dream of their life together, tells him he must be reasonable and shows him the path he is to take, in a word, she does everything to make him forget. For the sake of what they have in common, she sets about realizing her plan for keeping Rosmer's conscience clear.

Rosmer fails to find an answer.

There remains still another means of working on Rosmer—just so as to prevent his halting along the path he has taken, namely, to reveal the truth.

And she realizes this, too, for the sake of what they have in common.

Now he can go on—she will remove herself out of his life.

Rosmer is broken and relinquishes his desire to realize a new life, as he no longer believes her and, in consequence, he no longer believes in that which they have reached together.

He will believe if she gives proof by dying.

Rebecca agrees even to this, for the sake of what they have in common.

But now, because of his sinful past, Rosmer himself cannot face the people with his message.

He must die to atone for his sin.

He must die joyously for joy elevates the soul.

And they both fulfilled this.

They have not fulfilled their main object, but they have known fulfillment.

In each main unit the relations between Rosmer and Rebecca should be emphasized with especial clearness.

And in each auxiliary unit Rosmer's relations with Kroll, Mortensgard and Brendel.

The units of the roles now depend on the main and auxiliary units of the play.

The main units of all the roles should be in the main units of the play: the auxiliary—in the auxiliary.

The main idea of the main unit should not be broken up by the auxiliary thoughts of other units. The actor should know what is important in his role (the main thought) and what has arisen accidentally, which he utilizes as an accident subserving the fundamental.

The fundamental can never be obliterated.

Everything auxiliary can be eliminated (in practice this should not be done, of course) without injury to the fundamental.

NOTES ON THE PRODUCER'S COPY OF "ROSMERSHOLM"

Ibsen has the "feel" of the drama.

The play begins with something that disturbs the conservative circles. The imperious Kroll. He becomes extremely agitated.

In the production of any play, the actor instinctively seeks and strives towards emotion. His understanding of human emotion must be beyond reproach.

The main reason justice has not been done to Ibsen is that he has not been approached as a creator of monumental characters.

In the next stage of the work it is necessary to find something that will endow the play with poetic form.

Brendel remembers Rosmer the way one remembers an idea, the way an aroma is remembered.

The through-going action of the play comes from a hurricane which drives everything before it and even sweeps away Rosmer.

Rebecca has a revolutionary spirit which fires Rosmer.

FROM VAKHTANGOV'S DIARY

April 13, 1918.

The first dress rehearsal of *Rosmersholm* was held today. The Art Theater saw it. Leonidov had fallen ill and I had to take his place as Brendel. My two-year's work is finished.

What I have lived through . . . March on, march on!

LETTER TO R. M. STAROBINETS[22]

November 1, 1918.

You must pardon me, but I cannot address you by your given name and patronymic, as I do not remember your patronymic. Let me address you so: My good Starobinets!

If you have any trust in me, if the art of the stage is in any way dear to you, you will take what I have to say seriously and when you are alone you will think it over and answer it for yourself and take a clear, definite, firm stand. You must do this because our calling demands that we take such a stand.

Think over this question carefully: do you love the theater strong enough to serve it, to make its service the most important, the fundamental thing in your life, in this earthly life which is given to us only once? Or have you something else, for the sake of which you find it necessary to live, which makes life worth while, which justifies your earthly existence, compared to which the theater is of secondary importance, a superfluous though wonderful adornment of your life which you gladly give to that something else which you find fundamental.

If your answer to the first question is in the affirmative, if the art of the theater is of fundamental importance, then think over the question of whether you are giving to this fundamental thing as much as is necessary to justify its place in your life. Fundamental things always make great demands upon men. Fundamental things always demand sacrifices. Everything else exists only for the sake of the fundamental. Remove the fundamental and then everything that complemented it—the comforts of life, love, books, friends, the whole world, in fact—becomes unnecessary and a man feels that he is superfluous.

If you answer the second question in the affirmative and reply that there is something else more precious to you than the theater, then think it over whether it is right, even if your preoccupation with art is of secondary importance to you, to give it so little as you do; is it right to give so little to such a great and joyful thing as the theater, as the building up of a theater. Just think! God has been generous to you. You have a gift of mastering things easily and freely. You are at home on the stage. You have temperament. You possess charm. *If you work*, you can become a good actress, an artist, in a few years, after one or two plays. And if you work a *great deal*, you can become a *great* actress. I consider it my duty to say all this to you, my pupil,

as one who has come to love your talent, as a worker in the theater, as one who rejoices in the face of radiant talent. You have been lucky in the first stages of your career. This rarely happens (sometime in the future you will recall your first stages and this letter as well). One should never halt, one should never miss a single day. If I do have any knowledge, if I have anything at all to give to others, it is because of the tremendous amount of work I do at all hours of the day—you have seen this work go on before your very eyes.

Do not sin against God; do not ruin your life. For the sake of the big thing in life, you should sacrifice your personal interests which *at the moment* mean perhaps a great deal to you. Remember that everything can be retrieved save youth; one must not waste one's youth on what is transient. It is with warm, heartfelt feelings towards you, with a complete understanding of your woman's soul, so beautiful and frank, and it is without any anger at your frivolous attitude towards yourself, that I have written this letter. If you do not consider what I have written, *before it is too late*, we will see how a divine gift is trampled on with disdain, how something beautiful is permitted to wither and perish, how that which could have been a source of delight to your fellow creatures is squandered and exchanged for trivialities. I have written these things with all the sorrow of which my heart is capable.

Yours affectionately,

E. Vakhtangov

FROM VAKHTANGOV'S NOTE-BOOK

October 1918.

A part is prepared only after the actor has made every word of it his own.

He should aim at reaching a condition in which his temperament is aroused without external stimuli; hence, during the rehearsals the actor should, above all, work in such a way that everything that surrounds him in the play becomes his personal atmosphere, that the tasks of his part become his personal tasks; if he achieves all this, his temperament as an actor will speak out from the essence of his own being. Such temperament is the most precious, for it alone is convincing and free from deception.

Sometimes an actor with too many elements of magnanimity and decency in him cannot make all the necessary adjustments for a role of a scoundrel. In such case he fails to do justice to the image, although the quality of his acting is good owing to his having lived through the role.

If the actor does not convert the essence of the play into the essence of his own being and, what is of paramount importance, if he does not believe that the secret of genuine artistic creation is faith in the subconscious (which reacts of itself by virtue of its essential nature), he must act perforce according to past patterns, patterns developed during poor rehearsals. Everything will be tedious and hackneyed. The audience will know beforehand what and how the actor is going to play.

The most interesting thing in every new role is the unexpected.

The most important thing for a producer is the ability to approach the actor's soul, *i. e.*, to tell him how to find that which is necessary. It is not enough to show the actor the colors—to reveal the text—for the producer should also be able to lead the actor surreptitiously toward a practical way of accomplishing his task.

"You have such and such a task before you." But the actor does not know how to accomplish it. He should be shown the ABC of the solution of his problem. In most cases it is clear what is wrong—either the actor does not feel his object, or has no vital understanding of the task, or has a poor grasp of the essence of his role, or takes the letter of the role, not the spirit, or is remote from the through-going action of the play, or is under tension, etc., etc.

October 1918.

Both producer and pedagogue should pursue with conviction that which they know; they should never try to give the impression of knowing something which in reality they do not know. In such cases they should say firmly and unequivocally: "I do not know," and explain why (the reason).

October 22, 1918.

The actor's training should consist in storing his subconscious with multifarious capacities: the capacity for acting with freedom, for concentration, for being serious, "scenic," artistic, active, expressive, observant, quick to make adjustments and so on. There is no end of these capacities.

Equipped with such an arsenal of weapons, the subconscious builds, from the material provided for it, an almost perfect piece of work.

Strictly speaking, the actor should merely study and master the text along with his partners and then go on the stage to create the image.

That, of course, is the ideal. The actor has then developed all the requisite ca-

pacities and resources. The actor must be an improvisor. This is the thing we call talent. Heavens only knows what goes on in the theatrical schools. The chief mistake of the schools is that they set out to *teach*, while what they should do is to *educate*.

October 30, 1918.

The actor should study the plastic arts not in order to be able to dance well, to have beautiful gestures or a beautiful carriage, but in order to transmit to his body (develop in himself) a sense of plasticity. After all, plasticity not only exists in movement but also in a carelessly thrown piece of cloth, in the surface of a frozen lake, in a cat drowsing snugly, in hanging garlands and in a motionless marble statue.

Plasticity is ever present in nature: the rise and fall of the waves, the swaying of a branch, the trotting of a horse (even of a jade), the transition of day into evening, a sudden whirlwind, the flight of a bird, the stillness of mountain spaces, the mad rush of a waterfall, the heavy gait of an elephant, the ugly shape of a hippopotamus—all are plastic—there is no embarrassment, no clumsy tension, nothing is labored or lifeless. There is nothing dead or immobile in a cat slumbering sweetly; but, my God, how immobile is the painstaking young man who dashes at full speed to fetch a glass of water for his beloved.

By dint of long and assiduous efforts the actor should consciously develop the habit of being plastic, so that afterwards he can express himself unconsciously with plasticity in the way he wears his clothes, in the sound of his speech, in the capacity for physical (through the external form of the visible) transformation into the character he represents, in the capacity for correct distribution of energy in his muscles, in the capacity to mold himself into whatever he likes by gesticulation, voice, music of speech, the logic of emotion.

ORDER ISSUED BY VAKHTANGOV TO THE STUDIO

September 22, 1918.

Inasmuch as N. N. Shcheglova[23] has been extremely inattentive to the studio (failing to be on duty at performances), she naturally loses the right to receive attention from the studio.

I request the studio not to engage N. N. Shcheglova for one month, at performances, either in programs or in her official capacity. Moreover, the studio should refuse to offer her any services whatever. Personally, I shall not work with her for a whole month.

E. Vakhtangov

LETTER TO V. I. NEMIROVICH-DANCHENKO

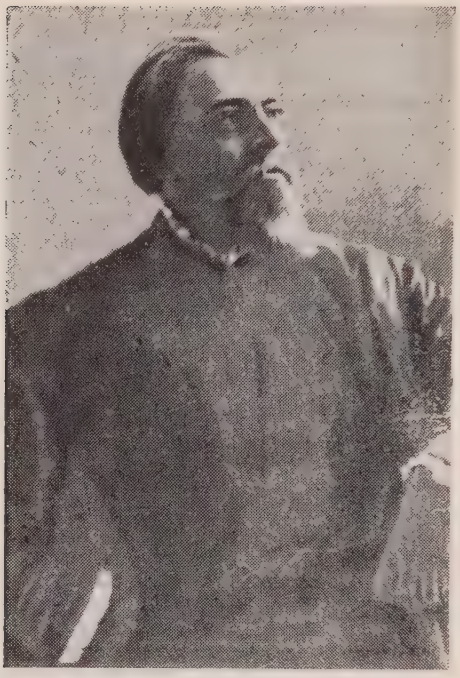
January 17, 1919.

Dear Vladimir Ivanovich!

A sense of duty tells me that I ought to inform you that I have had an operation, that it was successful, that I am gradually getting better, but that I shall not be out of the sanatorium before another 21 days . . . In Moscow it would be impossible to get the treatment I get here. The warmth and food and everything necessary for the operation were given to me with love and attentiveness and without any fuss. To be frank, I was in a bad way. The operation showed that I had a big ulcer of long standing, and that the doctors who had claimed an operation unnecessary had been mistaken. I feel that I have been saved; I have been through a lot during the last few days. I think of people with gratitude and affection.

When I look back on my life I see that I have done much which I should not have done and that my life on earth would have been empty had I not entered the Art Theater. There I learned all that I know; there I was gradually becoming purified, there my life acquired meaning. It was you, Vladimir Ivanovich, who took me on, and it is to you more than to anyone else that I am obliged for what I possess, and I cannot, I cannot help telling you of the deep, heartfelt gratitude I feel towards you. I had never told you how eagerly I devoured every word of yours, especially when you spoke about the art of acting. You have no idea how searchingly I have looked to you for an answer to the many questions connected with the theater; and I have always found the answer.

The first talk we had about Rosmersholm proved an impetus which had carried me on throughout the entire work on the play; and when you were passing on the production, many new things were opened up to me. Soul and spirit, nerves and thought, quality of temperament, "seconds for whose sake everything else exists," the clear-cut character of a play's sections, the sub-text, temperament and psychology of the author, the search for the mise en scène, the fitting together by the producer of sections of varying "saturation," and many more of your ideas, all of great significance and beauty as well as amazing simplicity and clarity, have for me become familiar realities and have filled my being with joyful conviction. I shall not have another opportunity like the present for telling you of all my gratitude and it may be that many years will pass in quiet unobtrusive work before life sends an occasion



Vakhtangov as a guest at Laura's in Pushkin's "The Stone Guest," at the Moscow Art Theater in 1915

for communing with you. For this reason I have hastened to tell you what is on my mind, be it ever so badly expressed, to tell you, be my words ever so lowly, about my enthusiasm, faith, gratitude and love, genuine human love.

With deep respect and esteem.

E. Vakhtangov

FROM NOTEBOOK ON THE PEOPLE'S THEATER

March 31, 1919.

Art should not be divorced from the people.

The artist should acquire vision among the people, not teach them. The artist should ascend to the level of the people, having comprehended their loftiness, instead of attempting in his conceit to raise them to his own imagined level.

Art should aim at contact with the soul of the people. The soul of the people, as a result of contact with the soul of the artist, who has learnt from the people the words of their soul, should yield a truly popular creation (a myth, perhaps).

Artistic striving should snatch from the breast of the people the word imprisoned in it. Without the artist it will trail on the ground, having failed to find its form. It will be trampled under the heavy feet of time.

To achieve victory, the artist, like Antæus, must touch the soil; that soil, to the artist, is the people.

Only the people create, they alone bear the creative energies and seed of future creation. The artist who does not draw upon these energies and does not look for this seed is guilty of a sin against his own life.

That which is deposited in the people is of necessity immortal. It is here that the artist should turn the eyes of his soul.

The people *experience* reality, refract the values of reality in their soul, and bring to light these values which are a result of true experience, in the form of images preserved by the people's memory, *i. e.*, by folk art.

The theater must not be converted into an opium den.

The people long for and aspire to art. Artist, listen to them.

The artist is he who has the capacity for his own intuitional comprehension.

A gifted producer belongs to the people.

WHY I WOULD LIKE TO WORK IN TEO[24]

March 1919.

