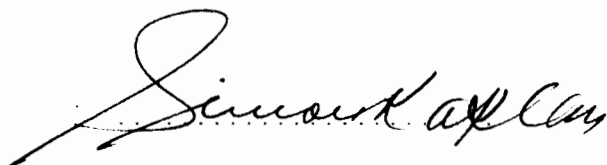


DUTCHESS COUNTY EDITION

OF

ONCE A REBEL

*Limited to 500 copies  
signed by the author*

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Simon K. Allen". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "signed by the author".

Once A Rebel

# Once A Rebel

by

Simon Kaplan

Farrar & Rinehart, Inc.

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Once A Rebel

To Marion

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## Foreword

*Without a sign his sword the brave man draws  
And asks no omen but his country's cause.*

Pope's translation of *The Iliad*.

“FAREWELL! We will meet again when Russia is liberated.” These words were spoken by a youth while taking leave of his father in a dingy kerosene-lit railroad station one evening over thirty years ago. . . .

This scene of parting was never eradicated from my memory. Surely, the two and one half years preceding that parting are even more vivid in my mind. My whole life was shaped by the events that took place during that short space of time. Only within the walls of my own home, surrounded by my immediate family, did I speak of that extraordinary period of my life. I always considered it to be a personal treasure, something that belonged to me and was of no particular value to any outsider.

But times have now changed so tremendously that I no longer feel that those memories belong to me and my family alone. There is a picture in them that should be unveiled. The beginning of restlessness in my mind must be traced way back to the times when the early revolution in Russia that promised to be the foundation for a free democratic country turned into a tyranny. The reasons responsible for the emergence of a dictatorship do not really matter. It was the poison of Communism, gradually penetrating Westward, that worried me. My fears were justified



by subsequent developments. The world of Old Europe slowly but surely divided into three armed camps controlled by three of the most merciless men that History has ever spawned. Blinded by a superpressure propaganda and weakened by false money values the proletariats (ill-used word!) became flocks of enthusiastic sheep—enthusiastic to follow the roads of salvation indicated to them by their sly and treacherous shepherds.

Having myself been through a social revolution it became steadily clearer to me that the propaganda employed by the dictators in their respective countries was leading to a far more momentous program than was apparent on the surface. When the free press and the rights of free assembly and all other vestiges of individual liberty were finally destroyed in the dictator countries, I became genuinely alarmed. My past boiled into my mind and I saw, dimly at first, but most vividly as time went on, an idealistic boy who desired to destroy a tyrannical old world so that a better one, a world where all could be free and equal and enjoy impartially the fruits of the earth, might be built upon it. That boy had been frustrated and disillusioned, for out of all the Russian struggle for freedom of so many years had come—Stalin. And the man saw that out of poverty and disorganization of the Italian kingdom had come—Mussolini. And the man, again, saw that out of the humiliation and hungry despair of the German Reich had come—Hitler.

I wanted to talk about these things, so I began to invite more and more friends and acquaintances to our home. They were people from various schools of thought: some of them college educators, others professional and business men who might be supposed to possess hard-headed common sense. Well, most of the business men agreed with me concerning

the dangers the world was facing, but by "the world" they meant only the Old World that was three thousand miles away. *It* couldn't happen here, of course. I became irritable when I could not convince these bluff optimists that a world revolution was bound to have its repercussions in every corner of the globe: no matter where it started. And the educators! The dreamy theoretical educators! They had a different story to tell. Their firm belief was that if one possessed the vision to look beyond the gloomy present, the spectacle would be that of a new and better world. Where had I heard that before?

Had I not as a youth participated in the Russian Revolution of 1905, that upheaval which started as a struggle for freedom of all people and not a single class? Fair words were spoken then and I believed them. We were to copy the democracies of Western Europe and America. But, when I emerged from prison as a fugitive and attended a few of the secret meetings of my fellow revolutionaries, what, to my great horror, did I discover? Simply that the revolution I had helped to nurse was already turning into a new tyranny even worse than the absolutism of the Czars. The shock was too much for me when I, the naïve and enthusiastic youngster who had dived headlong into the revolutionary stream, discovered that stream to be poisoned by selfish individuals bent upon an extreme destruction of the individual. Even my own class, the middle class, was to be condemned to destruction, the theory of the new leaders being that it was dangerous and had no place in the scheme based on the Marxian theory. Well, the monsters who succeeded the early revolutionary leaders of my day *did* destroy that middle class. They blew it out of existence with shot and shell. They lined it up against walls all over the great Russian countryside and eliminated it. The only reason

I survived was because I was not there to face a Red Army squad.

Here am I today, in my early fifties, a municipal contractor in a lively and first-class town and a member of the National Republican Club, a man who may be supposed to be "settled"; and yet, I suppose, I am one of the most unsettled individuals in the Empire State. It is the era which had done that to me and I am certain that the invisible electrical link between the man of today and the ardent young revolutionist of 1905 is the conveyor of that troubling current that gives me sleepless nights. I am, to repeat, restless—restless because of the crash of democracies and the emergence of terrible dictators that make Napoleon Bonaparte look like a wraith. It is the absolute threat to Democracy, to the American way of life which I was fortunate enough to make my own, that makes me think that the story of a boy engulfed in revolution may be, if not of value, at least a signpost pointing away from unfortunate roads.

There are two methods of progress, I suppose, and I attempted to follow one when I was young. That was a way, though I did not foresee it, that led to violence and the eruption of strong and merciless men—dictators, in fact. The American way, the way of Democracy, to be exact, is one of progressive legislation that excludes no class (and there are classes even in our great Republic) from the benefits of a liberal existence. There is unfairness here, sabotage, political chicanery, strong-arm methods, and a materialism which is ugly to behold; but none of these flaws are legalized under government. They are sly and criminal evasions, and I have sufficient faith in the American people to be convinced that these things will disappear in time.

I say that I have faith in the process of America, but

what if those processes are overturned by ambitious or slothful men? What if our elected leaders, for political reasons, for sentimental reasons, for cowardly reasons or from sheer shortsightedness, procrastinate too long and rear no adequate defense against the threat (and it is there) from the dictators of the Old World? What if the business men continue to loll back in their easy chairs and say "It can't happen here"? Neither way is the way of Democracy. There is an objective for every man and woman, young and old, to be working—not for a regimented end but for a liberal end, where the individual exists in himself as an entity, as a free human being in a free commonwealth. That, in spite of my fears, is my dream of America.

1

With Fire and Famine

## WITH FIRE AND FAMINE

IT was the clanging of the rusty hammer against the still rustier iron flange that startled me out of my lethargy and brought to an end a childhood that had hardly begun.

I was not quite seven years old on that beautiful spring morning; half-awake, I lay in bed and looked forward to a hearty breakfast. Hadn't Mother baked fresh bread only yesterday, and was I not going to gobble a chunk of it with sour milk? Pangs of hunger had all but overcome my sleepy dreams, when my father rushed in and, addressing no one in particular, called out:

"Nicolai's house is on fire!"

It was the house adjoining our old barn, for Nicolai was our closest neighbor. Forgotten was breakfast, and all else at that moment. I can recollect other happenings in my childhood long before the fire but they are comparatively blurred as in a curdling fog. For instance, I can never forget waking up in the middle of the night and hearing Father direct my brothers and sisters to get up and read the XXIst Psalm for our little brother who was dying. For he must not die without a final appeal to the Lord, all earthly efforts to save him having failed!

Yes, I recall how the candle was stuck hurriedly on the table and the quiet turning of the pages in the old Bible. The tear-stained features of my mother and the bewildered pale face of my father stand out as do the silhouettes of my brothers and sisters, reading mechanically the words that had no meaning for me, nor, I fear, for them.

That picture slowly grows dim and other days and events disappear, too, always subordinate to my recollection of that terrible fire, the roaring blaze that blotted out sun and sky, destroyed our old house and the new wing (the wing that had been erected only a few months before) of which my father had been so proud. Yet, puffed up as he felt about it, his attachment to the ancient thatched-roof house of three rooms, to which he had led his bride of fourteen, was imbued with greater sentiment. When he refused to follow the rabbinical vocation for which he had been trained, to become a leader of a small flock in some Jewish town, my father, who had recently emerged from the Yeshiva, the Jewish Rabbinical School, cast his lot with the great Russian farming population and became a son of the soil.

