

ON GUARD  
FOR THE  
SOVIET UNION  
MAXIM GORKY

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## INTRODUCTION

### TO GORKY

*The first udarnik\* of the Universal Republic  
of Labour, greetings from a French colleague.*

There is no need to introduce Gorky to the European public. His fame as an author is universally established. But there is another Gorky whom French aesthetes prudently prefer to hide under their cloak. It is Gorky the fighter, protagonist and chief of the proletarian intelligentsia, which is constructing a new world. This Gorky is almost the only man in Europe—at any rate, he is the first and most thorough—to set the élite the scandalous example (which they do not dare to follow until the ship sinks when they will try to save themselves by swimming away like rats) of a man prominent in the world of art, a great intellect, a great author who takes his genius, his fame into the camp of revolution and addresses western intellectuals from the other side of the barricade. I, too, have crossed that barricade, and I shake Gorky's fraternal hand.

For a year or two I have been, although not regularly, following the shock-work of that author, "the first *udarnik* of the U.S.S.R.," as he has been called: his articles published in the Moscow newspapers. And I felt sorry that the West knew nothing of those passionate narratives, which reflect, not only the strong, burning soul of Gorky, but also the new society which is in the making, whose moulding he observes and depicts. I was pleased to find in this book a number of articles I would have chosen myself. I might have added some others, which impress me particularly as an author, for they give me a glimpse of the extraordinary progress of art, literature and science among the Soviet peoples who had been deprived of the use of their language for centuries, and whose proletariat had always been barred from cultural attainments by severe oppression.

The present volume contains two principal kinds of articles: rejoinders to enemies and exhortations addressed to friends.

The first, which demonstrate the unrestricted right of criticism which is exercised in the U.S.S.R. (since they are written in reply to mountains of snarling and venomous letters received in the U.S.S.R.) are, in most cases, couched in a caustic, violent, ruthless

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\* A member of a Workers' Shock Brigade

style. Passion permeates them. They smell of battle. In spite of their fervency these are not the articles I prefer, for their effect is to irritate opponents rather than convince them, and their importance consists mainly in stimulating the pugnacity of those who are convinced beforehand.

For us westerners, I attach much more importance to the articles in which Gorky, assuming the role of mentor of the Soviet workers, encourages and enlightens them, shows them the right way, and, sometimes chiding them, reminds them of the respect due to cultural values produced throughout the ages which they might have a tendency to despise, rouses discouraged adolescents to activity by making them realize the grandeur of the epoch, extols the tasks of to-day and the rich life which is opening before us and which must produce a new humanity. In answer to those who mourn over the passing of such old bourgeois idols as liberalism and individualism, he uses strong language to express the essence of real individuality and real liberty, which I would like to quote here, since I believe it will help to dissipate the fears of western intellectuals, who timidly cling to their firesides, whose scraggy necks glory in the yoke which they call liberty.

Bourgeois society forces the individual to serve its ends—the ends of the class whose power is based on the exploitation of the physical energy of the majority. The free development of the individual in bourgeois countries is limited to conceptions of race, nation, class and religion, and to the prejudiced belief in the originality of national culture,” an originality which exists on the surface only....

Our state is being constructed on a socialist basis, restrictive ideas are eliminated, the individual enjoys the right freely to develop all his powers and abilities.

Some people will tell me: that is untrue, since the Soviet Government is opposed to freedom of speech, freedom of the press and all other “freedoms” about which defenders of the capitalist regime hypocritically boast and which in reality are non-existent.

Our state has instituted the greatest and most complete liberty for the individual, eliminating those ideas which for centuries hindered and limited his evolution. It fights against the individual only when he becomes the bearer and disseminator of

ideas which retard the free development of the intellectual power of the individual himself. These are precisely those ideas upon which the power of capitalism depends— class, race, nation, religion....

To permit, in the workers' and peasants' state, the spreading of ideas definitely hostile to workers and peasants and attempting to prove to the toiling people the legitimacy and inevitability of their enslavement, would be absurd and ridiculous Don Quixotism.

In another article, this profound psychologist makes a thorough analysis of that false individualism to which the last few defenders of "intellectual independence" are desperately clinging in capitalist countries and he compels them to see the lamentable failure of their efforts.

The individual defends his sham freedom and apparent independence inside his cage. The cages in which the writers, journalists, philosophers, government officials and all the other well-greased cogs of the capitalist machine are confined, are naturally more comfortable than the peasant's cage....

Individualism is the result of outward pressure which is brought to bear on man by class society. Individualism is a sterile attempt by the individual to defend himself against violence. But self-defence is self-limitation, since in a state of self-defence the process of intellectual growth is retarded. Such a state is harmful alike to society and to the individual. "Nations" spend billions on arming against their neighbours; the individual expends most of his energy defending himself against the violence to which he is subjected by class society. "Is life a struggle?" Yes, but life ought to be a struggle of man against the elemental forces of nature, with the object of subduing and directing them. Class society has transformed this lofty struggle into an abject fight to master the physical energy of man and to enslave him.

The individualism of the intellectual of the nineteenth and twentieth century differs from that of the peasant in form of expression only. It is more flowery, more polished, but just as primitive and blind. The intellectual finds himself between the upper mill-stone of the people and the nether mill-stone of the state. As a rule, the conditions of his existence are harsh and

full of drama since his surroundings are generally hostile to him. That is why his imprisoned thoughts so often cause him to place the burden of his own condition of life on the whole world and these subjective conceptions give rise to philosophical pessimism, scepticism and other deformities of thought.

I have quoted these masterly pages because they coincide with my own reflections and because in the course of severe struggles during the last few years, I have arrived, in my own way, at the same conclusions. In the very near future I shall speak again in some articles and a book, of the blood-stained birth of free thought in the West. Such a crisis is of interest to thousands of my colleagues in France, Germany and other countries and I know they are groping in the dark along the same paths.

To this sorry spectacle of an individualism of prisoners, walking in a circle within the walls of their jail, whose only refuge lies in an escape upwards in the hallucinations of a religious spirit or in the proud illusion of an enchained stoic, Gorky has no difficulty in opposing the healthy and vigorous exchange effected between the social mass and its individual units in the new society founded by the revolution. The revolutionary mass gives out emotional energy which is caught by the individual who sends the electric charge back into the masses, after reinforcing it by his ability to translate collective energy into idea-images. The will of the masses will, in the great hours of creative action “undertake tasks which are inaccessible to one individual, no matter how great his genius may be.” The knowledge of this gigantic will imparts to the individual an heroic joy and élan which sweep aside all futile snivellers sighing, “What’s the good?” as well as the melancholy of bourgeois individualism.

My dear young folks, says Gorky to those who whine about the drabness of life, its uselessness and mediocrity—for your own sakes I sincerely wish that life may teach you a good lesson, that you may feel the weight of her horny hand—the hand of that great and implacable teacher which we humans imbue with our reason and our will. I honestly wish you to understand that your complaints are devoid of sense and that... it is shameful to complain when one has the good fortune to live in the most extraordinary age of humanity, at the time when it is crumbling and being resuscitated, in the exhilarating years



when an enthusiastic people are erecting the first classless socialist society, a state of equals, despite the fierce and savage resistance of the old type of man opposed to everything new, whom history has condemned to death.... If you, young people, really want to live a "grand and beautiful life," create it, work side by side with those who are constructing a stupendous edifice that requires gigantic effort, that has no precedent.

Our voice shall answer the voice from Russia, and the whole West shall reverberate to the echoes of the East. It shall bring the blush of shame to the face of cowardly youth, seeking its profit in more or less disguised servility to business politicians and finance imperialism; or to the face of those other "young people" of the literary world, who quit the fight in order to practice, shut up in their homes, the narcissism of an art which exhausts itself in sterile joys in front of a mirror. If they do not find enough blood in their impoverished veins to recognize their infirmity and cure it, let the north wind carry away these dead leaves, let the human forest grow new generations, more healthy and verdant to cover their remains! In the U.S.S.R. "a people of 160 millions is working, not for its own benefit only, but for that of the whole of humanity, showing the latter the miracles performed by the will of intelligently organized masses." Nations of the West, you, who for centuries have been the vanguard of humanity—you, who to-day are last—when will you take your place again among the builders of the new world? With or without you, that new world shall come into being.

ROMAIN ROLLAND.

## TO AMERICAN INTELLECTUALS

*By Maxim Gorky*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

By these words the bourgeois admits that the intelligence of his class is impotent, insolvent. He wants to “bridle science” forgetting how much power science has given his class with which to strengthen its authority over the world of toilers. “To bridle science”—what does this phrase mean? To forbid science its freedom to explore? There was a time when the bourgeoisie was fighting valiantly and successfully against the attempts of the church to violate this freedom of science. In our day bourgeois philosophy is

gradually becoming what it was in the darkest years of the Middle Ages—the servant of theology. Caillaux is quite right in saying that Europe is threatened by a reversion to barbarism, as foretold by Marx, about whose teachings he knows nothing. Yes, it is an indisputable fact that the bourgeoisie of Europe and America, now mistress of the world, is every year becoming more ignorant, intellectually weaker, more barbarous. It is beginning to grasp this fact itself—in your person, M. Caillaux.

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

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

As you see, Paul Valéry performs his duties as comforter in a very radical spirit. He knows that the bourgeoisie wants to live

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

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

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

Learning of Berger's declaration, the Prussian government has forbidden him to speak again in public. This prohibition aroused the indignation of Hitler's followers. One "nordic" newspaper writes:

“Berger cannot be accused of inciting to any illicit action; we will slaughter the Jews on the basis of a law which we shall pass after coming into power.”

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

The comforters from among the intellectuals, confined within this “vicious circle,” are gradually losing their skill in offering comfort, and are in need of comfort themselves. They beg for comfort even from people who are opposed to charity in principle (for fear of establishing a precedent). Their gift of seductive lying, their chief gift, is no longer able to gloss over the filthy cynicism of bourgeois reality. Some of them are beginning to feel that to entertain and console people who are weary of plundering the world and are worried by the ever growing resistance of the proletariat to their infamous designs, people in whom the thirst for profit has taken on violent, mad and socially destructive forms—that to console and to entertain such people is becoming not only futile but even dangerous for the consolers themselves.

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

Bourgeois in origin but proletarian in social standing, the intellectual seems to grasp how degrading is the part he plays in the service of a class which is doomed to ruin and just as fully deserves this ruin as any professional bandit or murderer. He begins to grasp this because the bourgeoisie is no longer in need of his services. He hears more and more frequently how people of his own sort are trying to please the bourgeoisie by wailing about the overproduction of intellectuals. He sees how the bourgeoisie turns for “consolation” to charlatans who claim the ability to foretell the future, rather than to philosophers and “thinkers.” The newspapers of Europe are full of advertisements of palmists, astrologers with horoscopes, fakers,

clairvoyants, spiritualists and other quacks even more ignorant than the bourgeoisie itself. The camera and the cinema are killing art, and painters, in order to avoid starvation, are bartering their pictures in exchange for bread, for potatoes or for the old clothes of the bourgeoisie.

The following cheerful item appeared in a Parisian newspaper:

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

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

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

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



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

Seeing all this, some of the intellectuals begin to understand that the “creation of culture,” which they were accustomed to consider as their business, as the result of their “free thought” and “independent will,” is their business no longer, and that culture is by no means an inner necessity of the capitalist world. Events in China remind them of the destruction of the university and library of Louvain in 1914. They hear how Japanese guns destroyed the Tuntsi University in Shanghai, the nautical college, national university, college of medicine, agricultural and engineering colleges and workers’ university. This act of barbarity aroused no one’s indignation, just as no one is troubled by the reduction in appropriations for cultural institutions while expenditures for armaments continue to grow.

Of course, it goes without saying that only a restricted and quite negligible part of the European-American intelligentsia has sensed the inevitability of its subjugation to “the law of the excluded middle” and is debating the question of which way to go. Are they to go with the bourgeoisie against the proletariat—the usual path—or

with the proletariat against the bourgeoisie—as honour demands? The majority of intellectuals continue to be satisfied with their task of serving capitalism, a master who, knowing well the moral flexibility of his servant and consoler, and seeing the impotence and futility of his conciliatory work, begins to despise his servant openly and is already beginning to doubt whether it is necessary for him to exist any longer.

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

DEAR MR. GORKY:

Terrible perplexity, bordering on despair, is now prevailing everywhere, as a result of the frightful economic crisis which is now shaking all the countries of the world. This world tragedy prompted me to commence a series of articles in the most popular Norwegian newspaper, *Tidens Tagn*. The object of these articles is to raise the spirits and kindle the hopes of the millions of victims of this terrible disaster. In pursuance of this object, I found myself obliged to apply to the representatives of literature, art, science and politics, requesting them to express their opinion with regard to the tragic position of the peoples during the last few years. Every citizen of every country is confronted with the problem: whether to perish under the heavy blows of cruel fate, or to continue struggling in the hopes of a happy issue to the crisis. This hope of a favourable outcome from the present hopeless situation is essential to everyone; it will bring a bright ray of hope to all those who may read an optimistic opinion, expressed by a person to whom everyone is accustomed to listen with respect. This is why I take the liberty of asking you to send me your opinion of the present situation. This opinion should not exceed three or four lines, but it will no doubt save countless people from despair, giving them strength to look forward bravely to the future.

Yours respectfully,

SVEN ELVERSTAD.

Men like the author of this letter, men who have not as yet lost their naive faith in the medicinal power of “three or four lines,” and in the sacred might of a phrase—such men are still to be found aplenty. Their faith is so ingenuous that it can hardly be genuine.

Neither three nor four, nor three hundred nor four hundred phrases will put life into the decrepit limbs of the bourgeoisie. Thousands of phrases are being uttered in all the parliaments of the world and in the League of Nations every day, but they fail to console or soothe anybody, or to inspire any hope that the spontaneous growth of the crisis of bourgeois civilization can possibly be arrested. Former cabinet ministers and other idlers are travelling from city to city trying to convince the bourgeoisie to “bridle” science and to “discipline” it. The babbling of these persons is immediately caught up by the journalists—men for whom “nothing matters, and everything has long ago become tiresome.” One of these men, Emil Ludwig, in a serious newspaper article published in the *Daily Express* urges us to “kick out specialists.” And the petty bourgeoisie listens to this advice, reads all this nonsense, and draws its own conclusions. If the European bourgeoisie finds it necessary to close down its universities, it will be nothing to be wondered at. They will be able to refer to the fact that every year in Germany there are 6,000 openings for official posts requiring university diplomas while the yearly number of graduates from the German universities is 40,000.

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

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

and is beginning to run amuck.

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

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

It goes without saying that the war will not obliterate the hatred between the various national groups of the bourgeoisie. You think yourself "capable of serving the common culture of mankind" and "obliged to prevent it from declining into barbarity." This is all very well. But first ask yourselves this simple question: What can you do to-day or to-morrow to protect this culture, which, by the way, has never been the "common culture of mankind" and can never be such while there are national-capitalist state organizations which have absolutely no responsibility to the toiling people, and which stir up the nations against each other.

And then, you must ask yourselves, what can you oppose to the facts of unemployment, the exhaustion of the working class from starvation, the growth of child prostitution—things that destroy culture? Are you aware that the exhaustion of the masses means the exhaustion of the soil on which culture is grown? You are certainly aware that the so-called "cultural stratum" was produced by the

masses. You should know it very well, for the Americans are in the habit of boasting that in the United States of America newspaper boys have risen to the post of President.

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

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

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

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

even by the “voice of God from heaven.” One of the Paris papers writes:

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

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

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

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

the first centuries of Christianity, with the massacres of Jews, the extermination of the Albigenses and Taborites, and with the whole bloody policy of the church of Christ.

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

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

The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, A.D. 70, forcing the Jews into exile all over the world and helping thereby the dissemination of... Christianity... a doctrine which was as dangerous to the safety of the state [Rome] as the teachings of Lenin and Marx were to be to that of our modern capitalistic and industrial society.

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

What is the church doing in our day? In the first place, of course, it prays. The Archbishops of York and of Canterbury, one of whom preached something like a "crusade" against the Soviet Union, have concocted a new prayer, in which English hypocrisy is excellently blended with English humour. It is a very long composition, drawn up in the same form as the "Lord's Prayer." The bishops are calling to God:

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

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*Thy Will be done.*

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

*Thy Will be done.*

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

*Thy Will be done.*

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

*Give us our daily bread.*

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

*Give us our daily bread.*

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

*Forgive us our trespasses.*

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

*Forgive us our trespasses.*

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

clash of the representatives of these two classes. Nothing save the victory of the proletariat will be able to rid the world of hatred.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The peasants want to live not in the filthy villages which they were forced to inhabit for centuries, but in agricultural cities with good schools and nurseries for their children, and theatres, clubs, libraries and moving pictures for themselves. A thirst for knowledge and a taste for cultural life is growing in the peasants. If the peasants had failed to understand all this, the work in the Soviet Union would never have been crowned by such magnificent results as have been achieved by the united efforts of the workers and peasants in the last fifteen years.

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

Millions of workers are suffering the pangs of hunger, the health of the people is being wantonly ruined, infant mortality is mounting to disastrous proportions, the number of suicides is increasing, the original source of culture, its vital human energy, is being drained dry. And in spite of all this, your Senate has rejected

the La Follette-Costigan bill for the appropriation of 375 million dollars for immediate assistance to the unemployed, and the *New York American* publishes the following figures showing the eviction of unemployed persons in New York for non-payment of rent: in 1930, 153,731 evictions; in 1931, 198,738 evictions. Hundreds of families of unemployed were evicted daily in New York in January, 1932.

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

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

A bourgeois state, which stakes everything on individualism, assiduously trains its youth in the spirit of its interests and traditions. This is, of course, quite natural. But observe how anarchic ideas and theories have arisen and still arise for the most part from among the youth of this very bourgeois society. This is an unnatural phenomenon and is a proof of the abnormal and unsound state of an atmosphere where people are suffocating and beginning to dream of the total destruction of society in the interests of the unlimited freedom of personality. You are well aware that your youth is not only dreaming such dreams but is also putting them into practice.

The European press publishes more and more frequent reports

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

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

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

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

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

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

The bourgeoisie is hostile to culture, and at present cannot help being hostile to it. Such is the truth, borne out by the facts in bourgeois countries, by the practice of capitalist states. The bourgeoisie rejected the Soviet Union’s plan for universal disarmament, and this fact alone tells us clearly enough that the capitalists are socially

dangerous and are preparing a new world slaughter. They are keeping the Soviet Union in a tense state of defence, forcing the working class to spend an enormous amount of precious time and materials on the production of weapons for defence against the capitalists. They are gathering their forces for an attack on the Soviet Union in order to make this vast country their colony and their market. The people of the Soviet Union are spending an enormous amount of their forces and resources for self-defence against the capitalists of Europe, forces and resources which could certainly have been employed with greater advantage for the cultural regeneration of mankind—for the work of construction in the Soviet Union has a world-wide importance for the whole of humanity.

Rotten bourgeois society, mad with hatred and panicky fear for the future, is producing a rich crop of idiots, who absolutely fail to understand the meaning of what they are screaming about. One of them appeals to the “gentlemen rulers and diplomats of Europe” as follows: “At the present moment, the forces of the yellow race should be utilized by Europe as a means wherewith to smash the Third International.”

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

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

It is time for you to decide on which side you are, “masters of culture!” Are you for the elemental labour force of culture and for the creation of new forms of life, or are you against this force, and

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for the preservation of the caste of irresponsible plunderers, the caste which is decaying from its head down and is continuing its existence only by inertia?



## ON LITERATURE AND OTHER THINGS

An interesting story, and a true one, is told about a little boy. He was sitting on a box in the street and screaming. A passer-by asked:

Why are you screaming? Have you lost your mother and father?"

"No."

"What ails you?"

"Nothing ails me."

"Are you hungry?"

"No."

"Thirsty?"

"No."

"What do you want then?"

"I just want to scream."

This boy came to my mind while I was attending a large and noisy meeting of writers and critics. There was a lot of shouting there too. Although I listened attentively, I could not understand what was going on.

Excitement led some of the speakers to make the most extraordinary statements.

"Since the proletariat, in its social creativeness, has gone ahead of us writers, there is nothing for us to do and literature as such has become useless."

Perhaps this was said ironically or "under stress of excitement and irritation," and ought not even to be mentioned unless the reasons for the excitement are worthy of examination.

What is the matter? Why all the shouting? What do they want? Nobody can seriously bewail the fact that literature is lagging behind reality. It has always followed in the wake of life, it has always "recorded facts," generalized about them, given them synthesis. No one ever demanded of a writer that he be a prophet and foretell the future!

The present times have brought to the fore the question of linking art more closely to reality, the question of literature entering into the spirit of the epoch, the essence of which is the social revolution.

One of the younger writers spoke very aptly about the beauty and strength of the new reality created by the will and the mind of the working class. Another, who was subjected to severe but unjust criticism, also said quite fittingly that a writer ought not to be afraid

of criticism and that anyone who recognizes the historical value of his work ought not to be offended when criticized, no matter how severe might be the criticism.

But neither of these speeches commanded the attention they deserved. They did not move the audience, the first because of its pathos, the second because of its impetuosity. As a matter of fact both speakers touched upon questions which it is high time writers discussed in a sincere and friendly manner. Instead, the speeches that followed clearly echoed these writers' personal and professional animosities and petty motives.

I heard verbal disputes of this kind thirty or forty years ago, when the *Kulturtraeger*\*—who later became Cadets† and now are almost Black Hundreds—argued with remnants of the Narodniks (Populists) and the latter argued with the young Marxists.

At that time, it seems to me, considerably more passion and fire were put into these “discussions,” perhaps because they were much more personal, since two generations were at loggerheads. The older generation firmly believed in the decisive “role of the individual”—that making history is the professional task of the intelligentsia—whereas the Marxists denied the right of the latter to act as the “arbiters of the fate of the people” and maintained their firm belief in the power of the proletariat, a power created and nurtured by history to destroy the banal, criminal, mediocre world of capitalism and to establish a free international brotherhood of the toiling masses.

The rage, the fury, the hysteria displayed by those who were told to their faces that their game was up was quite natural—as natural as is now the wrath and howling of white émigrés abroad who will never be allowed to return to us, even if they went down on their bended knees.

Nowadays the argument is carried on by people who were created and pushed to the front line of battle by the most important revolution the human race ever experienced, a victorious revolution which is inevitably acquiring world-wide dimensions. A revolt against the old world has begun—against the old world as a whole and against its institutions. The leader of this revolt is the mighty

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\* Culture bearers.—*Ed.*

† Abbreviation for Constitutional Democrats, a liberal bourgeois party in Russia before the Bolshevik Revolution.—*Ed.*

Party of the proletariat, which is armed with a crystallized, scientific idea. This revolt is led by a class which grows ever younger with time, ever more numerous and stronger.

We must remember that before the October Revolution the training of a revolutionary began between the ages of 17 and 20, while to-day it begins at the age of pioneers\* and Children of October. This indisputable fact serves as a guarantee that the people of the Soviet Union have entered upon a journey from which there is no return. The road back is the road to death. It is closed.

The capitalist world may embroil us in war; it may, for a while, hinder us in the building of our new society. But capitalism has not the power to reverse an historical process which capitalism itself prepared and by its very nature could not avoid. Capitalism has neither the power nor the ideas necessary for the organization into one whole of the groups irreconcilably divided by the age-long, brutal, unrestricted and irresponsible exploitation of the energy of the working class and the treasures of nature.

The proletariat possesses an idea whose organizational and cultural strength is so obvious that it requires no extended comment. We should remember just one thing: that this idea embodies the whole meaning of history, and history must of necessity imbue the toilers of the whole world with this idea.