1. TEO should tactfully make all types (in the artistic sense) of theaters *understand* that to go further along the road mapped out by them will mean at best to turn a new page, even if most glorious, in their *old* life. That the revolution has arrested the growth of the theaters existing hitherto. It has, so to speak, lapped off all possibilities of further development along the old, albeit possibly solid, lines. That if they do not want to become "an old theater," a theater-museum, they must make some *radical* change in their life. Those theaters which had achieved perfection by the eve of the revolution will occupy a place of honor in a museum, and their records will each fill a volume in the future encyclopedia of Russian art. (This applies to the Maly and Art Theaters.)

This means that people should be given to understand that if they want to create something new, they must

preserve their magnificent past and begin to create something new, *on new lines*. If this is impossible because of human nature as such, let them spend the remainder of their days in doing the best they can.

2. The *new* means new conditions of life. It must be understood, once and for all, that everything old has passed away. Forever. The tsars are dying off. The landowners will not return. Capital will not return. There will be no more factory-owners. It must be understood that all this has been made an end of. And the new nation should be shown the good that *was* and this good should be preserved *only* for this new nation. And in the new conditions of life, of which the new people constitute the main conditioning factor, it is just as imperative as it was in the old life to exercise the gift of listening, if we are to create what is new, valuable and great. That which is not heard in the soul of the people, which is not divined in the heart of the people can never be long-lived. One should go among the people and listen to them. The artist should mix with the throng and listen to the beating of its heart. He should draw upon the people for creative energy. He should *contemplate* people with his whole artistic being.

No debates, discussions, talks, lectures and reports will create the new theater.

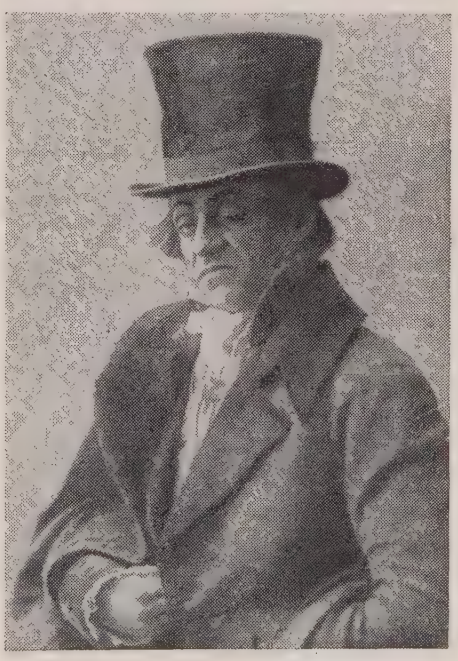
Artists, both refined and daring and responding to the people, must appear. They should either arise from among the people themselves or should be men who have "hearkened" to the god of the people. It is then that the new theater will have come.

It requires time for artists to arise from among the people. Perhaps, it requires very much time. Centers from where they can appear must be created by patient toil. If the creators of the new are to be those who on the eve of the revolution were working in the old art, it is imperative that they realize how badly people lived hitherto; they must realize what a wonderful thing is happening to mankind and that everything which is old has come to an end. They must learn to love the new people.

"MUCH WILL BE ASKED OF THE ARTIST . . ."

March 1919.

The revolution has divided the world by a red line into the "old" and the "new." There is not a single corner in human life through which the line does not pass, while there is not a single human being who does not feel it, in one way or other. People desiring to continue the old ways, and defend the old (to the point of using arms); people who accept the new and who also defend the new (to the point of using arms); people who await the results of the struggle between the two above-mentioned forces, *i. e.*, people "who passively adapt themselves"—such are the three categories (of people) clearly differentiated by the clear line of the revolution. The material, spiritual, emotional and intellectual sides of human life have been disturbed by a hurricane unprecedented in the history of the earth. Ever further and further and on an ever-widening scale, it spreads the flames of destruction. The age-old structures of the human race are burning up. The circle of those who have been caught in its rejuvenating fire is ever widening. But some are naive folk still waiting for a fire brigade capable of quenching the flames that has gathered for centuries among the people. They still think they see the incendiaries and still expect these rebels (the incendiaries) to be caught and the bygone prosperity to return (with white loaves). They do not even take the trouble of glancing through the pages of that book which tells not about the history of kings but about the life of that many-faced being whose name is the people.



Vakhtangov as Mr. Tackleton in Dickens' "The Cricket on the Hearth," at the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theater, 1914

It is the people who raise with their own hands the individual to the summit of life, and bring destruction on such as break with them. It is the people who open the crater of their boundless soul and throw up the lava which is accumulating for centuries in ominous silence. Some have mistaken this silence for thoughtlessness. Some thought that their loud prosperity, side by side with the silent misery of the people was in the order of things. But the people cried out. They cut through the thick wall of the silence. They cried out to the world. Their cry is lava; their cry is fire and flame. The revolution is their cry. Coming, as it does with hurricane strides, leaving a fiery trail that divides the world into "before" and "after," how can the revolution fail to touch the heart of the artist? How can the ear of the artist, on hearing this cry to the world, fail to understand who uttered the cry? How is it possible for the soul of the artist not to feel that the "new" just created by him, but created before the Revolution, becomes "old" the moment the Revolution takes its first step? If the creations of the past are beautiful, they should be made accessible to the people, for it is precisely because the beautiful was always concealed from them that the people have broken their silence and now they demand the return of all they were robbed of. Mankind has not a single truly great work of art that is not a perfect embodiment of the creative energies of the people themselves, for whatever is truly great has been heard by the artist in the soul of the people.

When revolution comes—and it comes when the genuinely beautiful in all spheres of life becomes the possession of a few—what happens is this: the people demand that what is rightfully theirs be returned to them. The artist need not fear for his creation: if it is truly beautiful, the people themselves will keep it and preserve it. In this respect, the people have extraordinary intuition.

But that is not all.

If the artist wants to create what is "new," to exercise his creative faculties after the Revolution has come, he must do so "along" with the people. Not for them, not for the sake of the people, not apart from the people, but along with them. To create what is new and achieve a victory, the artist, like Antæus, must touch the soil. That soil, to the artist, is the people.

Only the people create, they alone bear the creative energies and seed of future creation. The artist who does not draw upon these creative energies and does not search for this seed is guilty of a sin against his own life. The soul of the artist must seek contact with the soul of the people and if the artist has learnt from the people the words of their soul, the meeting will give a truly folk creation, *i. e.*, a truly beautiful one.

It is in the voice of the people, wherein age after age have been deposited the crystals of the people's soul; in the precious harmony elaborated through the ages from the riches of human emotion actively experienced by the people, in this ocean of age-old wisdom wherein each who sees the sun has left an immortal particle of himself, that particle which he bore within him and for the sake of bearing which he was born to see the sun; it is here, in the voice of the people, that the artist should feel the living fire of his aspirations towards heaven.

If the artist is destined to bear the spark of immortality let him turn the eyes of his soul towards the people, for that which has developed among the people is immortal. The people are now creating new forms of life. They are creating them through Revolution, for never did they have nor have they today any other means of crying to the world against injustice.

"Only on the shoulders of a great social movement can true art rise from its present state of civilized barbarism to the height it merits."

"Only Revolution can bring to life from its depths once more, but made more beautiful, noble and all-embracing, that which it snatched and imbibed from the conservative spirit of the preceding cultural period."

"Revolution only, not restoration, can give us once more a great work of art."

Thus spoke Richard Wagner.[25]

Only Revolution . . .

What "people" does he refer to?

All of us are the people.

It is to the people who create Revolution that he refers.

ON THEATRICAL ANALYSIS OF PLAYS AND ROLES

March 1919.

If you know some person well, if you know of several important events in his life and know his character, habits and tastes, *i. e.*, likes and dislikes, you will find it easier to answer the question, how he would act on this or that occasion. You can invent a number of situations for such an acquaintance and tell almost infallibly how he will behave in each instance. The better you know him, the more details you remember,

the better you will get the feel of him and the more correctly and rapidly will your feeling prompt you as to the effect a given situation will have on your acquaintance. When an author writes a play he invariably has a good knowledge of the people in the play. The more intimately he knows them, the truer to life will be the course of events (first acts) and the truer to life the finale (last act).

ERIK THE FOURTEENTH [26]

March 22, 1921.

Erik . . . Poor Erik. He is a fervid poet, keen mathematician, sensitive artist, incorrigible dreamer, poor Erik doomed to the life of a king. His kingly ambition leads him to stretch his hand across the sea to Queen Elizabeth of England, whose heart is "occupied by the Duke of Leicester." At the same time his rebellious soul, the soul of an artist seeking escape, leads him to the "Gray Dove" tavern, where he meets the daughter of a common soldier, whose heart is occupied by "ensign Mons." He feels the need of a friend and looking for one among the nobility, he draws to himself the aristocrat Gyllenstjerna because Gyllenstjerna is "a human being first and foremost." In the same "Gray Dove" tavern he comes across a reveller by the name of Persson, a "scoundrel" who finally ends on the gallows. Erik makes Persson his counsellor for "he is a friend, he is a brother, he is a good man." The king sends out invitations to his courtiers to attend a marriage ceremony and also gives a personal invitation to the soldier Mons along with his poor relations. The nobles decline the invitation, upon which Erik commands that beggars from the gutters and the prostitutes who frequent low taverns be invited instead.

The king acts quite in the spirit of the Gospels.

But all at once he begins to kick the "guests" and dubs them a pack of villains. However, when Gyllenstjerna tries to restrain the over-boisterous populace, kind-hearted Erik forbids him to touch "these children." Let them make merry. A married man, he ponders the question, "whom should I marry?" He asks his reveller friend to become his advisor in affairs of state and appoints him attorney general with unlimited powers, warning him however that if he, the king, is made to feel the reins, Persson will be thrown overboard. In a fit of humility he marries the soldier's daughter, but immediately after the wedding, driven furious by the nobles, he shouts at her: "Go to hell!" when she stretches her arms towards him to appease him. "Never go against truth and the law," "ever since I have had my children near me I have been against killing," "what does the law say on the matter"—these are his favorite utterances throughout his strange life. But no sooner does he deliver himself of one of these maxims, than he offers bribes, plans murder, summons the executioner, sometimes even doing the job of the executioner and committing murder himself. He accuses the nobility of treason and calls a meeting of the Council of Ministers to consider the case. Through Persson's efforts, the nobles are found guilty. But Erik suddenly informs the country that he has pardoned them.

Erik is a man born for misfortune.

Erik creates but only in order to destroy.

He oscillates between the dead world of the pale, anemic nobles and the living world of the plain people. This king whose whole nature cries out for rest, is fated never to find his place in life. He is hopelessly caught in the clutches of life and death.

Magnanimous to a fault, he declines a Polish princess and permits his brother Johann to woo her. But in a few minutes he commands that Johann be seized dead or alive and that "his arms and legs be cut off if he attemps to resist."

Now he is wrathful, now tender, now haughty, now simple, now protesting, now submissive, believing in both God and Satan, now blindly unjust, now a man of genius and intellect, now ludicrously helpless, now capable of making rapid decisions, now slow and prone to doubts.

God and hell, fire and water. Master and slave in one, he is built of contrasts and caught as in a vice between the contrasts of life and death. Such a man must inevitably destroy himself.

And eventually he perishes.

The common people remember the parable of the king in the Gospels, while the court trumpeters play a funeral march and the master of ceremonies hands over the regalia left behind by Erik—his crown, his robe, his globe and scepter—to his successor who ascends the throne to the strains of the funeral march.

Behind the throne stands a red executioner. Kingly authority which carries within itself its own antithesis must sooner or later perish. It, too, is doomed.

Arrows in the crown, arrows on the sword, arrows on clothes, on human faces, on the walls.

In selecting for production this play by Strindberg, the studio of the Art Theater has set out to give a theatrical production in which the inner content would justify the form which is remote from historic truth. "Refraction" of all situations—external and internal—in the play is conditioned by modernity.

The theme of the play, the style of acting (the lifeless world—the courtiers—monumental, statuesque and laconic qualities; the world of the living—Mons, Karin, Max—saturated with temperament and rich in details and the style of the scenery and costumes—remote from all existing style—are all dictated by a feeling for modernity.

All this is the subject of an experiment by the studio in its quest of scenic theatrical forms, for scenic content (the "art of emotion"). Hitherto the studio, in conformity with Stanislavsky's teaching, strove untiringly to achieve skill in the "art of experiencing." Now, also in conformity with Stanislavsky's teaching which seeks expressive forms and indicates the means of achieving them (breathing, sound, words, phrases, thought, gestures, body, plasticity, rhythm, all in a special theatrical sense having an inner basis with its roots in nature)—now, the studio is entering a period of search for theatrical forms. This is the first experiment. It is an experiment to which the studio has been brought by the time we live, by these days of Revolution.

TO AUDIENCE AT DRESS REHEARSAL OF "PRINCESS TURANDOT"

February 27, 1922.

Our teachers, our elder and younger comrades! Believe us, the form of today's production is the only form possible for the Third Studio. It is a form suitable not only for the story of Turandot but for any fairy tale by Gozzi. We have tried to find for Gozzi a contemporary form expressive of the Third Studio in its present stage of theatrical development.

The form demanded not only the retelling of the tale, but the use of scenic devices which possibly escaped the attention of the audience but which were absolutely indispensible for the training of the actors.

Each play the studio produces serves as a pretext for a special six-month course of training necessary for a particular form.

We are only beginning. We have not the right to invite audiences to plays performed by magnificent actors—as yet we have not trained such actors. The training of master-actors requires years and years. But we sift out actors, we seek the laws of the stage and imbibe all that Konstantin Sergeyevich (Stanislavsky) gives us; as yet we do not even dream of truly theatrical productions. Until such time as we form a cast of master-actors trained by our laboratory methods, we shall show only laboratory work.

The production of "Princess Turandot" on April 7, 1922, was attended by V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko. After the performance he sent his photograph to Vakhtangov with the following inscription:

To Evgueni Bagrationovich Vakhtangov. The night after *Princess Turandot*. My gratitude for the great artistic joy I felt, for your wonderful achievements, for your magnificent daring in finding solutions for contemporary theatrical problems, and for embellishing the name of the Art Theater.

V. Nemirovich-Danchenko
April 7, 1922"

LETTER TO V. I. NEMIROVICH-DANCHENKO

Dear Vladimir Ivanovich.

Yesterday, after each act of *Turandot*, I was informed by telephone about your reaction to the performance. After your conversation with my pupils last night, four of them visited me and gave me a full account of what you said. Along with the whole studio I felt extremely moved.

And now comes a package from you. A photo. Your photo with such an inscription . . .