The fire! Did my father believe in the superstitions of his neighbors? Did he see in the flames a visitation of the spirit of the great Jehovah, as fitting punishment for his failure to pursue his holy mission?

If he did, he did not say so. More immediate to him was the fact that the old house, in which my mother had given birth to her first child seven years after marriage, was being consumed. The sight of it then must have brought back other memories; it must have reminded him of the two drunken muzhiks teasing the town cripple about his deformity and the heavy stick he employed as an aid in walking. To prove his superior strength, the cripple drove his stick through the wall of the house, while my mother was hugging her first-born, a son.

Those memories must have come to him in a sudden rush on that fateful morning, when he started to organize the evacuation of a family faced with complete ruination. My sister Bluma and I were entrusted with the care of the youngest member of our family, a little fellow about six

months old who seemed to have been a favorite. And why not? Two of his predecessors had died before reaching the age of one.

I remember with some amazement that he was named "Lippman Holiday." According to Father it was a great holiday to have him arrive a week before Peisach. Father was sure the little one was born to obliterate the tears caused by the death of the other two. Indeed, it was quite a holiday. Even our tailor, who lived three miles away, and the blacksmith offered congratulations on the day of circumcision. They told my father the new-born was bound to bring happiness to us all after so much previous sorrow.

That Saturday after his birth there was special intonation in the voice of Father when he read the Torah. For was this not a marvelous coincidence to be born in the week when the reading had to do with Exodus? When he came to the XVth Chapter, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel," he actually broke into song. This son, the apple of his eye for twenty years following, and one of the most gifted in our family, sleeps somewhere near the Mazurian Lakes in East Prussia where he met a soldier's death on August 14, 1914, as a member of the huge Russian Army under Rennenkampf which was routed by the superior and more efficient forces of Field Marshal von Hindenburg.

I was extremely fond of the village smithy who was constantly telling stories and who doted on the words of my father, looking up to him as a man of learning. This respect for learning seems to be a long-standing trait of Jewish character. The Jews always cast admiring glances at a man who can explain the Torah, and I often wonder whether we as a people are quite as envious of riches as of learning.

Short, swarthy, and wiry, the little smithy, whose



hands were almost as rough as some of the tools of his trade, was a man of great heart. Once in the middle of a cold winter night my mother was taken seriously ill. Father and all of us were helpless, we went around in circles not knowing what to do. My oldest brother ran to fetch the smithy; he would know what to do—and he did. At break-neck speed he drove his sleigh and tired horse through that bitter cold night to get the doctor. I remember how we all sighed with relief when he finally showed up with the doctor in tow.

“He refused to come to treat your Esther at first but I showed him my hands and he knew I meant business,” the smithy chuckled to my father.

The doctor stayed with us two days until Mother felt better.

As much as I liked the smithy, I was in mortal fear of the tailor whose gray beard ended in a point and whose long nostril hair was always moist and covered with snuff. He seemed like a walrus and inspired terror in me.

At any rate here they all were celebrating a great event, the circumcision of a new-born whose father was certain the child would make his name in Israel. In honor of the occasion, Father drank, first with the tailor, then with the smithy, then with the others of the congregation—there could not have been fewer than ten according to the Jewish ritual. Everyone seemed happy, each radiant face expressed a happiness so rare, even unnatural, to a Jew in that spiritual ghetto that only with the inspiration of something stronger than tea were they aroused to such merriment. I remember Mother’s face then and many times afterwards. She used to watch her husband and wonder how he could be so happy. She seldom smiled, how could she? She was either with child, nursing a child or burying another.

Well, there we were on the day of the fire, my nine-year-old sister and I, entrusted with our little brother. I must have accepted the responsibility as I have since accepted all responsibilities with instinctive knowledge and understanding. The tiny lad was not able to walk, of course, so we carried him through the fields away from flying sparks. My sister, being two years older, was naturally in charge of our flight. After hours of stumbling and tramping through the fields we were exhausted and entered a house inhabited by three old maids, daughters of a village priest. They gave us water and also offered food; but we would not think of accepting food in a gentile house.

Several years afterwards while playing with a nephew of the three old maids in their house during the Easter Holidays, I ate their food, even part of a suckling pig. One of the old maids reminded me that only a few years back I had refused their food and had preferred to fast rather than accept nonkosher fare.

A few years of life in a Russian village have the power of hastening one's maturity and that fire was the turning point of my life. To have seen our hired man's wife, Xenia, running through the streets pulling her hair with one hand, holding her apron with the other, while something charred and bulky smoldered beneath that apron, crying: "My Pavlik, my Pavlik . . . !" was enough to make even a child of my years sad for many years.

In bewilderment I kept thinking of this little Pavlik, a year younger than I, with whom I had played on the previous day when everything had run smoothly with no forebodings, for it is the happy lot of childhood that tragedy cannot be anticipated. This little fellow was rather stupid for his six years, I thought; he could hardly speak distinctly. I could see him picking up pebbles and stuffing them into

his nostrils. And here he was—whatever was left of his charred body covered by a mother's apron.

My mother explained to me that when Pavlik saw the fire he sought safety in the lower part of the brick oven, a space reserved as winter quarters for the chickens. It was from there his mother dragged him out when at the risk of her own life she entered the log cabin before it had sufficiently cooled. After searching every nook and corner she finally found him in the chicken coop of the oven, a combination stove with a sleeping space above and a chicken coop in the lower part, the place little Pavlik chose for his final sleep with the chickens.

Before the embers cooled in what once had been our homestead the family met in council, ascertained that everyone was safe, and took inventory of what could be salvaged from the ruins. There was nothing.

I learned that while my sister and I were guarding our little brother the rest of the family had carried out a few things into the neighboring fields, at that time about knee-high with rye, oats, and other grains. No sooner were our possessions thrown into the fields than some peasant snatched them up. When dusk fell, it was clear that beside the fact that there was no place to go, no one had eaten. And we were all hungry. In that dreary moment a peasant by the name of Stepan Dratch (this was not his actual surname—he was called that because in peasant speech it meant a scrapper or a fellow who is always looking for a fight) approached our saddened group and offered the use of his hut.

Stepan was a typical Mongol with high cheekbones and a square face. He rolled his eyes continually. I can almost see him now being fed the evening meal by his wife who kept at a respectful distance while his eyes searched out the

entire cabin room, a dwelling clean but devoid of objects that would have made it seem more like a home. There was not even a small ikon, which was very unusual for a peasant. Most peasant homes were filled with small gaily-colored pictures and those who could not afford to purchase them would sketch them by the flickering light of kindling wood. Their roughened hands would outline crude drawings of angels and of various pastoral scenes and with these they would decorate their one-room huts. The wealthier peasants also had "summer homes" which meant an additional room built onto the main hut. Usually it was designed exactly like the main house except that, instead of placing layers of moss between the logs, the proud peasant left open spaces to permit ventilation. But only the wealthier could afford a summer home.

Stepan Dratch was considered one of the best hunters in the section and many times on a bleak winter day he would be seen returning with an old-fashioned, single-barreled shotgun nestled under one arm and some kind of bird or half-starved rabbit under the other. It was several years afterwards that my father had the chance to repay this hospitality. Under the influence of vodka Stepan had beaten his wife and shot a neighbor in the leg. My father made a special trip to the esprovnik or county leader to intercede for Stepan and managed to get him off with a brief jail sentence.

But getting back to his offer of his one-room cabin, put together from logs with an earthen floor. I remember Father looked at him, murmured something under his breath, looked at him again, saying, "Stepan, where are you going to live?"

"We have no children, my wife and I will put up in a barn," Stepan said.

This, coming from one of the most hated peasants in our village, was too much for my parents—both dried their tears and the procession started toward the center of the village of Bystritza and that tiny log cabin situated between two other cabins of similar design.

We must have been on the verge of collapse when finally we entered the rude hut that was to be our home for the next four months. Although I cannot remember how we slept that night or what portion of the earthen floor I occupied, I shall never forget the apologetic expression on my father's face, as if he were blaming himself for the disaster that had beset us.