One would think that under these circumstances a writer would know perfectly well the significance of his work and the direction it ought to take.

It seems to me that certain writers howl not at any one in particular, but at history, because it deprived them of the possibility of finding a "neutral zone" outside of and apart from the world conflict. Such a writer thinks that he is being assailed in the field of literary or political criticism, but he is wrong, for if he is being assailed at all it is by history, particularly by ancient history. He protests ostensibly against the revolution's right to direct the creative energy of the individual. He protests at a time when the whole working class is creating miracles; at a time when the proletarian youth is performing herculean tasks; when that hoary individualist, the peasant, who for thousands of years has lived in the hope of owning his own little plot of ground, understands that it is more

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\* Pioneers—the Communist Organisation for children of school age. Before school age the children are known as "Octobrists."

profitable and more meritorious for him to be not a slave put a skilled worker, an artist of the soil.

Such a writer thinks that literature is his own private affair. At times ignoramuses and blockheads confirm him in such thoughts. Recently one of these blockheads said to a writer: "Writing is your own personal affair and has nothing to do with me." This is pernicious rubbish.

Literature was never the personal property of a Stendhal or a Leo Tolstoy; it always had its roots in an epoch, a country, a class. We have the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, the Italian Renaissance, the Elizabethan period, the literature of the decadents or the symbolists, but no one ever speaks of the literature of Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Dante, etc. In spite of the amazing variety of types among the Russian authors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we nevertheless speak of literature as the art reflecting the drama, tragi-comedy and novels of the period as a whole and not as the literature of any particular individual like Pushkin, Gogol, Leskov, Chekhov.

Now, we may and should speak with greater zest than ever before, of current Soviet literature as collective work. And never before has a writer been of such interest and so close to the masses of readers as he is in the Soviet Union to-day. Never before has a writer been so highly appreciated by the literate masses, and this appreciation is natural because the masses see how they themselves create the writer and how they are reflected in his books.

Of course, it is easier to write about the "old Russia," not only because it is "remote" and is easier to picture in words and images, but also because it is essentially nearer and dearer to the soul of some writers, particularly those who have rather vague conceptions about the past and who erroneously think that life in the past was calmer and happier than it is now.

It must be noted, however, that our greatest writers want to learn, and do study zealously. Nevertheless it is high time that we artists of the pen solved this fundamental and very simple question:

Is it possible to serve "art" and at the same time honestly to serve the revolution? Can we be neutral in the class war while the dying class strives forcibly, inhumanly and senselessly to retain for itself the key positions to which it has been accustomed, while the other class, advancing in all its power to take the place of the former, grows and works with a force whose creative ability has not

yet been tested, but which is capable of bringing about the universal regeneration of mankind?

Perhaps someone will ask: Are we then to sacrifice ourselves to the revolutionary demands of the epoch? Thus formulated the question is ridiculous. Nevertheless I answer it in the affirmative. Yes, we must re-educate ourselves so that serving the social revolution becomes the personal task of every honest person and becomes at the same time source of gratification to the individual. "Great is the joy of battle!"

And one should not feebly give way to one's own ego and behave in such a manner as to give ordinary persons the right to think that talented people are capable of sacrificing themselves only to the dark influences of the old world.

I must, however, mention certain facts which in some measure perplex, frighten and often even offend writers, and cause them to reject reality and shout from the housetops.

In the old days a popular entertainment at fairs was the trial of strength known as "hitting the Turk's head." Cut out of a tree stump, this head was crudely painted and fixed to a strong spring attached to an iron pedestal. Those who wished to try their strength would hit the top of the head with a wooden sledge-hammer, the blow would force the head down and contract the spring, and the strength of the blow was registered on a dial. The important thing was deftness in wielding the hammer, and the victors were not always the strongest but those who were experienced in swinging hammers, the blacksmiths, masons, etc.

The attitude of critics toward writers is very often like that of the athlete towards this wooden "Turk's head." It is useless to describe the deplorable manner in which critics try the strength of their words on writers' heads. I do not want to give our enemies the opportunity to laugh at us by emphasizing the coarseness, the lack of culture and, very often, even the ignorance of our critics. Perhaps our critics are very well equipped ideologically, but something seems to deter them from stating with the utmost clarity and simplicity the science of dialectic materialism as applied to questions of art. They quote Karl Marx, Engels, Plekhanov and Lenin, but they often obscure the meaning of these quotations by burying them under an avalanche of colourless verbiage. The demands made on literature and on writers are not clearly defined. It often happens that critics possessed of one and the same ideology make entirely differ-

ent demands of a writer. Contradiction among critics is a usual occurrence, but the thing to be deplored here is that the contradictions grow and develop on the basis of the critics' attitude towards the most important question of all: the method of conceiving the phenomena of life. Usually the critics attack the author instead of educating him and speak not of the methods of organizing experience, but only of the author's political complexion.

But unless the experience of the author is organized systematically, unless his emotions harmonize with his intellect, political opinions will be thrust upon the young author from without, he will imbibe them mechanically and they will be left suspended in thin air. Dobrolubov, Chernyshevsky and Plekhanov educated the writer, but the tone and the method of our critics to-day only make us doubt the strength of conviction of their pedagogical approach.

Individualistic tendencies and group interests are as highly developed among critics as among writers, and very often these interests overshadow the important problems of literature, one of the most fertile fields for revolutionary cultural work. Perhaps it is because of this very aloofness that certain regrettable incidents occur in our midst.

Dissension and internal strife take up so much of the critics' time and energy that when a heretic does appear among them, they fail to detect him for a long time, and only when he goes to extremes do they sound the alarm and begin to chastise him. His disciples make public penance for having dabbled with this heresy, and the poor little heretic, black and blue from the numerous blows inflicted upon him, becomes bloated and expands to the dimensions of the "martyr of an idea."

The manufacture of martyrs is the last thing our critics should be engaged in. But, alas, how many confessions of heresy have already been made! It often happens that a heretic has no "idea" but goes on living with the sole desire of pleasing "the mighty."

Another case: For many years a certain professor, writer and critic exalted mediocre writers to the height of classic authors. Serious critics paid no attention to his activities, which were hardly beneficial to the young people who heard him lecture. Now he admits that "in the last few months he recognized some of his mistakes." It is a pity he does not see all his mistakes. A Russian proverb says: "Words once uttered cannot be revoked;" consequently the mistakes of the professor remain and continue to harm the youth.

And in this case, too, our critics were not “on guard” for the interests of the younger generation of writers.

Critics read hurriedly and, it would seem, they look only for an opportunity to pick a quarrel with the author, to “down” him. This is what I call a narrow, warped attitude towards one’s work and I am absolutely convinced that such an attitude creates animosity, irritates the author and is like putting sand in the bearings of a machine.

The cultural and educational importance of literature, its role as the travelling companion of history, its critical attitude towards contemporary life are underestimated by our critics, although we speak and write daily about the class content of the novel, short story, and the drama. We say and write much, but make no mention of the technical methods that may and must be employed if we are to introduce at least a part or a partial synthesis of our magnificent reality into current literature.

That is not all. At the meeting of authors, which I mentioned above, a speaker justly declared that our painters depict reality like a photographic plate, that their style is cramped and lifeless. To this someone replied: “It is not true.” But it is true. With few exceptions our pictorial and literary work are merely temporarily successful experiments and, despite the undisputed talent in our midst, are not able as yet to give a synthesis of the most characteristic manifestations of our reality, the creator and hero of which is the collective labour of people straining every fibre of their creative power.

Our reality is monumental and has been worthy of great painting, of being generalized in imagery. Our critics should ask themselves if they can help the writer, and if the writer can, with the technique and methods which he commands, create these generalizations and these syntheses. Does it not behove us to find a means of uniting realism and romanticism into a third category which could portray the heroic present in more striking colours, in a more lofty and appreciative tone?

Labour, on which everything depends, has always been the key to all the mysteries of life; and to-day in the Soviet Union it not only lends new life to the ancient legends about the heroic exploits of Hercules and of Prometheus, the challenger of the gods, but even excels them. Labour is the real hero of our reality! Even in the “religious” creations of the toiling masses—which at the time bore a purely artistic character, labour left its distinct impress. The gods of the toilers were but idealized workers: Vulcan and Thor are black-

smiths; Hebe is an excellent cook; Diana, a successful huntress; Wainamoinen, a musician, etc.

We must admit and remember that the creative art of the toiling masses has not disappeared. It was not destroyed by centuries of slavish toil for the almighty individual who invented a mystical god in order to justify his own existence. We must recognize that the ability of the toiling masses to create literature is asserting itself and must assert itself, because a revolution frees man, not only socially and physically, but also emotionally and intellectually.

We see, for example, that the workers employed in the antiquated and badly equipped Izhorsk Works in Leningrad have built a puddling-furnace with their bare hands. It is true that it was built under foreign supervision but we must not forget that the desire to build something new springs from the ranks of the working class itself. It is time we learned to rise above such manifestations of the creative energy of the working masses, and to synthesize this energy in poetry and prose. Literature must understand that its role is to stimulate still greater energy.

In our country there are thousands of inventors, shock-brigaders, workers who fill executive posts—men and women springing from the toiling masses, who only yesterday were illiterate, backward, indolent, indifferent to their fate and who patiently bore the heavy burden of a life over which they had no control. Out of the flesh and bone of our people an army of extraordinary individuals has arisen. The Five-Year Plan not only builds gigantic factories but also creates people endowed with tremendous energy. Hundreds of such new people already occupy responsible posts where they conduct the struggle side by side with the old warriors of the working class, who spent half their lives learning how to work “underground,” in prisons, in exile and in jail.

Writers and critics must not forget that they are living in the midst of such people, that thousands of them are invading literature and occupying the front line trenches of the cultural revolution. In five years workers will not have to waste their energy building a puddling-furnace with their bare hands, and many hundreds of them will turn to the work of summing up the recent past in artistic form. In all probability they will be amazed when they study our present life, our current work, our scholastic and barren wordy disputes, the confusion that attends our personal relations, and the abundance of vulgar gossip upon which we thrive.



I am absolutely convinced that our proletarian masses, our new, free workers on the land, will speedily come forward to delve into all phases of art; that we are about to witness the creation of a new form of collective art. It is incumbent upon us to extend them a helping hand.

A number of important and complex problems confront our writers and critics, and one of them is to avoid the path that was followed by the army of intellectual individualists, the path which brought this vociferous army to disruption and complete bankruptcy.

Writers and critics must find and work out a method of working collectively in the interests of the toiling masses. The meaning of life is to serve the revolution. In our day it can have no other meaning. The revolution demands the fraternal union of all honest persons, of all those who feel and understand the greatness of the task which the workers have undertaken. We are trusted, but we have not fully justified this confidence. Our work compares poorly with the work of the masses who are imbued with an heroic and exceptional enthusiasm, with a burning passion, with which we, comrades, writers and critics, for some reason have as yet been slightly infected.

## TO THE "MECHANICAL CITIZENS" OF U.S.S.R.

### AN ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENTS

During my four months stay in the Soviet Union I have received more than a thousand letters, about two hundred of which were sent by citizens who are not in sympathy with the Soviet Government. Many of the correspondents demand answers, but it is a physical impossibility to answer each one separately, so I am answering all at once. So that there shall be no misunderstanding about this answer, I shall name some of the correspondents.

They are: "a philistine who mechanically became a citizen of the U.S.S.R."; "a group of Russians"; the author of a letter about the "Tower of Babel"; a man who "attended lectures of Bukharin, Lunacharsky and of other builders of Socialism in the Moscow State University." "But tell them," he demands, "that after I left the University I became an extreme individualist." And others: "a peasant poet"; an Anti-Semite; "a proletarian poet," whose coat and rubbers were stolen; "a former Hebrew teacher"; "a former admirer"; "a convinced defender of philistinism"; and dozens of other "mechanical citizens."

The ignorance of the epistles of these citizens differ only in degree; but they agree perfectly in their coarseness and their rage against the Soviet Government, Communists, the working class, and against the author of this article. "He is a traitor to his country," whose head is in a whirl from all the "tsarist honours and praises," and to whom "non-existent accomplishments are shown," while he is being "led by the nose."

It is quite characteristic of "mechanical citizens" to be enraged and irritated by those very accomplishments of the Soviet Government and the working class, the realization of which they so unanimously and vehemently deny.

The majority of the correspondents declare that they have no hope of their letters ever reaching me. I hasten to inform them that they did reach me. Not only letters reached me but also post cards on which varied abuse was clearly written. The Moscow Post Office is exceedingly efficient, which I consider one of our accomplishments.\*

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\* In feet, I beg to extend my sincere thanks to the Post Office workers for their attention to my prolific mail,

I must make another comment. The rage expressed in the letters of my correspondents proves that the Soviet Government in one decade has been able to exasperate the philistine—that spiritually dead and indifferent individual—which the autocratic regime was not able to do in the course of many decades.

To-day the irritations of "mechanical citizens" are not cutaneous, as they were when cutaneous stimulation led many of them to the erroneous belief that they loved the people and were revolutionaries. Now the irritation has gone deep into the holy of holies of the philistine soul and there caused a process of oxidation and putrefaction. Here are a few examples of the verbal black smoke which coils from the depths of the philistine soul:

Where are your proofs, Gorky, that humanity is eternal and that it will preserve itself when the earth is devoid of atmosphere, *e.g.*, when there will be no air to breathe? And if you have no proofs, why should I, by my activity, support that which is destined to fall?

A second philosopher simplifies the question of the first;

Is it not vain and absolutely purposeless for us to make so many sacrifices and to limit ourselves and others by creating laws, government institutions and beliefs in the name of a more or less remote future even if it be in the name of a Communist future?

A third puts it still more resolutely, simply and concretely:

I don't care a pin—he writes—for all your social action, for all your appeals to toil or for creative work. I am not ambitious, I want to live simply, for my own family, for myself....

And then there is another who, as the saying goes, dots the "i's":

The Russian people do not understand freedom. What they need is the Cossack and the lash.

We cannot deny that the comprehension by the "mechanical citizens" of their own hidden essence is a result of the charitable activities of the Soviet Government, and this result is quite a big accomplishment, I think.

Of course, I have letters of still another type. It is very appropriate to quote one of them here and contrast it with the philosophy

of the philistines.

The author of the letter is “a man of the soil, who before was called muzhik and now citizen, as everyone else.” He “wrote this letter for two weeks as I learned to write from my nephew who is a member of the Red Army.” He writes:

If we knew before what we know now thanks to the Soviet government, then we'd have no wars of any kind and no sons-of-bitches who started it and we'd have money for property in the villages and for factories and dear Lord help all the comrades get disarmament, then we'd spread far and wide.”\*

Of letters in this tone I have many, and sometimes they make me think, as queer as it may seem, that it is harmful for “mechanical citizens “to know how to read and write.

Citizens! You try to convince me that I am “blind, deaf and dumb;” that I have “sold myself “; that I act against my conscience,” etc. There is no limit to your *etceteras*! One of you even goes so far as to ask: “Can't you see that ninety per cent. of the people despise you and are afraid of you.” This careless statistician will ruin my ego. He ought to realize how enormously great one must feel, if 148,500,000 people despise one. There has never yet been in the world a man who knew himself to be hated by such a mass of people.

It is absolutely untrue, fellow citizens, that I see nothing bad or drab in the Soviet Union. For example, I see you; and to put it mildly one cannot say you are very lovely. Nothing you wrote to me can evoke in me anything but pitiful contempt for you. Frankly speaking, your abuse, slander, lies do not bother me in the least. I have been accustomed to slander, and lies and abuse of all kinds “since infancy.”

The only truthful thing you pointed out was the fuss made in honour of my sixtieth birthday. The fuss was indeed superfluous; and although it did not set my head whirling, it nevertheless took up much of my valuable time. V. I. Lenin, so correct in everything, was doubly right when he said that a jubilee is a ludicrous absurdity.

But what else do you write besides referring to this particular incident?

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\* In the original this letter is full of mistakes in grammar and spelling which are difficult to translate.—*Ed.*

You say: "We have no factories"—when almost all the old factories have been put in motion, and hundreds of millions have been expended for the construction of new ones.

"In every city there are 50 to 100 thousand, and even more, unemployed." This is awful, of course, particularly for those cities where the total population is no more than 50 or 100 thousand. And what about those cities where the population is no more than 30 or 40 thousand? That is absolutely beyond comprehension....

"Seventy-five per cent. of the Russian population suffers from syphilis," you say. "Every Communist has ten wives.... Girls begin their sex life at the age of six.... Factories are at a standstill and are being destroyed; transportation also." What do you mean "also"? At a standstill and being destroyed? "The ranks of the Young Communist League are filled with the children of former petty officials and clerks."

A writer, who, according to his profession, ought to know his *belles lettres*, says: "From a general survey of literature, it is evident we have no talents. The only stuff published is by Jews. The fuss that is made about them is simply disgusting."

I too am disgusted, citizens, by your abysmal ignorance.

For we are making a fuss about Sholokhov, Fadeev, Panferov, Volny, S. Semenov, F. Gladkov, Olesha, etc., who are all "orthodox" gentile Russians. The editors of the *Izvestiya* are I. I. Skvortzov-Stepanov and Gronsky; of the *Pravda*, M. Ulyanova and Bukharin; of the *Rabotchaya Gazeta*, Maltzev and Smirnov; of *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, Kostrov; of *Krasnaya Nov*, Raskolnikov; of *Novy Mir*, Lunacharsky, etc.—all of them Russians.

And if they were Jews, then what of it?

Do you think, citizen-poet, that Babel or Utkin, for example, and other talented Jews are worse than a Christian goose like you? You are wrong, fellow citizen; you are wrong because you are ignorant.

Your ignorance is overwhelming. One of you writes that "the Communists stuffed up your ears so you should not hear the muteness of the people."

But stop and think! If the people are mute, why do they need to stuff up my ears? And how can you say that "the people are mute," when self-criticism is at its height, when an enormous army of worker and peasant correspondents mercilessly unmask everything, even the tiniest mistakes which occur in the building of the national

economy, when everything is done to draw the toiling masses into the full tempo of a life which is their own?

How can you state that “the masses do not give a damn who governs them, and how,” when you yourself point out that “the newspapers are full of facts of a negative character?” True. But the masses who create these facts are also the first to expose them, for the worker and peasant correspondents are the voice of the masses.

You must agree that despite the “freedom of press and speech,” the European press has not yet experienced such a phenomenon as self-criticism by the working masses of its own work. And when I come out in the press against the tone and the form of some self-criticism, I do it because the worker and peasant correspondents by dragging into the press all the unavoidable “pettiness of life” are only giving a helping hand to such as you.

But who are you, anyhow?

You are enemies of the toiling people.

That citizen who studied in the Moscow State University and remained an “extreme individualist” writes: “The Russian masses are worthless, cowardly, dishonest people who are incapable of doing collective work because of their low moral and mental state.”

This young pessimist’s estimation of the masses is false, but his estimation is quite true of your own masses, “mechanical citizens.”

All those “facts” of which you wish to inform me I know already. I read about them in the émigré press. The émigrés also lie very ignorantly, yet they do not write such amazing nonsense as you do.

“The anti-Christ foretold by John the Evangelist has come. He is Lenin.... The old regime is a star to be attained by the present epoch.... The sacred name of Witte.... The Bolsheviks are German spies; Gorky, Lenin’s friend, is also a spy.”

Listen are you not ashamed of yourselves? V. Burtzev wrote such nonsense eleven years ago. Now even feeble-minded old émigré are ashamed to write such trash.

My “ex-admirers of Nizhni-Novgorod and Sormovo” write that I am “at the mercy of the Bolsheviks, people of a dark past, fresh from prison.” These send me their farewells: “Farewell to our Gorky!” But they bid me farewell much too late. You should have done so long ago, citizens.

Yours I never was. I have been “at the mercy” of the Bolsheviks for the last twenty-five years. My past, citizens, is also the

prison, but my prison days were not as hard nor as long as those of any of the old Bolsheviks. To my sorrow, I also differ from them in having overestimated in 1917 the revolutionary significance of the intellectuals and their spiritual culture and underestimated the will power and the valiancy of the Bolsheviks, and the class-consciousness of the advanced workers. About this mistake of mine I have already spoken. No one, citizens, is insured for life against mistakes. No doubt many of you are mistaken in your attitude towards the Soviet Government and the working class, and in your estimation of the actual state of affairs.

To those citizens who ask why I "sold myself," why I "hang on" to the Bolsheviks, I will reply: every person is at liberty to say, and should of course say, what he thinks. It is always better to give vent to your stupidity than to carry it within you like a disease. Stupidity expressed may be likened to a skin disease; it is easier to fight. But when it is hidden in the depths of thought it is like an internal disease and is much more difficult to cure. Besides, when stupidity is expressed it becomes more easily obvious to the one who expresses it.

My answer to the question is this: While I was a boy living in Kazan, Tsaritsin, Borissoglebsk and Nizhni-Novgorod I became acquainted with revolutionaries of populist tendencies. This was fortunate for me for it was the first time I met people whose interests in life were beyond their own satisfaction, beyond the goal of a personally secure life. These people, who knew intimately and thoroughly the burdensome life of the toiling people, spoke of the imperative necessity of changing this life. And they not only talked, they acted.

There was a railroad worker, Michael Romas, who had already served a ten-year sentence of hard labour in exile, and, under the hateful pretence of store-keeper, was trying to carry on propaganda among the peasantry of the Volga region between Kazan and Simbirsk. He would say to the young propagandists, Victor Arefyev and Paul Sitnikov:

"When you are engaged in revolutionary work there is no task which is too difficult. And you must remember: the test of words is action."

I came in contact with marvellous people: Gusev, a propagandist among the Saratov peasants, who spent twenty years in exile somewhere near Tashkent. Withered and wasted he kept himself

alive with some kind of medical powders. But as soon as he came to Nizhni-Novgorod he began to scold everybody severely for having slackened down in their revolutionary work. Dry as a mummy, he seemed about to fall apart. Yet, when I listened as he spoke, I felt ashamed of not doing anything for the liberation of the people. And I felt more ashamed when this man went to Saratov and immediately began his work; and then after seven months was betrayed by someone and died in prison.

People like Gusev were few, of course. They would succumb under the strain of a miserable and wretched life. I was able to perceive that they left among people emotions of two kinds. Older people, former revolutionaries, smiled confusedly and shrugged their shoulders; while the attitude of the youth towards types like Gusev was that of mockery and at times even of irritation. A group of students from the Yaroslav Lyceum, who were deported to Nizhni, were in ecstasies over the "courage" of Leo Tikhomirov, a former member of the Executive Committee of the *Narodnaya Volya* [People's Will Party], a renegade, who wrote the booklet. *Why I Ceased to be a Revolutionary*.

To me the old revolutionaries who had been in prison, in exile, at hard labour, were heroes, demigods, the living incarnation of "truth and honesty," people who had the power to get to the very bottom of the entanglements of life.

During 1891-1892 I met in Tiflis many people who had been tried for activities during the eighties, and who had served their sentences of hard labour and exile. And once at a party one of them, Markozov, after listening to a report of the choleric revolt in Astrakhan, said sighing:

"It seems that the whip and bayonet are still needed to rule the people."

I expected that the former "fighters for the freedom of the people" would contradict him, but no one paid attention to his words which I often heard repeated among the philistines just as if they were the most ordinary and familiar words. I was at first deafened by them, but then my ear was developed and became more sensitive. Soon I ceased being shocked by declarations uttered by revolutionaries, such as the declaration of an old member of the "Netchayev Group,"\* a man of exceptional education, translator of

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\* Netchayev was a leader of the early populists.—*Ed.*



Flaubert and Leopardi.