What can I say? I am sorry that I am very weak and ill and cannot go to you immediately and thank you for the joy you have given me. How sorry I am that it is difficult for me to write and that I cannot collect my thoughts in order to convey to you the fullness of my heart. Last year it was ten years since the greatest event in my life: I was accepted by you in the Art Theater. "What can we do for you, and what can you do for us?" you asked me during our first conversation. "I want to learn," I answered.

From that day to this I have been learning. Under you and Konstantin Sergeyevich (Stanislavsky). You have no idea how eagerly I absorbed all you said at the rehearsals of *Hamlet*, *Thought*[27] and *Rosmersholm*. I learnt to understand the difference between your perception of the theater and Stanislavsky's. I have learnt to combine your teachings and those of K. S. You revealed to me

the meaning of the "theatrical" and "the actor's craft." I saw that over and above "emotion" (you never liked the term), you demanded something else from the actor. I learnt to understand what it means to talk about feeling on the stage and what it means to feel. And also much, much more about which I once spoke to you very briefly. I am most grateful, more grateful than I can tell. Your inscription on the photo is equivalent to recognition, and nothing could give me greater joy, because in art recognition is the only thing the artist strives for. To be recognized by you and K. S. is the summit of achievement, even if others refuse to accord recognition. Now I have a fear of the future, what if in my next work I fail to live up to what has been given me.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all that you, perhaps without knowing it, have done for me, for having caused me such joy.

I should like you to take the trouble of seeing *Hadibuk*[28] at the Habima Theater. This work has cost me my health. In the first place, it was necessary to solve "theatrically" and in contemporary terms the problem of presenting daily life on the stage, and in the second place it was necessary to "make the actors." I had to perform the whole play, all the roles, to the smallest details, with all the gestures, different intonations and changes in timbre of voice. I had to work out every phrase, as the Habima cast was very weak in the sense of the actor's craft. I had to work with various individual actors separately. Do not rail at me if you do not like *Hadibuk*; this is an experiment, a quest of form, a groping for what we have not found as yet, material for future work, that is if I am destined to do more work.

Pardon this long letter. I am very agitated and try to hold myself in check. Yesterday was one of the big holidays of my life. Never, my dear Vladimir Ivanovich, will I forget it . . .

TWO TALKS BETWEEN E. B. VAKHTANGOV AND HIS PUPILS[29]

April 10, 1922.

Konstantin Sergeyevich (Stanislavsky) demanded . . . that the spectator should be made to forget that he is in a theater and feel that he is in the same atmosphere

The dressing scene in Vakhtangov's production of Carlo Gozzi's "Princess Turandot" at the Third Studio of the Moscow Art Theater

and surroundings as the characters in the play. He was glad that spectators went to see the *Three Sisters*[30] in the Art Theater not as though they were going to a performance but like guests of the Prosorov family. He regarded this as the highest achievement of the theater. Konstantin Sergeyevich used to say: "As soon as the spectator has taken his seat and the curtain has risen, we take charge of him and make him forget that he is in a theater. We take him into our own environment, into our own atmosphere, into the surroundings existing on the stage." We, however, in conformity with our conception of the theater, take the audience into the world of the actors who are engaged in the work of the theater. Konstantin Sergeyevich wanted to get rid of banality in the theater, to put an end to it once and for all. Everything reminiscent of the old theaters, even in the slightest degree he dubbed "theatrical" and in the Art Theater the word "theatrical" became a term of abuse. It is quite true that everything he denounced was really banal, but he became so absorbed in casting out banality, that along with it he cast out genuine and necessary theatricality, the true "theatricality" which consists in presenting theatrical productions theatrically. What is required to make a production theatrical?

Firstly, the actor should handle his role in such a way that the audience is continually conscious of his craftsmanship. When a talented actor is performing, when the scenic interpretation of the role is in the hands of a genuine master, the effect is theatrical. But when an ungifted actor begins to imitate a master-actor, contributing nothing of his own to the role, the effect is theatrically banal.

Such, for example, has been the case with pathos. When a talented actor with a feeling for his role executes it with theatrical pathos, the audience understands, responds to it. But when an ungifted actor begins to imitate him (as regards form, of course) without being fired spiritually, the audience does not react; the actor does not succeed in conveying pathos. This is especially true when the ungifted actor is in love with himself.

That the theater has to have an exquisitely designed curtain, an orchestra and ushers wearing smart uniforms—that the theater has to have effective scenery and showy actors, knowing how to wear clothes, how to speak well and act with temperament; that applause be permitted in the theater—all this goes without saying, because these are all elements of genuine "theatricality." But when all this is done incompetently, when ushers in tasteless uniforms strut about the theater, when a wretched orchestra scrapes the instruments, when an incompetent actor imitates a temperament he does not possess and shows off in tasteless clothes, the effect is one of theatrical banality. Konstantin Sergeyevich denounced all this and set about casting it out and looking for the truth. This search for the truth led him to the truth of "emotion," *i. e.*, he began to demand genuine, unfeigned "emotion" on the stage, forgetting that what the actor experiences should be conveyed to the audience by theatrical means. And Konstantin Sergeyevich himself was compelled to resort to theatrical means. After all, you know that none of the Chekhov plays were produced without talking behind the scenes, chirping of crickets, orchestras, street noises, shouting of hawkers and chiming of clocks. But all these are theatrical devices found for the Chekhov plays.

K. I. Kotlubai: But what is mood? What is mood if not a theatrical achievement?

Vakhtangov: No, there should be no moods in the theater. In the theater there should be only joy; there should be no moods. Actually there are no theatrical moods at all. When you look at a picture painted in the naturalist manner, do you have a "mood?" It produces an impression on you because of its subject, but you forget at that time about the artist's craftsmanship. I remember the impression which I got from Repin's picture "Ivan the Terrible Killing His Son." I stood for hours before the picture; I was afraid of going near to it; but I judged it only from the standpoint of its content. I saw the blood, Ivan's eyes, and especially the eyes of his murdered son. But now when I look at the picture, I am repelled by it.

Once, talking about his work on one of Chekhov's plays, Konstantin Sergeyevich said: "We were sitting in the buffet feeling very upset; we were sitting in semi-darkness, gloomy and depressed. Nothing seemed to come of our work. Suddenly we heard a scraping sound. It was a mouse. We listened to it in silence and felt that now we had the right mood."

Suddenly I understood. The secret of the success of the Chekhov plays in the Art Theater lay in the use of appropriate theatrical devices.

A perfect work of art is eternal. A work of art means a work in which harmony of content, form and material has been found. Konstantin Sergeyevich found only harmony with the mood of Russian society at the time, but not everything

Scene from Act III of "Hadibuk." (1922)

that is timely is eternal. But the eternal is always timely.

When the Revolution began we felt that in art things should not continue as they had been. As yet we did not know genuine form, the form that had to be found, and for this reason the form in *Anthony* [31] was transitional. The next phase in our work will be a quest for lasting form. In the Chekhov plays the devices suggested by life coincided with those of the theater. But now, the theatrical devices we employed in *Anthony*—"denounce the bourgeois"—coincided with the demands of life, with the requirements of the day. But the present period will pass. When privation disappears and with it all ideas of privation, there will be no need to denounce the bourgeoisie. Thus, the devices we have chosen will cease to be theatrical. We must find genuine theatrical devices. We must find an eternal masque.

Stanislavsky made his appearance when true theatricality had died out. He began to build a type of actor who was a live man with a real heart and real blood. This man began to live in life and left the theater, because the theater became life. The time has come now to return the theater to the theater.

April 11, 1922.

Vakhtangov: You can put questions.

B. E. Zakhava: I think we should talk today about theatricality, genuine theatricality.

Vakhtangov: Very well. In the theater I search for modern devices for the production of plays in a form that would sound theatrical. Take, for example, ordinary every-day life. I try to solve the problem of its presentation on the stage, but not in the way the Art Theater has solved it, *i. e.*, by presenting an exact replica of it on the stage. I am anxious to find some pungent, incisive form for its presentation that would be theatrical, *i. e.*, a work of art. The solution of the problem given by the Art Theater does not generate a work of art, because the solution is not a creative one. It is merely a keen, clever, subtle result of observations.

I should like to designate what I am doing by the term "imaginative realism." You don't like the term, Ksenya Ivanovna? Why?

K. I. Kotlubai: I don't like it because Vakhtangov ought to bring words back to the stage in their true and unique significance. What you call "imaginative realism," is simply realism to me. I wish you wouldn't define your quests at all.

Vakhtangov: I don't feel like speaking at the moment. Try yourselves to explain the difference between naturalism and realism.

B. E. Zakhava: In my opinion naturalism gives an exact reproduction of what the naturalistic artist has observed in real life. Naturalism is photography. But the realistic artist selects from the raw material of life what seems to him the most important, the most essential. He rejects trivial details, choosing what is typical and important. But in the process of creation he is continually dealing with the material given by reality. Such art exists but it should not be confused either with naturalism nor with the object of Vakhtangov's quest.

Vakhtangov: I could name that which I am seeking "theatrical realism" instead of "imaginative realism," but that would be worse: in the theater everything should be theatrical. That goes without saying.

K. I. Kotlubai: I am sure there must be some well-formulated definition of realism. Boris Evguenievich (Zakhava—*Ed.*), you say that the realistic artist sifts the important from the unimportant; in my opinion that is absolutely incorrect. As I see it, realism in art in general, and in the theater in particular, is the artist's capacity for creation, for re-creation of what he receives from the material which inspires him. This material gives the realistic master-artist a definite impression, a definite idea, which he afterwards creates, by means known to him alone, in his own specific field of art.

Vakhtangov: So you want to say that Boris Evguenievich gave a wrong definition of realism. You think that realism means creation anew by means which resemble in no wise the impressions received by the artist. Give us an example. What would you call the Art Theater's production of Andreyev's *Life of a Man*?[32]

K. I. Kotlubai: In my opinion it is not true realism, and for this reason: it is an attempt to transfer to the stage the symbolic content of the play by the same symbolic means used by the author. It is not a re-creation of a symbolic play on the stage. Everything written by Andreyev is transferred to the stage just as it is.

Vakhtangov: That is not correct. The characters acting on the stage were created by the producer, not by Andreyev but by the producer. Andreyev did not write that such and such a character is fat and talks in such and such a way. Andreyev wrote the text. But the artist-actor creates the character, makes him wear clothes he feels he should wear, gives him definite (in this case schematic) movements, tries to discover how he walks, speaks, sits, and so on. *Life of a Man* and the *Drama* of *Life* are examples of imaginative realism.

B. E. Zakhava: Do you regard *The Lower Depths* as naturalism?

Vakhtangov: Of course, it is pure naturalism. The theater gave a false interpretation of Gorky. In my opinion Gorky is a romanticist, while the theater gave a naturalistic interpretation of him instead of a romantic one.

Ksenya Ivanovna, you say that we are searching for realism. Here is an example for you: in the second scene of *Hadibuk* (during the wedding) it was necessary to introduce a scene which would justify an interval of scenic time. We had to make the audience believe that the orchestra had time to meet the bridegroom, otherwise it would seem that the musicians return to the stage immediately after leaving it. To create the needed impression I introduced the scene with the two girls watching the orchestra, doing things that Chekhov characters might do, jump on benches, watch the orchestra and clap their hands. The result was a charming little scene. All the actors liked it. They felt that there was something Chekhov-like about it. However, the scene had to be discarded because it did not harmonize with the play as a whole. There even exists a term, "The Hadibuk device."

And what would you call *Turandot*?

K. I. Kotlubai: True realism.

Vakhtangov: No, it is imaginative realism.

Acting was common enough in bygone days, in the theater of Shakespeare or Molière. Now it is only a handful of great actors, like Duse, Chaliapin and Salvini who, while acting, underline the fact that they are acting.

Realism does not take everything it finds in life, but only what is necessary for the reproduction of a particular scene, i. *e.*, it shows only things that act. But it does take the truth of life; it gives us genuine feeling. Sometimes it presents details as well, in which case the result is naturalism, because details mean photography. Pushkin in the Art Theater is realism. Have you ever seen details in a Pushkin play or, say, in *Fedor*?[33]

However, in *Fedor* the boyar affords a chance to present some details, in which case there would be a replica of life, *i. e.*, naturalism. Sometimes the playwright does not provide for details but the producer introduces them; if you have come in from the street where it snows, the naturalistic producer makes you shake the snow off and talk etc. in the hallway.

A play can be produced either in a realistic manner or in the manner of imaginative realism. The effect produced by the latter will be more powerful because imaginative realism is like a statue that is comprehended by all the peoples.

Opera is usually produced naturalistically or at best realistically. I should approach it in the way gifted singers do subconsciously. One cannot deceive the audience. The singer must emphasize: I sing and so I go out on the proscenium. Konstantin Sergeyevich produces opera realistically. He does not permit the singer to go out to the footlights.

In *Anthony*, which we are doing now, we have a combination of the convention of external scenery, realism and imaginative realism. In the acting there is no naturalism, whatever. In imaginative realism, form and the producer's devices are of tremendous importance. The devices should be theatrical. It is very difficult to find a form which harmonizes with the content and is amenable to the proper artistic means. If you take a block of marble and hew it with little wooden hammers, nothing will result. To break the marble a suitable instrument is required.

When Luzhsky[34] takes a play he begins to ponder the question: "How should I produce it? Ah, in the manner of Sèvres porcelain." Tnis could be done, of course, but there would be no harmony between content, artistic means and form. *Ango*[35] is not convincing because its very form—musical comedy—requires devices of musical comedy. There is nothing of an "engraving" about it. In other words, appropriate form has not been found. Even the "engraving" manner is not consistently adhered to. It begins only when the act is over. The "engraving" manner is something immobile and very serious, even if the subject is frivolous. The principal thing is that in this case, a musical comedy is produced by dramatic means, not by musical comedy means.

Why is *Turandot* successful? Because harmony was found. On January 22, 1922, the Third Studio staged that Italian tale by Gozzi. The means are theatrical and up-to date. Content and form harmonize like a chord in music. This is imaginative realism, the new trend in the theater.

Drama of Life and *Life of a Man* were produced in the Art Theater in the manner of imaginative realism. But to see *Life of a Man* now would be unpleasant because it was produced by theatrical means of that period, the period of decadence.

Why is *Life of a Man* unacceptable now? Because it corresponds to bourgeois tastes. After order is restored and things settle down, it will be an anachronism to denounce the bourgeoisie and a production of *Anthony* will have to be approached from another point of view.

K. I. Kotlubai: A work of art which lives through the ages is realistic. Realism has existed in all the arts, except in the theater, because the means were not found to make a scenic production go over as realism. What was called realism in the theater is, in my opinion, a compromise form, which in substance expresses nothing.