But on the following morning the sun shone brightly as ever. The day was beautiful. Bread and milk appeared from somewhere and plans for a new home were made at the breakfast table, an ingenious affair fashioned from two boards supported by two barrels. We sat on benches contributed by neighboring peasants. After breakfast the whole family, our little brother in Father's arm this time, revisited the site of our former home. The tile oven in the new wing, while discolored with soot and smoke, was the only object that had remained upright. Everything else was flattened. What once had been our vegetable cellar and storage house to keep meat fresh for several days in summer, was now a leveled expanse of tumbled ruins.

Looking back, I see my Father standing with the youngest child in his arms—standing like Jeremiah, the prophet of Doom, with his family surrounding him and the light breeze blowing the fine black ashes from the destroyed homestead. There he stood, silent for a moment, a tall stocky figure, with a short brown beard and moustache. His eyes became like balls of fire as if suddenly for the first time he realized the magnitude of the blow.

His sense of humor had not completely deserted him, however, for he recalled that somewhere in the now filled-up cellar he had buried a twenty-five quart keg of vodka some years back, hoping to have a little treat for his friends, he said, in years to come, "when the vodka would get good and old—now there will be no vodka." That vodka should be old enough now, very old. . . .

He did not complain aloud, but we could see that the load that had fallen on his shoulders weighed heavily and crushed beyond restoration his once cheerful spirit. From the day of the fire he became a different man. He was forever seeking consolation in the Holy Scriptures. His combativeness was gone.

His brother, who lived seven miles away in a town called Kopyl, arrived shortly afterwards and offered to take some of the family to live with him. My oldest sister Basha and I happened to be the lucky ones.

Some twenty-eight years afterwards when my wife, Marion, and I stopped in Omaha, Nebraska, on a prolonged honeymoon, we visited his ailing widow. Her husband's photograph, goatee unaltered, hanging over the mantelpiece, brought me back to the day of the fire and my subsequent visit to their home in Kopyl. My uncle was a highly temperamental person who under the spell of some part of the Talmud would pace the floor, gesticulating with his hands, call on heaven to be his witness that the day was not far off when Israel would come back into its own and the "golehss" would come to an end. What part he expected to play in this I never was able to comprehend for he never even made an attempt to provide for his family, even after the day he was finally packed off to America "to pick the gold off the streets." That gold would have had to glitter resplendently to make my uncle stoop for it.

How did they get along and what did they live on? Just like many another Jew who went to Yeshiva and knew the Talmud from cover to cover; becoming rabbis, they married and lived off their women.

My uncle, for example, married a woman who would get up at five o'clock in the morning to go to the market and meet peasants who came in to barter. This fine Jewish woman specialized in purchasing pig bristles, and she earned enough not only to support her family but also her aging mother and a brood of sisters. She experienced the darkest day of her life when she was finally persuaded to accompany her two children to America to join her ne'er-do-well husband. He was basking in glory at the time, as a teacher in a Hebrew school in Cincinnati. The strain must have been too much for the poor fellow for he died soon afterwards.

Irrespective of his own contributions and small earning capacity, he rarely failed to criticize everything his wife did, especially her cooking. On that memorable Friday night, when my sister and I arrived in Kopyl, his derogatory comments on the meal made a lasting impression. She had prepared a kind of sauerbraten with black sauce and a heap of onions, which I, starved for two days, proceeded to wolf down. Deliberately he tasted two or three spoonfuls, then began to demonstrate to my sister, my senior by eight years, that he was boss of the household.

He berated his wife for the concoction she had prepared "for the lovely guests," the children of his brother, Ely. "Why, this food is not fit for a peasant!" exclaimed the man who was too lazy even to comb his own beard. His wife was all smiles and apology and my sister sensing the situation profoundly sympathized with her.

Only the ghetto produces such types. It was commonplace that precocious young men, hungering for knowledge,

at an early age (not more than twelve) were entered in the Yeshiva where aside from sleep and a few hours' rest on the Sabbath they would be closeted with the dusty tomes of *Mishnah* and *Gemara*. It was a place where masturbation was rampant and where no modern book or new idea was allowed. Many tales have I heard of one Yeshiva supervisor who tossed out bodily any young men in his school who dared, in hiding, to read anything not in the books on the Law of Israel, written between 600 B.C. and 200 A.D.

"Why," he would argue, "is there not enough knowledge to satisfy the most critical in these books? Does one need the books of the 'goyim,' written by the uncircumcised and published with the idea of wiping out what is left of Israel?"

There comes to my mind a conversation with a patriarch of the local Yeshiva in a street of the town of Baranovici. His features reflected the very essence of that ascetic life wherein he ignored earthly existence. In reply to my simple question as to why he did not permit his flock to study the Russian language, the language of the land, he first rubbed his hands with soil, then recited:

"I speak to a sinner now. What is your request? Repeat it."

By performing this ritual he indicated that he was defiled while speaking to me. And I am not at all certain that as soon as he departed he headed for the first water-well to wash away the sinful contact.

Time raced on, wars were fought, and discoveries were made, but the ghetto Jew still bemoaned the fact that Nikolas the First had tried to clothe him in Western European attire. What a cry went up when the ukase was pronounced that all Jews were to be taken to barber shops to have their ringlets shorn! How can I ever forget an incident



which made me rebel most against the ghetto system? It happened years later when that good Samaritan, my father's brother, on a visit to us saw my older brother reading a beautiful Russian edition of *Hamlet*. First he slapped my brother's face, then turning to my father demanded: "Are you raising 'goyim'?" Unwilling to create a disturbance Father apologized to him, but my brother and I made ourselves scarce for the balance of my uncle's visit. I remember that my brother led me by the arm through a meadow that night and said: "That scoundrel, I hope he does not visit us again. At all times I prefer Shakespeare to *his* knowledge."

Fond as he was of his younger brother for his learning, my father was also appreciative that his own son read to him and to all of us the works of the English poet and other classics. Such readings were given regularly on Friday evenings for years in our home. I have not forgotten the particular Friday night that my brother switched from the classics and read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. I wept bitterly when Little Eva finally ascended to a better world, and I remember promising myself that when I died I would search for her and express in ecstatic phrases my deep admiration and respect.

The fire that summer must have directed the future of our family. From a well-to-do landlord-tenant (our acres were rented from Prince Radziwill under a long lease, since ownership of land in the Northwestern States of Russia was denied to Jews) my father found himself without a home, with most of his farming tools destroyed, and with no shelter for the few head of cattle that remained. With the assistance of my mother's sister, the wife of a fairly prosperous mill owner who resided twelve miles away, Father engaged "mechanics" to build a new house. Barns were erected first, on the site of the old homestead, for it

was vital to provide the cattle with a roof. It was the meanest-looking ramshackle barn that was ever fabricated. Plans for the house were drawn after family conferences and a lot in a meadow bare of any shade trees was selected. It was a quarter of a mile from the village.

I recall wondering if we would ever have any wind again, for in my childish fancy the wind was created by the trees, by the sudden movement of their foliage. How could there be any wind without trees around our new house? The song of the wind was as soothing to me as the oldest lullaby. It used to start me daydreaming for hours on end. Consequently, in the following spring and summer all my spare time was devoted to the planting of tiny apple and cherry trees around the new house. Years afterwards, when I was a refugee, I received a letter from my mother telling me that my efforts had not been in vain, that there were clusters of cherries on the spare saplings. I wonder, do these trees still stand and yield fruit? Are they providing another child with dreams and does the wind murmur lullabies?

Armies have crossed and recrossed that village where I was born. During the World War and the revolution that followed, battles were fought there with external and internal enemies and I do not know but that the place, which served as the foundation for a family since spread far and wide, is now but a mound of dirt, perhaps harboring within its breast poor wretches, victims either of the war or of the revolution.

With the plans completed our new home began to take shape. It was a great pleasure to come home once a week on Friday and watch its progress. I was placed in a Hebrew school about five miles away that summer and with my older brother was boarding five days a week. We would start out Sunday morning shouldering packs that contained a

clean shirt, a loaf of bread, and some cheese. On this we had to live all week. Occasionally in season we got a pear or an apple and every once in a while the owner of the house in which we slept on hard benches would give us a plate of hot soup. That was something!