"My friend," he said, "forget these beautiful dreams. The Russian people will never be satisfied with any other form of government than an autocracy, a despotism."

I ran across these same ideas in 1897. In Tiflis, in the Metechsky castle, the gendarme officer, Konissky, showed me a piece of paper on which was written:

"When I was a molly-coddle like you I also wanted to make a revolution; but after having spent three years in Mezeni I was cured."

"Who wrote that?" Konissky asked very pleased.

I heard many similar remarks and in 1907 I read in an article in *Vekbi*: "We ought to be thankful to the government that it protects us with bayonets from the rage of the people."

It is well known that *Vekbi* was published by the ex-Marxist, Struve, a derelict, a nomad, who from Marxism wandered over to monarchism. In 1901 I watched the way both men and women students idolized him; he was then "leader" of the youth movement. I believe that these reminiscences are eloquent enough and I will wind up with the words of a famous anarchist:

"In our youth we all valiantly swing the revolutionary bludgeon and when we grow old it swings back on our own heads."

All this, without diminishing my estimation of the cultural work carried on by the intellectuals, compelled me to doubt their "love of the people" and their revolutionary tendencies.

The real revolutionary spirit I felt only in the "Bolsheviks," in Lenin's articles, in the speeches and work of the intellectuals who followed him. And already in 1903 I began to "hang on" to them. I did not enter the party but remained a sincere and for ever loyal "partisan" to the great cause of the working class and I am certain of its final victory over the old world.

I know, citizens, that all I say here will not convince you. I know that it is useless to point out to you the tremendous achievements of the Soviet Government on the road to the construction of Socialism. I know that another in my place would not stop to answer your dirty and criminal absurdities. But I have my own attitude toward people, an attitude derived from my experience and knowledge of the hardships of life. I am aware of all that is animal and base in people, and I know that people are often not responsible for their baseness, that they are base out of sheer necessity, out of

weakness, because life is based on greed and envy, on the most heinous human cruelties. The cursed past has oppressed and defaced people and will continue to do so until we have changed the very basis of life, the economic system.

If I am being brutal, if I am using sharp language, it does not mean that I am hurt or want to hurt anybody. Nor does it mean that I forget how miserable people are, how difficult life is for them, how little they can be reproached for their stupidity and greediness. I am not angry, but I hate the past; and very often I cannot find words harsh enough to express this hatred. I met and still meet with much which disgusts me, but I do not always want to speak of it. It does not interest me because, to my mind, it is not characteristic of people.

In my youth I became deeply interested in the question: how did it happen that our horrible life could create fine people? It was not easy to find an answer to it.

I am certain that the basic virtue of man is the striving to better his conditions. This virtue is also a characteristic of animals, but man developed it to a degree of perfection by the use of his fundamental power, reason. It was he who created and continues to create culture. To be able to find, to compare, to study the useful and harmful, the beautiful and ugly outside of and within ourselves—this is the principal biological power of man. This power urges him on to create conditions of life more suitable for the further development of his faculties; it will conquer all obstacles hindering the development of man. It must conquer.

You, citizens, are afflicted with a chronic disease, a dark spot on your brain. This spot has the faculty of recording and then reflecting facts and thoughts only of a negative nature. In your brain there is a constant process of putrefaction of all impressions. This deformity is due, of course, to your class psychology, to your parasitic desire to rule over people, to live on the sweat and blood of others; the desire for personal security, bliss and wellbeing—a desire, in general, for all that which was always criminal and is becoming still more so as the toiling people begin to understand their right to toil on their own account.

You are individualists; but history needs strong men able to create new forms of life more worthy of the reasoning faculty of man than those forms imposed upon him by the past. Life seeks heroes; parasites are done for.

Hillel, the ancient Hebrew sage wisely said: "If I am not for

myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I for?"

This is one of the best commandments ever handed down to man. It has always inspired me. My entire life work has been devoted to but one object: to strengthen in people their will for a better life and intensify the active hatred of the reality we inherited from the past.

People must have an entirely different reality than the one they have been accustomed to.

I see that the creation of a new reality in our Soviet Union is developing with a remarkable rapidity; I see how successfully life is rejuvenated by the creative energy of the working class and I believe in its victory.

I believe, because I know.

1928.

## MORE ABOUT “MECHANICAL CITIZENS”

Judging by the numerous repercussions from right and left, the article on “mechanical citizens” has had the effect of a “strong medicine.”

The “mechanical citizens” have grown red in the face with anger and are swearing furiously; they threaten me with a “trial by the people.” Some of them from abroad, who think themselves clever, pretend to be exceedingly happy at the existence of “mechanical citizens” in the Soviet Union. One of them has even published a little article on this subject entitled “Good Tidings,” which makes one wonder what good there can be in the existence of people who themselves admit: “Yes, you are right. We are not free, we are impotent, we are born slaves; we submitted to the Tartar yoke and autocracy and now we submit to the Bolsheviks”—as a certain lady writes me, boasting at the same time that she, too, was “imprisoned for the sake of the people.”

I have no right to doubt that my correspondent served a prison sentence “for the sake of the people” in full sincerity. I must remind her, however, that many of those who were imprisoned “for the sake of the people” dislodged those who exploited and oppressed the people only the more firmly to establish themselves in their place. As Don Aminado, the poet of our émigrés, has said: “Their migrations to the people and back again were carried on to a point of exhaustion.”

The joy aroused by the fact that “mechanical citizens” are still alive and kicking, is quite natural to people who would have liked to see the toiling people submit to their will mechanically and mutely.

Another overjoyed person writes: Remember what Ephraim Sirin—a writer of the fourth century, not a Marxist—said: ‘How happy will the enemy be when he will see thy work destroyed by his own hand and his heart will gloat over thy sorrow.’”

This quotation is familiar to me, but I doubt that Ephraim Sirin is its author. I think I ran across it in the writings of Sviatogoretz, and, if I am not mistaken, one word was omitted from the quotation, which should read: “and his *cruel* heart will gloat...”

This man implores me “to tell the truth.” With pleasure. Here it is: Power must belong to the toilers and although it may not please the exploiters and idlers and all those who work hand in hand with them, it nevertheless shall be so. One sceptic tries to convince me:

What are you getting so hot about? All goes well. "the crab is crawling backwards," "the pike is drawing to the water," knowing well that the crucian exists by being ever alert; but your illiterate workers at the "broken trough" just as our intelligentsia found themselves at that trough, like that "black swan who wants to dwell on the heights."\*

Well, I too was "consumed by love for the people." Oh, I do not believe in quotations and proverbs. How, for example, can you repeat that a black dog cannot be scrubbed white, when black hundreds became "whites" and pink idealists became jet-black, when they saw that their beloved "people" refused point blank to lead the mechanical life of slaves.

Besides, burning is a form of oxidation and, since decay is also a form of oxidation, many who are decaying think that they are consumed with a bright and beautiful flame.

At some invisible point between revolution and culture there is a fissure—the "Sceptic" writes—and this fissure goes further and further and becomes deeper and deeper, leads to the fact that the slogan of the cultural revolution" amounts to a "deviation to the right," while the idea of the "proletarian revolution" and "dictatorship of the proletariat" acquires a character hostile to culture."

What culture does he speak of? Is it not that culture which cedes to the minority the right to educate, in its own interests, the intellect and will of the majority and to exploit its energy most outrageously? Is it not that culture of the "spirit" of which he speaks? The devil take that spirit, the development of which demands the existence of masters and slaves, human oppression, bloodthirsty massacres!

The "Sceptic" in his own words looks at "reality from the height of that tower on which humanity lit the beacon of the only and eternal truth."

I personally have no idea either of the place where this "tower" stands or of the existence of the "only and eternal truth."

I believe that truths are arrived at only by experimental science. Someone has said very aptly that "truth is an instrument of knowl-

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\* From a fable by Krylov.—*Ed.*

edge,” but we know that all instruments wear away with use.

To-day experimental science has created a new instrument of knowledge, the electron theory of matter, just as social science has established the undeniable truth of the inevitability of the class war and the necessity for the working class to take political power into its own hands.

This inevitability and necessity is proved and justified by the outrageous crimes of the capitalist system. Not one honest person can or has the right to call life reasonable and intelligent when it permits such things as the wars of 1914-1918. During the War, tens of millions of workers and peasants were killed off, 300,000 homes were destroyed in France, and Germany alone wasted over forty million tons of metal for the destruction of human life.

If, in 1913, political power had been in the hands of the workers and peasants, the billions of roubles wasted by Russian capitalists for the slaughter of their own and German workers, for the ruination of East Prussia, would have been spent as they are spent now—for the development of agriculture, industry and transport, for the cultural development of the toiling people.

For what purpose was this most outrageous war started?

For the interests of a handful of thick-headed millionaires, for the gratification of their greed, their insatiable desire for luxury. And thus the wrangle between a handful of robbers and parasites led to fratricide between workers, who are equally wretched all over the world and whose common enemy is the capitalist.

To be sure these are “elementary” truths known to everybody, but is it my fault that I must repeat them? They must be repeated because the capitalists again want to reap profits from the blood of the workers, because they are again preparing to send millions of workers and peasants to a fratricidal war. This new war will be even more bloody and more destructive. We will again see entire cities converted into dung-heaps; hundreds of thousands of acres of fertile soil will again be laid waste, and poisoned by corpses; immense forests will be razed and burnt down.

Yet, all that has been built in the world belongs to those who built it and not to those who paid for the labour with money squeezed out of the workers and peasants. Everything is the fruit of labour, and the chief reason that wealth is in the hands of the exploiters and parasites causing all this suffering, crime and sorrow for the toiling people, is that the peasants and workers as a whole

are still blind and therefore still fail to understand that if they rallied in solid united ranks it would be easy to overthrow the yoke of the capitalists, who have long ceased to be human and have become beasts, growing ever more ferocious and bloodthirsty.

It stands to reason that I am not saying all this for the benefit of "Sceptic" but for the edification of those young people who, in city and village, are taking the places of the old guard of Bolsheviks who have placed a magnificent head on the tremendous body of workers and peasants of the Soviet Union—the Communist Party.

The "Sceptic" is that "black swan who wants to dwell in the heights." To be exact, he is less a "sceptic" than a romantic. He is stuffed with phrases, many of them borrowed from old fables which were once wise and are still eloquent. But his "wisdom" is superficial and is pasted on his skin like a poster to a hoarding.

The workers—he writes—whom you serve, if not out of indifference, then from lack of understanding, will never restore that spiritual culture, that blissful life which they destroyed.

He is a passive romantic. Passive romanticism is the romanticism of the tired middle class and it always makes its appearances after stormy social tragedies and takes the place of active romanticism, which generally precedes revolutions. It walks hand in hand with God, one of the chief essentials in its game of politics. It has a kind of lyrical and engaging youthfulness, a certain "beauty," at most a prettiness in stylistic ornaments, but it is more like mildew, although mildew does not belong to the field of politics but of mycology, the science of fungi. However, passive romanticism is connected with politics—we are still living in a class society, and it is well known that under such conditions nothing can be "outside of politics."

The soft green mildew of passive romanticism aims to restore—nay, even better, to renovate—the individual, who has been shaken to his very roots and cleft to the very depths of his "ego," even if the individual be as great as Leo Tolstoy. Passive romanticism presupposes that were the individual to exclude himself from the sphere of social problems and questions and plunge headlong into the capricious game of introspection, he would regain, in this very seclusion, his lost entity, his "inner harmony." But by shutting up the individual within himself, passive romanticism only quickens the process

of his destruction.

One must be very naive to believe in the possibility of a “beautiful life” under the disgusting conditions of class society, under conditions of universal anarchic warfare, of envy, greed, forced and often senseless toil. It is absurd and shameful to believe that anybody, no matter who he be, has the right to build himself a cosy nest so that he may lead a comfortable personal life, when social life is becoming ever more openly cynical, sordid, poisoned by multiple crimes against humanity.

The petty bourgeois content of that passive romanticism now gradually and stealthily developing in the Soviet Union is quite obvious. This romanticism creeps along two parallel roads: one leads to the seclusion of the individual in his own little world, in his own microscopic “ego,” and the other road is the idealization of the toil of sickle and plough, which aims to revive and develop the banal, smug individual proprietor. It is not only a question of poetry but also of comfort, for it is much safer to sit on the backs of peasants than on the backs of workers. The heroic toil of the hammer which is forging a new collective life is organically foreign and even hostile to the passive romanticism of the petty bourgeois, the lovers of a “beautiful life” and “spiritual culture.”

One of our “cultured” men, when it was still fashionable to belong to the tribe of revolutionaries and then to the Black Hundreds, admitted in a moment of frankness:

As a matter of fact, what is our spiritual culture? Our culture is the culture of the cabaret; gypsy songs, Hungarian fiddles; in a word, it is a romanticism of the cabaret. There is a small group of people who dabble in philosophy, but the Jew Gershensohn feels the real Russia better than a Russian.

To my mind these words contain a considerable amount of truth.

In the “romanticism of the cabaret” there is indeed something specifically Russian.

The more sentimental the romantic whine, the more deafening is its influence upon people of a restaurant culture. And one is led to think that the main contents of a “beautiful life,” the most savoury spiritual food for which these people wail, is just this gay, sugary excrescence of the expensive cabarets, the filth which these people themselves rapturously created. And as émigrés they displayed their



talent for restaurant activities in their "melancholy" singing and "enraptured" dancing.

The romanticism of such people is even lower and more pitiful than the romanticism of my neighbour in Nizhni-Novgorod, Nicholas Priyakhin, a postal-telegraph clerk. This red-headed young man, always modest, and well groomed, after seeing a series of sensational and talentless plays by Nevezhin and Spazhinsky, imagined that he was hopelessly in love with an actress and decided to put an end to his petty, rusted life.

He wanted to die "beautifully." First, he obtained an empty champagne bottle and filled it with beer, then he took the artificial flowers which decorated his icon and strewed them over the table before him; he drank a glass of beer and then fired a shot with a revolver into his right temple. He became blind in both eyes but remained alive.

Later, telling about his heroism, he would add: Cruel is the irony of fate!

And carefully feeling his way with his staff, he would look straight at the sun which was invisible to him.

Some of the "mechanical citizens" accuse me of skilfully selecting quotations from stupid letters and "remaining mute" to sensible ones. This is not true, citizens. I read very carefully all the letters and zealously look in every one of them for "traces of objective truth." But, either it is not there or I am so ill-bred that "truth is *organically* foreign to me."

I have before me now a tremendously long letter, ten large pages written in a small hand. It takes at least twenty minutes to read such a letter. It is signed, "Siberians," and is, therefore, a "collective" letter, a fact which doubles its importance and increases my interest. But it is written in the first person—"I," and not "we."

I am writing in all honesty and do not mean to bespatter with vomit the colossal, heroic work of the U.S.S.R. I do not know who I am—a mechanical citizen or something else. Now I am working for the Soviets, but I accepted the work only after denying its usefulness.

After reading this I said to myself: "At last, something important." But, alas! What followed was familiar and tiring.

The masses of people followed the Bolsheviks thanks to the provocation in Kolchak's rear by famous heroes like Annenkov. The Bolsheviks ought to erect a statue to him, because he and others like him won Siberia for Bolshevism. These marauders of Pureshkevich's clique dreamed of immediately overthrowing the Bolsheviks and other revolutionary parties, in order to restore the autocracy and worked towards this aim wherever they gained authority.

If we took this for a "truth," then it would be a truth fabricated by the Socialist-Revolutionaries; and, if I am not mistaken, the Socialist-Revolutionaries are themselves convinced that even though they fabricate "truth" profusely they nevertheless make a very poor job of it.

The "Siberians" further informs me that "Bolshevism carries out the will and wishes of the Curzons"; then follows a criticism of Soviet construction, which was copied word for word from the émigré press; and, finally, there are melancholy reflections about the fate of the intellectuals, "the great majority of whom are against the U.S.S.R. not only because as intellectuals they serve those who pay them more—this is an unjustified and stupid accusation, as the Bolsheviks are well aware—but apparently because there is something about the U.S.S.R. to which they can under no circumstances reconcile themselves, although one has to admit that the Soviet Government is beginning to pay the intellectuals comparatively well."

This is written by an intellectual who points out that he belongs to a definite political-literary organization. I think he writes poorly. And the Soviet intellectuals will hardly thank him for these, mildly speaking, stupid lines.

"Russia is doomed to perdition by the Bolsheviks—that is what you should write," advises another "mourner" of the fate of the people. "There is a shortage of iron, of coal," he shouts.

We know that there is enough iron for sixty years to come, and enough coal for seventy-five, and that European industry is very much worried and alarmed about it. It seems to me that the Bolsheviks cannot be blamed for the fact that capitalist states waste hundreds of millions of tons of coal and metal for the building of cruisers, cannon and projectiles for "defence," and for the fact that, due to wars, our world is becoming poorer and poorer. This squandering of precious metal and waste of fuel by a handful of anarchist capi-

talists is indeed one of the most disgusting crimes ever perpetrated against the toiling people. We had a very fine thinker—not very famous because he was original—N. F. Fedotov. Among the many of his original theories and aphorisms there is the following:

“Freedom without the conquest of nature is just like the liberation of the peasants without giving them land.”

This, I think, is irrefutable.

The capitalist system strives to conquer the forces of nature only to strengthen its authority over the sources of living power, over the labour power of the toiling people.

The workers’ and peasants’ government of the Soviet Union has a different aim: to transform as completely as possible the physical strength of the workers and peasants into a reasonable and intelligent force, and, with the aid of this force, hasten the subordination of all the energies of nature to the interests of the toiling masses and their liberation from the degrading labour for capitalists.

Iron is squandered, black fuel (coal) pilfered and burnt; at the expense of the toilers, liquid fuel (oil), white fuel (electricity), grey fuel (peat), green fuel (lumber and straw), are wasted. But many varieties of fuel still remain which capitalism has not yet learned how to use: sky-blue fuel (the wind), blue fuel (the ebb and flow of the sea), red fuel (the energy of the sun). These are all sources of energy which will last for thousands of years.

It is necessary that the exploitation of all these sources of energy be wrenched from the hands of the exploiters who regard the physical strength of workers as fuel to be burnt for the sole purpose of strengthening activities which are criminal because they exhaust the treasures of the earth, consume and waste them only to strengthen the power of the exploiters over the workers and peasants as well as over scientific and other cultural forces.

I see that the workers’ and peasants’ government understands this perfectly and that it works courageously in this direction.

## TOWARDS A NEW, HAPPY AND INTELLIGENT LIFE

### A LETTER TO THE WOMEN WORKERS OF THE TURKCHOLK FACTORY ON THE OCCASION OF CALLING THE FACTORY AFTER GORKY

I am sincerely sorry, comrades, that I cannot come to your meeting. I thank you warmly for the honour you have shown me in naming the factory after me.

Let me tell you that from my early childhood, in contemplating the life of women, particularly village women, I have reflected with sorrow on the hardships of their lives, the intolerable burden of toil laid upon them by the circumstances of village life under conditions of private ownership.

What was the village woman under such conditions? A servant to her father, husband, father-in-law, mother-in-law. She was washerwoman, seamstress, weaver, cook, cowherd, nursemaid and gardener. All her life she worked unceasingly, both at home and in the fields; and at the age of thirty she was practically an old woman, suffering from ailments caused by her years of heavy toil. Such a joyless life of imprisonment was unworthy of human existence. There was no time to study, to read or write. If she did acquire a little self-taught knowledge, she forgot it soon enough, because she could do nothing with it; for there were neither books nor newspapers in the village.

The Communist Party and the Soviet power, in transforming private property into collective property and in organizing collective farms release the woman from this servitude, make her independent of man, her master, and institute an easier, more humane life in the village. In the collective farms of the southern part of the Soviet Union, in the Ukraine, in the northern part of the Caucasus and on the Volga, where almost all peasant property has been transformed into collectives, women have begun to live differently, more wisely, in an easier and more enlightened manner. There women have established communal bakeries, laundries, kitchens, bathhouses, nurseries. There women are beginning to live a broad communal life. They have time to go to school, to read newspapers and books. They have an opportunity to acquaint themselves with what is going on in the Soviet Union and in the entire world.

The world is witnessing an immense, unparalleled struggle of the toiling people against their masters, against those who live on the labour of others and who are accustomed to sit on the backs of

the workers and peasants. The foundation of this workers' struggle was laid here by our own workers. Like a conflagration it is growing and spreading all over the world. It will end in a complete victory for the workers.

You, comrades, should know that it is essential for you to take an active part in this struggle for your own freedom, for your right to change and better your own life—a struggle for a happy and intelligent life. The first step towards this goal is to refuse to remain for ever in the same place, as your grandmothers and great-grandmothers did. The first step towards the new life is the kol-khoz— agrarian collective economy. Life in the collective farm will make you equal to man. He who has in the past always been your master will become your comrade and friend in the work of constructing a bright new, wise and satisfying life.

Accept my most heartfelt greetings and reflect well upon the truth of my words.

1931.

## REPLY TO AN INTELLECTUAL

You write:

“Many intellectuals in Western Europe are beginning to feel that they are people without a fatherland, and our thoughts are now turning more and more toward life in Russia. At the same time what is actually going on in the Soviet Union is still hazy in our minds.”

The Soviet Union is the scene of a struggle between the rationally organized will of the working masses and the forces of spontaneity in both nature and man. This “spontaneity” in man is nothing more nor less than the instinctive anarchy of the individual which has become ingrained in the course of ages through his oppression by the class state.

This struggle is the sum and substance of reality in the Soviet Union. Anyone who sincerely desires to understand the profound meaning of the revolutionary cultural changes which have overtaken old Russia will grasp their import only by regarding this process as a struggle for culture and for the creative potentialities of culture.

You westerners have adopted an attitude toward the people of the Soviet Union which I can hardly consider worthy of persons who consider themselves apostles of a culture which they deem indispensable for the whole world. It is the attitude of a tradesman to his customer, of a creditor to his debtor. You remember that Tsarist Russia borrowed money from you and learned from you how to think; but you forget that these loans yielded your industrialists and merchants uncommonly luscious profits, and that Russian science of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries contributed much to the general stream of European scientific research. To-day, when it is so distressingly clear that your creative power in the sphere of art is drying up, you are living on the forces, the ideas and forms of Russian art. You cannot gainsay the fact that Russian music and literature, not to be outdone by Russian science, long ago won an honoured place in the body of world culture.

It would seem that a people whose spiritual creative capacity has risen in the course of one century to heights comparable to those achieved by the rest of Europe in the course of many centuries, a people which has but now gained freedom in the use of its creative powers, deserves closer study and attention than has hitherto been accorded it by the intellectuals of Europe.

Is it not time that you definitely made up your minds to ask yourselves this question: just what are the differences between the objectives of the bourgeoisie of Europe and of the peoples of the Soviet Union? It is sufficiently clear by now that the political leaders of Europe do not serve \*the nation as a whole," but mutually hostile groups of capitalists. This mutual hostility among the leaders of big business, who were devoid of any sense of responsibility to their respective "nations," resulted in a series of crimes against humanity similar to the world holocaust of 1914-1918. It intensified mutual distrust among nations, turned Europe into a row of armed camps and now squanders an enormous amount of the people's labour, gold and iron in the manufacture of ammunition with which to perpetrate new massacres. Owing to this antagonism between the capitalists the world economic crisis, which drains the physical resources of the "nation" and stunts the growth of its intellectual forces, has been sharply aggravated. This enmity among robbers and petty shopkeepers is preparing the way for a new world carnage.

Ask yourselves: What purpose is served by all this? And, generally speaking, if you sincerely want to be relieved of your burden of doubt and your negative attitude toward life, ponder over this simplest of questions regarding the existing social order. Without allowing yourselves to be carried away by words, give serious thought to the general aims of capitalist existence—or, to be more exact, to the criminal character of its existence.