Vakhtangov: Yes, to this compromise form is given the name of realism in the theater, whereas the things I am looking for I shall call imaginative realism.

Naturalism in the theater can be learned; naturalism is indifferent. Realism, too, can be learned.

In the theater there should be neither naturalism nor realism, but imaginative realism. Appropriate theatrical devices, when found, afford the author a real life on the stage. Devices can be learnt, but form must be created by the application of imagination. That is why I call it imaginative realism. Imaginative realism exists; it should now be present in all the arts.

COMMENTARY

1. L. A. Sulerzhitsky (1872-1916)—One of Stanislavsky's closest associates in the Moscow Art Theater, who was in complete agreement with his system, and who helped him in many ways in the development of his production and pedagogical ideas. Headed the directing body of the First Moscow Art Theater Studio. Published very interesting reminiscences of Chekhov and of the Moscow Art Theater.

2. *The Deluge*—a play by E. Berger, first presented in 1915. Staged by Vakhtangov.

3. V. S. Smyshlayev played the part of Charlie.

4. O. V. Baklanova played the part of Lizzy.

5. B. M. Sushkevich played the part of Stretton. N. N. Bromlay, an actress in the studio, wrote as follows on the

previous performance of *The Deluge*: "Sushkevich is far more moving and true to life than at the dress rehearsal."

6. A. A. Geirot played the part of Beer.

7. A. I. Cheban in 1911 entered the Moscow Art Theater, and later became one of the most prominent actors of the First Moscow Art Theater Studio.

8. A group of actors of the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theater toured the Caucasian front in a concert program.

9. Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* was produced in the studio in 1917.

10. Vakhtangov was then working on the production of Ibsen's *Rosmersholm* in the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theater. A. I. Cheban was rehearsing the role of Peter Mortensgard.

11. "White horses" in Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*—the legend that white horses appear to wake memories about the dead. Rosmer's wife Beata says before committing suicide as suggested by Rebecca: "Now they may expect the white horses shortly at Rosmersholm."

12. Dramatization of a story by the Russian writer Gleb Uspensky.

13. Hauptmann's play *Reconciliation* staged by Vakhtangov. First presentation in 1913.

14. Dickens' *The Cricket on the Hearth* first presented in 1914. Staging and production by B. M. Sushkevich.

15. For a long time the studio was attracted by the idea of adapting and producing Dickens' *The Chimes*. However, the production was never realized.

16. *Pilgrims* by V. M. Volkenstein, staged at the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theater, 1914.

17. *The Wreck of "Hope"* in the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theater.

18. V. M. Volkenstein, manager of the literary department of the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theater, submitted for discussion the *Tragedy of Love*, a play in four acts by the Norwegian playwright G. Heiberg.

19. O. L. Knipper-Chekhova—Actress in the Moscow Art Theater, who played the part of Rebecca in the production of *Rosmersholm* by the First Studio.

20. L. M. Leonidov, an actor in the Moscow Art Theater, played the part of Brendel in *Rosmersholm*.

21. Ibsen's Dramaturgy. *Rosmersholm*. I. A. Apollonskaya (Stravinskaya).

22. R. M. Starobinets, an actress in the Habima studio, who resigned from the studio for purely personal reasons. The letter was written in connection with her resignation.

23. N. N. Shcheglova—A student in Vakhtangov's Theater Studio.

24. TEO—Russian contraction of Theatrical Department of the People's Commissariat of Education. Vakhtangov headed the department's section in charge of theatrical productions.

25. Richard Wagner—*Art and Revolution*.

26. Strindberg's *Erik the Fourteenth* was produced by Vakhtangov in the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theater (The premiere was held on March 29, 1921). The names mentioned here are those of the characters in the play.

27. Leonid Andreyev's *Thought*. Production by V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko (1914).

28. An-sky's play *Hadibuk* was the last but one of Vakhtangov's productions in the Habima Studio. The premiere took place in 1922.

29. Stenographic reports of two conversations between E. B. Vakhtangov and K. I. Kotlubai and B. E. Zakhava, at Vakhtangov's home during his fatal illness.

K. I. Kotlubai and B. E. Zakhava—Vakhtangov's assistants in his studio. Zakhava has written a book entitled: *Vakhtangov and His Studio* (1930), as well as the concluding remarks, "The Creative Path of Vakhtangov," in the book entitled: *Vakhtangov—Notes, Letters, Articles* (1939), from which the fragments published here are taken. He is one of the most prominent contemporary stage directors. He staged a number of plays in the Vakhtangov State Theater.

30. Chekhov's play *Three Sisters* appeared on the stage of the Moscow Art Theater in 1901. The Prozorov family is the family of the three sisters—Olga, Masha and Irina—and their brother Andrei.

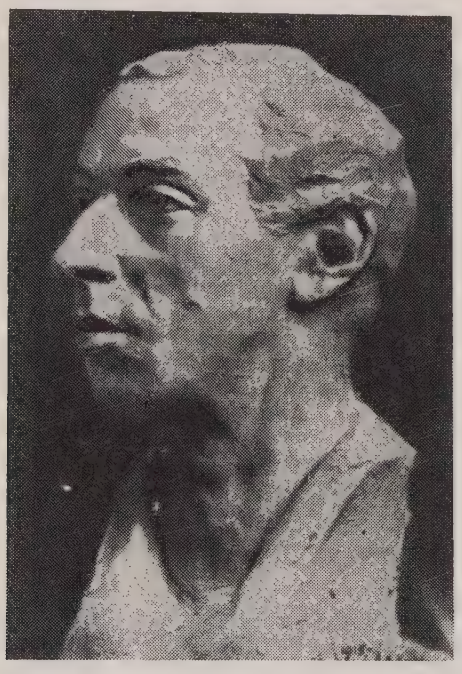
31. Maeterlinck's play *Miracle of St. Anthony* was produced by Vakhtangov twice—in 1918 and in 1921.

32. Leonid Andreyev's drama *Life of a Man* had its premiere in the Moscow Art Theater in 1907.

33. The opening play of the Moscow Art Theater, on October 14, 1898, was A. K. Tolstoy's drama *Tsar Fedor Ioannovich*. This play had been prohibited by the tsarist censorship and saw the footlights only due to the insistent efforts of the directors of the Moscow Art Theater. It was staged simultaneously at Suvorin's Theater in St. Petersburg.

34. V. V. Luzhsky—Moscow Art Theater actor, died in 1931.

35. Charles Lecoq's comic opera *The Daughter of Ango* was played on the Moscow Art Theater stage in 1921. It was produced by V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, with the famous operetta actors K. F. Nevyarovsky and B. A. Shchavinsky in the cast.



Vakhtangov, a bust done in 1915 by I. Mendelevich

Two "Schools for Scandal"

Sheridan is very popular with Soviet theatergoers. Not only *The School for Scandal* but *The Rivals* and *The Duenna* are well known to the Soviet public. However, the most significant renderings of Sheridan on the Soviet stage are the productions of *The School for Scandal* by the Leningrad Comedy Theater and by the Moscow Art Theater.

Performances of the Leningrad theater are sharp-edged, strongly given to irony, somewhat cold. We might have known beforehand that Sheridan would appear in all his glitter at this theater.

N. Akimov, the art director of the company and one of the best scenic artists in our country, designed a special curtain for *The School for Scandal*: the scandal-mongers running in from all directions to "share" what they have picked up, inventing new details on the spot, then dashing off, ever in a hurry—slanderers running a race. Their figures, superimposed on a clean white background, are swinish and repulsive.

The first gathering of the scandal-mongers, it will be recalled, takes place in the drawing room of Lady Sneerwell. Sir Benjamin Backbite, Lady Candor and Crabtree come running in. Snake grovels and wriggles, true to his name. These scandal-mongers are very diverse types. The Leningrad company exposes the whole hierarchy: scandal-mongers great and lowly; carefree and pensive; unconscious and deliberate; loud-spoken and soft-spoken. Then that profound tragedy of a slanderer: Snake. For the first time in his life he is bribed to do a good turn instead of evil, and he feels that he has been betrayed. He knows no longer how to shape his course. All these men and women are admirably portrayed.

The second "circle" of characters in the comedy consists of the profoundly unhappy Sir Peter Teazle, his young wife, the Indian Nabob Sir Oliver Surface and his two nephews. One moment they are caricatures, not unlike the figures superimposed on the curtain, perfect in their utter incredibility. The next moment they begin to talk like living persons, speaking directly to the public and disclosing things which the rest of the characters in the comedy must not know at any cost.

As for Sir Peter Teazle, it would be no exaggeration to say, that he "touched the soul." As though overjoyed in having someone to talk to, he would advance to the footlights and complain to us, the public, about Lady Teazle. His in-

Sheridan's "The School for Scandal" at the Moscow Art Theater. A. Ktorov as Joseph (left), E. Lebedeva as Maria, and P. Massalsky as Charles

Sir Peter (M. Yanshin) and Lady Teazle (O. Androvskaya). Scene from Act I of the Moscow Art Theater production

tonations were quite inimitable and it was all real good comedy. Beniaminov made a splendid Teazle.

But, as was to be expected, the Leningrad Comedy Theater, fearing to be banal, turned out to be much too sophisticated. In this production, Joseph was just an engaging roue, like Charles. The producer evidently thought that he was not to take too seriously either the intoxicated frankness of Charles or the bungling, "amateurish" hypocrisy of Joseph. However, this fitted ill with the whole logic of the comedy. At one time Joseph was played like Tartuffe, a consummate hypocrite. This was a misinterpretation. In many respects, Joseph is quite the opposite to Tartuffe. But, if Joseph like Charles is a good fellow who has the misfortune of having put the saddle on the wrong horse, the verdict of the comedy is unjust. And we do not experience the "moral satisfaction" which this masterpiece has been giving theatergoers for 160 years: the scandal-mongers and hypocrites are made fools of in the long run.

It is this theme that has become the central theme or, strictly speaking, the only theme of the production of *The School for Scandal* by the Moscow Art Theater.

There, although the scenic artist is the selfsame Akimov, nothing but flowers are painted on the curtain, spiteful-looking blooms they are, too. The show, however, begins without any suspicion of spite. It begins not in Lady Sneerwell's drawing room, but just as it begins in Sheridan's original two-act version. Sir Peter Teazle comes before the public and very earnestly requests the spectators to give a thought to his predicament before they laugh at his misadventures. "When an old bachelor takes a young wife, what can you expect?" As we see later, he is not even seeking sympathy, he is only warning us.

Thus we immediately enter the second circle of characters in the comedy: Sir Peter and his wife, Sir Oliver Surface and his nephews. And the scandal-mongers only create obstructions, that is their sole purpose in life and in the play. We get the impression that the producers thought it unnecessary to give much thought to these monsters and make a psychological study of each miscreant separately. The outer "circle" of the comedy shrinks tremendously and the relations between the scandal-mongers are extremely simplified. Lady Sneerwell does not sit at her toilette as she gives instructions to Snake while he drinks chocolate. In general, Lady Sneerwell, the head-master of the school for scandal, does not differ in rank and conceit from the ordinary Lady Candor, and the "tragic" Snake has quite an insignificant part in the play.

For these reasons the first scenes surprised and puzzled us. It was difficult to recognize in this atmosphere of tranquillity and sincerity the tempestuous Sheridan with his forceful pen, who

even in his plays always appeared as an orator, stern and sparkling. But soon all our misgivings were dispelled. There was something exhilarating and captivating in the performance. We saw that this company had switched the conversation to quite another theme, but this second theme was even more significant, so that the scandal-mongers *really and truly* receded into the background.

The story of the Teazles and Surfaces is very conventional. It had become old-fashioned already in Sheridan's day. It could appear very naive in our own day. But the Moscow Art Theater has endowed it with a profound significance. This is because the characters, as they appeared on the stage, proved to be confident each in himself, with a very definite opinion of one's self and one's behavior. These individual conceits quite naturally collide. Then things become involved in fine comedy style, out of which a moral emerges: it doesn't do to be a hypocrite, it doesn't pay under any circumstance. This is a simple and highly effective result which is lacking in the Leningrad production. After all, the achievement of such a result is an object no less serious than an exposure of the vices of English high society at the end of the eighteenth century.

Lady Teazle—played by O. Androvskaya—is completely convinced of her right to ruin and tyrannize Sir Peter. She would have never forgiven herself if Sir Peter's match with a beautiful young woman failed to cause him trouble—that's in the logic of things! A young wife, extravagant, ambitious to become the queen of fashion, is a very old personage, but the problem was to represent such a personage in the pure form without the upholsteries and additions of later years. Androvskaya achieved this splendidly. She is not just the heartless wife out of a French comedy, whose husband, if he is old, *must* be a cuckold. She is not a modern Anglo-American "vamp"—a wearisome creature altogether. Androvskaya plays lightly and elegantly a vivacious young drone who has every reason to treat herself well.

The auction scene from Act II of "The School for Scandal" at the Moscow Art Theater

And Sir Peter Teazle (M. M. Yanshin) above all is a man full of a sense of his own dignity. As played in the Leningrad production, Sir Peter Teazle simply oozes with bitterness and self-pity. Here he is different—he is very circumspect, quite the aristocrat. Not only in public, in the deadly society of the socialite scandal-mongers, but even secluded with Lady Teazle he is very careful not to lose his dignity.

There is one fine scene in the production which, however, is not in Sheridan. There is a reconciliation between Sir Peter and his wife. As a token of their hearts' accord, they play a duet: "The dove and the turtle never quarrel . . ." Sir Peter plays the flute while his lady plays the harp. This music, specially written by D. Kabalevsky, is as simple as could be, but to Sir Peter it seems to convey all kinds of hints, even to the point of ridiculing him. Therefore, he is cautious even toward the music. He puts his head on one side, a little feebly, but still with dignity. This duet scene is a masterpiece.

Sir Oliver Surface is something of a surprise in this production. On the grounds that he is an Indian Nabob, he is made up to resemble something between a Spanish buccaneer and a Ukrainian bandit chief, with ear-rings and a blunderbuss in his belt. It would be ridiculous to cavil at this but, judging by the ludicrous exterior and by all the good old rules of comedy, Sir Oliver should be a man with a kind and sympathetic heart. In the Moscow Art Theater production Sir Oliver is a very stiff gentleman who, if he has a heart of gold, hides it all too successfully. This is a mistake in itself, apart from the fact that there is another character in the play who really fancies himself as a terror. This is "Captain" Rowley, that "old sea-dog." Both these characters seem to act alike, something

More characters from the Moscow Art Theater production: A. Karev as Moses (left), V. Sokolova as Lady Sneerwell, and A. Verbitsky as Sir Oliver

which Sheridan, who knew his theater, always managed to avoid.