But the rabbi told us that food was of no consequence in comparison with the learning of the Holy Scriptures, and his constant belching, which exuded the mixed aroma of onions and stale tobacco, did nothing to improve my appetite. I hated that man with all the hatred possible in a child. Once I put salt in his pipe and watched him fill the bowl with tobacco. After a few vigorous draughts the pipe exploded. Since I was the only one in the class who was convulsed with laughter (the others were too scared) it was easy for him to spot the culprit. So he removed his strap and lambasted me for all he was worth. When I returned home that weekend I anticipated another beating for I knew my brother would naturally tell of the incident, since it was too good not to mention. Much to my consternation my father greeted me with a smile instead of a frown.

Our meager fare that summer started to tell on me, for on the evenings at home I would loiter around near the camp occupied by the house-builders and enviously inhale the odors of the salt pork they fried over the open fires. The head carpenter, a peasant more than six feet tall with the build of a wrestler, knowing that no Jew would eat pork, used to wave a stick of the sizzling meat under my nose and say tantalizingly: "Here, you little sheeny, why not try something like this to improve your spindly legs?" I remained speechless and motionless and many a tear did I shed on my return to the shack of Stepan Dratch.

A halt in the construction of the house was called every now and then because the workers demanded their pay and

money was not available. Every time that happened, my mother would make a pilgrimage to her wealthy sister, the one married to the miller. And every time she returned she would appear completely dejected. She would toss the money onto the table and voice aloud the hope that she would never "have to go through *that* again." It was not because her sister was mean or miserly. Married to a man twice her age, she hated her husband as only women can hate. It must have been difficult for her to ask her mate for money. He was not only an ignorant man but one who glorified in his ignorance, this in itself a rather unusual trait in the Jews of that section. Sickly, with an arrested case of consumption, he was soured against the world. This, however, did not hinder his productivity in money or children of whom he had perhaps a baker's dozen. Only the eldest survived, the others dying at various ages with consumption. One, a moderately successful photographer, died in America at the age of thirty.

Writing about that rich uncle stirs my recollection of how he treated the men who worked for him. To his large water mill peasants from the countryside used to bring their grain, and when the sheep were shorn, peasants also brought wool to be washed and cleansed twice a year. During the wool-cleaning periods the mill would be operated day and night and almost fifty men were employed. But when he took a notion to discharge a man he gave no particular reason; he was the law.

On a certain moonless, cloudy, late fall evening, while the rain fell unceasingly, my uncle was ascending the large exterior staircase of the water-powered mill. Suddenly he encountered the obstruction of human flesh. He struck a match and saw a man with his pants down standing with his naked buttocks toward the mill owner and calling out: "Kiss

it, you dirty kike!" He recognized the voice of his foreman whom he had discharged for no apparent reason on the previous day.

My uncle was confined to bed for two weeks after that incident, thereby enlarging the fund of laughter in which the entire community shared. They cordially disliked him and were glad of the opportunity to have a good laugh at him, "the patronizing rich one who owned everything including the synagogue and the rabbi."

The community's rabbi, a half-consumptive individual who depended entirely for his livelihood on the crumbs handed out by my uncle, was a sorry-looking specimen. His Adam's apple shuttled up and down like a piston whenever he tried to defend his opinion regarding portions of the Talmud, in a polemic discussion with my father, who not only was better versed on the subject but who could also outargue all comers. The rabbi's brood contained one slow-witted son who was my age. Food was scarce in the rabbi's household, where the livestock consisted of only two chickens. One day his son came running to my uncle's home where his mother was visiting and shouted with joy:

"Ma, one hen laid an egg!"

"How about the other hen?" his mother asked.

"The other—a big turd!" he gleefully replied.

Towards the end of the summer of the fire we were invited by our affluent aunt to spend the holy days, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, ten days in all, as her guests. For weeks I looked forward to the trip with anticipation and dreaming as did the rest of the family. For were we not going to stay in a huge, beautiful home, filled with all the delicious things of the world—a childhood world that held among its treasures roasted chickens, white bread, all conceivable kinds of pastry and soup with "kreplach"? My

mouth watered as I envisioned the square-cut pieces of dough filled with meat and cooked in the soup.

Finally the day of days arrived. The hired man filled our wagon with fresh straw, molded out three back seats and three in front and we all crawled in, prepared for our journey. The horse couldn't pull all of us. We were too many. So we took turns—while half of the group walked the other half rode. Uncomfortable in my cramped position I personally welcomed the opportunity to walk. No Mussulman ever enjoyed his pilgrimage to Mecca and the tomb of the Prophet more than we the excursion to our aunt's house.

After a summer of privation, with a poorer winter in view, inasmuch as the drought had completed the misery caused by the fire, we reveled in ten days of forgetfulness. But my father's pride was badly shaken as he pictured himself more or less a dependent of his ignorant brother-in-law, the miller, and his frequent sighs indicated how he felt about the journey. We did not share his misgivings; we did not possess that understanding which comes only with age and experience.

I remember going into the "cold room" of my aunt's house where the food was kept. (It was like a pantry-store-room; the wallboards were not closely fitted so that air could circulate better.) There I saw my mother and aunt eating pears and engrossed in conversation. Auntie tried to explain something about money matters and how difficult it was for her to obtain money from that despised husband of hers to help her sister.

Dressed up in her holiday-go-to-synagogue clothes, my aunt wore several strings of genuine pearls. Several months later I heard my mother exclaim to my father: "How could a woman with a king's ransom around her neck mention the paltry sum of a few rubles to help complete a

roof over our heads?" But shingles had to be paid for and money was not available. When the time came for the family to return home I was panic-stricken at the thought of going back to the village and Stepan Dratch. My aunt must have noticed my fears for she said:

"Let that thick-nosed son of yours stay here as my son will miss him a lot."

Therefore I remained another two weeks, until after the celebration of the Tabernacle. Returning home then was more difficult than before—going back to that bleak little hut where we still lived; and the constant falling rain after a rainless summer projected for me a scene of dejection and misery. The blank look on everybody's face when I entered the log cabin just about completed the picture of my family's abandoned hope.

We moved into our new but not quite completed house late that fall. The roof shingles glistened with newness and the green moss protruded through the squared-away logs of our home. Even the main entrance with its extended peaked roof over the steps and its two posts that smattered of English Colonial architecture looked beautiful and inviting in the light of our four months' occupancy of Stepan Dratch's appalling little shack.

Once inside one encountered a large room, about thirty feet wide, with almost a fifth of it occupied by the rear section of an oven, the top of which would serve as a catch-all place in summer and a comfortable spot to keep warm in through the shivering cold winter. To the right of this living room were three bedrooms for the children, to the left the bedroom for our parents and a good-sized "cold room," where in the less prosperous days ahead, a big barrel of herring was stored. With boiled potatoes this herring frequently served as the main dish. In the first

winter we were there one of the peasants dropped in and expressed surprise at our humble fare. My father quickly explained to him:

“Why, Philip, this is only the appetizer. Our main dish will come afterwards.”

Frequently, after the fire, my father found it necessary to hide our dire poverty from outsiders and he always accomplished it with grace. More realistic, Mother could not understand this continuous covering up. She used to criticize him under her breath for being a dreamer. Only in sotto voce would she criticize him, for she greatly admired her husband and never openly complained of her lot. How could she? Had not she, alone of four sisters, married the Man of Learning, the scholar who was the proud possessor of a letter of recommendation from some of the most prominent rabbis? Were not the letters written down with a quill and engraved on sheepskin by those great men of learning? As a woman whose father himself was eligible to answer complicated questions in the *Mishnah* and *Gemara*, it followed naturally that she strove to please a man who reminded her of her learned father. Also, her brother was a rabbi of a large section in Kishinev (Bessarabia), which increased her respect for my father.

Many a night would I awaken at the sound of voices, only to recognize my father and uncle loudly arguing a point that required polemic training. In the heat of argument they had little regard for each other's feelings. Time after time would they accuse each other of being rank ignoramuses and only after feeling exhausted and not getting anywhere would they declare a truce. Then, good-naturedly, with a feeling of mutual admiration, they would have another glass of tea and discuss in lighter vein whether it was permissible to eat an egg laid on the Sabbath.