You intellectuals are said to "cherish culture, whose universal significance is indisputable." Is that really so? Under your very noses capitalism is day by day steadily destroying this precious culture in Europe, and, by its inhuman and cynical policies in the colonies, is most certainly creating a host of enemies of European culture. If this rapacious "culture" of yours is producing a few thousand similarly minded robbers on the black and yellow continents, do not forget that some hundreds of millions still remain within the fold of the plundered and poverty-stricken. Hindus, Chinese and Annamites bow their heads before your cannon, but that does not in the least mean that they venerate European culture. And they are beginning to realize that in the Soviet Union a different sort of culture is springing up, different in form and in significance.

"Heathens and savages dwell in the East," you declare; and in proof of this assertion you harp on the position of women in the East. Let us go into this question of savages.

In European music-halls scores and hundreds of women appear nude on the stage. Does it not strike you that such a public exhibition of the naked female ought to call forth some protest from the mothers, wives and sisters of the European intellectuals? I am discussing the significance of this cynical pastime not from the "moral" point of view but with an eye to biology and social hygiene. To me this vile and vulgar pastime is indisputable proof of the savagery and of the deep-going decadence of the European bourgeoisie. I am convinced that the evident and rapid growth of homosexuality and Lesbianism, which find their economic explanation in the high cost of family life, is accelerated by this disgusting public spectacle of burlesque women.

There is far too much evidence of savagery in bourgeois Europe, and it ill befits you to speak of the barbarism of the East. The peasantry of the nations which have entered the Soviet Union is fast learning the value of genuine culture and the importance of the part woman plays in life. The truth of this is fully appreciated by the workers and peasants in those provinces of China in which Soviets have already been established. The Hindus, too, will learn to understand. All the toiling masses of our planet must sooner or later discover the road to freedom. It is precisely for this freedom that they are struggling all over the world.

In the capitalist world the struggle for oil, for iron and for the arming of millions in preparation for a new slaughter, rages with increasing fury. It is a struggle conducted by a minority for the right to the political and economic oppression of the majority. This brazen, cynical, criminal struggle, organized by a small group of people goaded to savagery by the senseless thirst for money, is blessed by the Christian church, which is the most deceitful and the most criminal church in the world. This struggle has completely exterminated "humanitarianism," which was so dear to the hearts of the European intellectuals and of which they were so proud.

Never before had the intellectuals so clearly displayed their helplessness and their shameless indifference to life as they have in the twentieth century, so full of the tragedies created by the cynicism of the ruling classes. In the sphere of politics, the sentiments and ideology of the intellectuals are under the thumb of adventurers humbly serving the will of capitalist groups, who trade in everything that is marketable, and, in the end, always bargain away the energy of the people. By this word "people," I mean not only the



workers and peasants, but also petty officials and the army of “employees” of capitalism, and the intellectuals as a whole—still a bright patch among the filthy tatters of bourgeois society.

Carried away by verbose investigations into that which is “common to all humanity,” the polyglot intellectuals survey one another from behind the wall of their respective national and class prejudices.

The failings and vices of their neighbours are, therefore, of more interest to them than their virtues. They have fought one another so often that they no longer remember who has the greatest number of victories or defeats to his credit, and deserves to be treated with corresponding respect. Capitalism has inspired them with a sceptical distrust of one another and plays cleverly on this feeling.

They did not understand the historic importance of the October Revolution and they had neither the strength nor the desire to protest against the bloody and predatory capitalist intervention of 1918-1921. They protest when a monarchist professor or plotter is arrested in the Soviet Union, but they remain indifferent when their capitalists violate the peoples of Indo-China, India and Africa. When, in the Soviet Union, a half-hundred of the most infamous criminals are shot, the foreign intellectuals fill the air with their clamorous outcries against savagery; but when, in India or Annam, thousands of totally innocent people are wiped out by cannon and machine-guns, these humane intellectuals are modestly silent. They are still unable to draw conclusions from the results of years of toil and of inestimable energy spent in the Soviet Union. The politicians in Parliament and in the press fill their ears with tales of how the work of the Soviets is directed exclusively to the destruction of the “old world,” and they do not fail to believe that this is so.

But in the Soviet Union the working masses are rapidly assimilating all that is best and most precious in the cultural heritage of mankind. This process of assimilation is accompanied by a process of development of this heritage. Naturally, we are destroying the old world, for we must release man from the multiplicity of shackles which have impeded his intellectual growth and free his mind from superstition and all the time-worn concepts of class, nationality and church.

The fundamental aim of the cultural process in the Soviet Union is the unification of all the peoples of the world into one indi-

visible whole. This work is dictated by the entire course of the history of mankind; it is the beginning not merely of a national, but of a world renaissance. Individuals like Campanella, Thomas More, Saint-Simon, Fourier and others dreamt of this at a time when the industrial technique necessary for the realization of this dream was as yet non-existent. Now all requisite conditions exist. The dream of the Utopians has found a firm foundation in science, and the work of realizing this dream is being carried on by millions. In another generation there will be nearly two hundred million workers engaged in this work in the Soviet Union alone.

When people do not want to understand or have not the strength to understand, they take refuge in blind belief.

Class instinct, the psychology of the petty proprietor and the philosophy of those who blindly support class society, force these intellectuals to believe that individual expression is smothered and suppressed in the Soviet Union, that the industrialization of the country is proceeding by means of the same kind of forced labour that built the Egyptian pyramids. This is not an ordinary lie, but the kind of obvious lie which deceives only those who are absolutely impotent and with no sense of personal responsibility, people who are living in a state of complete decadence and whose intellectual energy and critical thought have been completely exhausted.

The rapidity with which great numbers of talented people are emerging in all walks of life—in art, science and technology—conclusively disproves this myth of the suppression of individuality in the U.S.S.R. It could not be otherwise in a land where the entire population is drawn into the cultural process.

Out of twenty-five million “private owners,” semi-literate and totally illiterate peasants oppressed by the autocracy of the Romanovs and the landed bourgeoisie, twelve million have already come to appreciate the reasonableness and advantages of collective farming. This new form of labour frees the peasant from his instincts for conservatism and anarchism as well as from the animal-like mentality common to petty proprietorship. It offers him considerable leisure, which he uses to liquidate his own illiteracy. To-day, in 1931, there are fifty million adults and children attending schools; and the literature planned and issued during this year comes to 800,000,000 books, or fifty billion printed pages. Popular demand has already reached eighty billion printed pages, but the factories cannot supply that amount of paper.

The thirst for knowledge is growing. Since the establishment of the Soviet Union dozens of scientific research institutes, new universities and polytechnic schools have been founded. All of them are filled to overflowing with throngs of young students, while the masses of the workers and peasants are constantly developing thousands of new leaders of culture.

Has it ever been, and can it ever be, the aim of a bourgeois state to draw all the millions of its working people into cultural activities? History answers this simple question negatively. Capitalism promotes the mental development of the workers only in so far as is necessary and profitable for industry and trade. Capitalism needs human beings only as a more or less inexpensive source of power for the defence of the existing order.

Capitalism has not reached and never can reach the simple realization that the aim and significance of genuine culture is the development and accumulation of intellectual energy. In order that this energy may develop uninterruptedly and thereby assist humanity the sooner to utilize all the forces and gifts of nature, it is essential to liberate the maximum amount of physical energy from these senseless and anarchic drudgeries which serve the greedy interests of the capitalists, plunderers and parasites of toiling humanity. The conception of humanity as a storage plant filled with an enormous supply of intellectual energy is absolutely foreign to the ideologists of capitalism. In spite of all their shrewdness in wielding the pen and their eloquence in the spoken word, the ideology of those who defend the rule of the minority over the majority is essentially bestial.

Class states are built after the fashion of zoological gardens where all the animals are imprisoned in iron cages. In class states these cages, constructed with varying degrees of skill, serve to prolong those ideas which divide humanity and prevent the development of an awareness in man of his own interests as well as the birth of a genuine culture embracing all humanity.

Is it necessary for me to deny that the individual in the Soviet Union is restricted? Of course not, and I do not deny it. In the Soviet Union the will of the individual is restricted when it runs counter to the will of the masses, who are aware of their right to build new forms of life; who have set themselves a task beyond the power of any single individual even if he be gifted with the genius of a superman. The front ranks of the workers and peasants in the Soviet Union are advancing towards their own lofty ideal, hero-

cally overcoming a multitude of obstacles and difficulties in the way.

The individual defends his sham freedom and apparent independence inside his cage. The cages in which the writers, journalists, philosophers, government officials and all the other well-greased cogs of the capitalist machine are confined are naturally more comfortable than the peasant's cage. The peasant's smoky and filthy hut and his "private patch of ground" keep him alert, on the watch against the capricious destructiveness of nature's elemental forces, and against the attacks of the capitalist state which flays him alive. The farmers of Calabria, Bavaria, Hungary and Great Britain, of Africa and America, do not differ greatly from one another psychologically, except in the use of language. Throughout the entire globe the peasant lives in the same more or less isolated manner and is infected with a primitive individualism. In the Soviet Union the peasant is gradually weaning himself away from this psychology of the slave of the soil, the attitude of the eternal prisoner of an impoverished proprietorship.

Individualism is the result of external pressure brought to bear on man by class society. Individualism is a sterile attempt by the individual to defend himself against violence. But self-defence is self-limitation, since in a state of self-defence the process of intellectual growth is retarded. Such a state is harmful alike to society and to the individual. "Nations" spend billions on armaments against their neighbours; the individual expends most of his energy defending himself against the violence to which he is subjected by class society. "Life is a struggle?" Yes, but life ought to be a struggle of man against the elemental forces of nature, with the object of subduing and directing them. Class society has debased this lofty struggle into an abject fight to master the physical energy of man and to enslave him.

The individualism of the intellectual of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries differs from that of the peasant in form of expression only. It is more flowery, more polished, but just as primitive and blind. The intellectual finds himself between the upper mill-stone of the people and the nether mill-stone of the state. As a rule, the conditions of his existence are harsh and full of drama, since his surroundings are generally hostile. That is why his imprisoned thoughts so often cause him to place the burden of his own conditions of life on the whole world and these subjective concep-

tions give rise to philosophical pessimism, scepticism and other deformities of thought. It is well known that the birthplace of pessimism is the East, particularly India, where the caste system has been carried to the height of fanaticism.

Class society cramps the growth of the individual. That is why the individual seeks a place and peace outside and beyond reality; for example, in God. The toiling masses seeking an explanation for the elemental forces of nature, benevolent and malevolent, have cleverly incarnated these phenomena in a being having human characteristics but mightier than man himself. The people endowed their gods with all the virtues and vices which they themselves possessed. The Olympian gods are exaggerated human beings; Vulcan and Thor are blacksmiths, such as you might find in any village, but infinitely more powerful, if not more skilful.

The religious images created by the workers are simply artistic creations, devoid of mysticism; they are essentially realistic and true to reality. They clearly reveal the influence of the daily toil of their creators; in fact this art aims at stimulating their activity. The consciousness that the world of reality is the creation not of the gods, but of their own productive energy, is also apparent in the poetry of the people. The masses are pagans. Even fifteen hundred years after Christianity became the state religion, the peasantry still envisaged the gods as the gods of old: Christ, the Madonna, and the saints stalk the earth and share in the day's toil of the people just as the gods of the ancient Greeks and Scandinavians.

Individualism sprang from the soil of "private ownership." Generations upon generations of men have created collectives, and always the individual, for one reason or another, has stood apart, breaking away from the collective and at the same time from reality where the new is ever in the making. He has been creating his own unique, mystical and incomprehensible god, set up for the sole purpose of justifying the right of the individual to independence and power. Here mysticism becomes indispensable, because the right of the individual to absolute rule, to "autocracy," cannot be explained by reason. Individualism endowed its god with the qualities of omnipotence, infinite wisdom and absolute intelligence— with qualities which man would like to possess, but which develop only through the reality created by collective labour. This reality always lags behind the human mind, for the mind which creates it is slowly but constantly perfecting itself. If this were not so, reality would, of

course, make people contented, and the state of contentment is a passive one. Reality is created by the inexhaustible and intelligent will of man, and its development will never be arrested.

The mystic god of the individualist has always remained and always will remain immovable, inactive, creatively dead. It cannot be otherwise, for this god reflects the inherent weakness of the creative forces of individualism. The history of the individualist's sterile and hair-splitting distinctions, drawn in his religious and metaphysical speculations, are well known to every educated person. In our own time the futility of these speculative niceties as well as the complete bankruptcy of the philosophy of individualism has been clearly and irrefutably exposed. But the individualist still continues his barren quest for the answer to the "riddle of life." He seeks it not in the reality of labour, which is developing in every direction at a revolutionary pace, but in the depths of his own ego. He continues to cling to his miserable little "private estate" and has no desire to enrich life. He is busy cogitating measures of self-defence; he does not live, he hides; in his "contemplative activity" he recalls the biblical hero, Onan.

Humbly submitting to the exigencies of the capitalist state, the intellectuals of Europe and America—the writers, the publicists, the economists, the ex-Socialists who have of late blossomed forth as adventurers and dreamers of the type of Gandhi—consciously or unconsciously defend bourgeois class society, a society which obstinately impedes the process of development of human culture. In this process the will of the working masses, directed toward the creation of a new reality, plays the most important role. The intellectuals think they are defending "democracy," although this democracy of theirs has already proved and continues to prove its impotence. They defend "personal freedom," although this freedom is imprisoned in a cage of ideas which imposes sharp limitations upon individual growth. They defend "the freedom of the press," although the press is at the beck and call of the capitalists and can serve only their anarchic, inhuman and criminal interests. The intellectual works for his own enemy; for the master has always been the enemy of the worker. The idea of "class collaboration" is just as naive and absurd as friendship between wolves and lambs.

The intellectuals of Europe and America are working for their enemies, as is shown in a particularly glaring and shameless way by their attitude towards the revolutionary cultural process which is

developing among the masses of workers and peasants in the Soviet Union. This process is developing in an atmosphere of frenzied hostility on the part of the European bourgeoisie, and under the threat of a vicious attack on the Soviet Union. The influence of these two factors serve to explain almost completely these negative phases which the enemies of the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union are so anxious to emphasize.

These negative aspects of Soviet life appeal in particular to those malicious Russian émigrés who dabble in politics and who serve the European bourgeois press as sources of "information" about the Soviet Union.

Who are these émigrés? The majority of them are political failures, ambitious small-fry with "great hopes." Some of them would like to be Masaryks, Briands and Churchills; many of them would like to be Fords; it is characteristic of all of them that they have tried their hands at executive posts which are beyond their mental capacity. For some time past I have been well aware of their moral and intellectual poverty. This they showed as far back as 1905-1907, during and after the first revolution, when daily they demonstrated their impotence in the Duma. Again, during 1914-1917, they pretended to "fight against autocracy," but in reality they were champions of Pan-Russian chauvinism. They enjoyed some measure of popularity by organizing the political consciousness of the petty and big bourgeoisie. Broadly speaking, they are the ideologists of the lower-middle class. There is a saying: "If you can't get lobster, crab will have to do." The part they played in Russian life was that of crabs, always moving backwards. This, generally, is the role of the majority of intellectuals during revolutionary periods.

But their ignominious role is not confined to constant political "changes of front" and to forgetting the oath which Hannibal vowed. In 1917, they joined the remnant of the Tsar's generals, who had despised them and dubbed them renegades and "enemies of the Tsar." Together with these scoundrelly bed-fellows these intellectuals entered the services of the Russian oil, textile and coal magnates and big landowners.

In Russian history they are known as traitors to their own people. During a period of four years they betrayed and sold their people to your capitalists, Mr. European Intellectual. They helped Denikin, Kolchak, Wrangel, Yudenich and other professional murderers to destroy the social economy of their country, already rav-

aged by a slaughter which shamed all Europe. With the help of these contemptible vermin, the generals of the European capitalists and of the former Tsar, slaughtered hundreds of thousands of the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union. They razed hundreds of villages and Cossack hamlets, destroyed railways, blew up bridges and devastated everything in their path, bringing their country to the brink of destruction in order to assure delivery into the hands of the European capitalists. If you were to ask them why they butchered their own people and destroyed their homes, they would answer quite unabashed: "For 'the sake of the people'"—and not breathe a word about how that same "people" flung them unceremoniously out of their country.

After 1926 they were involved in the organization of numerous plots against the workers' and peasants' state. Needless to say, they deny participation in these crimes, although the conspirators—their friends—confessed that they furnished the press with notoriously false information about the activities of the Soviets. The conspirators in their turn, were guided by the press of these traitors to their country.

Your humanitarianism, gentlemen of Europe, was roused to indignation by the well-merited sentence passed upon the forty-eight sadists who deliberately set out to starve the country.\* How strange that you are not moved to protest against the almost daily murder of perfectly innocent workers by the police in the streets of your cities? Forty-eight degenerates are far more disgusting than that Dusseldorf sadist, Kurten, who was sentenced to death nine times. I do not know the motives which prompted the Soviet Government not to turn these conspirators over to the regular courts, but I think I can guess the reason. There are crimes whose vileness is peculiarly pleasant to the enemies of the Soviets, and to instruct an enemy in such depravity, would be asking rather too much. But I will say this: if I were a German citizen I would have protested against the public trial of Kurten. Class society has already made far too many sadists; and I see no need or justification for advertising sadism and thus raising the technical skill of criminals.

May I ask why the European intellectuals defend "personal liberty" when the person in question is, for example, Professor S. F.

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\* A group of officials in the food industry and cold storage plants who carried on wrecking activities.



Platonov, a monarchist, yet remain indifferent when the person in question is a Communist?

If you want to know the exact degree of savagery of which Russian émigrés are capable, read the appeal on behalf of the victims of the struggle against the people of the Soviet Union, published in the Paris organ of the monarchist émigrés, *Vozrozhdyeniye* (Regeneration).

At the head of this base and vulgar venture is “His Beneficence, the Metropolitan Anthony, president of the Synod of Archbishops of the Orthodox Church Abroad.” Here are the actual words of this fanatic:

“By the authority given to me by God, I bless every weapon used against the red Satanical power which has raised its head, and I absolve from sin all those in the ranks of the insurgent bands and those who, as individual avengers of their nation, will give their lives for Russia and for Jesus. First and above all, I bless every weapon and every militant deed of the Universal Brotherhood of the Truth of Russia, which has fought unflinchingly for many years, in word and deed, against the red Satan in the name of God and Russia. God’s mercy will rest upon all you who enter their fraternal ranks, for brotherhood will surely rescue and deliver you.

ANTHONY, METROPOLITAN.”

It is thus perfectly clear that the Metropolitan, a leader of the Christian church, gives his blessing to all those who violate the will of the people of the Soviet Union and commit acts of terrorism against them.

Do you not think that such appeals, such benedictions bestowed upon murder by a priest evidently enraged to the point of idiocy, are somewhat out of place in the capital of a “civilized” state? Do you not think that you should tell his Beneficence to hold his tongue? Does it not strike you that this frenzied outburst of a Russian priest is a sign not only of the unmitigated barbarity of the Russian émigrés, but also of the utterly shameful indifference of European intellectuals to questions of social morality and social hygiene? And you dare speak of the “savagery of the East”!

You believe the evidence of the Russian émigrés. Very well. That is your “own affair;” but I doubt whether you have the right to believe as you do. I doubt it because you are plainly not interested

in the evidence of the opposite side—the side of the workers' and peasants' state. The Soviet press does not conceal the bad sides of life in the Soviet Union. On the contrary, it uncovers every possible shortcoming, for it is based on the principle of the severest self-criticism, and there are no skeletons to be hidden away in the cupboard.

The Soviet press must act as a news channel and organ of information for millions of people, most of whom are not yet altogether literate—through no fault of their own, you can be assured. But an honourable person will always bear in mind that a semi-literate person is quite apt to make mistakes. It should also be noted that most of the lies and calumnies on which the émigré press batters and consoles itself, seek some semblance of justification in points raised by Soviet self-criticism.

Personally, I protested in the press and at meetings in Moscow and Leningrad against this overdoing of self-criticism. I know with what voluptuous delight the émigrés pounce upon news items which might in any way feed their morbid hatred of the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union.

Not long ago an article of mine appeared in the Soviet press dealing with a book by Brehm, the Russian translation of which had been butchered by a careless old hack of rather meagre learning. Immediately the editor of the émigré newspaper *Ruhl*,\* Josef Hassen, a very stupid and ludicrously ill-tempered old fogey, published an editorial in which he announced with clownish glee that “even Gorky criticizes the Soviet authorities!” He knows perfectly well that I have never hesitated to speak my mind quite openly about people who turn out careless, unconscientious or bad work. But like all the other émigré “politicians,” he simply cannot help lying.

There is a special kind of “truth” which serves as spiritual food for misanthropes only, for sceptics whose scepticism is founded on ignorance, and for indifferent people who seek justification for their indifference. This is a putrid, moribund “truth;” this offal is fit only for pigs. This kind of truth is being cut out, root and branch, by the work of the advance guard of the builders of a new culture in the Soviet Union. I realize full well how this “truth” interferes with the work of honest folk; but I am opposed to the idea of giving suste-

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\* The Berlin organ of a group of counter-revolutionary émigrés.—  
*Ed.*

nance and consolation to people who have justly been humiliated by the verdict of history.

You ask: "Are there discontented elements among the workers and peasants, and with precisely what sort of things are they discontented?" To be sure, there is no distinct class of discontented people; but it would be miraculous indeed, after only fourteen years of labour under the dictatorship of the proletariat, if 160 million people enjoyed absolute satisfaction of all their wants and desires. Such discontent as exists is readily explained by the simple fact that the apparatus of production and distribution cannot catch up with the rapidly growing cultural needs of the working masses in so short a space of time as fourteen years. There is a shortage of many things and quite a few people grumble and complain.

These complaints might be dismissed as ridiculous for they are premature and ill-considered; but I will not call them ridiculous because they are expressed with the firm and unmistakable conviction that the Soviet power is capable of satisfying all the needs of the country. Of course, those formerly well-to-do peasants who hoped that the revolution would enable them to become large-scale farmers and big landowners and would deliver the poor peasantry into their hands, are dissatisfied and even actively opposed to the work of the Soviet Government. It stands to reason that this section of the peasantry would be antagonistic to collectivization and would champion private property, hired labour and all the other bourgeois paraphernalia which would lead inevitably to a rebirth of capitalist forms of life. But the game played by this section of the peasantry has already been lost, its resistance to collective farming is hopeless and only continues through sheer inertia.

In the more active ranks of the workers and peasants, no complaints are heard. They work. They know well enough that they are the government, that all their needs and desires can be satisfied only by dint of their own efforts. It is this realization of their own abundant strength and their absolute power that has called forth such popular manifestations as socialist competition, shock brigades and other unmistakable signs of the creative activity and heroism of labour. It was due to the consciousness of all this that a whole series of enterprises completed their Five-Year Plan in two and a half years.

The workers understand the thing that it is essential for them to understand: that power is in their own hands. In bourgeois states,

laws are concocted and handed down from above; they are made for the purpose of strengthening the power of the ruling class. Legislation in the Soviet Union originates with the lowest bodies, in the village Soviets and in factory committees. If you watch the course of any such legislation, you will readily be convinced that these measures do not merely meet an immediate need of the working masses, but are convincing proof of the cultural growth of these masses.

The working and peasant masses of Soviet Russia are beginning to understand that the process of their material advancement and cultural development is being tampered with artificially by hostile European and American capitalists. Understanding this, of course, greatly increases their political self-consciousness and their own strength.