Two very interesting characters in the production are the nephews: Charles and Joseph. Charles is a serenely happy young man who enjoys his own company and life in general. He is quite sure that other people are wasting their time in this life. Charles believes that plain dealing and honesty have an irresistible effect, even on creditors and moneylenders. Such a strange delusion falls short of the incredible only because this is Charles. Judging by numerous evidences, Sheridan in his young days must have had a similar faith in his own star and personality, and one feels the playwright's great affection for this character. And the producers have not been afraid to show that they share this admiration.

Joseph is particularly well portrayed. The Moscow Art Theater has not repeated the mistake of the Leningrad Comedy Theater. Here, Joseph (Ktorov) is a man profoundly convinced that he has no alternative than to play the hypocrite, even though it is irksome to do so. To the general satisfaction, this article of faith is exploded and he is severely punished for harboring such unhealthy ideas.

In the famous scene in Joseph's room, nearly all the main characters, in the course of the intrigue, have to pretend for a time to be not what they really are. They try to outmaneuver each other. They are not successful. But they all have a simple way out: they return to their original and true condition. Joseph alone, the eternal dissembler, is quite finished. He has nothing to return to, he is left with empty hands and an empty life. The Moscow production brings out admirably the double penalty for hypocrisy.

The decoration is Akimov's second scenic treatment of *The School for Scandal*. His inventiveness is amazing. His second *School for Scandal* is every bit as successful as the first. Here there are exotic objects from India, extravagant but full of meaning, and a very sarcastic treatment of eighteenth-century fashions, interiors which look very old-fashioned and substantial but are actually full of surprises, for instance, the massive wardrobes in Joseph's room with the alcoves concealed behind them.

In this play about hypocrisy, the usual simulation, no matter how clever, would have been intolerable. The slightest lapse into insincerity would put the actors in the position of Joseph: some people think that actors have to pretend on the stage and pretend to be pretenders. The Moscow Art Theater production is a triumph for its time-honored excellent principle of good, straight acting, doing full justice to the characters.

LEONID BOROVOY

Twenty Years of Soviet Georgian Literature

The twenty years of Soviet government in Georgia have been years of particularly fruitful work in all branches of literature. Georgian writers may well pride themselves on the notable successes with which they greet the twentieth anniversary of their republic. These achievements, the result of a profound assimilation of the rich cultural heritage of the past, have been effected in close cooperation with the other nationalities of the land of Socialism in the field of letters.

During the latter years preceding the revolution Georgian literature displayed a marked shallowness, experiencing a period of incredible decline. The slough of despondency into which the greater part of the intelligentsia, men of letters, were plunged as a result of the defeat of the 1905 revolution, was conducive to the appearance in Georgian literature of bourgeois decadent currents. Literature drifted apart from the glorious traditions of Georgian classical realism, losing all contact with the people, with their vital interests and aspirations. This process manifested itself most conspicuously during the years of the first imperialist war when a decadent school of poetry, "The Blue Horns," made its appearance, a belated echo of Russian and European symbolism in literature. At the time of the counter-revolutionary Menshevik government, literature in Georgia became the mouthpiece of bourgeois nationalist, chauvinist ideas. This was a period of utter stagnation.

Following the establishment of Soviet government in Georgia, several literary organizations, having nothing in common with each other, continued to function for a number of years. These included "The Academic Association of Writers"—a literary society of extreme conservative tendencies embracing artistic circles which professed narrow nationalistic leanings; the above mentioned bourgeois decadent school of poets—"The Blue Horns"; "The Ariphioni"—a reactionary group of writers; "The Corporation of Georgian Futurists"; and lastly "The Association of Georgian Proletarian Writers." The attitude between these circles determined the character of the ideological struggles on the literary battle-field, in which the intense class-struggle then raging in the country was vividly reflected.

During the period of national economic reconstruction, proletarian literature progressed considerably, and played an important part in the general literary movement. The finest representatives of the pre-revolutionary generation of writers definitely adopted a position of revolutionary contemporaneity.

Soviet Georgian poetry has evidenced a marked advance in the course of these last years. Having vanquished the apathy of the bourgeois-decadent school, the Georgian poets have sought to retain the simplicity and the popular character of poetical speech, and have succeeded in creating their own style of Socialist poetry, national in form. Galaction Tabidze, who undoubtedly is one of the best of the pre-revolutionary generation of poets, revealed himself, from the very first days of the victory of the proletariat, as a great revolutionary poet, and produced many an admirable poem in which he sang, with fervent exultation, of the triumph and victories of Socialism. Georg Leonidze, a gifted lyrical poet, wrote *The Childhood and Youth of Stalin*, a poem in which he painted a vivid picture of the birthplace of the leader of peoples, of the scenery, customs and environment amidst which Stalin's early years passed.

The pathos of triumphant Socialist construction is what permeates Alio Mashashvily's best poems. In his *Enguri* the author paints in vivid colors the portrait of a young man of our times, a staunch fighter in the cause of Communism. The poetic creations of Simon Chikovani, the inspired bard of rejuvenated

Georgia, of her mountains, her flourishing orchards, her rivers and joyous present, are imbued with supreme lyrical potency, while the sublime feeling of Soviet patriotism finds its adequate and vivid expression in the poems of Ilo Mosashvily.

During the last few years the literary efforts of the young Georgian poets have been definitely crowned with success. The most convincing proof of the headway they are making is Grigori Abashidze's poem *The Spring of the Black City*, as well as his book of lyrical poems.

The appearance of such poetical productions as *Georgian Poems and Songs Dedicated to Stalin, To Our Leader From the Georgian Writers, Songs of Felicity, To Our Happy Fatherland*, the fruit of collective effort, is a brilliant landmark evidencing the ideological and literary growth of the Georgian poets. The most exalted thoughts and feelings of the people have found their expression in these books.

While, with some rare exceptions, Georgian prose in pre-revolutionary times limited itself to the production of decadent miniature sketches, the twenty years of Soviet rule in Georgia have been conducive to the creation of numerous novels, tales and short stories, which bear witness to the general revival of the realistic traditions of classical prose writings.

Leo Kiacheli, an eminent prose writer, can at present be said to have attained the apogee of his creative power. After his historical and revolutionary novel *Blood* and a number of admirable novelettes, he has produced another novel, *Gvadi Bigva* (see p. 84—*Ed.*), a work of talent, imbued with a profound knowledge of the life of the collective farm countryside. Shalva Dadiani has written an historical novel of great length, *Giorgi Rusi*, in which he describes Georgian life in the times of Rust'hveli, and has published several chapters from his as yet unfinished novel *Urdumi* dealing with the revolutionary peasant insurrections in Georgia, as well as a number of short tales and novelettes. K. Gamsakhurdia's novel *The Rape of the Moon* was the first attempt of the author to describe present day conditions. Well-known are K. Lordkipanidze's novel *Imerethia* and his short stories, among which the series of Byelorussian tales which appeared under the general title of *Immortality* and which have been translated into Russian, deserve primary mention. A. Kutateli's novel *Face to Face* unfolds before the reader a vast panorama illustrating the life of the Georgian people under the dominion of the counter-revolutionary Menshevik government.

Several novels and collections of short stories have been published by D. Shengelai. His novel *Sanazardo*, which he wrote during the first years of the proletarian revolution in Georgia, was at that time the first herald of the revival in Georgian literature of works of fiction. His novels *Bata-Kekia* and *The Dawn*, his short stories *The Vow*, *The Creator*, *Youth*, as well as S. Kidiashvili's novels *Ashes* and *The Provincial Moon* together with a number of his remarkable novelettes, and the prose writings of the poet R. Gvetadze deserve to be ranked among the best samples of modern Georgian literature. A number of other well-known Georgian prose writers might be included in the above list as having displayed considerable talent in the field of works of fiction.

The repertory of the Georgian Soviet theater is, at present, made up chiefly from the original works of Georgian playwrights. The most outstanding dramatic production of Shalva Dadiani is his historical and revolutionary drama in which the author unfolds before us the revolutionary activity in Georgia of the young Stalin at the dawn of our century. To his pen we likewise owe the plays *Aimed Straight at the Heart*, *The Broken Bridge*, etc. A permanent place in the repertory of the Georgian Soviet theater is assigned to the dramatic works of S. Shanshiashvili, to the plays *Anzor*, *Georgi Saakadze*, *Arsen*, which have played a considerable role in the development of Georgian theatrical art. P. Kakabadze's comedies—*Kvarkvare Tutaberi* and *A Wedding on a Collective Farm* belong to the best samples of Georgian Soviet plays of this kind. In the course of the last few years a series of plays have been written by S. Kidiashvili, the well-known writer of works of fiction mentioned above. Among these plays *A Generation of Heroes*, which deals with the revolutionary vigilance of Soviet people, may be said to enjoy the greatest popularity. In addition to his historical dramas *(Shamil* and *Georgi Saakadze)* I. Vakeli has written a play called *Envy* in which he depicts the life of the younger generation of Georgian intellectuals.

Georgian art critics, who, of late, have succeeded in casting off the shackles of vulgar sociological and formalistic theories, have likewise exercised a considerable influence on the growth and evolution of Georgian literature.

IRAKLI ABASHIDZE

Tbilisi.

CURRENT PUBLICATIONS

NEW GEORGIAN COUNTRYSIDE IS THEME OF NOVEL

Leo Kiacheli, recently awarded a Stalin Prize, occupies a foremost place among outstanding Soviet Georgian prose writers. His latest big novel *Gvadi Bigva* has come out in a Russian edition of over 300,000, published by the State Literary Publishing House.

Gvadi Bigva affords a novel, realistic picture of the new Georgian countryside. Kiacheli focuses his attention on the psychology of people, and effectively shows the survivals of the capitalist past in their mentality and every-day activities. The author depicts the complex, fascinating process by which human character and social relations change under the conditions of Socialist life.

Gvadi Bigva, the hero of the book, is a gifted person, but with many a flaw in his moral makeup, the result of the jungle law of capitalist society, where the exploitation of man by man prevails.

Piling episode on episode, the author depicts Bigva in his relations with others, his clashes with various people. The mainspring of the plot is Gvadi's connections with a certain Archil Poriya, the son of the former owner of a local sawmill and a covert enemy of the Soviets and of the collective farm village. In his search for easy money, Gvadi, not suspecting the real character of the man with whom he is having dealings, gets deeper and deeper involved in Poriya's shady affairs and after a time becomes his involuntary accomplice.

As the story unfolds, the author shows how the new environment, the collective farm village, influences Gvadi. The chairman of the collective farm has confidence in Gvadi and entrusts him with a responsible job.

The upshot of it all is that Gvadi experiences a "rebirth," as it were, or, as the author has it, Gvadi takes a "gigantic leap from the old world into the new."

Gvadi's cherished dream of happiness becomes something tangible and real. Bolshevik concern for people, reliance and confidence in people, tremendous educational force—it is this theme that forms the ideological content, the quintessence of Kiacheli's novel.

V. G.

STORY OF THE EDUCATION OF THE NEW MAN

Socialist emulation in Soviet industry forms the subject of a new novel, *Hot Shop*, by the young writer, Boris Polevoy (published by The State Literary Publishing House). The author, who is an engineer and has an intimate knowledge of his subject, with a knowing hand guides the reader through the departments of a large Soviet enterprise and with bold strokes paints a picture of Stakhanovite labor in a "hot shop"—a modern mechanized forge department.

A young worker, Evgueni Sizov, a former homeless waif and idler and a skillful guitar player, has been accepted in the Stakhanovite forge crew headed by Luzgin. His knowledge of the work is limited, however, and he soon realizes that it is not easy to operate the new machines skillfully.

Crew leader Luzgin, a famous Stakhanovite, accepts Sizov into his crew just when the latter is threatened with dismissal from the plant. The process of the remaking of the "difficult character" of Sizov, of the molding of a new man from the material of the old, is the theme of this story.

The book holds the reader's interest, and is written with genuine feeling for truthfulness. The writer has combined a true story of life at a new Socialist enterprise with a captivating tale of the personal experiences of his hero, spicing the combination with a good number of dramatic episodes.

Tanker Derbent, the first story about Socialist emulation, presented the mighty rise of labor enthusiasm in the romantic setting of the stormy Caspian sea. In the book under review Polevoy gives a picture of everyday Stakhanov labor at a new and higher stage of Socialist emulation.

Socialist emulation is here portrayed as a method of work adopted by the best people of a large Soviet enterprise. The romanticism of labor, struggle and success is revealed in undeviating movement forward and in the striving of Soviet people for that which is new.

IVAN MARTYNOV

BOOK ABOUT V. I. NEMIROVICH-DANCHENKO

The Nemirovich-Danchenko State Musical Theater is putting out a book by V. Y. Vilenkin, *V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko—A Sketch of His Work.*

The book is divided into three parts. The first deals with the infancy and boyhood of Nemirovich-Danchenko, his early infatuation for the theater, his activity as a dramatic critic, his literary, dramatic and pedagogical work. Part One ends with his momentous meeting with K. S. Stanislavsky.

Part Two tells of Nemirovich-Danchenko's work with the Art Theater, beginning with the first Chekhov performances and ending with his latest production, *Three Sisters*. Separate chapters are devoted to his work on *Julius Caesar*, the plays of Ibsen and Andreyev, the staging of Dostoyevsky's novels, his work as a theatrical director in the post-revolutionary period, and his productions of the works of Tolstoy and Gorky. A special chapter is devoted to Nemirovich-Danchenko's art laboratory, and his methodology as a producer.

The twenty years' history of the Musical Theater, founded by Nemirovich-Danchenko, forms the subject of Part Three. It gives a picture of the life of the Moscow Art Theater and the Musical Theater against the background of which is clearly reflected the work of the great producer, and his significance and place in the Russian theater as a whole.

"Like a mighty river wending its way across the steppes, so all my life is permeated with this magnetic and turbulent atmosphere of the theater and theatrical life, an atmosphere which repels yet does not release one from its grip . . ." writes Nemirovich-Danchenko in his memoirs *Out of the Past.*

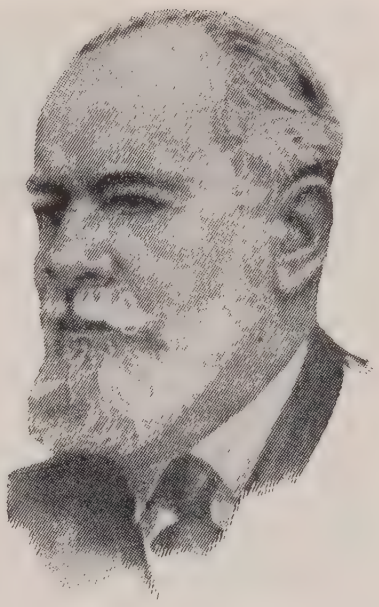
"In the 65 years of his life that Nemirovich-Danchenko has devoted to the theater," V. Y. Vilenkin writes in his book, "he has acquired a veritable mine of vital, artistic impressions, knowledge and experience. And what is really remarkable is how lightly he carries this precious load."