To me, the young rebel, all this appeared rather juvenile. Again and again would I gaze at those huge tomes (eighteen inches wide, thirty-two inches long, and more than two inches thick) and wonder that people of great learning should waste their talents on a discussion of whether it was fortunate or unfortunate for the egg laid on the Sabbath and whether it could or could not be eaten. Uppermost in my mind was the thought, "Give me that egg," for scrambled eggs were truly a feast in our house and if a chicken could be coaxed to lay one the day surely did not matter. Little did I realize then that these polemics sought to unravel some of the mysteries contained in the large tomes, written by the genuises of the University of Beth Hillel and Beth Shomai, one liberal, the other ultra-conservative. They served to aid in the development of the minds of the Jews who by virtue of complete isolation, either because of the law of the land they happened to inhabit or by their own choice, did not share in the general opportunities for higher learning.

While it is true that several of those discussions succeeded only in beclouding one's mind, they nevertheless kept the mind open and receptive to things of greater import. Perhaps it was good training to argue over what should be the proper height of the Tabernacle where the Jews could feast on the Holiday of the Tabernacle, or the exact height of a fence over which the disappointed husband could throw to his wife the divorce papers lately obtained from the rabbi. Father chuckled frequently while perusing some of the laws of Israel as prepared by the Talmudical philosophers. I was vaguely aware that he was extremely fond of discussing anatomy and that he had a Hebrew translation of the complete works of the astronomer, Flammarion—in these he found more gratification than in contemplation of the ques-

tion raised when a neighbor's cow was gored by another neighbor's bull.

All in all our poverty but slightly affected our general demeanor. We did not acknowledge any inferiority complex. Father always sought to imbue us with other riches, the riches of the soul, and his citations of heroic deeds, performed under the most adverse circumstances by great men of Judah, were a fount of tremendous pride to us all.

With pleasantest anticipations we indulged in preparing for the Holiday of Passover. Since the event was celebrated in the early spring in the full moon of Nissen which appeared toward the end of March the setting seemed perfect. Like the Jews of antiquity who suffered privations under the Pharaohs who forced them to build the pyramids and occasionally substituted a Jew for a lacking brick (small wonder the pyramids have lasted), so also did we suffer distress during the tormenting Russian winters. When every ray of the sun turned into water the frozen countryside, the ensuing thaw in the early and yet weak sunshine glistened like tears of joy and gave promise that soon I would be able to scamper barefooted through the sod and mud of my beloved meadows.

But an unmistakable sign of spring was the shoemaker from the town who would come to our house for an extended visit to make shoes for the whole family. In line with our opinion that only the most unfortunate Jews became craftsmen, our shoemaker seemed oblivious of anything outside the realm of his work. He was likable and fascinating. I enjoyed the smell of leather and the masterly way he was able to hold wooden pegs in his teeth and then mechanically fit them in the holes made by an awl he held in his left hand. With rapid, automatic taps of the hammer

he would drive them home. Only his occasional noisy flatulence made me consider him with suspicion and I would wonder how far removed he was from the bull in the barn. I knew little else about this shoemaker except that he usually appeared with the first signs of the melting snow and departed a few days before Passover. Since each pair of shoes had to last us a year we were well accustomed to going barefooted all summer long.

Within several days after the shoemaker's departure the double windows and the paper sealing them from the inside were removed. Then preparations were in full swing for the Holiday of Deliverance. The first "Seder," the formal evening meal on the eve of Passover, was a feast not easily forgotten. Either through the kindness of our rich aunt or other now-forgotten circumstances, food appeared in abundance and raisin wine in carafes was proudly placed on the sideboard. There was gefüllte fish and matzoth, soup with halkes, roast turkey and torte and my father uttered the final prayer over the food. Wine was poured for everyone including a large glass for Elijah the Prophet for whose arrival we were prepared. According to tradition, every Jewish home was visited during the "Seder" by that great prophet who on the Day of Days (coming of the Messiah) astride a white horse would lead the hordes of Israel from exile, "golehss," into the Promised Land.

The room was filled as if by magic and I know of no bridegroom who awaited his beloved with greater thrill than we who awaited the opening of the door upon a signal from my father so that the prophet could be admitted. My oldest sister was usually delegated to open the door which was then shut hurriedly to keep out the cold. With what hungry expectation we looked forward to that Day of Days! And you can imagine how shocked we were once when my sister

opened the door and the neighbor's dog appeared and barked at her. That dog to us was a lost soul from Sheol come to punish us and laugh at us for our hidden doubts as to the sincerity and true belief of the only true deliverance . . . My eyes would be glued to the glass of wine assigned to Him and with the door opened and the quantity of wine in His glass undiminished, I would feel terribly disappointed. My sense of frustration was not lessened even after we arose and with great fervor prayed in unison: "Pour Thy wrath upon those who know Thee not."

I tried to visualize the God of Vengeance who would pour His wrath upon the nonbelievers and felt sorry for my little playmate, Alexander, who was only a poor gentile and who could never hope to ascend the great heights, because he did not enjoy the pleasure of professing the only true faith. "What will be done to poor little Alexander if the Lord's wrath should pour on him? Would it not rob me of a companion?" I would ask myself. I knew I could not possibly convince him to turn to my faith, because many times when we fought, he would call me a Christ-killer.

The holiday spirit, strengthened by the assurance that no harm could befall a people whom the Lord Himself had chosen from so many, made a strong impression on my young mind. A new suit, new shoes, plenty of matzoth, some made with egg dough, and other goodies certainly buoyed up that spirit. For eight days I moved as in a dream in the noble spiritual spheres. It annoyed me a little that I had to deliver small packages of matzoth to some of our neighbors: the Public School teacher, the three old maids, orphans of the late priest, the "feldsher" (a country medico whose only knowledge of medicine was gained as a member of the Army pharmaceutical corps), and one or two county officials. It seemed to me that I was belittling and cheapen-

ing this great holiday by giving them the unleavened bread made traditionally holy by the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt. It occurred to me that this bread had been baked in a hurry by those fleeing Israelites and that therefore they did not wait for it to rise. Doubtless the remarks and slight sneers of the "feldsher" and the county officials (who possibly did not wish to seem offensive) made it seem humiliating to my childish mind to have to deliver the very essence of the exodus celebration to persons who still kept us in captivity.

Is it any wonder that hundreds of years before, a high cleric had said in effect, "Give me a child until he is seven and the world can have him after that"? I, as well as millions of Jewish children raised under more or less similar circumstances, was weaned in an orthodox atmosphere that fairly clamored with the dictum: "Thou shalt not question." It has taken me considerable time and many painful mental convolutions to shed that influence and feeling, and even when I was certain that the salvation of the Jewish race lay in wholehearted intercourse with fellow neighbors, non-Jewish as well as Jewish, I found myself, at intervals, wondering if that was actually the solution of this universal problem.

In a village of more than one hundred and twenty-five families, of whom only three were Jewish, we knew comparatively little of their life. To be sure we knew our hired men, upon whom we were taught to look with contempt, and some fifty girls who were hired in the harvest season. But they were expected to address each member of our family by the proper titled surname. How they lived, what went through their minds, and how they actually felt toward us was cloaked in mystery. I was the first one in our family

to attempt to cross that bewitched barrier to learn their ways, and "goy" was therefore my name afterwards.

They did not call me that with bitterness since it must have been a relief to my mother to get rid of me occasionally and to give the other children a vacation from one who was the cause of much squabbling among the older people. I was mischievous and punishment meted out to me only increased my desire to stay away for longer periods of time with the neighbors' children who taught me woodcraft, how to conquer my fear of dogs, and finally as time went on, the childish love affairs of peasant boy and peasant girl.

The final day of Passover would arrive slowly, then the reaction would set in. We would eat the last of the matzoth (the goodies never lasted until the eighth day), and the eternal question of "tomorrow" would appear in all its magnitude. For after the fire, everything became a romantic projection of things to come.

We were worse off that following spring than we had been during the long, dreaded winter.