If the intellectuals of Europe and America, instead of listening to scandal-mongers, instead of trusting traitors, gave serious and honest thought to the historical significance of the process which is developing in the Soviet Union, they would understand that the object of this whole process is the assimilation of the invaluable treasures of universal culture by a nation of 160 million people. They would understand that this nation labours not only for itself but for all humanity, at the same time revealing to mankind what miracles may be accomplished by the intelligently organized will of the masses.

Finally, I must categorically ask this question: Do the intellectuals of Europe and America want a new world massacre which will still further decrease their ranks and augment both their impotence and savagery? The worker and peasant masses of the Soviet Union do not want a war. They want to create a state where all will be equal. But in the event of an attack they will rise to a man to defend themselves as one indivisible whole, and they will be victorious because history is working for them.

## TO THE AWAKENING EAST

My hearty congratulations to the workers and peasants of Soviet Georgia upon the tenth anniversary of their heroic and fruitful toil in industry and culture! I should like to be present as a mere spectator at this glorious celebration and to recall Georgia as I saw it forty years ago; to recall Tiflis, the city where I began my literary career.

I can never forget that it was in this city that I took my first diffident steps on the road which I have followed for the last forty years. Perhaps it was the majestic magnificence of the country and the romanticism and tenderness of the people, perhaps it was precisely these two forces which impelled me and made a writer out of a vagabond.

I am afraid my lyricism is hardly in place at the celebration of the toiling people of Georgia, at a time when this people is declaring, in the face of its enemies, its creative energy and accomplishments, its readiness to continue the work of the great cultural revolution.

But, comrades, I will take the liberty and indulge in a bit of lyricism. I want to say a few words about my inexhaustible love for you and your country, I know that in our days there is no room for lyrical outbursts.

Days of fabulous achievements of the Soviet Union in the work of building Socialism, days of unparalleled chaos in the life of Europe and of the sharpening of the class struggle which inevitably and rapidly must reach its logical end—the victory of the toiling masses over capitalism—these days are the eve of a great celebration in which the world proletariat liberated from the yoke of the robbers and parasites will participate.

Bourgeois holidays are preceded by “a purging;” the world celebration of the proletariat will be preceded by the “last and decisive fight.”

Georgia is situated at the approach to great reserves of oil, and if the workers of Europe will not seize the Briands by the throat in time, the Briands might succeed in sending millions of their workers and peasants against the workers and peasants of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

Our enemies are not asleep. They are on the alert, not only because of their insatiable greed but also out of fear. They are well aware of the accomplishments of the Five- Year Plan. They see the

amazing results of socialist competition, of "shock-brigading." The ex-Socialist Briand does not conceal his "horror" of the fact that "Bolshevism might take complete possession of the world." The horror of the old renegade is intensified by the fact that not all the plunderers dare participate in intervention. They, too, see quite clearly that the Soviet Union threatens the bourgeoisie, but they prefer trade to war.

They know that people can be looted without the use of machine-guns and cannon. Customary looting, legalized in times of peace, is less risky and less noisy. The capitalists who get rich from the profits of war industry, from the manufacture of weapons for the murder of workers and peasants, are naturally always ready for war.

Let me remind you of the truth which you already know. The world proletariat must remember that there is only one "real, just and sacred war." It is the war against the capitalists. The workers must also remember that they have only one fatherland, the land which is building Socialism, the U.S.S.R.

The proletariat of all Europe and the proletariat of the whole world must remember that during the next war, if they do not turn their arms against capitalism, they will be forced as before to annihilate themselves, but on a larger scale and by methods more destructive than in the massacre of 1914-1918.

Only two powers exist in the world: the capitalist class torn by its own contradictions, by its greed and jealousy; a class of people who carried on their own affairs, reduced them to absurdity and to anarchy, who degenerated, who became impotent and who must disappear.

Awakening, rising to replace that class, is the proletariat, that fabulous Atlas supporting the globe upon his mighty shoulders. It is the force which creates everything, as is shown by the working class of the Soviet Union; which is able to create what was never created before and what was considered impossible: a state of equals, a socialist society in a capitalist world.

As well as its enemies all over the world, the working class of the Soviet Union has enemies at home. These enemies are the petty parasites who want to become big ones.

In 1917-1921 a number of parasites of this calibre participated in the good work, they helped to drag the landlords and manufacturers from the backs of the workers and peasants. They took part in

this useful work not because they wanted to liberate the workers and peasants, but in the hope that they would be able to fill the vacant places. The NEP [New Economic Policy] encouraged and confirmed these hopes.

But the NEP was only a respite before the mighty socialist advance, and those who hoped to ride on the backs of the toiling people were disappointed and hurt.

They do not like Socialism. They complain: it is difficult to live. They often send me tearful letters, manuscripts, "messages to an atheist"—in defence of God, of course—and other compositions whose sorrowful or enraged tone blends in a delicious and touching manner with their stupidity.

For example, yesterday I received a letter from one of these gentlemen. Not a very literate letter but a very interesting one because a semi-literate parasite says what he thinks. He asks me: "Is it not too early to sing the swan song of toiling individualism which by its existence completely changes the political order of things?"

An ancient song. By "toiling individualism" is meant petty private ownership—that rotten soil from which bloomed the poisonous flower of imperialist capitalism, which nurtured misfortune and sorrow for the peasants and workers of the world. Why then is it "too early to sing the swan song" of this form of ownership, which rapaciously exhausts the soil and its treasures for the ignominious defence of capitalism against the proletariat?

Do you know why? Because, it seems, "a world collision between Communist labour and capitalism in the presence of a third combatant on the field of battle is only a myth"—that is to say, a legend created out of whole cloth.

The "third warrior" is the "toiling individualist." It is very likely that he is the same individual whom the rude Soviet press calls kulak (rich peasant); and as for our Party, it does not stop at that.

This "third warrior" imagines he has the power to stand up "on the field of battle," between the Red Army and the stupefied armies of the Briands, and say to our warriors and to the soldiers bought by the French capitalists from Roumania and Poland: "Boys, quit fighting! You will damage my modest farm, my respectable cows, and my blessed private property which I earned during the civil war, in the fight for my hut and my cow. Quit your fighting, boys!"

At these touching words the valiant Briand, the ex-Socialist and

now most ardent defender of private property, will order his hired armies, in the purest French language: "To your homes, boys!"

And Klim Voroshilov.... I need not tell you how this worker by birth and leader of the Red Army of workers and peasants will act on such an extraordinary occasion.

You see for yourselves that the letter of this "toiling individualist" is not very clever. But that is nothing. What follows is still worse. The author of the letter continues as follows:

*You say that Communists hate capitalists. But the toiling individualist also hates the capitalist, although he makes an alliance with him in the name of self preservation.*

How interesting and how unexpected, comrades! It is quite clear that the words, "in alliance with him in the name of self-preservation" escaped the "third warrior" in spite of himself. It rarely happens that logic pierces a brick skull. With these words the "toiling individualist" displayed his true colours completely. He is a confederate of the capitalists, he is your enemy.

You might ask if it is worth the trouble to pay attention to such stupid letters. Yes, indeed, comrades! The point is not that they write letters to me, but that these parasites live, plot and work among you. The stupidity of the parasites is their "sacred truth." You must fight mercilessly against them. They thrive on your flesh and their only aim is to suck your blood.

Briand declares: "Countries in central Europe and in the East may become easy prey to Bolshevism, and we must come to their rescue."

Translated into plain language these words become: "We want to see if at the same time there is any possibility of converting the Soviet Union into a colony of idle European capital; if there is any possibility of reducing the Georgians, Armenians, Abkhazians, Ukrainians, White Russians, and all the other peoples of the Soviet Union to a state of slavery, as was done with the Negroes of Africa."

The parasites read the proposals of Briand in the *Izvestia*, in the *Pravda*, and the tone of his words brightens their hopes, although it is quite likely that the bellicose words of the old adventurer do not come from his lips, but from that part which in normal people is considerably lower than the back of the neck. Little parasites, on hearing these sounds, imagine that Briand will be able to make them big ones.



They learned something in the past ten years and can distinguish clearly on which side their bread is buttered. They are organically inclined to quench their thirst only with turbid and stagnant water from the bourgeois marshes. They creep about among you, awaiting the opportune moment to jump on your backs. They make hissing, snake-like sounds and are quietly and cautiously poisoning the very air you breathe. They see all the difficulties which still confront you, but they are afraid to see all your gigantic achievements which will soon make your life easy and beautiful.

It is well known that when a bear goes to the bee-hive after honey, the bees sting him and he escapes them by running away. But that same bear in the Siberian Taiga cannot so easily rid himself of a swarm of midges.

During your celebration, comrades, as well as during your days of toil, do not forget the midges, the “toiling individual,” the “third warrior”—your enemy whose insignificance makes your struggle more difficult.

The best weapon against your enemy is education, the knowledge and the development of the consciousness of the historic task of your class, the consciousness of your unity with the world proletariat, with that invincible power called upon by history to create “its new world.”

Long live Soviet Georgia, her workers and peasants, her Young Communists and Pioneers! Long live our Party, the indefatigable and vigilant leader of the workers and peasants!

1931.

## TO THE HUMANITARIANS

The International Union of Democratic Writers, through its general secretary, M. Lucien Quinet, honoured me with an invitation to become a contributor to its literary organ. The aim of the Union is “the rapprochement of democratic writers.” Members of its presiding council include Romain Rolland and Upton Sinclair, both of whom I hold in great respect. But Professor Albert Einstein and Mr. Heinrich Mann are also on the committee. These, together with many other humanitarians, recently signed the protest of the German League for the Defence of the Rights of Man against the execution of the forty-eight criminal organizers of the food crisis in the Soviet Union.

I am quite certain that the rights of men include no right of criminal action, particularly, criminal action against toilers. The indescribable baseness of the forty-eight is well known to me. I know that they committed acts more criminal and vile than those of the owners of the Chicago stockyards described by Upton Sinclair in *The Jungle*.

The organizers of the food crisis, having aroused the just anger of the toiling people against whom they plotted, were executed at the unanimous demand of the workers. I consider this execution fully justified. It was the judgment of people who, living and working under difficult circumstances, foregoing numerous necessities, unsparing of their strength, are heroically and successfully striving to create a proletarian state that will be free from exploiters and parasites as well as from people whose humanitarianism is merely a cloak for exploitation and parasitism.

It is clear that my appraisal of the execution of the forty-eight does not concur with that of the League for the Defence of the Rights of Man. And since Messrs. A. Einstein and H. Mann agree with the League, it is quite obvious that any rapprochement between us is impossible, and that is why I refuse to be a contributor to the organ of the International Union of Democratic Writers.

During the last three years I have received several invitations to contribute to organs of democratic “Humanitarians.” I have not replied to these invitations—I shall now attempt to make amends for my discourtesy. I direct my reply to R. Rolland, U. Sinclair, G. B. Shaw, H. G. Wells, whose names are mentioned in M. Lucien Quinet’s letter and to whose opinions I am not indifferent. I think

that it is fair that I should clarify my position regarding intellectuals who have made a profession of humanitarianism.

After January 9th, 1905, the humane gentlemen of Europe, appalled by the mass slaughter of workers on the streets of St. Petersburg, gave Nicholas Romanov the title of "The Bloody," a title which he fully deserved long before this horrible crime. But they did not protest against the bankers of France who supplied the bloody Tsar with money, helped him to exterminate several more thousands of Russia's most valuable men by gallows, exile and imprisonment. There was ample time for protest since the Tsar's reign of terror lasted three years. In 1910, together with Wilhelm Ostwald, Richard de Miles, Oran Eden and Upton Sinclair, I participated in the international organization of intellectuals. The aim of this organization was also the "rapprochement" of European humanitarians.

In 1914, Wilhelm Ostwald and Richard de Miles were among the first to sign the bloodthirsty proclamation against England. That same year quite a number of Russian writers and scientists—all humanitarians!—drew up and published a vile and frantic statement against the Germans but not against war itself. This was done by the same intellectuals who now reside in Berlin and Paris and are ignorantly and stupidly slandering the workers' and peasants' government of the Soviet Union, who are poisoning the minds of European humanitarians with base lies, who are preaching the idea of intervention against the Soviet Union, that is to say, justifying the next world war. And those who protested so vigorously against "German atrocities" now want to see that same German and any other variety of atrocity in the land which was their fatherland, and against the people whom they considered their kin.

I find it necessary to state here that I never signed any protest against German or any other atrocities. I know that war is a series of atrocities, and that during war people, who have nothing against one another, are forced to murder each other because they are placed in a position of self-defence. I know that war is organized by capitalists in order to assure a state of affairs which makes the daily brutalities of "peace time" seem quite natural, that it is organized by the capitalists out of personal greed and lust for power and not "in the interests of the nation." The nation is the toiling people, whose economic interests are international. I know that capitalism is a contagious disease of nations. I deny that any order which makes wars

between capitalists inevitable, wars which are waged by the strength of the working people whom it destroys, has any right to exist.

The Defenders of the Rights of Man do not protest against war, such an infamous and surprisingly stupid affair. The Soviet proposal for full and complete disarmament, presented by Maxim Litvinov to the League of Nations, was not supported by the humanitarians.

In 1918, the French, English and American governments, after crushing Germany, organized a raid on war-ridden and exhausted Russia for the purpose of transforming Russia into one of their colonies and plundering it as Germany had been plundered. The humanitarians paid no attention to this fact which was flinging "cultured" Europe back to the times of Cortez and Pizarro.

The Defenders of the Rights of Man paid no heed to the orders of the French general, Franchet D'Esperey, to his soldiers in Odessa:

"Russians are barbarians and scoundrels! Don't be ceremonious with them, shoot them, beginning with the muzhik and ending with the most responsible man."

These astonishing shrieks of this savage were heard by the Russian humanitarians, but they were on his side and to-day they are willing to assist the first idiot who, on the orders of the capitalists, is ready to shoot down the toilers of the Soviet Union.

Is it not true that humanitarians are very curious people? They are not in the least perturbed about the events in India, China, Africa and Palestine. They are not perturbed by events at home. They are indifferent to the growth of the primitive instincts of nationalism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia. They are indifferent to the dramas and tragedies, which are played daily within the ancient blood-soaked structures of bourgeois society. They make no attempt to protest against the sinister deeds of M. Raymond Poincaré, the man who almost shattered France and is now zealously preparing the next slaughter of workers and peasants.

It speaks badly for the sanity and health of bourgeois states that their destinies are in the hands of such insignificant creatures as Poincaré and his kind.

Yes, indeed, the contemporary world offers work a-plenty for the humanitarians.

We might point out to the head of the catholic church that to preach a crusade in the twentieth century is, at best, the humour of a misanthrope, and that such a doctrine has decidedly nothing in

common with the “interests of culture,” about which humanitarians so much enjoy talking. We might ask the father of the catholic church: Did he and the church heads enjoy the position in which they found themselves in 1914-1918, when Christians slew one another by the hundreds of thousands?

It is surprising that throughout the world the humanitarians and the defenders of the “Rights of man” are interested only in one spot on the globe—namely the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

It is very strange that they, educated people, should find it possible and convenient to believe the vulgar talk that an individual dictatorship reigns in the Soviet Union, when it is evident that the dictatorship is exercised by the concentrated energy of the millions of workers and peasants, an energy organized by the genius of Vladimir Lenin and the will power of his pupils and friends. The aim of this dictatorship is the education of the entire mass of the population of the Soviet Union to a consciousness of its right to create new forms and conditions of life, and to the construction of a socialist society based on equality. This goal was not mapped out by the “arbitrary will of fanatics and barbarians,” as those people assert whom hate has rendered ignorant and even cretinous. This goal was mapped out by history which has shown that individualism as the basis for the development of culture has breathed its last, has out-lived its time.

Is force ever used for the development of the consciousness of man? I say, yes! There never yet was a time when it was not used for the attainment of this end. Culture is violence organized by reason and exerted on the animal instincts of man. In European schools children are flogged in order to make them subservient to the family and society, to make them just as zealous guardians of “cultural traditions” as are their parents. I recommend very strongly to the pedagogues of Europe that they whip children for any manifestation of property instinct, and that they instil in children a consciousness of their right to beat their parents for their passion for hoarding money by means of plunder legalized by their parents themselves.

Among the mass of Soviet workers there are still traitors, renegades, and spies of former “masters of the country,” who desire to re-establish their property rights. It is quite natural that the power of the workers and peasants should crush such enemies like vermin. These erstwhile masters and other “has-beens” are supported by the capitalists and parasites of Europe, who hope to satiate their un-

bounded thirst for profit. The workers and peasants of the Soviet Union are successfully building their state, surrounded by the bestial hatred of the world bourgeoisie, a degenerate class which has already outlived its vital energy, which is unable to create anything and which acts only by inertia.

What does this class of degenerates want? It wants to sit a little longer on someone else's back, to subsist a little longer on the labour of others. Only a little longer because it has no faith in its ability to prolong its existence.

One of its devoted servants, Gustave Hervé, calling on the German capitalists to get together with the French, frankly blabbed out the modest intentions of his masters in his newspaper *Victoire*. He writes:

*Germany should break its connections with Moscow and together with Poland act as a barrier against Russian Bolshevism, participating in all economic enterprises in the defence of civilization against Communist barbarism.*

*The collapse of Bolshevism in Russia and the restoration of the capitalist regime means—it must be remembered—20, 30, 40 perhaps even 50 years of solid work for American and European industry.*

Obviously the capitalists want very little—not less than twenty, not more than fifty years, of their accustomed peaceful, sated, colourless, licentious, carefree life.

And to assure their “prosperity,” they are again preparing to send millions of workers, peasants and colonial slaves to war against a country with 160 million inhabitants and with an army every soldier of which is fully aware of what he is fighting for. Throughout its history the bourgeoisie has never revealed its inhumanity in such an openly cynical and infamous manner.

But what has happened? Why has bourgeois Europe during the last two years exposed its real inhumanity in such an unseemly and cynical way? A clear answer to this question is furnished by the former conservative M.P., Arthur Hopkinson, in the English journal the *Empire Review*. He writes with “touching frankness”:

*What I want to draw to the particular attention of my readers is that it is stupid to pretend that the Five-Year Plan is a failure. It is a fact that in many industries the Plan has already*

*been surpassed. I am attempting at all costs to put the reader on guard against the error of supposing that the Five-Year Plan will be a fiasco. In reality it has already attained such great success that it has become a menace to the whole civilized world.*

Hopkinson perceives the terrifying perspective of the transformation of the U.S.S.R. into a country independent of world capitalism. Frothing at the mouth, he calls for war against the U.S.S.R. and ends his article with this warning:

*The Hammer and Sickle may in the future become to Europe what the Crescent was in the past. It may be true that "he who takes up the sword shall perish by the sword."*

The history of the last fifty years shows that he who does not take up the sword shall perish with even greater ignominy.

Hopkinson is more intelligent than Gustave Hervé. He says nothing about the "barbarity of Communism," for he apparently understands that Communism and barbarism are incompatible. He does not shout like other fools about the "destruction of civilization" by Communism. His wolfish howls are inspired by the fear that the Soviet Union will become a state independent of world capitalism.

This, humanitarian gentlemen, is what provokes the horror of the property owners and explains their hatred towards the Soviet Union, their slanders against the workers and peasants' state, their calumnies about the social conditions in the U.S.S.R., their intervention against a people who with astonishing energy is initiating a new rebirth of humanity, gentlemen humanitarians.

Permit me to ask you a naive question:

Why do you not protest against a state system which allows an insignificant and morally degenerate minority to dispose of the lives of the majority, infect it with its vices and hold it in conditions of poverty and ignorance, throwing millions of people of different countries on the field of battle for mutual destruction? Why do you permit for the manufacture of armaments the senseless waste of huge quantities of metal and other treasures of the earth, treasures which are the heritage of the working masses and security for their future?

Does it not seem to you that this absurd order hinders the de-

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velopments of the real human culture of which you platonically dream?

1930.



## UNDER THE RED FLAG

To-day, on the First of May, in the land of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, the workers and peasants will measure their strength, gaily, under the red flag, to the strains of a hymn of victory and the music of trumpets. Mighty streams of individuals, firmly welded together by the consciousness of their own power, the real masters and legislators of their land, proud of the great progress of their heroic achievement, will march through the streets into the Square. Here they will see the Red Army, the well-ordered ranks of their brothers and children. Here they will see all that has been done for the defence of the Soviet Union, that young giant who lives and labours for the purpose of destroying all that is decadent and out-worn and which is building a new world.

With the exception of the Soviet Union there is no state on our planet, where workers and peasants can delight in an army created by themselves for the defence of their own freedom and not for their own oppression. There is no other state in which the workers are free, on the First of May, to demonstrate their unity and their power, without running the risk of being attacked and shot down by the police of the capitalists.

To-morrow we shall no doubt read in our newspapers about the provocative and bloody deeds of the “guardians of law and order” in bourgeois countries; of the assaults and murders committed against the worker-demonstrators. Our demonstration on the First of May is an impressive spectacle, which should deepen in the working class the consciousness of its own might and should intensify in every individual the revolutionary hatred of the old world—the world of the capitalists and the petty bourgeois.

Watching our wonderful army we must not forget what an enormous amount of energy the enemy compels us to spend in defending ourselves against their encroachments upon our freedom. We must remember that the old exhausted robber—the capitalist world—forces us to employ resources in the manufacture of cannon and rifles which we might use for the building of factories and schools. We must remember that the growth of our culture is retarded by the threat of a predatory attack upon us by the enemy; that it is because of him, our enemy, that we are still compelled to live and work in conditions of extreme difficulty, under a constant strain upon our creative powers.

This is more than enough to account for the intense and irreconcilable hatred which the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union feel for the capitalists. The more concentrated it becomes, the more devastatingly and triumphantly will it explode on the day of the “last and decisive struggle,” the inevitable struggle with the savage enemy.

At the core of this profound hatred is the consciousness, in the Leninist, of his creative powers, the consciousness of the grandeur of his tasks. This consciousness has already been transformed into a revolutionary will, into a passionate desire to fructify reality.

The worker is animated by this feeling; he desires to create things to the best of his ability and to achieve the aims of his class as quickly as possible. This strong passion for creation explains such phenomena as socialist competition, shock brigades, the “Five-Year Plan in Four Years”—already completed in some factories in an even shorter time. As the result of this passionate energy the giant enterprises of Selmash, the Stalingrad tractor plant, the Artyom electric power station and 323 plants and factories were built in the first two years of the Five-Year Plan. During the third decisive year we shall build 518 more plants and factories.

The workers of No. 1 *Tulshy* factory have excellently expressed it:

“This figure—518—must light a flame of fresh enthusiasm in our hearts, must pour new strength and new courage for new victories into every man and woman worker.”

“We suggest that the figures showing our greatest achievements should be brought to the notice of every worker and every peasant in the collective farms in order that all of them may know that we have not used so much strength and energy in vain. We have not thrown the energy of our labour to the winds—as the energy of the workers and peasants elsewhere is thrown to the capitalists—but have invested it in the construction of new and mighty giants of socialist industry and socialist agriculture.”

The working class of the Soviet Union and its leader—the Leninist Party of workers and peasants—have been working for a long time not only for self-defence but also for the liberation of toiling humanity as a whole, of the proletariat of all countries. The Union of Socialist Soviet Republics already presents the aspect of a coun-

try in which, as the result of the mingling of the blood of different tribes and peoples, a new humanity, a new race must wake to life—a race and not a nation.

A world socialist state of equals, where the individual is liberated from the idea of “class,” nation and religion, from everything which limits the liberty of his development—this is the great ultimate goal of the heroic work which was inaugurated by the virile men and women of the Party of Vladimir Lenin.

What can justify capitalism in its daily, incessant, inhuman struggle against the proletariat, in its attempts to arm the proletariat against the peoples of the Soviet Union?