The reader will find genuine satisfaction and pleasure in perusing this book and in learning more about this celebrated leader of the Soviet theater, a man who has produced 70 plays, and is still imbued with invincible verve and the energy to create new works of theatrical art.

V. S.

LAWS OF LIFE

A. Popovsky's new book *Laws of Life* is actually a series of narratives about the great physiologist, I. P. Pavlov, his pupils, A. D. Speransky and K. M. Bykov, and the scientific research worker A. G. Gurvich.



V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko

In *Temporary Ties* which tells of Pavlov, the author gives a profoundly moving picture of triumphant human labor. "People succumbed, they could not stand the strain, but others came who took their places, in order to glean a grain of truth from a heap of rubbish and waste. Every scientific law was won in hard-fought battle after months of persistent labor. The laws of the severance of temporary ties . . . demanded 50,000 different experiments. The mechanics of the action of bromine was learned after 10,000 various experiments."

The reader sees how natural science, which was brought to a standstill "before the highest section of the brain, before that organ governing the most complicated relations of animals to the outer world," has mastered this field of knowledge too. But what effort this victory cost! Science demands that man devotes himself whole-heartedly and passionately to her, Pavlov said. And we see this great passion burning brightly throughout his life.

Everything for science, but not for science hidden behind cloister walls, but for militant science, science fighting to strengthen man's positions in his struggle with nature. After years of experimentation on animals, checking every step he took, not once but thousands of times,

Pavlov, with theory as his main weapon, sought towards the end of his life for a means of treating the most difficult and as yet unexplored field of sufferings of man—psychical ailments.

The narrative reveals another characteristic feature of Pavlov, one that harmonizes with our epoch of creative work—collective effort. It would be difficult to find in the history of world science another such example of colossal labor in which scores of people participated all their life, united by a single goal, a single will, a work of love to which they devoted all their ability, all their talent. Pavlov is dead, but the remarkable school of which he was the initiator is continuing to develop the heritage left by that brilliant scientist.

The narratives about Pavlov's pupils—K. Bykov and A. Speransky—seem as it were a continuation of *Temporary Ties*.

Science had regarded respiration, digestion and metabolism as processes regulated by a special vegetative nervous system which was independent of the higher sections of the brain. And that was how this nervous system was called—autonomous. It was assumed that the kidneys, heart, the millions of cells of which the body consists, were independent of the brain in their activity.

Pavlov was the first to make a breach in this theory. K. Bykov, continuing the investigations of his teacher, made most interesting discoveries. It was proven possible, by employing the usual stimuli used by Pavlov, to develop conditioned reflexes—by a ring, or the light of a lamp—and thus influence the activity of certain internal organs, strengthening or weakening them. Even the kidneys, which until lately had been considered independent of the influence of the cortex of the large cerebral hemispheres, are drawn into the province of conditioned reflexes, and through the brain maintain connection with the outer world, obviously reacting to external signals.

These observations of Bykov's strengthen our conceptions of the entity of the human organism. They also have exceptional, practical significance in aiding medicine.

The third story in this series of Pavlov tales is *The Mechanism of Suffering*, a tale about the remarkable research work conducted by A. Speransky, Soviet physiologist and pathologist, whose works shed new light on the role of the nervous system in the development of various diseases. An important step has been taken toward the formulation of a new medical theory.

Radiation of Life, the tale with which the book closes, deals with one of the most interesting chapters in Soviet science. A. Gurvich began with abstract theoretical problems, but now, through the logic of his investigations, his work is proving to be an important factor in medicine. Gurvich made a study of the causes of cellular division. During the course of his experiments he discovered an extraordinary phenomenon: a simple bulbous rootlet caused increased cellular division in a neighboring rootlet. It was experimentally proven beyond a doubt that the rootlet is, in its way, a miniature broadcasting station sending special rays out into the world. Radiation is characteristic not only of bulbous radicles. All living cells produce rays which play an important role in life.

It sometimes happens that rays weaken or die off completely. Such extinction, for instance, takes place in cases of cancer. Tnus a means is provided whereby a disease may be discovered at its very inception when other methods of diagnosis are of no avail. And early recognition of disease makes it possible to save thousands upon thousands of lives.

The story of Gurvich's work is extremely interesting and well-written.

Popovsky's book *Laws of Life* tells of the victories of Soviet science, and tells of them in a new and interesting way.

A. SHAROV

ON THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

In his latest book, *Im Letzten Winkel der Erde* (At the Edge of the World), which was published by Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga, Theodor Plivier comes out as a first-class story writer, a master of the genre whose way of telling a story has acquired exceptional expressiveness. The theme of this work follows from everything the writer has lived through.

El ultimo rincon del mundo—the edge of the world, we would say—is what the inhabitants of the little Chilean seaport, where the action of Plivier's story is laid, call their town.

In this harbor town, to which the irony of fate has given the ambitious official name of Caleta Colosso, the hero of the book, Wenzel, leaves the vessel on which he has sailed the length and breadth of the seven seas, but which he no longer can bear. Here his path separates from that of his shipmate, the Dutch sailor Bouwenstaak, with whom he has left the boat.

Plivier's tale is a story of an individual struggling to make his way in the world, of a homeless searcher for happiness, wandering on the edge of the earth during the period of "calm" between two wars.

But the calm even here proves to be illusory.

The only road to happiness with the girl he loves—the daughter of Don Pedro, the local hotel keeper—is that of "making money." Wenzel begins with a petty but dangerous undertaking: with the aid of a fisherman by the name of Pejesapo, and a former convict, the halfwit Febronius, he sets up in fishing in evasion of the law.

Fish piracy puts him well on the way to building up a real business and becoming a gentleman, a white flanneled and Panamaed habitué of Don Pedro's bar. Luck in his dealings diverts to Wenzel a considerable quantity of scrip issued in lieu of money by a stock company and negotiable only within its holdings. When he goes to a bank with this "money" and demands that it be exchanged for real currency, he creates the threat of a unique inflation on miniature scale. This makes him dangerous to the all-powerful company that has created its own monetary, credit and trade system to serve the one and only aim of squeezing profit out of the population.

Thus Wenzel finds himself pitted against the bosses of Caleta Colosso. But so far his opponents see in him only a trade competitor; he is not encroaching on the mainstays of society as yet.

Though Wenzel does not see through it all at first, "a man wants to know what it is that he is doing things for in this world." Plivier puts his hero through the mill—from disillusionment in his sweetheart, who turns out to be a narrow-minded egoist incapable of the simplest human feelings, to downright catastrophe.

He is losing his interest in fish pirating, but he nevertheless lets himself be persuaded by Febronius, and together with the latter and his dog Hakon he goes out fishing one night. The dynamite they carry explodes and kills Febronius and sinks their wherry, while Wenzel, suffering from contusion of the head, is dragged ashore by the dog. Suffering of contusion of the brain, Wenzel is abandoned by everybody except the fisherman Pejesapo and the dog. The authorities evict him from the smashed-up vessel which had served him formerly as a dwelling.

At this point characters that at first were only briefly described reappear: the prostitute Margarita and Bouwenstaak, who accompanies an itinerant house of ill fame. Margarita unselfishly takes care of Wenzel, leaving the brothel and staying with him.

Nevertheless Wenzel sends her back to her native country, where she begins anew.

Theodor Plivier

He himself remains at the "edge of the world," and tries to build up his life all over again, this time as a worker.

Once more he enters into conflict, but this time for a principle, against the society of gentlemen. A strike has broken out, and he realizes that he and Bouwenstaak are being employed as strike-breakers. Wenzel refuses to be one, quits his job and joins the strikers. The strike grows, and the workers finally win. Wenzel himself, however, is in danger of arrest. Warned about this, he takes leave of his dog, and sets sail in a boat provided him by comrades. Thus he leaves the "edge of the world" the same way he arrived there.

Plivier's new novel seems to leave the story of its hero unfinished, but the picture given is clear, just as is the meaning behind the book: how a solitary seeker for happiness finds the meaning of life in the struggle for the common cause.

"You can't feast alone to your heart's content! You can't hold out by yourself! You can't live all by yourself! Only when we're all for one, when we lend each other a hand, and shoulder to shoulder . . ."

That is what Wenzel thinks aloud. The book's hero lives and develops, and together with him develops the theme of love for life, of the desire to know and to remake the world.

N. NADEZHDINA

BAGRITSKY IN THE JEWISH LANGUAGE

A Jewish translation of selected works of Eduard Bagritsky has just appeared. Y. Zeldin, the translator, has managed to retain the rhythm of the original, a difficult task to cope with, since some of Bagritsky's rhythms (which come from Ukrainian folklore) are new to Jewish poetry.

Zeldin's translations are a very happy rendering of the original. Among the best is his translation of the *Ballad of Opanas*.

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

A new translation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's famous *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was recently published in Russian by the Children's Publishing House. In a sense, the appearance of this book, the emotional effect of which is extraordinarily great, is quite an event in the world of children's literature.

"Scores of one-time famous books have grown old and been forgotten, while *Uncle Tom's Cabin* still holds the reader's attention," Kornei Chukovsky, the well-known writer, says in his foreword. "The book has an unusual hold on life; humanity stubbornly refuses to forget it, and we can readily understand what a literary event it was in those distant years when it first appeared."

MAYAKOVSKY IN POLISH

V. Mayakovsky, inspired bard of the Socialist Revolution, has long been known in Poland in spite of the veto of the censors. Even those fragments of Mayakovsky's works which succeeded in getting through the censor into bourgeois Poland were sufficient to create a veritable upheavel in Polish progressive poetry. A whole generation of Polish poets was brought up on Mayakovsky's verse.

Translations of some of his poems appeared in Warsaw in 1928. However, his best, as *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin* and *Good!*, were unknown to the Polish reader.

We involuntarily recall this now, when we turn over the pages of the new volume of selected poems of Mayakovsky just off the press in a Polish translation.

The new translations have been made by Soviet Polish poets, living and working on emancipated soil. They have succeeded in conveying the very essence of Mayakovsky's verse: the noble, revolutionary sentiment, valiant lyric, the summons to struggle, lashing satire, and the poet's original, inimitable poetic mastery.

The new volume is prefaced by an extremely interesting article by Jerzy Borejsza.

LATGALIA OF YESTERDAY

Heretic in Latgalia, by J. Niedre, published in Riga, contains 12 stories written in a lively, popular style which hold the reader's unflagging interest.

Passionate hatred, venomous, scathing satire—these are the weapons with which Niedre launches out against the enemies of the working class. He depicts with a gentle humor the people of the masses, with their superstitions and their ignorance, begotten by their former conditions of life.

The writer resurrects in his tales the monstrous rule of the priests of the Roman Catholic church, the kulaks, and landed aristocracy who doomed the people to poverty and ignorance.

The author does not confine himself merely to a description of the "powers of darkness." He shows the growing discontent of the masses and the struggle of the staunch fighters against the forces that held sway in oppressed Latgalia and exploited and held the people in subjection.

BOOKS ON A GREAT VOYAGE

A striking, well-drawn picture of life on the icebreaker *Georgi Sedov* during its 812-day drift in the Central Polar Basin from October 23, 1937, to January 13, 1940, is presented in two books by participants in the expedition, put out by the Northern Sea Route Administration Publishing House.

One is called *On Board ss. Georgi Sedov Across the Arctic Ocean*, by Hero of the Soviet Union, Captain K. S. Badigin, and the other is entitled *Stories of the Sedovites*. Both volumes make interesting reading.

Captain Badigin's book is a delightful tale wherein the romantic life of the explorer and sailor is brought out in relief against a background of data accumulated by persistent scientific research. Dialogue and vivid description are supplemented by plans, diagrams and documents.

The *Stories*, by fifteen men of the *Georgi Sedov* who bear the high title of Hero of the Soviet Union, vary in style. They contain fragments of diaries, extracts from memoirs, and autobiographical sketches.

NEWS AND VIEWS

U.S.S.R.

AZERBAIJAN TO OBSERVE NIZAMI ANNIVERSARY

Extensive preparations are under way in Azerbaijan to honor the memory of Nizami of Ganja, the national bard of the republic, the 800th anniversary of whose birth falls due this year.

A special edition of the poet's works in the Azerbaijan, Russian, Armenian and a number of other languages of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. is being prepared for the jubilee.

Two symposiums devoted to Nizami and containing essays on his works and his significance for contemporary literature were published in Baku.

Composers are writing music for operas and ballets dedicated to the poet and to the characters he created. Local artists and sculptors are working on canvases and sculptures of related themes.

The Nizami Museum which is being opened in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan, is nearing completion. The building is one of the finest edifices in the city, adorned with statues of Azerbaijan's greatest poets and writers and decorated with colored majolica and ornaments of the 12th and 13th centuries. Its 22 halls will acquaint the visitor with the life and work of the celebrated poet, the epoch in which he lived, his influence on literature and the gifted Azerbaijan writers who came in his wake.

A separate hall will be dedicated to each of his five poems and will feature manuscripts, paintings and other exhibits.

New manuscripts are constantly being added to the new museum's collection. Eleven photostatic copies have been obtained of manuscripts of Nizami's works which are kept in western-European museums. Quite a number of manuscripts have been received from various institutions and archives in Moscow, Leningrad, Georgia and Armenia.

A huge statue of the poet, fourteen meters in height, will grace the front of the museum. A mausoleum is also being erected in the city of Kirovobad (former Ganja) where the poet is buried.

JUBILEE OF NOTED UKRAINIAN POET

The fiftieth anniversary of the birth of Pavlo Tychina, renowned Ukrainian poet and member of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian S.S.R., was observed throughout the Soviet Ukraine. The poet's works enjoy great popularity not only in the Ukraine but in other republics of the Soviet Union too. Many of his poems have been translated into the languages of the different nationalities inhabiting the U.S.S.R. as well as into Bulgarian, Czech, French, Turkish and other languages. Tychina himself has

A composition in iron by O. E. Manuilova on a theme inspired by Nizami's poetry

translated into the Ukrainian the works of Russian, Georgian, Armenian and Jewish poets.