While my father had managed in the fall to plant some winter rye, no seed was available for spring planting and the farm tools were in deplorable condition. My mother made one more pilgrimage to her mill-owner sister and returned with a couple of sacks of potatoes, far from the best quality for planting, and a quantity of buckwheat.

Just when things looked blackest a ray of sunshine appeared from a quarter least expected. The fire that had laid waste several peasant homes and finally, owing to a strong wind, ours, had also destroyed the town hall, the public school, and also a large dormitory for boys who came from an outlying village to attend our township's school from September to May. Our village was the seat of the township which consisted of ten villages, hence it was the

site of the public school. The only education that Holy Russia accorded the section in those days was concentrated in a single school building with one teacher for the ten villages all within a radius of fifteen miles. Like the school, the dormitory had been a large one-story structure, but instead of desks (one desk for three pupils), there was a raised platform over the floor of almost the entire width of the room. This served as sleeping quarters for the boys.

While our house was completed in little more than four months, construction of the town hall and school building was postponed until the following spring. To our amazement, the building contract was awarded to a Jewish firm from a distant town, and their artisans, carpenters, and bricklayers were mostly Jews who had to be housed in some Jewish home. Overnight, ours became a boarding house. The contractor himself with his youthful, good-looking wife and two children, were quartered in what once had been the Russian bathhouse, now quickly transformed into a home. It was the only public building that had escaped the flames.

The ox carts rolled by hauling giant logs; construction was started. It was a glorious summer. While it became necessary for my mother and two sisters to work almost day and night to feed the large army of workers, the rapid-fire exchange of light banter during mealtime and the laughter of the young craftsmen chased away the gloom of labor. Money was coming in at regular intervals and Father would drive twice a week to the nearest town for supplies. The Friday evenings of that summer stick in my memory. A meal of fish, soup, roast beef, and glasses of tea with lemon would usher in a pleasant weekend.

Since we were the proud subscribers to the weekly Hebrew paper (*The Defender*), which was printed in St.

Petersburg, my father would read aloud from it to the entire gathering, omitting only the advertisements. After that all the workers would retire to their sleeping quarters in the hayloft where they exchanged jokes and stories about the opposite sex. Fortunately my parents never suspected this, else they would never have permitted my brother and me to share the hay with them. Stories and jokes now in vogue differ very little from the ones they told.

Human nature was constant too. A number of the young men sought to have affairs with the village girls but were quickly discouraged by my father who threatened to evict anyone who was not a "good Jew."

The absence of a town lockup was lamentable (it had been leveled in the fire), especially when, as would frequently occur, a peasant displayed his love and affection for his wife by bloodying her nose and loosening her teeth. "He must love me if he beats me," was the general saying among peasant women. The local peace officer or constable ("sotnik") directed the contractor to build first a large toilet. This won general approval and an eight-holer with separate partitions and doors for each was quickly provided.

Unforgettable was the picture of the first two prisoners in that improvised lockup. They were young bloods, brothers, who had a falling out when the wife of one, apparently in a weak moment, decided to test the charms of her brother-in-law. When the husband came home from the fields and learned what had happened, he beat his wife with a whip until she was a mass of bloody cuts and bruises. Then he went after his brother, against whom he did not make much headway. They rolled in the mud (a typical Russian way of fighting) and scratched each other's faces until finally they were halted and arrested by the "sotnik" and placed in two adjoining toilets of the improvised jail.



I hid behind the privy and, almost frozen in my tracks, listened to new experiences and new words poured out by brother against brother. The air was sultry with unheard-of expressions. "How could you go to sleep with my wife and do the things to her I have been doing?" called the betrayed husband.

"Well, you married a whore in the first place because otherwise she would have had children," the brother answered. "And what is more, I am not the only one who slept with Saluta. Get wise to yourself."

Recriminations of this sort continued for almost an hour. Finally hunger got the better of the husband's emotions for suddenly he said: "Saluta promised to have 'lotky' (a pancake made of unrefined buckwheat, with lard, and fried in flaxseed oil) for supper. How about calling the 'sotnik' and telling him to get us out of this stinking place."

I ran like mad to the "sotnik's" home and related the conversation. Slowly he took the pipe out of his mouth, spat a few times and said: "Well, I can't hold them forever. Neither one of them has committed any crime, for I don't know of any law that forbids a husband to knock hell out of his wife!"

With that he departed for the eight-holer and freed his two prisoners, whom I can almost visualize now walking arm-in-arm as brothers should, their faces covered with blood, on their way to Saluta's house to eat those pancakes.

With the end of summer our building boom drew to a close. Instead of the sorry excuses for public buildings that existed before the conflagration, there now appeared large new structures including, in addition, a Board of Health building or pill dispensary. This edifice contained living quarters for the "feldsher" and an office with shelves that were packed with medical supplies put up in pill and powder

forms. There were also blue glass gallon jugs which contained many kinds of liquids.

I had gained favor in the eyes of the county medicine dispenser, who allowed me to loaf around his office while he examined old and young as they came in with various complaints. It was not unusual to watch him examine a half-naked country maiden who seemed all unaware of her nudity.

The fatalism of the Russian peasant was remarkable. He took life and death for granted with few qualms. Vaguely, he knew that the Little Father, the Czar, was watching over him and that from that source all orders were issued and must be unquestioningly obeyed. Was it any wonder, then, that a peasant examined by this ignorant soldier-pharmacist and told that after taking prescribed medicine he or she would get better dared not question it? It just had to be. If on the other hand the patient died, well, that was God's will.

God Himself, to the Russian peasant's mind, appeared as one who was not open to questions. It was up to the priest to worry about God. The peasant would say: "For is not the priest the intermediary between Him and the flock?" When a cow or a horse was sold to satisfy the tax collector, that calamity was labeled the result of the work of the devil, who played just as big a role as the Lord in the imagination of the peasant; it was only a question in his mind as to who had the upper hand.

At every dusty crossroad of Holy Russia there was a shrine, in the form of a tall wooden cross with a small crucifix on it, shaded by a pointed arch. And many a drunken peasant staggering along the dirt highway hastened for protection to the safety of Christ's image when he felt the devil was getting the best of him. He was certain that the unholy

spirit suffered the tortures of hell when it came under the sign of the cross. Had they not seen ikons for that very purpose in their five-cupolaed churches, each under a double cross to make it doubly strong?

The end of a happy summer was ushered in with the celebration of the final day of the Tabernacle and every member of the congregation, which consisted of my father as the cantor and reader of the scriptures, and all the artisans and contractors, got thoroughly drunk. I hated to see the contractor and his wife take away their son who was about my age. They invited my sisters and me to take home things they did not deem worthwhile lugging with them. So we three were loaded down with all kinds of kitchen utensils, cheap knives and forks made of German silver, and a few prayer books. "Aren't they going to pray any more after they leave us?" was the only comment our mother made.

The money that had been coming in during the summer helped pay off most of the bills for the completion of the house and the rent and taxes, so we faced winter with a certain sense of security. Winter started earlier than usual, however; fodder had to be provided for the cattle ahead of schedule and half of the potatoes were frozen in the field before we could uproot them. Consequently, envisioned security became again a state of continuous expectation.

It must have been in early October that my father drove with his hired man to a nearby town, six miles from our village, to purchase supplies. Shortly after his departure a furious storm broke out. It lasted for three days and three nights. All roads and pathways were blocked and the snowdrifts were as high as our roof. We hoped and prayed that Father had got safely to the town and had stayed there until the storm receded. We were afraid to look at each

other, fearing to read in our faces the suspicion that Father's fate was entirely different from that we had voiced. On the fourth day, when the storm abated and the sun illuminated the bleak countryside, my father and the hired man appeared with horse, sleigh, and supplies. The two men were covered from head to foot with banners on which sacred images were painted, banners which usually decorated a church and were used only during processions and funerals. They were a sight!

Joyful that our father was alive and well, we pressed him to tell us how he had got all those forbidden banners. To this day I wonder that he condescended, even to save his life, to wrap himself in a cloth painted with saints, something so distasteful to the Jewish mind. "Why," he explained, "after we left town with the supplies the storm got worse, so we let the horse plod his own way in the hope he would lead us back home; and we finally wound up near an old church. When the storm increased in fury, we broke into the church and in order to keep warm, as there was nothing else we could do to save ourselves, we used those banners." After several glasses of tea with lemon, he retold the story several times and it was reiterated to every neighbor who visited us, and many a future event was dated from the storm and the time Father broke into a Christian church.