Capitalism protects only its own physical authority over the working people, its habitual enjoyment of every advantage of the cultural conditions of life which are created by the systematic enslavement of the working masses, and by the vicious exploitation of their working energy.

Is it necessary, in these years of the world-wide crisis of capitalism, to recall the facts which expose unmistakably all that is criminal in the very existence of a system whose days are numbered?

Certainly not.

We would only repeat what is already sufficiently well known to everybody: the capitalists through their mutual competition, stirring up of millions of workers and peasants against one another by the destruction of national economy in time of war; the squandering of the national wealth such as metals and coal; the enslavement of millions of people in India, China, the island colonies, in the Black Continent; the creation of an army of 30 million unemployed, the conversion of workers into beggars; the growth of crimes due to hunger; the growth of diseases due to premature exhaustion; the slaughter and massacre of workers in the cities and of slaves in the colonies; the growth of child prostitution; the growth of a *lumpen-proletariat*; the development of bestial anarchism, *etc., etc.*

How can the inhuman cynicism of capitalism be justified?

There is no justification.

Justification is no longer sought, since it is recognized that such efforts are futile, that the whole class system of society is based on crimes against the working people and that it cannot exist otherwise.

The idea of God as an intangible power which exists somewhere above the world, incomprehensible to the human mind—this idea is losing ground and ceasing to poison the minds of the work-

ing people.

More and more they are pervaded by a feeling of their own dignity and the consciousness of their own might which capitalism uses as a weapon in its own defence. Religion has become blunted; its influence upon the imagination of the masses is decreasing every day. The church has long ago ceased to be the guardian of the enslaved and oppressed; it is an accomplice of the oppressors.

The proletariat is beginning to see more and more clearly that the conditions of life are created not by an inexplicable power, but by the evil mind and despotic will of plunderers and parasites. This mind, functioning to an ever increasing extent with inhuman cynicism, is revealing its inherent weakness, and is opening the eyes of the working masses to the source of their own strength. The strength of the capitalists lies in the capacity of the proletariat to endure a life of slavery, to submit with resignation to the atrocious cupidity of the ruling class. Thanks to this strength capitalism rides upon the backs of the workers.

The proletarians of all countries see and feel more and more clearly that they are being oppressed because of their own docility in working for the oppressor, and that they themselves arm the foe against themselves.

They also see that in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics the working class has not only abolished its master class, but has rapidly and successfully impregnated the peasant masses with the principles of socialist economy on the land, and is abolishing even the possibility of a return of the robbers and parasites.

Capitalists no longer declare that Socialism is a fantasy, a utopia. Now they are bothered by one thing only: that the Five-Year Plan, planned economy, socialist competition, the work of shock-brigades—all these things and many more threaten capitalism with complete destruction.

If we exclude the white émigrés, the “had-beens” who either because of old age or debility, have plainly sunk into idiocy, who deny reality and still continue to bleat about the impracticability of Socialism; if we exclude this insignificant group of people who are only half-alive, all the remaining defenders of the capitalist system are incapable of finding any objections to Socialism other than those based on lies and slander. They create legends about “dumping,” about “forced labour,” about violent repression of individuality, about terrorism. They know, of course, that the working class of

the Soviet Union is living in a state of war against the enemy within, not yet completely exterminated, and that that war means terror.

The unconquered enemy within the land of the Soviet Union is a real enemy and the accomplice of the enemy without. He is the conscious wrecker, the traitor, the slanderer and tale-bearer. He deliberately provides false accounts of the work of the Soviet Union. (The Mensheviks themselves have admitted receiving such accounts.) The unconquered enemy is the individualist raised in a bourgeois society. He puts the petty interests of his "ego" above the titanic work of a class which is creating a new history, a class which works for the regeneration of humanity.

The unconquered enemy is the man who, like a fly in a spider's web, has been caught in the cunning mesh of the concept which has for centuries maintained the legality of the power of the minority over the majority whose unskilled labour has created the values of human civilization. . But the time has come when the unskilled worker desires to become not only a craftsman, but also an artist and a virtuoso in his particular work. Under the conditions of Soviet reality, which he himself has created, he gives daily proof that he can become what he desires to be.

The time has come when not dozens but hundreds of thousands of men skilled in science, in art and in technique must take their part in life, when the entire reserve of unutilized mental and nervous energy of the millions must take an active share in the construction of a new reality, a new history.

On the First of May, the festive day of the proletariat of all countries, it is perfectly appropriate to speak of those high objectives which the vanguard of the international army of workers has set for itself. Those objectives are not so far from realization as the unbelievers and the doubters would think. The destruction of the old world is proceeding as rapidly as the construction of the new. The number of builders is ever growing.

Is the number of our enemies growing?

Proletarians and peasants must realize and must firmly grasp the idea that the enemy does not descend from the clouds, but that he may be found among their own masses, among their own flesh and blood. This means that the worker and peasant masses must watch vigilantly for the growth of the enemy within their own ranks. This means that it is essential for the worker and peasant

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masses to know who is their mighty, incorruptible, disinterested friend and leader.

Long live the world proletariat! Long live the toilers and collective workers of the Soviet Union! Long live the Party of Lenin! Long live the Young Communist League and the youth on their way to the League! Long live the shock-brigades on their way to the Party of Vladimir Lenin!

1931.

## ON CYNICISM

### AN ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT

You ask:

“Is it possible that you, Maxim Gorky, are not roused to indignation by the cynicism of contemporary life and that you sincerely rejoice at the despair of those honest people who see no way out of this gloomy reality? Is it possible that your philosophic tranquillity is not disturbed by the endless dramas of life?”

Permit me to inform you that I am no philosopher at all and that “tranquillity” is foreign to me. If I were a tranquil person, people of your kind, your adherents, would not accord me that attention in which rage is so pitifully intermingled with an obvious helplessness of speech and an ignorance peculiar to intellectuals. I can attribute it only to forgetfulness of the past.

Now about cynicism. A small article, “On Cynicism,” was published in 1908, in a French journal, *Documents du Progrès*. This is how it begins:

“The tempo of life is increasing, for the mighty turbulence of the awakening of spring is penetrating further and further into its secret depths. The rebellious throb is felt everywhere, potential energy is becoming conscious of its creative power and is getting ready for action. Consciousness of self is gradually but steadily growing among the people and social justice is catching fire. Under the breath of the coming spring the cold and hard layer of hypocrisy and prejudice is visibly thawing and the ugly carcass of contemporary society, the prison of the human spirit, is shamelessly disclosed.

“The fire of joy sparkles in millions of eyes. The lightning of anger flashes everywhere and illuminates the clouds of stupidity and mistakes, prejudices and lies, accumulated through the ages. We are on the eve of the international regeneration of the masses.\*

\* \* \* \*

“Lucky are those who know that the people are an inexhaustible source of energy and can transform all the possible—into the necessary, all dreams—into reality. For such persons always have a live

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\* The dots represent, in abridged form, the traces of the iron hand of the Tsarist censor.

creative feeling of their organic connection with the people. And now this feeling must grow and fill their hearts with great joy and a thirst for creating new forms for a new culture. The symptoms of human regeneration are obvious, but ‘the people of higher culture’ do not seem to see them, which, by the way, proves that the bourgeoisie feels the imminence of the world conflagration.

“The dulled weapons of the process of accumulating wealth\* ... they are forced to defend their hopeless position and seek refuge in the narrow cage of their ‘culture,’ as they term the inculcated conviction which has deadened their souls, that a capitalist state is eternally legitimate and forever stable. They are no longer merely the slaves of their master, but have become their domestic animals.

“Slaves are turning into people—this is the new significance of life!”

This was written by me, as you see, twenty-two years ago. I think that for that time it was not a bad article. Among others, Anatole France, who was not very lavish with his compliments, wrote me a letter in which he praised my article highly. I should like to reproduce the whole article. Perhaps that would convince you that during these twenty-two years my opinion of people of your type has changed very little and that I can hardly be called a “traitor to the traditions of the intellectuals;” that I was “developed” not “by their help,” but by overcoming their attempts to bring me up in “their own image,” that is to say, as a domestic animal of capitalism or as its house dog. I am not so gifted that I can play the role preferred by refined intellectuals.

I am very sorry that I cannot here reproduce my article, “On Cynicism,” in its entirety. I have lost the manuscript, and as for the Russian text appearing in my book *Articles*, published in 1916, the censor maltreated it like a hungry pig let loose in a garden. But here is a bit not devoured by the censor!

“Cynicism hides itself behind freedom, behind the search for absolute freedom. It is a most ignoble mask.

“Literature throughout by the pen of the more talented writers, shows that when the refined petty bourgeois, in his striving after absolute freedom, displays his ego, he becomes a domestic animal in the eyes of modern society.

“Apparently, this is inevitable and does not depend upon the

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\* Again traces of the censor.



will of the authors. The efforts of the latter are honourable and clear—they want to depict a model man, absolutely free from the prejudice and tradition which unite the petty bourgeois as a whole in a society which limits the development of individuality. They want to create a ‘positive type,’ a hero who takes everything from life and gives nothing in return.

“The hero, thundering through the pages of a novel, proves his right more or less cleverly, to be what he is; he realizes a number of pertinent facts only in so far as they help to free him from the bonds of social feelings and ideas. If he is not stifled in time by his surroundings, or if he does not commit suicide, towards the end of the book he inevitably appears to the petty bourgeois reader like a newborn pig—like a suckling pig putting things to rights.

“The reader knits his brows, he is dissatisfied. Wherever there is a ‘mine,’ there must necessarily exist an absolutely autonomous ‘I,’ but the reader knows that the absolute freedom of ‘I’ inevitably demands the enslavement of all the other pronouns—an old truth which everybody makes an effort to forget. The petty bourgeois sees this only too often, for in practical life, in the severe everyday struggle for his smug existence, man becomes more and more cruel and frightful, and less and less human. And at the same time such ferocious beasts are necessary for the defence of sacrosanct and beneficent property.

“The petty bourgeois is in the habit of dividing people into heroes and mobs. But the mob disappears, becomes transformed into socialist parties, which threaten to destroy the petty bourgeois ‘I.’ The petty bourgeois calls the hero to his aid. The latter comes in the image of a thievish and greedy creature with the psychology of a wild boar.

“This monster, called to defend the holy right of private ownership does not recognize the sacred right of human individuality, and even at private ownership itself he looks with the eyes of a conqueror.

“On one side there is a red hydra with thousands of heads, on the other, a flaming dragon with its insatiable jaws wide open, and between these two is an agitated little man with his mean riches.

“And although this meagre wealth chains him like a prisoner, is his yoke of slavery, he loves it and is loyal to it, is always ready to defend it with all the lies and cunning of which he is capable. He is always ready to defend the existence of property with all the means

at his disposal, from God and philosophy, to fire and sword!”

It seems to me that these words prove one thing: to-day I say exactly what I always said.

In a letter to A. Amphiteatrov in 1913, my friend, later my “enemy,” Leonid Andreyev, called me the “knight of the proletariat”—sonorous and flattering words indeed, but they were simply a prelude to: “He rolls the Sisyphean stone of realism up the hill again and again, wasting his beautiful and prophetic dream of the proletariat upon the four rules of arithmetic. But, after all, only that which I do not like is realistic, and that which I desire and like is never real.”

This appeared in the book *Requiem*, published by “Federation.” Andreyev made a sad mistake. He, as everyone else, had no right to make light of the four rules of arithmetic, the basis of science. And the “beautiful dream” about the freedom of the proletariat, about the power of its creative will—this “dream” has become a heroic reality in the Soviet Union.

You write me: “The epoch in which we live is becoming more and more cynical.”

Quite right. I do not wish to attribute to myself the virtues of a prophet, but it seems to me that I am not a bad observer. It is twenty-two years since I wrote about the cynicism of the bourgeois system and this cynicism has developed like leprosy in the organism of the bourgeoisie. But you thought of it too late. Your cleverness will hardly help you to take a more honest and active position in relation to the historical problem of the world proletariat. It would, however, be more profitable for you, if instead of inspiring me with the laws of gentleness, you looked more attentively around you.

Just look around you and you will see that the imposing facades of bourgeois states have fallen apart, and any one who wishes can see what is going on inside the stone walls of European philistinism.

The economic crisis is raging, the result of the morbid greed of the robbers for profit. Bank crashes occur with more and more frequency; bankers continue their robbery with the discreet aid of government officials and parliamentarians, loyal lackeys of capitalism.

In Europe and America the luxurious life of the bourgeoisie is becoming more and more cynically ostentatious, crude and stupid. Bourgeois recreation is becoming more scandalous and is definitely taking on the character of sexual debauchery and perversion.

Recently a newspaper wizard said that “industrial progress is

the father of the workers.” He forgot to add that the bourgeoisie is the wicked, stupid, and lewd stepmother of the working class. Millions of workers, their wives and children are starving, at a time when millions of tons of unsold wheat are used for fuel. Everywhere capitalists cut wages to protect their profits and proclaim that government aid for workers ought to be discontinued, because it only corrupts the hungry and makes them lazy.

With a courage worthy of a better purpose, the starving workers of Europe and America exhaust their strength in vain by trying to remain patient. Crime and suicide is growing among them. Almost daily the newspapers report that whole families, no longer able to withstand humility and hunger, asphyxiate themselves with gas. Very often fathers and mothers murder their children before taking their own lives, so that their children should not remain homeless paupers in a bourgeois world.

Do you dare to deny the abundance of such facts?

Zealous people who make professions of being concerned with the weal of the working class—leaders of the Social-Democratic Party, members of the Second International which is dying of anaemia and lack of talent—have forgotten, in their old age, who is the prime enemy of the working class. It seems that they want to, but dare not, say to their humble congregation: “Eat as little as possible. Still better, do not eat at all, for our capitalist fatherland is in danger. Capitalist fatherlands of workers of other nations are sharpening their teeth to attack us.”

In order to distract the vigilant attention of the workers from the Soviet Union, where a proletarian dictatorship is established and where real socialist construction is developing rapidly, the leaders of Social-Democracy, such as the decrepit old man, Karl Kautsky, sift the sand of their dead philistine wisdom into the brain of the working class. Cynically and stupidly they slander the Communists, taking the material for slander and mud throwing from the bourgeois press. Nor are they squeamish in using the Russian émigré press as a source of information for their lies and filth.

The generals defeated by the workers, the theologians, bishops, contributors to the Black Hundred press, former manufacturers and bankers of Tsarist Russia and their ex-radical men of letters, all the scum and rubbish swept away by the tornado of the great proletarian revolution, most naturally joined forces in fabricating lies and calumny against the toiling peoples of the Soviet Union.

This entire clique of Russian and European enemies of the world proletariat is headed by the master of the Vatican. He is apparently very ignorant, as is natural in one who believes that he takes the place of Christ, "the God of love and gentleness." He ordered the monks to pray "for the suffering Russian people," of whose life and work he knows nothing. Three hundred of the most energetic workers of this same Russian people, mostly non-party, on arriving in Naples, acclaimed with sad amazement: "What poverty here, what sickly looking children, how awful the workers' living quarters are!"

In speaking of the most profound ignorance regarding the Soviet Union on the part of both the "great " and the little people of Europe—its intellectuals, its press and its journalists—I am not exaggerating at all. Here is one proof of this ludicrous ignorance. The *Mattino* of January 4th, 1931, published the following telegram from Vienna:

*BEARDS ARE IN STYLE IN RUSSIA*

*The patriarchal beards, which so exasperated Peter the Great that all his courtiers were obliged to shave, are again stylish in contemporary Russia. But apparently not because of aesthetic considerations. Seriously speaking, a long beard has many merits. It saves ties, warms the chest, prevents colds and at the same time removes from the face that bourgeois expression which is given by the absence of a growth of hair. Only those unfortunates whom nature endowed with red hair will be forced to sacrifice the growth on their chins, because the Russian population, in spite of the Bolshevik spirit, is still superstitious and regards redheaded people as carriers of misfortune.*

Such stupidities are published almost daily in the European press. They also appear in the famous dictionary *Larousse*, which, among other nonsense, announces:

*Samovar—a vessel for boiling water, with one or several taps.*

*Raskolniki—Russian dissenters. There are three kinds; the raskolniki, the rakolniki and the raskolnists.*

*Ivan III was called The Good.*

*Ivan IV was called The Terrible because he killed his wives with canes.*

*Denikin (General).—A famous general who on the order of*

*Kerensky fought the Bolsheviks.*

Recently a photograph of Dnieprostroy appeared in one of the Italian newspapers, with the following caption: "New life in Siberia. A view of Dnieprostroy on the river Obi, the energy of which will be used for the industry and the illumination of Omsk City."\*

Of course, all this is nonsense, trifles, but it is the rubbish with which the heads of the workers of Europe are filled day in, day out, year in, year out.

People who are in a habit of proclaiming the "brotherhood of peoples," the "unity of nations," the "crisis of culture," seem to have forgotten that ignorance is one of the greatest misfortunes in the world. They do not protest against the propaganda of ignorance, they do not even notice it.

Besides this marked indifference toward stupidity, lies, and slander, in the philistine world a multitude of infamous crimes are committed against the toiling people. But there is no opposition to any of them on the part of the European intellectuals who, with a childish naiveté, continue, according to your own words, "to consider themselves the creative power which guards European culture based on Christian humanitarianism, which nevertheless makes progress, which nevertheless seeks truth, love, brotherhood and equality."

From this sentence I gather that you speak of those sinners of Dante's *Inferno* who walk forward with their eyes turned behind them.

Your platitude about "the universal truth of love" I consider most shameless at a time when national hatred, kindled in Versailles, burns with ever greater intensity; when the capitalists, continuing to arm themselves, are preparing a new world massacre; at a time when in the "cultural centres of the world" workers are murdered daily, merely because they want to eat.

Much more honest than babblers of this type is General Ludendorff, who has been reduced to a state of savagery. He recently declared his hatred for Jews and now, in an open letter to a Saarbrücken newspaper, he declares that "real Germans cannot be Christians."

This is coherence! And this is not the only example of the sav-

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\* Dnieprostroy is on the Dnieper River, in central Ukraine.—*Ed.*

agery peculiar to European generals of artillery, of cavalry, of politics, of religion and even of science.

It is shameless and absurd to talk about “universal truth” when a bloodthirsty conspiracy is, with impunity, openly being created against the toiling people, a conspiracy into which the “democratic intellectuals” will inevitably be drawn in one way or another.

The reality created by the capitalists and petty bourgeoisie which they drag after them like a dog on a chain—this reality is so cynical, that it makes us think that the economic crisis is part of the great capitalist conspiracy against the workers; that the crisis is artificially prolonged; that armies of unemployed are created only to be converted into armies of soldiers.

Is this fantastic? Very likely. But what is more likely is that we will again witness a world war of paupers, organized by millionaires. I am not alone in this opinion. For example, an American professor of anthropology, Leslie White, in his report at the anthropological convention in Cleveland last December said:

*“War is inevitable, because capitalism is heading for war with the hope of solving the crisis.” Suicide by means of war, said White, is the logical end of the capitalist system.*

You maintain that I do not see the truth? But I see two truths.

One of them is your decrepit, cross-eyed, toothless truth which is thriving on the rubbish which it itself has created.

The other is young, enthusiastic, inexhaustible, energetic. Without looking back, it pushes ahead towards its goal. It often falls into pits, maliciously and vengefully dug on the difficult road by the slaves of the outworn truth.

Here is one of the truths: the toiling people in the Soviet Union under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party and of the workers’ and peasants’ government, despite difficulties, is successfully building its own state, a state of equals. This colossal and heroic work is the beginning of the regeneration of the world proletariat. It is the beginning of a world “Renaissance.”

The other is a stupid, shallow truth loved by decadents, living within and without the Soviet Union. This truth takes a malicious pleasure in pointing out that the 160 million inhabitants of the Soviet Union are still not decked out in silks and velvets; that in the thirteen years of its dictatorship, the working class has not succeeded in making socialists out of the 25 million petty individualist proprietors.

All the petty carping of those who uphold the decrepit, still living but swiftly dying, truth of the spiritually impoverished, only leads to such conclusions.

As you see. Citizen P. N., I know the truth.

1931.

## THE FINGERS OF THE MIGHTY HAND OF THE WORKING CLASS

The sooner the toiling masses understand the imperative necessity of the complete industrialization of the land of the Soviets, the sooner will the militant legacy of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin be carried out: to “overtake and surpass” the industry of the capitalists of Europe and America.

On this field of battle to “overtake” already means to conquer, to “surpass” means to demolish.

The better, the more arduously and honestly our plants and factories work, the brighter will be the life of the workers; the more cultured will be our country and the richer our land; the greater will be the confidence of the worker in his all-conquering strength, in the power of his toil which was, is and always will be the only basis of culture.

At the same time, the peasantry, equipped with machinery, will quickly understand the obvious advantages of collectivism, it will have a new, more reasonable attitude towards its toil as well as towards the soil, it will increase the harvest, will free itself from hard labour and from all the old customs which hinder cultural growth in the villages.

The primitive individualism of the peasant can be eradicated only by equipping him with machinery—the fruit of the toil and intelligence of workers.

The idea of socialist competition is one of the greatest ideas of Lenin, the real leader of the international toiling masses. Like all his ideas, it is simple. It demands only one thing: to intensify the labour of workers in their own interests, in the interests of the state in which they are the sole masters; to work better and more conscientiously than they did for the capitalists.

Socialist competition also demands a decisive and immediate change in the most careless and shameful attitude toward the worker-inventors. If we were to compute all the benefit which the resourcefulness of the workers brought to the workers’ and peasants’ state, that is, to the toiling masses, we would get a fabulous figure amounting to millions of roubles. We would also see that our scientists, together with our inventors, in developing and perfecting science and technique, are successfully freeing the land of the Soviets, that is, the workers and peasants, from dependence upon capital



abroad and from the necessity of importing manufactured products.

The disgusting official, bureaucratic attitude towards inventors is well known. Such an attitude has no place in a country organizing socialist competition, where an ordinary house-painter propounds such a wonderful idea as “Industrialization Day,” a day which should be given the significance of an annual holiday to take the place of outworn holidays such as Easter which celebrates the resurrection and transfiguration of Christ.

We underestimate facts such as this proposition of the house-painter Slobodchikov, although they bear witness to the actual resurrection and transfiguration of the worker who only a short time back was the humble and mute slave of the inhuman masters of the world.

I know, I do not forget that we do not believe in “heroes “ and that they are not “supreme saviours.” But I see that other new heroes have appeared in the world, heroes of a different character, devoted to different aims. These heroes are created by the toiling masses and not one of them pretends to be the centre of any cult. But we must know, we must not forget that the utmost regard for their work is necessary. And while promoting them to advanced posts as pioneers of industry, as explorers of the road to Socialism, the army of labour, the Party, and the Soviet Government must create an atmosphere of sympathy towards them and their labours.

*Our own right hand  
The chains shall shatter!*

Yes! Our heroes of toil and science are the fingers of the mighty hand of the working class.

1929.

## ABOUT LEARNED MEN

Is stupidity a “gift of nature”?

I am convinced that it is not, and that even cretinous idiots are the work, not of nature, but of biology, which is conditioned (mutilated, to be more exact) by the “conditions of existence,” by social conditions.

There are sages who maintain that stupidity is a gift with which man has been endowed by nature from the day of his birth to the day of his death, as if nature consciously endeavours to limit the thinking process and the power of imagination of man.

This fantasy was invented in ancient times by our hoary ancestors who were intimidated by the tumultuous elemental powers of nature, hostile to man, such as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, recurrence of cold and torrid temperatures, and other extravagances of the blind colossus. Later they created gods out of these terrors.