What permeates Tychina's poems is the lofty principles he so ardently advocates—the cause of Socialism. His collections of verse *The Party Leads, Sentiments of the United Family* have been inscribed in the annals of Soviet literature as outstanding examples of impassioned political poetry.

DOSTOYEVSKY ANNIVERSARY MARKED

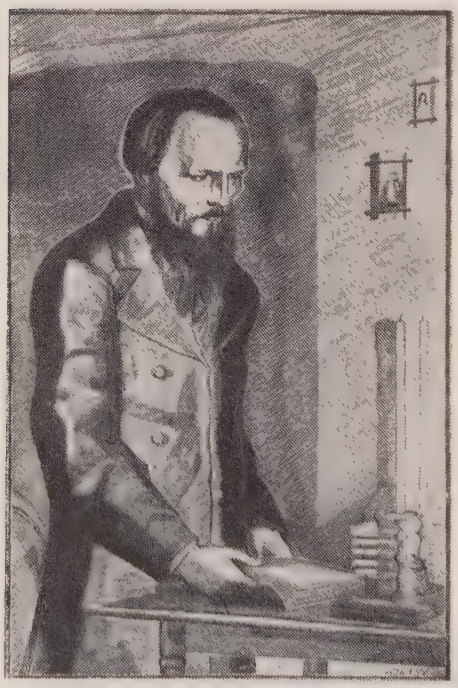
The Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. held a number of public commemorative sessions marking the 60th year since the death of F. M. Dostoyevsky. An exhibition devoted to the great Russian writer was opened in Staraya Russa where Dostoyevsky had lived.

The biggest collection of original manuscripts and documents relating to Dostoyevsky is kept in the manuscript department of the Lenin Public Library. The collection includes MSS. equaling 1,750 author's signatures in the writer's own handwriting, as well as manuscripts copied by Dostoyevsky's wife but edited by himself, and books with his annotations. Another department of the library has in its safe-keeping eight hundred letters addressed to Dostoyevsky, his official papers and numerous data concerning his nearest relatives. How Dostoyevsky worked on his books can be seen from the materials to four of his biggest novels—*Crime and Punishment, The Demons, A Raw Youth* and *The Brothers Karamazov.*

In an article on Dostoyevsky V. Yermilov (whose article "Gorky and Dostoyevsky" was published in our issues Nos. 3 and 4-5 for 1940) writes that the "hero of our present-day literature combines *force* and integrity of character coupled with *generosity* and a love for the people—he personifies that unity of human qualities which Dostoyevsky did not believe possible. The hero of our contemporary literature is far removed from the psychology of hopelessness and dualtiy of character.

"Great truth and great falsity are interwoven in Dostoyevsky's writings.

"We know that Dostoyevsky's panaceas cannot serve to cure the world. And, of course, not humiliation but *force* must humanity counterpose against all those who would humble and affront it."



Dostoyevsky, a woodcut by V. Favorsky

NEW DOCUMENTS ON GORKY

The Gorky State Archives have acquired a number of new autographs by the great writer. Among these are letters by Gorky and five volumes of stories which Gorky presented to Doctor Fyodorov, the physician who treated him in 1903. Another valuable acquisition are notes from a diary kept in 1920-1921.

The Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library, Leningrad, turned over to the Gorky Archives about 40 new documents dating to the period when Gorky was associated with the *Znaniye* Publishers. Among these are a number of Gorky's letters to the publishing house in question, lists of books ordered by him, contracts with a number of publishing houses which undertook to issue his works.

Of particular interest are the manuscripts of various authors edited by Gorky.

New documents have been recently discovered in the archives of the former Lifland Province throwing light on the persecution of Gorky by the tsarist secret police. These date back to the year 1905, when Gorky was in Riga. At the request of the St. Petersburg secret police, the Riga gendarmes kept a close watch on Gorky's movements, who was suspected of "belonging to a committee formed in the city of St. Petersburg at the end of 1904 with the express purpose

of changing the existing forms of government and of drawing up leaflets calling for a struggle against the autocracy."

LITERARY CIRCLE AT IRON AND STEEL WORKS

"The Cupola Furnace" literary circle at the Sickle and Hammer Iron and Steel Works, in Moscow, has been functioning for about twelve years. Steel melters, rolling mill operators and mechanics meet regularly in their spare time to discuss their excursions into the field of poetry and prose.

Most of the literary efforts of the members of "The Cupola Furnace" literary circle deal with their own life and work, but they also include broader themes, responding to events which hold the attention of the whole country.

The members of the circle are working persistently to master the art of their favorite branches of literature. Writers and critics are frequent visitors at the circle meetings. Last winter the circle conducted a series of lectures on the history of western literature.

LETTERS TO A. BLOK ACQUIRED BY MUSEUM

The State Literary Museum has acquired the archive of Alexander Blok. The poet's private papers were acquired from his widow shortly before her death. These include some 2,000 letters received by the poet from prominent writers, artists and actors.

Of special interest are the letters Blok received from K. S. Stanislavsky and V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko. The renowned Russian poet had a passion for the theater and dramatic art. On two occasions he attempted to have his plays staged by the Moscow Art Theater.

Four letters of Stanislavsky date back to 1908. In one of these dated December 3, 1908, Stanislavsky explains that though he highly values the poet's talent, and is enthusiastic over his work, he is far from enthusiastic over his play *The Song of Fate* and cannot imagine just how the thing can be staged.

"It's quite possible that I do not understand something, that something which links up all the acts into one harmonious whole; but it is quite possible that the play is not monolithic," Stanislavsky wrote.

Several letters and telegrams of Nemirovich-Danchenko refer to Blok's play *The Rose and the Cross* which the Moscow Art Theater began to rehearse in 1916.

Nemirovich.-Danchenko informed Blok that the artist M. Dobuzhinsky would do the sets for the play and S. Rachmaninoff would write the music. Mention is also made of the part assigned to V. Kachalov and to other members of the cast. The play, however, was never staged.

HONOR MEMORY OF IVAN PAVLOV

The memory of Ivan Pavlov, Member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. and the greatest physiologist of our times, was honored on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of his death by scientific circles throughout the Soviet Union. A special scientific session was held in Leningrad under the joint auspices of the Department of Biological Sciences of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. and the Gorky All-Union Institute of Experimental Medicine. A number of reports on the achievements of the U.S.S.R. in the fields of physiology and pathology in recent years were delivered at the session. Prominent scientists who are continuing the work of Pavlov took part in the proceedings.

In the past five years many pupils of Pavlov—physiologists, neuropathologists and psychiatrists—have been delving deeply into problems of the higher nervous system, digestion, the cardiac-vascular system and nerve trophics.

The main centers where this research work is being conducted is at the Institute of Physiology and Pathology of the Higher Nervous System at Pavlovo (formerly Koltushi) where the great physiologist conducted his investigations, at the Pavlov Institute of Physiology of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. and the Gorky All-Union Institute of Experimental Medicine.

Soviet science has made considerable strides in the study of comparative physiology of the higher nervous activity, the development of the nervous system from the earliest stages of embryonic life to the full maturity of an organism.

An annual Pavlov prize for the best scientific work on physiology was instituted by the Soviet Government in 1936. In the past four years the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. has awarded the Pavlov Prize to Academicians A. Speransky, L. Orbeli, I. Beritashvili, and Professors K. Bykov, I. Razenkov and M. Petrova.

The Academy of Sciences Publishers has issued the first volume of Pavlov's works. The volume includes papers on the physiology of blood circulation and of the nervous system. The second volume will include studies of the physiology of digestion, in particular a monograph on the work of the main digestive glands. It was for these investigations that Pav-

People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, producer of "Three Sisters," during a rehearsal

lov was awarded the Nobel Prize. The third volume will deal with the physiology of the liver, and the remaining two, studies of the higher nervous system of animals and the action of the large cerebral hemispheres.

REVIVAL OF CHEKHOV'S "THREE SISTERS"

Recently the Moscow Art Theater presented a new production of Anton Chekhov's "*Three Sisters*." This play was

Final scene from "Three Sisters" at the Moscow Art Theater

written about forty years ago especially for the Moscow Art Theater. After the triumph scored by *Sea Gull* and *Uncle Vanya*, the theater considered a new Chekhov play as something indispensable to its further development. "Since that time our fate lay in the hands of Anton Pavlovich: if he would give us a play, a new season would be assured, without a play of his the theater would lose its distinctive flavor," K. S. Stanislavsky, the founder of the Moscow Art Theater, wrote in his book *My Life in Art*.

In writing *Three Sisters*, Chekhov took cognizance not merely of the school of acting evolved by the theater but also of the character of the cast. According to V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, "in this play Chekhov did the very thing usually condemned by sophisticated theatrical critics: he wrote the roles having in mind definite actors for the parts." But it was this very fact that helped to create a genuine ensemble.

During the rehearsals the cast could not strike the proper key for quite some time. The play seemed dull and too drawn out. But the experience acquired in staging the two previous Chekhov plays *(Sea Gull* and *Uncle Vanya)* helped the theater to find the proper approach. After that the characters depicted by Chekhov became infused with life.

Three Sisters brought to the stage the humdrum life of provincial Russia, the fate of the intelligentsia deprived of a purpose in life, of a prospect for the future. People dreamt of the future but pictured it to themselves in very hazy terms. "Some two or three hundred years from hence life on earth will be inconceivably beautiful and resplendent." They said that "the time has come, that something vast is moving down on us, that a mighty, violent storm is brewing, that it is near at hand and soon it will sweep away from our society indolence and indifference, prejudice against labor and rank boredom." They dreamt of this new life which would bring with it a new social and political system where "every man will work." But how and whence this "new inconceivably beautiful and resplendent life" would come, from what quarter this "violent storm" would flow no one knew.

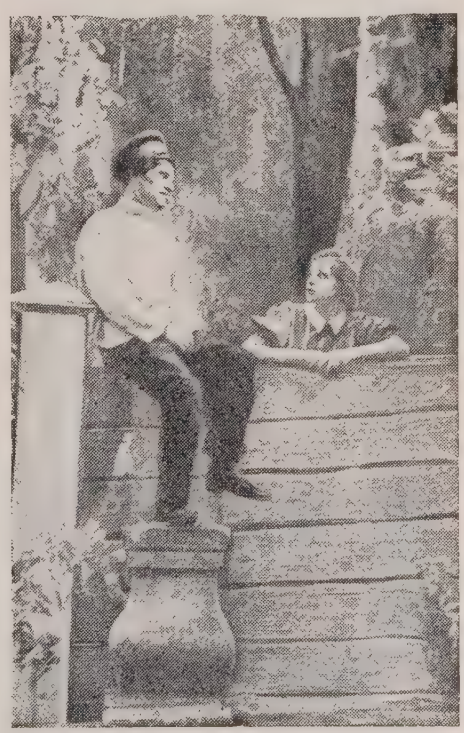
Gorky rated highly the effort of the theater. "*Three Sisters* are going splendidly. Better than *Uncle Vanya*. Sheer music, not mere acting," he wrote in March 1901. The theater itself considered the play to be one of the best it had staged.

A new understanding of Chekhov's play underlies the latest production of *Three Sisters* staged by the Moscow Art Theater, under the able direction of V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko. While retaining all the special features of Chekhov's style, and bringing out the play of emotions of the heroes, the new production reveals to the very depths the horrible and meaningless life which now has become a thing of the past.

MALY THEATER PRESENTS GORKY'S "BARBARIANS"

The Moscow Maly Theater has produced for the first time Gorky's *Barbarians*. This is one of the most scathing of Gorky's plays. Portraying life in a provincial town of tsarist Russia Gorky flays capitalism and breathes hatred for the savage, barbarian, idiotic conditions and customs it creates. The famous proletarian writer draws a minute picture of the people who deem themselves "the salt of the earth," the elite of society and exposes them for what they are worth.

The engineers Yegor Cherkun and Sergei Tsyganov who come to just such an out-of-the-way provincial town to build a railway look down on the local



"Barbarians" at the Maly Theater. A. Solovyov plays the part of Lukin, the student, and P. Bogatyrenko, that of the girl Katya

inhabitants as savages and barbarians. But Gorky shows that it is Cherkun and Tsyganov who are barbarians and are laying waste to their country.

The Maly Theater effectively brings out Gorky's main idea. Who was to change the conditions of life? Not the Cherkuns or Tsyganovs and most certainly not the merchant Prytikin or the town mayor Redozubov. Perhaps the student Stepan Lukin and young and impulsive Katya. Possibly, but it is still uncertain what course they will follow in the future. In the meantime earnest, sincere people perish in this world of barbarians, people like Nadezhda Monakhova, who could not find her hero in life and lost faith in the ideals she held most precious, or people like Doctor Makarov and the excise inspector Monakhov, who, finding no support in others, became discouraged and led a deep and dreary existence. The barbarism of the capitalist world which undermines the personality of human beings—this is what Gorky portrays in his play.

I. Sudakov and K. Zubov, the producers, have presented an interesting performance which grips the audience. The sets by K. Knoblok are in harmony with the production.

"Gorky's play leaves a strong impression," *Pravda* writes. "It is an indictment against bourgeois culture, an indictment profound for its artistic analysis. When the curtain drops for the last time one mentally compares the old provincial country town of Verkhopolye with the present day Verkhopolye. Gone are the Redozubovs and Pritykins and the entire face of the town, too, has changed."

FOREIGN PLAYS ON THE SOVIET STAGE

Many works by foreign classics and modern playwrights were included in the repertories of Soviet theaters in the

Scenes from some of the current attractions at Soviet theaters. Above, reading down, are Goldoni's "An Amusing Incident" at the Collective and State Farm Theater of the Karelian-Finnish S.S.R.; Molière's "Tartuffe" at the Pacific Fleet Theater in Vladivostok; and Scribe's "A Glass of Water" at the Drama Theater in Naryan-Mar, Nenets National Area

Goldoni's "Women's Gossip" at the Moscow Central Theater of Working Youth

"Plunders," based on Balzac, at the Gzhatsk Regional Collective and State Farm Theater

1940-1941 season. Theaters in Moscow and in centers of other Union republics are rehearsing a number of plays by foreign authors which will be shortly presented.

The Lenin Komsomol Theater in Moscow is preparing to stage Galsworthy's *Windows*, written in 1922. The Moscow Drama Theater, which recently produced *Mary Stuart*, is now playing Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* and Irwin Shaw's *The Gentle People*.

The first Molière play to be produced in the Kirghiz language is *George Dandin*, presented by the Kirghiz Theater for the Young Spectator.

Goldoni's *Mistress of the Inn* scored a great success at the Buryat-Mongolian State Theater.