The winter following this episode was one of the worst in the memory of old-timers in our village. Birds died in flight and the ground was frozen so deep and solid that when one of the village patriarchs died, our hired man said it took several men an entire day to dig his grave. The customary mid-January thaw did not appear and when one of our four cows freshened, its calf was carried into the house to keep it warm.

The arrival of the calf meant a lot to us for it indicated the appearance of fresh milk on the table; and because most of the cows freshened during the winter, no milk was available during the season of expectancy. As the little calf had to be fed artificially our attachment to it became greater each day. That calf was destined to be our pet for many a month to come. It grew to like us too and showed its affection whenever we came within sight. Afterwards it would desert the herd in the pasture and come running to us youngsters like a dog or a cat. Although calves were predestined to be butchered on account of our financial condition, this one was spared because it was raised in our own house. As time went on, it grew into a strong, fine-looking heifer and the tragedy of its parting with a short life must have persisted deep in my memory to permit me to recall it after all these years.

Like all heifers our young calf was in heat but no ordinary bull would do for our proud beauty! A neighboring kulak owned a pedigreed monster of a bull. The hired man and I led our heifer to the kulak's. The heifer capered about and gave us plenty of trouble until finally we got her to the farm. Fire and brimstone shone in the eyes of the huge bull and his thick lips twitched when he made a run for our fair heifer . . . She was quite docile on the way back and we even discarded the rope we had attached to her horns as she followed us meekly homewards.

Months went on and we watched her grow fatter in circumference. Finally the hired man appeared at the house and told Father she was having trouble getting freshened. They hastened to the barn where they stayed most of the night. Early in the morning Father came to the house completely exhausted and announced that our young pet had died in labor. To us it was a tragedy. As the ground was

still hard her poor carcass was taken to a nearby field. I avoided that field fearing to see what was left of her. Crows and other birds must have exacted their toll for when spring came only a few bones and the skeleton of the head remained. Death in the process of giving life struck me as an unjust decision from the Omnipotent.

Early in February of that severe winter one of my father's younger brothers returned after having served in the army for four years. His name had been mentioned several times in the house as the uncle who was a soldier, but as there seemed to be nothing to be proud of in being a soldier I did not anticipate seeing anyone whom I would particularly like.

Had I not heard time and again that a smart and intelligent Jew did not belong in the army, that there was always a way of finding exemption for a young Jew who deserved it? If one was so unfortunate as to be taken into soldiering, four years would levy its penalty. Instead of a pious, innocent, and unsophisticated young Hebrew scholar, back would come one that even his own mother would fail to recognize. He would be clean-shaven (a sin), and instead of the hollow cheeks that distinguished a student of the Yeshiva, his face would be well rounded out after four years on a diet of "tschchi" and "kasha," heavily garnished with pork. Yes, to be drafted into the army was almost as bad as dying, for most of them on returning home found they could not reorient themselves to the narrow way of life in a Jewish settlement.

This does not wholly express the general Jewish animosity toward joining the Russian army. There was also the outlook of a people who considered themselves strangers in a strange land, who paid with hatred for hatred, with contempt for contempt. It seemed only natural that they

should feel this way about their sons joining the army to fight against an external enemy when internal enemies seemed plentiful and more dangerous.

It should be borne in mind that the Jewish people lived under the influence of their Elders and felt vividly the long-buried past of their original homeland, the land of Israel. One could arouse patriotism in a Jew only through song or story of the Promised Land. Since no one knew or had any conception of what the land was like, it remained purely an imaginative Elysium and a dream to which the average Jew clung with all his tenacity. Even the Jewish lullaby dealt with the Torah, with the eventual migration to the land where the Wailing Wall still stood. In imagination he would walk over the hills and dales where Jehuda Hamagbi once led his hordes in conquest in the name of Jehovah. When a Jewish mother sang to her offspring of the Great Trade, she murmured:

*The Trade of raisins and almonds—  
It's the finest of merchandise;  
But the finest of all is  
The Trade of the Torah.*

People of an ancient culture with a significant historical background, they declined to adapt themselves to a land of tremendous opportunity. Small wonder that the soil was ripe for hatred and oppression stemming from those who controlled the strings of government! For whenever the Russian government found it necessary to deflect the attention of the populace from the misdeeds of the Russian oligarchy, it was convenient to point fingers at a people who lived completely by themselves, who observed the Mosaic Laws to the letter, and who refused to associate with their

neighbors, going even so far as to ignore learning the language of the land. I, for instance, did not speak Russian until I was eight years old.

Whenever a Jew of the younger generation had, by some quirk of fate, the benefits of a University education, whereby his eyes were opened to the deplorable status of isolation, he dared not express his conviction aloud, for immediately he would be condemned by the entire Jewish community and his name was anathema ("khayrim"). Publicly would he be denounced from the tribunals of the Jewish synagogue. It was easy for him to become acquainted with his average Christian neighbor, and even the Russian nobility did not draw the line against a Jew, provided, of course, the latter was not obsequious and servile. Yet the Jew continued to live alone, looking with contempt upon "those terrible Christian oppressors." On the Sabbath, when the law of the land required all to pray for the well-being of the Czar and his family, the Jew, under his breath, would mutter curses instead of prayers and when he came to the passage, ". . . and thou shalt destroy His enemy before Him," he usually prayed for destruction of the Czar.

So it seemed quite natural that my soldier uncle's name was hardly ever mentioned, since he must have become a "goy" and a pork-eater. This uncle, tall and handsome, with an abundance of brown, wavy hair, had been accepted in the Hussars, the regiment which acted as bodyguard to the Czar himself for four years, part of the time in St. Petersburg and part in Moscow. Since the Hussars usually comprised a selected group of tall, handsome men, and as the average underfed Jew could not be considered eligible, he was the only Jew in the regiment to his knowledge.

So here he was in the flesh, in a Western European suit instead of the customary Prince Albert coat which was worn



to distinguish him from the Polish Jew, who wore long surplice coats, "kaftans." Uncle wore shoes instead of boots, a shirt, collar and necktie, and a long fur-lined overcoat. More than a generation afterward Marion and I visited him in Des Moines, Iowa, where he had become a successful cattle dealer and was a true American patriot.

My parents did not know how to greet him or what to do for the moment, but blood being thicker than water, he gradually crept into their good graces and for evening upon evening regaled us with stories and wonders of the two capital cities of Russia. What was to be done with this ex-army man who had lost contact with the Jews? There was only one answer. He must marry a girl with money who could provide for him, or in the vernacular of the people, he would "make a Jewish mother out of her," and in return, she would feed and care for him.

Such a girl was soon found: the daughter of a well-to-do miller from the city of Mir. Nearly all of our family went to the wedding, traveling in a covered wagon, and upon the return Mother remarked that, yes, he might have married money and a girl of good character but certainly not a healthy one.

That winter marked my initiation in the study of the Talmud and *Gemara*, but because the Hebrew teacher who taught me the scriptures (Old Testament) was not well versed in higher Jewish lore my father undertook to teach me this. Many times did he call me a hopeless "goy" and an ignoramus, but I seemed finally to have grasped the general idea and was even complimented by my father, as a fellow who had an "open head on his shoulders." "If you keep it up, son, for another year, I will ship you off to the Yeshiva in Mir where my friend, the supervisor of the college, will make a rabbi out of you yet," he told me. I must

admit that I did not feel any particular longing for that part of the bargain and my rabbinical studies must have slackened soon afterwards; for, less than a year from that time, when I was in public school and was also being forced by Father to plow through *Mishnah* and *Gemara*, he gave up in despair and said: "You lack the ambition to be the only thing worth while, a Hebrew scholar."

I wonder now whether he really meant that; perhaps in the dim and narrow confines of his world his vision could not bring into focus anything better for one of his sons.