Stupidity is a brain deformity, engendered and developed artificially by the pressure brought to bear on reason by religion and the church, the strongest of all weapons which the bourgeois state uses to subdue the working masses. This is irrefutable and I am not a bit sorry that not one of the learned men is vigorous enough to say “a new word” on this subject.

Stupid people are indispensable to the “beautiful life” of the bourgeoisie. They are useful because they submit easily to the exploitation of their physical strength. The world bourgeoisie thrives on the stupidity of the labouring masses. The bourgeois system of mass education is a system of manufacturing fools.

I hope that these indisputable truths are well known to our enlightened Soviet citizens. They know what methods the bourgeois state employs to produce, to maintain, and to protect stupidity. Due to the daring initiative of V. I. Lenin and the Bolsheviks, the vanguard of the working class, due to the work of the Communist Party, and the labours of the workers’ and peasants’ government, the old stupidity is speedily disappearing in the Soviet Union. Aroused by this work, the toiling masses become more and more conscious of their own significance, of their right to power. The creative energy of the masses proves itself ever more decisively as a power capable of reorganizing life from the bottom upwards. Thirteen years of courageous and successful work have uprooted and continue to uproot the outworn principles of petty-bourgeois secu-

riety, which is firmly cemented with the sweat and blood of the toiling masses.

The workers of the world, hearing the buzz of the construction of a new life in the Soviet Union, respond with a thundering voice and are gradually organizing themselves to enter the final fight for their freedom.

The aim of this feuilleton is to discuss the stupidity of the learned man.

A learned man is first of all an intellectual. His main characteristic: like the Danish prince, Hamlet, "he lost the glow of his will through the oppression of reflection." Like Prince Hamlet he is an orphan; his mother—history—is the mistress of the capitalists, and his step-father—although a good-for-nothing—patronizes art, exploits science and poses as a cultured animal.

The learned man thinks he is the master of culture, its "spiritual lever," the "salt of the earth," etc., and, in general, considers himself an "unequalled individual." He is not "merely a man," but the embodiment of universal wisdom, the "hub of the world's wisdom," so to speak.

At crucial moments, when reality forces some sincerity out of the orphan, he calls himself a "slave, chained to the wheel-barrow of history," as a former "Spartacist"\* expressed himself. And another, a former Social-Democrat has said: "The bourgeoisie assaults the workers and the workers assault the intellectuals."

The Soviet journalists, who are barbarian—as is the entire population of the Soviet Union—often call the learned men pimps. I am against strong language. The role of a pimp is vile; he supplies the beds of rich old decrepit men and women with young girls and boys. In fact, the activities of the leaders of European Social-Democracy resemble very much this type of occupation, but... The learned men could certainly find a "but"; I, however have no desire to look for one. Besides, the universe, its entire reality, is being built with an austere logic of "yes" and "no," while "but," according to the laws of logic, is the "excluded middle," and all the "buts" are fabricated by learned men only "to mitigate conditions."

The learned man is convinced that the best armchair is the one

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\* The Spartacus Bund was formed by Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Mehring and other revolutionary Socialists during the World War and later became the Communist Party of Germany.—*Ed.*

in which he sits. And therefore he insists that everyone should sit in armchairs of his choice. Envisaging all the events from the point of view of comfort of his buttocks, the learned man cannot, of course, approve anything which tends to destroy that old piece of furniture on which reposes the esteemed part of his anatomy.

For example: during the time of serfdom Russian landowners liked to sit in Voltairian chairs; then, the intellectuals of the nobility developed a taste for the soft furniture of the idealist Schelling. After sitting for a while on Fourier, on Moleschott and Vogt, they installed themselves in Nihilism. They liked Spencer particularly because, among other things, he said: "Out of leaden instincts cannot be forged golden behaviour." This wonderful aphorism permitted indifference to certain social absurdities, crimes and tragedies. But Spencer, too, soon became uncomfortable. Changing places more and more frequently, they landed on the chair of Marxism—a very hard one, indeed! They attempted to soften Marx with Bernstein. Nothing came of it! They then took turns at Nietzsche and Bergson.... I cannot keep track of the whole line of furniture they tested. What the sages sit on now God only knows; many of them are émigrés. This jumping game is called "the history of the spiritual life of the Russian intellectuals."

In exile, the learned men compose *Essays on the Scientific Religious Conception of the World, Gospel of Divine Justice, Life of the Saints, Orthodox Veneration of Ancestors*; in general, they have taken to the trade of the upholstery-philosopher building armchairs which will seat them more comfortably.

In the émigré press one may read touching arguments of this type:

*It is said that orthodox Abyssinian priests dance during liturgy. Apparently in the hearts of Ethiopians—those Ethiopians whom Homer esteemed to the point of referring to them as "venerable Ethiopian sages"—orthodoxy found a different response than in the Russian soul.*

*Not long ago, a Russian girl I know, who received her education in a French catholic convent, complained to her mother:*

*"It is very uncomfortable there, you must take a bath with your chemise on."*

*"Why?"*

*That's what I'd like to know! I am alone in the tub and the*

*door is locked. But they say: 'What do you mean alone? And your guardian-angel? Is he not always with you?'*

*This childish, fascinating naïveté of the catholic convent appealed to me. Does it not have a resemblance to the conception we have of the guardian angel?*

The above was written by an old writer, an outstanding contributor to a Socialist-Revolutionary paper in 1905.

O tragic burden of the buttocks!

Although it is difficult, we must stop joking.

I have just read a brilliant book by Comrade S. Uritzky, *The Advance of the Socialist Offensive*. It made me feel very happy.

In the old days there was a group of people called *cantze-  
liarists*. A high sounding word, *Cantzelaria!*\* — *cane-ciel-aria*, which means: a dog out in the open, outside the door of the house. *Cantzeliarists* were called “inky souls.” The learned do not at all resemble the *cantzeliarists*, their souls are bookish. But they, too, live somewhere outside of reality and peep at it from under the door.

A learned man probably reads no less than 16,000 books on all subjects and this semi-mechanical labour of assimilating knowledge develops in him a distorted and exaggerated opinion of the strength and breadth of his mind. Of course, I shall not attempt to deny that the sack has a right to be proud of the quantity of grain it contains. But we often notice that the bigger the volume of knowledge acquired by a learned man, the more spasmodic and the longer is the curve of his vacillation.

We know of certain learned men who, seeking a comfortable place for themselves, retreat from Marxism to orthodox obscurantism, and from having been Bolsheviks, they become church elders.

Some of the learned think that freedom of thought is manifested only in frequent changes of creed. After all, it seems that books do not enlighten, but only blind the wise, and that the private property of their souls is seldom in good order.

For them books are the source of contradictions which perturb and torment them much more than the storm and stress of social reality. Reality demands that books reflect its growth and direction; but, as reality becomes more and more tempestuous and permeated

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\* Cantzeliarist—an office clerk.

with the energy and creations of a new class, it does not pay much attention to books which reflect the past. But the sages desire reality to concern itself with books. Not long ago a Leningrad correspondent wrote to me in perfect seriousness:

*We live now only on politics, and politics are meant only for statesmen and for state activities, the very thing which the Tsar's ministers of state and all those who occupied high posts had to answer for in the revolution. What is missing, then? We have no common life. Why? Because such a life is the result of a world perspective, and this very world perspective we do not possess."*

The "originality" of this concept is not extraordinary; on the contrary, it is quite typical of one with a peeping Tom point of view. The learned value books; they believe in books. But if they were told that the demand for books among the masses of workers and peasants of the Soviet Union grows with fabulous rapidity; that in 1927 more than 462 million pages were printed, and in 1930, 1,365 million, it would not cheer the learned men. They would say: "What books are published? They are not objective enough and are written by heretics, because materialism is an heretical and an anti-cultural doctrine."

The learned love "objectivism." This conception in its broad aspect means—on the one hand, that which it is impossible not to acknowledge and on the other—that which it is impossible to accept.

The wise are firmly convinced that without their participation in world affairs, the world would perish; but they can participate only by means of their wanton tongue. They are thoroughly convinced that they know all and that everything is clear to them. Bookishness has killed in them the sense of modesty and careful judgement, which is natural to people who take an active part in life and whose attitude is that of consideration and sincerity. One of them writes from somewhere, for example, from Prague:

"I know quite well that conditions in Russia have reached the highest point of desolation."

They know absolutely nothing, because they do not want to see what is most necessary to know. They are quite unaware of the height to which the activity of the working class and advanced peasants has reached in the Soviet Union. They judge the life of 160 million people as if it were the life of the population of a small

town. With the boldness of insolence they assert that “the uninterrupted working week is a failure,” and they refuse to see that 66 per cent. of the workers have adopted the uninterrupted week and this fact is of the greatest political-economic importance, a fact able to revolutionize the conditions of existence. And they croak: “The Five-Year Plan is impracticable,” although they ought to know that by the initiative of the workers the Five-Year Plan has been reduced to four years.

In general, they do not want to recognize that in the Soviet Union there is a powerful energy, unknown to the wisecracks and of a kind they had never seen anywhere— a free energy of the workers and peasants who are becoming more and more conscious that they are the only competent masters of their country, that they work for themselves, that they must work bravely and intensely forgetful of self.

Only by the strength of this consciousness can the seemingly unbelievable fact be explained that the oil and peat industries have already fulfilled 86 and 96 per cent. of the Plan for 1932-33, which means that in these industries the Five-Year Plan has been realized by the workers in two and a half years. The carrying out of the Five-Year Plan in machine construction has already reached 70 per cent., which means that the plan for machine construction will be completed not in five, but in three years. It is the same in the field of electricity.

These facts show the enormous reservoir of energy of the working class.

The fact that 22 per cent. of the peasantry have joined collective farms shows that the peasant no longer wants to be the slave of the soil and to depend on the caprices of nature. Does this not prove that the age-long worker of the soil recognizes the necessity for fighting the elemental forces of nature by means of machinery, by means of fertilization, by means of the newest, most scientific methods?

No one can doubt that collective farms are growing. The peasant can compare facts and draw conclusions. And here are the facts:

*The collective farm “Red Partisan” calculated that at the division of the crop every peasant family is to get not less than 700 roubles. The “individual” peasant cannot even dream of such a sum.*

*Fedor Savinkov is a poor "individual" peasant; he is exempt from taxes; his family consists of four persons, two of whom are of working age. He has a cow; his sowing: oats, 1.7 acres; millet, 1.7; lentils, 0.9; rye, 5.6; the total cost of husbandry for an average crop is 150 roubles;\* after deducting the cost of production, the profit is 138 roubles.*

*And now let us take the poor peasant, Nicholas Ushamakin, a member of the collective. He has a family of five, of which three are able workers; he has a cow; for the three working hands he gets 174 roubles in products and in cash; for the two minors he gets 24 roubles from a special fund for disabled workers or minors; in all he gets from the collective farm 198 rubles. From the unsocialized winter crop he gets grain and straw worth 100 roubles and 35 kopeks, consequently his total income is 298 roubles and 35 kopeks. (Quoted from B. Uritzky).*

The energy of the workers and peasants is growing with an amazing rapidity, a fact which even the less ignorant capitalists do not deny, although the growth of this energy portends trouble for them. But the sages stubbornly hang on to their own ideas. Well, they feel somewhat peeved, there are no eggs, no butter for breakfast, they are, in general, very uncomfortable in their armchair.

*It is not possible—they declare—that the semi-literate worker, the inveterate drunkard and sluggard, the illiterate, downtrodden muzhik, can successfully rival the capitalist. We know our country, know the character of its dynamic power and we know that P. Struve is right when he says; "The working class as a creative power can exist only under conditions of a capitalist state."*

Astounding wisdom! I do not know where and when Struve wrote so well about the working class. Did he really write it, or did my correspondents, "the honest Russians," write it for him?

The documents of the learned men among the "honest Russians" display a depth not to be outdone by their wisdom. It seems to me that there is something psychopathic in this wisdom. Is it not strange that while speaking of the "dynamic power" of the worker and peasant, they forgot to mention *baba* [peasant woman]—a new

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\* A rouble, 100 kopeks, is equivalent to 2/-.—*Ed.*



“dynamic power,” very alert and very energetic?

The befogged brains of the wiseacres take on most original and curious forms. Thus, one of them was informed of the development of extraordinary sub-tropical cultivation in the Georgian and Abkhazian Republics, and was told that the tea plantations on the Black Sea, totalling 675 acres prior to the revolution, now, in 1930, comprised 50,000 acres. He retorted: “What! Are you going to compete with China?” Nothing more! And he is an educated man, a scientist, a specialist, a botanist.

Learned men like to brag about their love and anxiety for the “people,” they like to recall how they suffered when the “people” suffered under the yoke of the incompetent, merciless authority of the landowners and the capitalists.

But now the workers and peasants have overthrown that authority and, masters of their land, are building a new society and teaching the toilers of the world how to build Socialism.

One would think that now the “mourners of the peoples’ misfortune” ought to give up their fruitless occupation of mourning and admire the vigorous initiative of the toiling people, its free creative spirit as manifested in all spheres of physical and mental labour.

One would think that now the sages would sing in chorus: “Now, you are absolving the souls of your slaves, O Lord,” and, for the complete peace of their souls, begin to prepare their own little graves. It is high time.

However, the cultural progress and achievements of the “people” to them are invisible. With Jesuitical zeal they keep calculating shortcomings, mistakes and “failures,” all of which they gather from the self-criticism of the workers and peasants, which, in reality, is not so much a “dream of power” as the stimulation of energy, the development of the initiative of the masses, of the consciousness of their responsibility to society for all their deficiencies, crimes, mistakes, negligence and hastiness. All this is, of course, foreign to them. They are interested in something else.

They write: “The most honourable Ivan Ivanovitch, whom we know, was arrested....”

From a distance, from under the door and through the keyhole, they cast furtive glances upon the new history which is being created by the power, by the will of the workers and peasants; and from their observation post they think they see and know everything.

There is one thing, it seems to me, they know very well: that there are learned men of kindred spirit, who are trying, within the limits of their feeble power, to restore the petty bourgeoisie, to re-establish the bourgeois system. And they realize very well that the more resolutely the worker-peasant power drives forward the Socialist offensive, the more must the rage of dying philistinism take on varied forms. This rage creates its own atmosphere; it is quite natural that some of the learned poison themselves with it, and then we are compelled, in spite of their noble spirit, to deprive them of all liberty of action, of speech and of work.

I know by heart the answer of a learned man—of whose sincerity there can be no doubt—when he was asked why “he permitted himself to be drawn into sabotage activity.”

*“Under the capitalist system we were, to a certain degree, the lieutenants of capital, if one may express it so. It was through us that capital accomplished its customary and, under capitalism, inevitable exploitation of workers; this, in its turn, brought about a definite ideology which created a sharp division between us and the workers, opposed us to them.”*

Let us end with this eloquent statement of a man who is of kindred spirit with the learned. Need we remember people who disappear from life more slowly than it is necessary for them to disappear?

Yes, it is necessary, because in their disintegration they create a foul atmosphere which can poison not only young and honest people but also those who have a careless attitude toward reality and who are exceedingly sensitive to the unceremonious ups and downs of life.

1930.

## CALUMNY AND HYPOCRISY

*TO THE COMRADES—STUDENTS OF THE  
OREKHOVO-ZUYEVO SCHOOL\**

I have received your letter. My hearty thanks for your warm response to my work.

Work is easy when you know that your labour is appreciated by the energetic builders of a new world, of a new culture. But it seems to me, comrades, that you need not be upset by the dull noise which was raised by the bourgeois and émigré press and which you call a “campaign of hatred against Gorky.”

This noise was not raised yesterday and will not end during my lifetime, because as long as I live I shall not leave the post to which I was appointed by your militant energy.

“Hands off Gorky!” Why? Let them, I can hit back at their hands and at their nose, if necessary. Let our enemies go on foolishly wasting what is left of their energy.

Gorky irritates them only because he is the echo of the triumphant march of the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union, marching towards that great end to which they have pledged themselves.

History is not friendly to our enemies. What do they say against you? They mobilize their own press which dispenses lies and calumny daily. But without Soviet raw materials, the capitalists cannot get along and, therefore, they themselves are forced to contradict the filthy fabrications of their “servants of the pen and valets of the press.”

Only recently their press attempted to prove that the Five-Year Plan is a fantasy. To-day they keep repeating that the Plan is being realized. Only recently they invented the fairy tale about “forced labour,” and already they are, little by little, beginning to deny it. Of course, they can send against the Soviet Union workers and peasants equipped from head to foot with the best weapons for the destruction of human life. But how will they shut the eyes and stuff

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\* Gorky's answer to the letter from the workers of the Orekhovo-Zuyevo School on the occasion of his election as honorary member to the Orekhovo-Zuyevo City Soviet and the campaign let loose against him abroad. The letter was addressed to Comrade Shirshikov, secretary of the Communist nucleus of the school workers.—*Ed.*

the ears of their own soldiers, who also want to be free and who already know that this is possible, that in the Soviet Union there are no slaves, that there are no unemployed?

Two weeks ago European capitalism let out a great cloud of that old verbal dust with which it had corrupted the eyesight and the hearing of the working class for many years. Through the head of the catholic church, the Pope, the master of Vatican City, capitalism announced over the radio *urbi et orbi* (to the city and to the world):

*The rich must consider themselves the servants of the Almighty as well as the guardians and the distributors of his wealth, to whom Jesus Christ himself entrusted the fate of the poor."*

This, in reality, is nothing but the voice of the rich themselves, who, serving "the Almighty" and profiting by unemployment, not only refuse to feed 30 million unemployed but are beginning to play the game of cutting wages. In the name of the church they wisely advise the "poor";

*...to remember the example of our saviour, Jesus Christ, not to disdain his poverty and his promises; not to disdain the accumulations of spiritual wealth so accessible to them in our day, and, aiming towards a better life within permissible limits, through real kindness and straightforwardness to earn the mercy of God and not to permit themselves to commit unjust acts.*

*To THE WORKERS AND EMPLOYEES*

*We ask the workers as well as the employers to avoid all hostile actions and all struggle and in brotherly and friendly union help one another; the one through their resources and leadership, the other with their labour and skill. They should demand only what is just and refuse anything which is not just and without transgressing established law and order to attain not only personal gain but also the good of all.*

Comrades, this is how the Roman Catholic Church teaches the "poor" and the "workers," this is how they fulfil their "task"—which is to maintain and to support the capitalist system based on the scandalous and inhuman exploitation of workers and peasants.

The man who speaks these "kindly" words, which have long

since lost their meaning, knows that the church of poor Christ is devilishly rich; that in Italy there is a bank called *Santo Spirito* [Bank of the Holy Spirit] and in Germany there is a bank called "St. Phallus." He also knows that the churches of Christ differ from ordinary banks only in that the deposits of the church are not returned to the depositors. He very likely also knows that the "poor" have no opportunity to "accumulate spiritual wealth" under the capitalist system.

This "good" advice to the "poor" from the prince of the richest of ecclesiastic organizations would be a good theme for a satirical journal. It is a pity that the bourgeois press which enjoys "freedom of speech" is bereft of the freedom of laughter.

The prince of the church gave a very charming bit of advice to the "potentates," who dispose of the fate of the working people, to be "righteous, to do good and not evil." This gives us the right to hope that the English die-hards as well as the inveterate French philistines, headed by Aristide Briand, will pay serious attention to the advice which comes from Rome, as behoves magnanimous and "straightforward" people.

Personally, I hope that they will immediately begin to disarm, will refuse to make a predatory attack on the Soviet Union and will tell our workers, our peasants: "Well, boys, what can we do with you? The Pope wishes that we do no evil and since you began to do good, continue and we will not disturb you!"

After this they will put their workers at home to forging ploughs out of swords, and they will begin to feed the millions of unemployed who are dying of hunger.

But if we stop joking and listen carefully to the gentle capitalist voice from Rome? What dullness of mind, what poverty of spirit in this voice! And what hypocrisy!

My hearty greetings to you, comrades, who are fighting for a wonderful future!

1931.

## CYNICAL INHUMANITY

The inhumanity of Christian-bourgeois culture is illustrated in an eloquent and irrefutable way by the fact that the bourgeoisie looks upon war and the slaughter of human beings as unavoidable and inevitable, as ordained by a “law of nature.”

There are sages who insist that war develops fearlessness, will-power and numerous other good qualities in man. We know that the most disgusting massacre of 1914-1918, which was organized by the bourgeoisie, exterminated tens of millions of workers and peasants, whose blood created several thousand shameless parasites and exploiters, the *Schiebers*, the *nouveaux riches*....

The assertion that “war breeds heroes,” creates fearless men, only proves that the bourgeois philosophers and moralists do not see the difference between fearlessness and shamelessness, inhumanity.

Our present epoch shows quite clearly that wars between bourgeois states, outside of their direct objective which is to pillage the enemy economically after rendering him powerless, are indeed creating “fearless” men—defenders of a lawless, inhuman state during “peace time.” We see these people in fascist organizations such as the Steel Helmets in Germany and similar ones in other countries.

*We know that* “peace time” more and more takes on the character of incessant and cruel warfare of the masters against the workers.

As well as becoming morally disintegrated, the bourgeoisie rears a large number of thieves, crooks, and bandits. The banker engenders the bandit—this is what our modern “book of Genesis” tells us and it is an undeniable fact.

The rapid growth of crime in bourgeois countries results in increasing the police force, which needs “fearless” men, capable not only of murdering workers, but also of combating bandits. In Berlin there is a specially organized “attack brigade” to defend the inhabitants from bandits. In the United States there is special insurance against swindle and robbery. In 1913 these insurance companies paid out two million dollars to their clients; in 1920, four and a half million dollars; in 1927, about seventeen million dollars. Chicago, one of the largest and biggest cities, is almost entirely in the hands of gangsters. President Hoover speaks in the Senate about the growth of crime.

Of course, America is not the only country so assiduously

manufacturing criminals against life and, particularly, against “sacred private property.” Europe is not to be outdone by the United States in this kind of progress. “Fearless” men are most necessary to the bourgeoisie.

*Need we repeat that war* is profitable to the industrialists who, by the toil of workers manufacture armaments for the fratricidal murder of these very workers and peasants?

All these and many other facts demonstrate irrefutably the cynical inhumanity of the bourgeoisie, that its very existence is criminal, and bear witness to the growth of its insanity, its idiocy, facts which condemn it to its inevitable doom.

I was a “pacifist” all my life. War aroused in me only disgust, shame for people and hatred for the instigators of mass massacres and for destroyers of life.

But after that victorious war heroically fought by our hungry, bare-footed, half-naked workers and peasants; after the working class had revealed and continues to reveal itself as an intelligent and talented master workman in the construction of a new state, its own state, under the most difficult conditions—after all this I was convinced of the inevitability of a mortal war.

And if a war breaks out against the class for which I live and toil, I too will join its battalions as a common soldier. I will join, not because I know it will be victor, but because the great and just cause of the working class of the Soviet Union is also my cause, my duty.

1929.

## MUTUAL APPRECIATION

*DEAR COMRADES!*

I was very much touched by your congratulations upon my 64th birthday. My hearty thanks I too frequently am I called upon to thank you for your friendship and your attention, but that is your fault and not mine.

Well, we will let it go at that. But let us agree that such mutual appreciation between an individual and the masses is inevitable whenever the individual reflects, with a degree of success and fidelity, the active state of mind of the masses who are carrying out a revolutionary task imposed by history.

Having agreed on that, we will draw from these mutual appreciations between the masses and the individual, very simple, and to my mind, instructive conclusions. The first conclusion is the indisputable educational power of the masses: this energy affects the individual who in turn sends it back to the masses. About this we have spoken more than once.