Shakespeare occupies a place of honor in the repertories of Soviet theaters.

King Lear will be presented shortly for the first time on the Azerbaijan stage at the Azizbekov Drama Theater. The play was translated into Azerbaijan by Mirza Ibrahimov.

Baku proposes to present *Twelfth Night*. The Kirovabad Theater, Turkmenia, has included in its repertory *Othello* and *Hamlet*: it is also rehearsing Schiller's *Robbers*.

The Winter's Tale will be presented at the Lenin Komsomol Theater in Moscow.

The premiere of *Othello* was held at the Khamza Uzbek Drama Theater.

Shakespeare plays also figure prominently in the repertory of Moscow amateur dramatic groups. The *Merry Wives of Windsor* were presented by an amateur circle composed of subway builders, while amateurs from the Aviakhim Plant were the first to bring *Cymbeline* to the Soviet stage.

This season the workers' theater at the Caoutchouk Factory in Moscow presented its 100th performance of *The Taming of the Shrew*. This play has been performed with success by the Caoutchouk Factory cast in many workers' clubs of Moscow as well as in Leningrad and Yaroslavl.

Rehearsals of Gounod's opera *Romeo and Juliet* have begun at the Bolshoi Opera Theater in Moscow.

Othello, the opera by Verdi, was staged by the Shevchenko Theater of Opera and Ballet in Kiev, capital of the Ukrainian S.S.R. The premiere scored a big success.

NEW OPERA ABOUT SUVOROV

The composer S. N. Vasilenko is completing work on the opera *Suvorov*. The libretto, by S. Krzhizhanovsky, is based on the history of the great Russian field marshal's Italian campaign in 1799.

In the first act Suvorov is shown in the village of Konchanskoye to which the famous soldier has been banished by order of Tsar Paul I. The brilliant military strategist is languishing in forced idleness and the only "battles" he leads are the snow ball fights of the children in the village. Suddenly a messenger arrives from the court and brings him his marshal's baton and the request of Paul I that Suvorov should lead the Russian troops against the enemy.

Next the action is transferred to Vienna at the Austrian court and to Northern Italy where the Russian troops are quartered. The last act opens with the beginning of the heroic march of the Russian troops across Devil's Bridge.

The closing scene takes place in Cracow, where Suvorov, recalled by Paul to St. Petersburg, takes final leave of his troops. Handing over the battle standard to General Bagration, Suvorov urges him to be ever true to the people of Russia, and to uphold the glory of Russian arms in impending battles.

The composer has made good use in his opera of army songs of the end of the eighteenth century, as well as documents referring to Suvorov, Paul I and others.

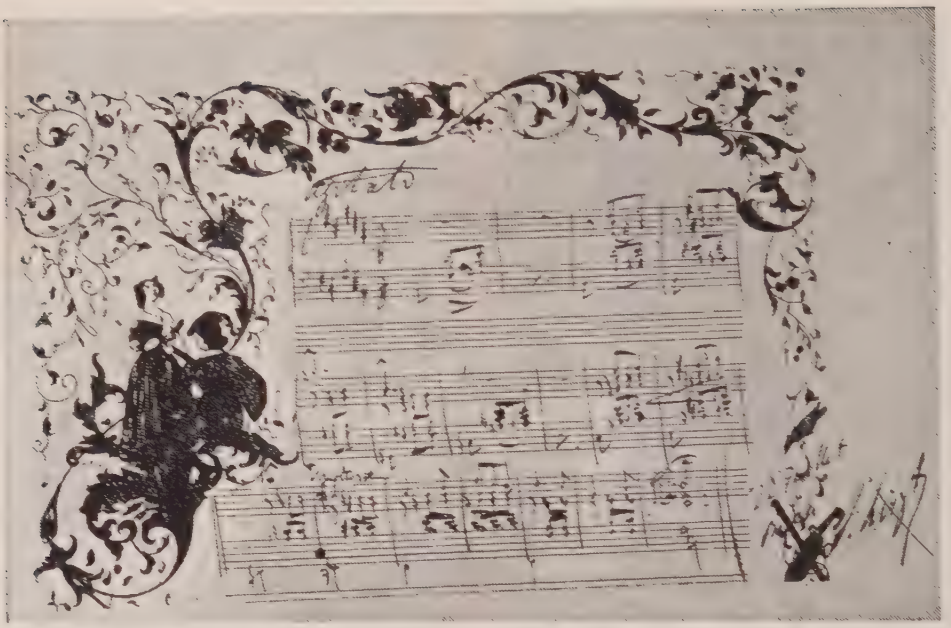
FILM DEPICTS LIFE IN FORMER WESTERN UKRAINE

Life of the Ukrainian peasantry under Polish rule is brought to the screen by *The Wind From the East*. The authors of the scenario, A. Dubrovsky and V. Kucher, portray events which preceded the liberation of Western Ukraine by the Red Army. Wanda Wasilewska, well-known Polish writer, gave the scenario writers and producers the benefit of her advice. The film was produced by A. Rom.

The gradual awakening of people, the molding of new views, the transformation of ignorant and submissive serfs into revolutionary rebels is shown in vivid terms.

The action is laid in the village of Lentovnya where Countess Pshezcinska reigns supreme. She ruins the Ukrainian peasantry and humiliates them in every way. The court, the laws and the police are on her side and with their aid she robs Khoma Gabrys, a poor Ukrainian peasant, of his tiny plot of land which happens to lay across the new road leading to her manor. With a cynic frankness the countess tells the Polish teacher Ganna that "to bring the great Polish culture to the people is a noble mission. But too much knowledge frequently detracts the serfs from their usual occupations. This can lead to no good. . . ."

Ganna had vowed to devote herself to bringing enlightenment to peasant children. Gradually she learns the



A Liszt autograph from the Vyazemskaya album in the library of the Moscow Conservatory

bitter truth of life and comes to the realization of the need of waging a struggle to change the order of things. She shelters Andrei, a Bolshevik, and gradually her love for him grows because Andrei opens her eyes to the grim facts of life.

Ukrainian and Polish actors from the western regions of the Ukraine collaborated with artists from Kiev in producing a stirring film of extreme interest.

INTERESTING ALBUM

The library of the Chaikovsky Conservatory of Music in Moscow has in its archives an interesting album with musical autographs by Meyerbeer, Liszt, Talberg and Ole Buhl. The album belonged to Nadezhda Vyazemskaya, daughter of the poet Pyotr Vyazemsky, a close friend of Pushkin.

The first page of the album has a song "*De ma première amie entends je la chanson*" by the composer J. Meyerbeer. This song was not known before.

Another musical autograph is that of Franz Liszt which is in the nature of an improvisation. But even in this laconic miniature one can trace an affinity to Liszt's sonnets. Another page in the album has the autograph of Liszt's rival, the brilliant pianist Sigizmund Talberg. Next is a composition for the violin by the famed German violinist Ole Buhl.

All these entries date to the year 1840 when Vyazemskaya was in Baden.

"MYSTERY ISLAND" TO BE MADE INTO FILM

A suitable spot on the Black Sea Coast became the scene of the Civil War in the United States as the shooting of the film *Mystery Island* based on Jules Verne's book of the same title was undertaken.

The scene was the siege of Richmond, the capital of Virginia. The Northerners courageously attack this stronghold of the slave owners. An artillery duel is in progress. Dense clouds of black smoke belch forth from the mouths of cannons. Side by side with the Northerners are negroes who are fighting staunchly for their independence.

Arms of the sixties of the last century were used by the participants in the "battle" which lasted until dusk. The parts of officers and soldiers were taken by students of the Frunze Artillery School in Odessa, directed by B. Shelontsev from the Odessa Film Studio.

Other scenes of the film have already been completed. The services of the inmates of the Odessa zoo were enrolled in shooting some of the jungle scenes. To reproduce the roaring of wild animals a piece of meat on a hook was suspended in a lion's cage. When the "king of the jungle" reached for the meat it was withdrawn. The enraged beast raised

an awful hullabaloo. Leopards, tigers, and a nearby elephant joined in the "symphony of the jungle" which was duly recorded by the sound apparatus.

LATVIAN ARTISTS OPEN FIRST EXHIBITION

The first exhibition of fine arts in Soviet Latvia was held at the Riga City Museum. Most of the three hundred canvases on display deal with a past page in the history of Latvia.

A big impression is left by the paintings *Two Generations* and *Seamstress* by F. Ogulis. The people depicted on the canvas no longer have any illusions, suffering is their daily lot to which they have become accustomed, the never-ending struggle for existence and labor devoid of joy has left its indelible imprint on their faces.

The works of A. Egle *(At the Market Place, Washerwoman)* and Edward Kalnins *(Rest, At the Wharf,* etc.) attracted considerable attention.

IN BRIEF

The City Museum of Vilnius, Lithuanian S.S.R., has acquired a well-known canvas by Rubens' pupil, I. Jordans, a Flemish painter. In the foreground of the canvas are depicted Lot and his daughters while Lot's wife, turned into a column of salt, is shown against the background of a burning city.

Several years ago a London art gallery sent out special agents to locate the picture but their efforts proved of no avail. The painting was discovered recently in Vilnius.

Vilna Bukovina is the title of a literary and art magazine which commenced publication in Chernovitsy, North Bukovina. The first issues carried the writings of old Bukovinian and Ukrainian authors who were banned by the Rumanian authorities and the works of young Bukovinian writers and poets.

Comrade Vasili is the title of a scenario now being written by T. Zlatogorova for the scenario contest dedicated to the Twenty-Fifth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. The scenario will deal with the life of the worker Vasili, one of the main characters in the films *Lenin in October* and *Lenin in 1918.*

Sven Waxel's *Vitus Bering's Second Kamchatka Expedition* has been published in Russian for the first time. The translation was made from the original German manuscript. Waxel took part in the famous Russian expedition to America in 1741.

A still from "Mystery Island"

CHINA

INTEREST IN SOVIET LITERATURE

Vast interest in Russian classic and Soviet literature is manifested by Chinese students. A circle for the study of Soviet literature and art has been functioning for two years at the Central University of China, which has been transferred from Nanking to Chungking.

A special circle of Soviet literature has been organized at the South-Western United University in Kunming.

Courses for the study of the Russian language have been organized in four cities (Chungking, Kweiyang, Kweilin and Kunming) by the Chinese-Soviet Cultural Society, in an effort to meet the growing interest in Russian literature.

MONGOLIAN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC

MONGOLIAN NATIONAL HERO ON THE SCREEN

The Mongolian Film Studio, in collaboration with the Leningrad Film Studios, is to produce a motion picture about Sukhe Bator, famed leader of the Mongolian people.

A nomad shepherd, Sukhe Bator became the commander-in-chief of the Mongolian People's Army which drove out the armies of intervention and overthrew the rule of the feudals.

Sukhe Bator is renowned for his bravery, his great devotion to the people and implacable hatred for their enemies. Together with Marshal Choibalsan, the present Prime Minister of the Mongolian People's Republic, he founded the People's Revolutionary Party.

Following the successful campaign of the People's Army which defeated Baron Ungern and liberated Mongolia, Sukhe Bator directed the country's efforts for peaceful construction.

The film deals with the years 1919-1923, and the locale is the Gobi desert and the city of Urga, now Ulan-Bator-Khoto (City of the Red Titan). This film will reproduce scenes from life in old Mongolia and the enormous changes that have transpired in this country once called by travelers "the land of monasteries" and "the mysterious heart of Asia."

The new film will be produced in two versions, in the Russian and Mongolian languages. It will be an experiment in collaboration between the Soviet cinema and the young Mongolian studio.

SWEDEN

"UNCLE VANYA" PRESENTED IN STOCKHOLM

Stockholm newspapers unanimously praise the production of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* at the Blanche Theater.

Scene from Chekhov's "Three Sisters" as produced by the Vienna Drama Theater

"This was an evening at the theater that will remain for long in our memory," *Dagens Nyheter* wrote. "After seeing this performance one readily understands the immense popularity of Chekhov in Russia, where in the last decade his books have been published in millions of copies."

Stockholms Tidningen praises the acting of the cast and adds that "Chekhov's plays exerted a great influence on modern dramaturgy."

FRANCE

LITERARY PRIZES

No Goncourt Prize for literature was awarded last year in France. Of the ten members of the Goncourt Academy nine are scattered throughout France and had no opportunity to meet and decide on the award. The tenth member, Rosny Sr., died recently and no successor had as yet been elected.

But the main reason why no Goncourt Prize, or any other prize for that matter, was awarded is that no novels worthy of them have appeared. Last year, *Figaro* comments, only some twenty-five novels were published in all of France and of these but two or three are worthy of attention.

The only exception is the French Academy, which, unlike the Goncourt Academy, continues to function as though nothing has happened. "The world may come to an end," *Figaro* comments, "but the Academy's tricorne and sword will remain intact. So long as a permanent secretary is there to uphold the social ritual, the sessions will go on."

Most of the members of the French Academy are in Paris and all the prizes established by the Academy, both for literature and other branches, were awarded in the stipulated time. If in the past the Goncourt Academy did by chance award its prize to something that had literary merit, the Academy has never been guilty of such a crime. The Academy's choice usually falls on the most colorless and reactionary books. The same rule prevailed in 1940. The highest award for literature fell to Edmond Pilon, author of a collection of historical anecdotes. The prize for the best novel was awarded to Edouard Peisson, author of sea novels.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

DERENIK DEMIRCHAN

One of the leading contemporary Armenian writers who began his literary career in 1893. Up to the Revolution devoted himself to poetry. In later years Demirchan turned to prose and playwriting. His story *Two Comrades,* an excerpt from which is published in this issue, deals with the Civil War period.

DAVID BERGELSON

Outstanding Soviet Jewish writer whose 30 years of literary activity was celebrated in 1940. Bergelson's writings are primarily devoted to a description of the Civil War period, to the life of the Jewish bourgeoisie in pre-revolutionary Russia and to the new life of the Jewish people after the Soviets came to power. Bergelson is the author of such novels as *Mirele, Birobijan, On the Banks of the Dnieper* and of several plays and volumes of short stories in which genre he excels.

JOHANNES R. BECHER

Noted German poet. Author of more than 35 volumes of verse and prose works, among them the collections of verse *The Seeker of Happiness and the Seven Ordeals, Regeneration, Sonnets,* and the novels *A Banker Goes to the Battlefield; Levisite, or the Only Just War; Farewell.* At present resides in Moscow. Is editor of the German edition of *International Literature.* This month Johannes R. Becher will mark his 50th birthday.

LEONID BOROVOY

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Editor-in-chief PYOTR BALASHOV