Further: the social revolutionary value of the individual is more significant when he can absorb and formulate into ideas and images the emotional energy of the people.

Bourgeois society forces the individual to serve its ends—the ends of a class whose power and strength is based on the exploitation of the physical energy of the majority, the free development of the individual in bourgeois society is limited to conceptions of race, nation, class and religion and to the prejudiced belief in the “originality of national culture,” an originality which exists on the surface only. All this you know already.

Our state is being built on a socialist basis, restrictive ideas are eliminated, the individual enjoys the right freely to develop all his powers and abilities.

Some people will tell me: That is untrue, since the Soviet Government is opposed to freedom of speech, freedom of the press and all other “freedoms,” about which the defenders of the capitalist system hypocritically boast, but which in reality are non-existent.

Our state has instituted the greatest and most complete liberty for the individual, eliminating those ideas which for centuries hindered and limited his evolution. It fights against the individual only when he becomes the bearer and disseminator of ideas which retard the free development of the intellectual power of the individual



himself. These are precisely those ideas upon which the power of capitalism depends—class, race, nation, religion.

The working class of the Soviet Union, under the leadership of the Party, recognized these ideas as harmful. It recognized that they distort man, are hostile to the masses of the toiling people, and, therefore, repudiates these ideas and prohibits their propagation.

To permit in a workers' and peasants' state the spreading of ideas decidedly hostile to workers and peasants and attempting to prove to the toiling people the legitimacy and inevitability of their enslavement, would be absurd and ridiculous Don Quixotism.

As you see, comrades, I am telling you what you already know as well as I do. This happens with me frequently, if not always. This is because through you I am addressing that "third warrior" about whom I wrote only recently. I again received a series of letters from him in which he defends the validity of his position between the capitalists and the working class. It is not worth while to waste time arguing with this "warrior," because his stupidity is insurmountable. It is a part of him and will remain so to the very end of his days.

But numerous are his followers who also like the position of the "third" and "in between." Of course, this position is not "in between" but apart; it is the expectant position of the marauder who hides behind his shameless verbiage, awaiting the end of the battle in order to plunder.

People of this type live in various provincial corners and the further away they are, the better they can spread the pestilence of anti-Semitism, baptism, petty bourgeois anarchism and other "free-thinking" ideas.

I can imagine quite little towns and hear the whispering of the "third warrior." They whisper into the ears of the youth, who are surrounded by these slanderers and who become dazed with the stinking order of the base and petty ideas which poison the robust and active zest of life in the youth. Ideas, as well as people, die, decompose and the poison of rotting ideas is as infectious as any other poison.

The youth in the backwoods, thirsting for knowledge, are not yet equipped with the strength required for a successful struggle against the poison emanating from the slanderers.

In the bright background of the tremendous work carried on by the socialist energy of the creators of a new history, the dark shadows of philistinism appear in relief. Of course, they will vanish,

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disappear, but, nevertheless, it is imperative that their final disappearance be not delayed by even a day at the expense of the youth.

1931.

## TO WORKERS AND PEASANTS

In Moscow, before the Supreme Court of the workers and peasants of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, there are on trial people who organized a counter-revolutionary conspiracy against the workers' and peasants' state.\* The proletariat of the world and particularly you, workers of France and England, must realize the meaning of this conspiracy and its significance, because in time you, too, will have to deal with just such betrayers and traitors as are now on trial in Moscow. These people are specialists, technicians, scientists; they are lackeys to the capitalists who were exiled from Russia, who were caught and who confessed to all the base crimes they committed against the workers. Taking advantage of their knowledge and the confidence of the Soviet Government, they sabotaged in every possible way the work of building a state of equals, a socialist society.

They retarded the development of industry in the Soviet Union, spoilt everything they could lay hands on, and senselessly wasted the means and strength of the toiling people. In their endeavour to hinder the growth and development of national economy, they artificially created a food crisis in the Land of the Soviets. All their criminal and base deeds were committed with a view to upsetting the work performed by the Soviet power in the development of the economy of the Soviet Union. They attempted to create chaos in the Union, to stir up the masses, particularly the peasants, against the Soviet Government. This was done with the approval and leadership of those Russian capitalists who emigrated from Russia and found refuge in Europe, primarily in Paris, and who want to establish their own power over the working class and the peasantry of the Soviet Union.

It stands to reason that the Russian manufacturers and bankers do not intend to come back to Russia armed only with their fists and their pocket books.

The aim of all capitalists is the same the world over—the vicious exploitation of the labour of the workers. And it is, therefore, natural that the Russian capitalists found complete sympathy for their criminal aims among the capitalists of France and England. Poincaré-la-Guerre, Briand, Churchill, Baldwin and other adventur-

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\* The trial of the "Industrial Party" headed by Professor Ramzin.

ers in the employ of capitalism wanted nothing better than to serve the Russian exploiters and swindlers. Together with the wreckers being tried in Moscow by the People's Supreme Court, they worked out a plan for the military invasion of the Soviet Union, a plan of intervention. The base and destructive work of the wreckers in the Soviet Union was begun in order to help the intervention armies in their predatory attack on the Soviet Union in 1930-1931.

They planned to provoke the Soviet Government into a declaration of war against the workers and peasants of Poland and Roumania, and the workers and peasants of France and England were then to rise as if in defence of these countries already economically enslaved by the capital of the big organizations of brigands.

War is profitable for the capitalists: they deal in ammunition and make money out of the sweat and blood of the workers. They will not stop before the horrors of a new war, although they know that its horror will exceed that of 1914-1918. The capitalists would not hesitate to annihilate another twenty or thirty million workers and peasants. All capitalists have one aim the world over.

The aim of workers and peasants the world over is also one—the workers and peasants must free themselves from the yoke of capital, from poverty and save themselves from extermination.

Workers! It is time you knew the source of all the evil and sorrow, of all the miseries and distortions of life. The source is the greed of an insignificant minority who have become savage and demented from a thirst for hoarding money, and who lawlessly and senselessly rule over the lives of the toiling majority, wasting their energy, destroying the treasures of the earth which belong to you. You must remember that during the four years of imperialist war billions of tons of metal, which were extracted and refined by you, were lost in the sea; millions of tons of coal, mined by you, were burned; an infinite amount of leather goods, textiles, and many other products of your labour, were destroyed. Treasures are destroyed which belong to you and your children, and, in the process of destroying these treasures—while you are being ravaged and millions of men, your blood and class brothers, are being killed—the capitalists reap their profits and grow richer.

Hundreds of thousands of workers build ships which will be sunk, they make cannon, machine-guns, rifles, which will in the end be turned against you. Of course, you, too, will be killing workers and peasants who are as guiltless as you are. And this lack of guilt

makes war still more senseless and more criminal. By arming the capitalists you harm yourselves, your labour for war is suicide. They want to send you against the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union who are showing you how much better it is to live and work without masters.

The bourgeois press lies about and slanders the Soviet Union daily, inventing all kinds of nonsense and horrors, in order to make you distrustful of the success of the workers of the Union, in order to make you hostile towards these workers.

It knows quite well how great is the progress of workers' construction in the Soviet Union in spite of the organized sabotage of corrupt souls, and it also knows that this progress threatens world capitalism. But the bourgeois press is the docile tool of the bourgeoisie; bourgeois journalists are bought souls who must not tell the truth, for if they were to tell the truth, the masters of the papers would throw them out into the street just as the manufacturers are throwing you out.

The capitalists know that if the workers of the Soviet Union achieve their aim—which is not so far off—you, too, will follow the example of the toiling people of the Soviet Republics. They are imbuing you with hatred against the workers' and peasants' government of the Soviet Union out of greed, because the Land of the Soviets is an enormous market and its soil is fabulously rich. They are imbuing you with hatred against it out of fear, because the workers and peasants of the Union are swiftly and untiringly digging a grave for capitalism. The capitalists want to reign triumphantly and become enriched at the cost of your lives.

In the Soviet Union even Young Pioneers know that any war, except the war of workers against their masters, is a most senseless crime committed by workers of one country against the workers of another.

The people of the Soviet Union do not want war, but you must remember that they are not afraid of it and are ready for it. You already know that twelve years ago the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union refused to fight against you and that, almost unarmed, hungry, and half-naked, they smashed the army of officers commanded by educated generals and excellently armed by the capitalists of France and England.

Now the Soviet Union has a well-equipped army, in which every warrior knows well that he will fight for his freedom, for the

freedom of his country, where he is the rightful master and where there are no masters except the workers and peasants. You will fight for interests hostile to you, for the interests of the capitalists who haggle over your flesh and blood. They sell to one another ammunition made by you and it is very likely that you will be killed by those very cannon and rifles which you made with your hands and which were sold by your masters to your so-called enemies.

Can you understand the astounding madness of your passive attitude toward this bloodthirsty game being played against you by your masters—this small band of brigands who have always thrived on the spoils of your hard labour?

They are arming themselves for a war still more horrible than the war of 1914-1918. They again want to annihilate, to cripple millions of people.

Do you want it, too? You have the power to prevent war. You and all those who can understand the senselessness and crime of a new world war can stop the adventurers on the spot. You have all the means for doing it.

Particularly you, the workers of France and England, ought to demand of your government that they turn out the Russian émigrés and capitalists who would like to sell out the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union to your capitalists.

This demand must be inspired in you not only by the class feeling of world proletarian solidarity, but by the simple feeling of self-defence against people who are strangers to you and who bribe your masters and ministers of state by promising to share with them the booty gained by the invaders and thereby provoke a new massacre which will destroy millions of people.

Women must protest against this massacre—mothers, wives, sisters, and sweethearts should protest, and those intellectual “humanitarians” who not long ago protested against a sentence without knowing how vile was the crime.

1930.

## ON TAPEWORMS

The more resolutely the working class undermines the base of the all-Soviet philistine, the more piercing and the more plaintive becomes the whine of the latter, who begins to feel the rapid approach of his fatal end.

It seems to him that in his person “the entire Russian nation is perishing.” Dead drunk with conceit, he imagines, like any drunkard, that not he, but the earth under him is wobbling. He calls himself the “salt of the earth” and knows that “soil bereft of salt is not fertile.” He “considers impossible a future culture without the free participation of the principle of individualism”—without his, the philistine’s, participation in the capacity of “salt.”

But there is a variety of salts. Some contain acids, and certain of these salts, over-saturating the soil, render it barren. Such acid soil is called saltmarsh.

Like an acid, the petty bourgeois causes much annoyance to the workers and peasants. After the October Revolution they sided with the landowners, manufacturers, bankers, adventurers and bandits, all of whom were against the toiling masses. To this day they continue to annoy the working class and the Soviet Government, as is evidenced by their counter-revolutionary conspiracies, by their countless acts of treason, by the vicious work of the white émigré politicians, by the ignominious treachery of the erstwhile servants of the workers’ and peasants’ state—the Bessedovskys, Solomonovs, Dmitrievskys, and all the others at the thought of whom even children shrink away in disgust.

There is a great variety of salts and there is also a tapeworm—a parasite. It has nothing in common with salt except a slight patronymic resemblance.\* It is found in the intestines of man, thriving on his juices. It is composed of a mass of loosely connected segments, each of which has the power of reproduction by fission, rendering the tapeworm tenacious of life and therefore difficult to get rid of. Tapeworms sometimes reach a length of two or three yards. Although each segment is infinitesimal, after 99 segments have been extracted from the intestines and if but one remains, it can, in a short time, multiply to an enormous length.

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\* In Russian the first syllable of the word for *salt* is the same as the word for *tapeworm*.—*Ed.*

Medicine found that tapeworm in frail people causes dizziness and general weakness.

The petty bourgeoisie is very much like the tapeworm. It is also a parasite and exists by thriving on the juices of others. It has the parasitic tenacity of life, is capable of prolific reproduction and of adapting itself to all environments.

The fundamental characteristic of every petty bourgeois is his conviction that he is “unique,” and “exceptional.” He considers himself the “bridegroom at every wedding and the corpse at every funeral.” He demands from the state and from society great care and “humane” treatment. He demands absolute freedom to express his feelings and to thrive on the blood of others.

He is a humanitarian and proves it at every opportunity, even in the *Cookery Book for Young Housewives*. He tells them:

“Spoilt meat can also be used. It should be soaked in vinegar, then well salted and given to the servants for dinner.”

He is a profound and far-sighted creature. In 1929 he remarked, either in Prague or in Paris:

*We cannot definitely say in what precise fashion economic equality will influence the ultimate development of culture. We must remember that culture developed under the pressure of necessity, in the aspiration for material well-being. Will this aspiration not disappear when wellbeing—the ideal of materialists—will be attained?*

He is religious. In 1927 he wrote:

*Sin originated with woman. Satan with his evil spirit seduced Eve, mother of mankind, and made her the tool of corruption and luxury: evil, lust, sexual degeneracy became a part of human nature and determined the character of life from its very conception—“I have been conceived in lust and born in sin”—to its inevitable death.*

This passage is quoted from a book by a former Marxist, now prelate, S. Boulgakov—*Friend of the Bridegroom*. This book preaches something between homo-sexuality and emasculation.

Probably, the heretical conception of woman as a source of “luxury” as well as of sin would please the author of a letter sent me on April 10th of this year. Writing about my article on “Woman,” the author of the letter asks:



“Do you really believe that religion has outlived its time?”

No. Religion still exists as a tool to enslave the toiling people, and, as such, still plays its infamous role. This role is particularly well played by Catholicism at the head of which is the “unique,” the authentic representative of that God whose aid he invoked to get the French and Italian Catholics to slaughter German and Austrian Catholics.

One of our Soviet “unique persons,” recently sent me a long indignant epistle in which he writes:

“You are publishing another of your useless journals, *Our Achievements!* About which achievements do you want to tell the world?” And he bellows; “Tractors, electrification, while the muzhiks have no bast-shoes.... The peasant proprietor is lost!”

The political programme of the obdurate philistine is very clearly and well expressed in these ardent words. He needs freedom to help the “peasant proprietor” keep the muzhik in bast-shoes, which he is prevented from doing by the Soviet power with its tractors, the electrification of the country, with its broad revolutionary cultural work. His programme is that of all counter-revolutionaries for whom economic equality and a classless state mean ruin.

My correspondent informs me that the “old intelligentsia keeps at a distance from the revolution.”

That is a lie. My correspondent knows that the “old intelligentsia” did not keep at a distance, but actually opposed the revolution; that it morally and materially supported the former masters of the country, the enemies of the workers and peasants; that to this day, in the capacity of wreckers, they work hand in hand with the enemies of the Soviet state.

The best, the most energetic and talented intellectuals are unselfishly and sincerely working in the country and in the Party. In the capacity of scientists and technicians they march side by side with the working class and in twelve years they have accomplished much more than they could have accomplished in fifty years under the senseless, semiliterate autocratic regime.

The achievements of science and technique of which the Soviet Union can be proud in the face of the whole bourgeois world and which already threaten that world because they rapidly enrich our land and develop its industries—these achievements became possible only under the present system, under the dictatorship of the working class which understands the significance of science and

technique and which assigns large sums for scientific research and experiment, for research institutes and scientific expeditions.

When a philistine has a toothache and has not the courage to extract the tooth, I know full well that it is hell on earth for him, and there is nothing with which to console the poor thing. I, of course, have not the slightest wish to console philistines pitiful through their own insignificance.

If he were told that prior to the October Revolution there were 90 schools in wild and barren Daghistan which attempted to Russify the mountain tribes, and which were therefore destroyed by the mountaineers in 1918, and that now these same mountaineers have 483 schools and they continue to build new ones—would that ease the terrific pain of the “unique” one’s rotten tooth?

He has already forgotten that the Romanov autocracy with the active support of the church retarded the mental development of the peasant. He wants to know nothing about the contemporary schools for the peasant youth, about the hundreds of thousands of peasants in secondary schools, technical schools, agricultural institutes, higher educational schools, about the cultural and educational work of the Red Army, about the work of the “Home-Study University.”

We have not yet forgotten the days when “children of cooks” were not admitted to the high schools. We still remember the time when the theorist and educator of the autocracy, the organizer of the parochial schools, Pobjedonostsev, cynically declared that “it is much easier to rule an illiterate people.”

The revolution has engendered thousands of worker-inventors. The inventions of these heroes of toil enriched and continue to enrich the country. Can facts such as these cheer a person long accustomed to reap all the profits for himself?

He should be shown how successfully the energy of the working class moulds the peasant individualist into a collectivist and Communist. But precisely this is one of the principal factors generating the hatred of the bourgeoisie toward the working class.

The petty bourgeois, the “unique” and “exceptional” individual, understands the psychology of the peasant perfectly. He knows the peasant to be a worshipper of private property and still hopes that the bulk of the peasantry will not be shaken from the traditions to which it has been chained for generations.

We know that the rapacious management of the “unique ones,” their spoliation of the soil and its treasures ate into the flesh of the

workers and particularly of the peasants. It is still difficult for the latter to realize that private property is the cause of their bondage and ignorance, that almost all of them vainly waste their energy in defence of their poverty-stricken existence, and that by working an exhausted soil, they are really harming themselves.

But the muzhik's head is nevertheless above the ground. He devours about two million copies of the *Peasant Gazette*, and if we add the numerous supplements to this remarkable newspaper, the countless number of books and pamphlets which effectively teach the peasant to live and work in a new way and not according to the ancient muzhik traditions, peasant literature would total 100 million copies.

We can safely say that there is no other country where the peasants read so much and so avidly. What are the results of so much literature? The peasantry is becoming more cultured, a fact which can be denied only by those who are completely blind.

The peasantry has already promoted and continues to promote from among its ranks thousands of cultured workers of the soil—agronomists, technicians, physicians, teachers, authors—new and vigorous “salt of the soil,” which is not in the interest, but for the destruction of the petty bourgeoisie.

The entire process of cultural development in the village is nothing else than the process of exterminating the “tapeworm” from the organism of the workers' and peasants' state.

Of what interest to the parasite can be the Northern Sea Route, Turksib, electrification, industrialisation of the land, the discovery of colossal reserves of fertilization (the Khibinsk apatites, the Solikamsk potassium salts), the Ural and northern oil wells, the irrigation of Turkestan, the expansion of cotton culture, the cultivation of new fibroid plants, the successful experiments on the rice plantations of Astrakhan and of Oussouri, and in general the entire activity, at an almost fabulous tempo, of the Soviet power?

The peasants and workers produce wealth totalling billions of roubles. This wealth is not pocketed by “masters,” but is returned to the toilers, and used for equipping the country with machinery, for building factories, railroads, and highways, for the expansion of means of transportation, for the education of millions of workers' and peasants' children.

In speaking of tapeworms, I have in mind young people in whom the “unique one” causes dizziness and weakness.

Although I am not a physician, I am quite well informed about the work of the petty bourgeois as parasites in the organism of our state, and I know that the harmful segments of these parasites are not only profuse but also manifest a tendency of propagation and adaptation, for which there are several favourable conditions.

In the toiling masses surrounded by petty bourgeois elements there is rapidly developing and crystallizing a new and really fecund “salt of the earth,” without the property of either chemical affinity for or combination with the petty bourgeoisie to which it is organically hostile. It is developing and being crystallized under materially difficult conditions, at the price of continuous work and constant struggle.

A part of this new force went through the fire and agony of the civil war and, with fatigued nerves, proceeded to the tremendous and difficult work of socialist construction. It was natural that they be tired, and they had a right to be so. Then came the children who in 1920 were only ten or twelve years of age, who knew the past only from books and were not infected enough with hatred for this past and with contempt for the petty bourgeoisie. They, too, live under difficult conditions, but under incomparably better conditions than those under which their fathers lived. The standard of living of these children rose considerably and although the economic development of the country moves very swiftly it nevertheless cannot satisfy all the demands of the youth. We are living in a period of construction. The petty bourgeois have a demoralizing influence on people who are physically exhausted, and who have an intense thirst for a “beautiful life.”

And therefore we often hear eaglets peep like chicks, and see lion cubs behave like sucking-pigs.

One seventeen-year-old gentleman warbles:

*I want a very grand and beautiful life, and life, you know, is so drab, so uninteresting, with its constantly gray and gloomy days which drag on, no one knows whither and wherefore.*

Another nineteen-year-old gentleman shouts hysterically:

*Life is meant for me, not I for life. My grandfather and my father served the government. I therefore have a right to peacefully continue my studies and not be forced to do social work.*

The “unique one” listens to all these lamentations, secretly

agrees with the chicks, pats himself on the back and thinks: "Our army is growing!"

I have repeatedly told lyrical and hysterical people with grievances, who want consolation, that they are applying to the wrong place. I am immune to the groans and wails of those who hope to become parasites and I shall not respond to their squeaks. I answer only those letters in which I perceive above the squeaks the sincere bewilderment of the ignorant, or in those cases where I feel it is a question of an excess of undigested reading.

If you, young people, really want to live a "grand and beautiful life," create it, work side by side with those who are constructing a stupendous edifice that requires gigantic effort, that has no precedent.

Life has accumulated an enormous amount of wonderful and practical things for enriching the world, for liberating people from their shameful prejudices, pre-judgments and superstitions. All the useful things which have been created for mankind in the past are merely a beginning, merely the corner-stones of the foundations on which the Communists, workers and peasants, have begun to build the new world.

The youths whose empty heads have been turned by the "unique one" ought to understand and feel all this.

My young correspondents live in a stifled philistine atmosphere. With the courage of ignorance they evaluate human life—perhaps the only such phenomenon in the universe, in the whole cosmos—in terms of "gray and gloomy days." At first this seems ludicrous. Only later do you realize that this point of view can be destructive for young people who remain blind and deaf although they live at the beginning of the world revolution, within full hearing of the volcanic roar of the destruction of the old world, in the years of construction of the first socialist and classless society, of a state of equals; although they live in an atmosphere of ardent enthusiasm and of fierce and savage resistance of the old type of man opposed to everything new, whom history has condemned to death.

My dear young folks! For your own sake I sincerely wish that life may teach you a good lesson, that you may feel the weight of her horny hand—the hand of that great and implacable teacher which we humans imbue with our reason and our will. I honestly wish you to understand that your complaints are devoid of sense and I want you to reflect seriously on the shamelessness of your la-

ments—yes, shamelessness—and on the incompatibility of your complaints with that “proud inner independence” about which you write me.

What does your “independence” mean? It is only your inability to seize upon and formulate “impressions of life”; it is mere emptiness.

The clamour about the “sovereign right of the individual,” about the freedom necessary for the latter, has rent the air since time immemorial and has never been able to purge the atmosphere of the universal and savage hostility in which people lived and were stifled. On the contrary, it has only poisoned it still more with the exhalations of animal-like egoism, with conceit and ambition.

The individual shouts to the heavens only because he feels his own hypocrisy. By these shouts he hopes to hide this vice from himself and from others. He must remain a hypocrite as long as he has not uprooted religion, nationalism, and all other prejudices inculcated by the class structure of the capitalist state.

As long as he is not cured of these maladies, the individual will continue to be corroded, decomposed and destroyed by worms of envy, of greed, of petty passions and of every kind of vileness. His ideal little face will be platonically turned towards lofty ideas, but his real and abject mug will be turned towards the practical things of life which consist of self-deception and of deceiving others in word and deed.

Thus the individual will remain through the ages, like a “two-faced Janus,” if he will not understand, will not realize, that the road to freedom and inner harmony lies in the destruction of everything in which he openly or secretly believes. This is the cause of his duplicity, of his servitude to and servile admiration of the infamous reality; this hinders the development of his powers and abilities. It is not enough to be merely a “person.”

History demands the emergence of a new human being, free from race, national, and class prejudices.

Is such a human being possible? The working class is already creating him. Direct all your energy, all the days of your life towards the creation of this ideal human being and you yourself will become one.

1930.