Between the age of nine and thirteen life in the village of Bystritza continued for me without much change. In a fat year when crops were plentiful we were able to exist without too much worry; in a lean year troubles multiplied. Yet I can recall nothing of outstanding interest in that period. My two years in the village public school were, of course, filled with amusing incidents, considering I was the only Jewish boy in a group of more than two hundred peasant lads whose ages ranged from ten to eighteen. It gave me a marvelous opportunity to learn something about them, inclined as I was to be inquisitive about everything pertaining to their life and behavior. In the beginning it shocked me to be surrounded by older boys who yet were unable to grasp the most elementary subjects. With but one teacher our four groups were placed in one large room; his was not a task to be envied. From each grade, therefore, he selected several boys to assist him in simplifying the three R's to the half-wild, slow-witted peasant children.

The teacher was an urban young man of peasant origin who had had the benefit of a good upbringing at home and at a teacher's seminary. His knowledge of the Jew must have been limited to the ridiculous stories he absorbed with his mother's milk and from a few anti-Semitic books which

he read for relaxation (I saw the books on his desk). Consequently, it was unpleasant for him at first to accept me on an equal footing with some of the bashi-bazouks, those savage offspring of the Russian muzhiks. In spite of his prejudice he realized I could be of assistance to him in helping dim-witted boys. He was ambitious and sincere in his work. But it was foreordained by the very nature of economic conditions that any undertaking to educate the children of a muzhik would amount to nothing. If a peasant's son was fortunate enough to survive all children's diseases he became another son of the soil. The Russian muzhik had no misgivings on that score nor did he suffer from imagination or an illusion of greater things for his sons. His daughters, of course, were not even considered as possibilities for public school education. One teacher, possessing only a smattering of pedagogy, could hardly hope to instill education in the minds of this crowd of savages. It was hopeless from the start. Out of a class of more than two hundred only eleven were graduated with me, and this in spite of the few requirements for graduation in that peasant school.

A bookworm and a dreamer, the teacher tried his best to make something of his questionable material. As one of his assistants my task at first seemed hopeless. The boys, who were not only bigger and older than myself, would pay no attention to me, refusing to take anything from a Jew. But a few ear-pullings by the teacher and my own humbleness gradually won them over and after that not only was I their instructor but even their friend and the recipient of many small favors whenever they returned from a visit to their homes. I don't recall exactly how that started but it must have been when one fellow tried to express his appreciation for my efforts by bringing me several

pounds of dried beans. Afterwards when I came home from school Mondays, I looked like a miniature Santa Claus.

When I gained some command of the Russian language I began to show an unquenchable thirst for reading and, as there was no guidance in my reading and the school library contained a slender supply of children's books, I delved into everything that came my way. Having the key to the book shelves I read a book a day with no selection or discrimination. One day I would read a sob story by a sob author, in which the Russian soil was so productive, while the next day would find me sweating over a Russian classic or the translation of a foreign book.

Our teacher was a bachelor in whose desk and private apartment in the rear of the schoolroom were many books on sex. I got hold of one of the books which gave, with illustrations, a vulgar and pseudo-medical description of sex life. The results were curious, for soon afterwards, when I visited the dormitory where the boys slept five days a week, I saw a young girl there in the process of changing her homespun undershirt and the illustration of the book became real. After that, I increased my dormitory visits after school and when the older boys played with Anna, who was about fifteen, I was right there to watch them.

Anna was the daughter of the dormitory caretaker, a peasant woman who could not see anything improper about the advances made by the big adolescent muzhiks toward her fair-headed daughter. Little Anna became pregnant and I am certain that she herself did not know the father of her prospective child. When the teacher protested against such immorality, the poor girl was packed off to another village to stay with relatives and I never saw her again.

In passing, it might be pointed out that seven of the boys accused of intimacies with Anna were dismissed from

the school and while walking out of class one of them said to me with a grin: ". . . and I thought all the time that I was the only one. You can't trust a woman."

The hundredth anniversary of the birth of the poet, Pushkin, was celebrated that year and complete editions of his works, in small paper-bound volumes, were distributed to the schools by the Government Board of Education. Teachers were instructed to award those editions to deserving students who could write a story or recite a poem by Pushkin.

I adored the great Russian poet and revered his poem, "Ruslan y Ludmila," which I read and reread until I knew it by heart. It inspired me to read others and I memorized and could recite "Yevgenyi Onegin." As this was almost a hundred pages long, I wonder to this day that I could have memorized it.

That event was recalled to my mind when Marion and I were invited in 1937 to visit an exhibition of Pushkin's works at Vassar College, on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of that poet's death. The display was under the supervision of the college's Russian instructor, a good friend of ours. That quiet dignified exhibition room in the Vassar College Library turned my thoughts back thirty-seven years to our village school and my efforts in the observance of Pushkin's birthday anniversary. Then, as in the days of my childhood, I felt I was paying respect to the memory of my favorite poet.

I lived the various scenes of that unforgettable tale; the dream of Tatiana, Lenski's soliloquy, the final duel, all impressed me beyond measure and I conjured up the characters and spoke to them and had them around me. So, when our teacher called upon the various children to recite of their own choosing any of Pushkin's works, I trembled like

a leaf. When my turn came I recited Tatiana's dream and for an encore, "The Miller." It brought tears to my teacher's eyes and when he presented me with several of the Pushkin booklets he said: "It is too bad you are a Jew!" I must have felt badly for eventually he remarked in an aside: "You know we all like you, don't take it to heart, you're all right."

When the summer recess started around May fifteenth, my father traveled to visit his father in an adjacent county about seventy-five miles away in the town of Luban, county of Bobruisk. My paternal grandfather was an old man when I was born and all I knew of him I had heard in conversation at home. He was a contractor and builder who specialized in the construction of whisky distilleries. But he was also well versed in the Torah. In comfortable circumstances at one time, he had made the mistake of transferring his entire wealth, when he grew older, to one of his sons, a man of affairs devoted mostly to the fair sex. Although he had a nice-looking wife and children, that son rarely failed to express his appreciation of any woman who moved in his circle—her age and appearance mattered little. Even our servant, a peasant girl and quite lame, did not escape his notice and whenever he paid us a visit he would interrupt the most important conversation at the sight of her. Only once was he outdone in love-making to Katya. It was one dark night when he was driven to our home by a Jewish coachman. The latter did not know the way to our barns so Mother directed Katya to lead him with a lantern. She was not out of the house more than a few minutes when we heard her scream at the top of her lungs. I overheard Mother's indignant cry to my father: "This coachman is no better than your brother—he tried to rape her!"

That brother received many a verbal lashing from his

mother because of his escapades and especially on account of the way he treated his wife. He ignored her to the point of having an affair with the maid under his own roof. "When I die," his mother said, "my ghost will return to plague you for your misdeeds." She died shortly afterwards and Uncle Mordecai trembled for many nights. He would go to bed with his wife on one side and the hired girl on the other, saying to them: "Watch me, my children, for I sure am a goner." He started to lose weight and for six months hovered between life and death. But apparently his mother's ghost decided to let him alone for he got well again and picked up where he had left off.

So to get back to my grandfather and this son of his, the latter must have said, "At your age you should not worry about anything outside of controlling the rabbi and the synagogue." My grandfather lived long enough to regret that advice, for in time he became merely the ward of his cunning son.

My father's visit to Luban was occasioned by a letter from Grandfather declaring that in view of the fact that he was getting on in years and because he had been "inherited" during his lifetime by his clever son, Mordecai, he would like my father to take with him one of the two scrolls in the synagogue and also try to intercede with that smart son of his for better treatment. The situation is not entirely clear since I heard only one side. There may have been some question as to the authenticity of the accusations against Father's brother. This eternal problem has never been settled, so it is best perhaps not to linger too long in slandering the memory of Uncle Mordecai.

Grandfather's scroll of the Holy Scriptures arrived at our house on the wings of a beautiful spring morning, Father having forcefully instructed the hired man to drive

day and night to forestall the possibility that, "God forbid, the Holy Torah should be kept overnight in a place which may not be clean." Father's return awakened me and although he looked very tired from his all-night vigil on a straw-filled wagon, his face radiated happiness and spiritual contentment as he held in his arms something dearer to him than life itself. With hardly a glance at me or anyone else, he proceeded to lift his treasure, shielded with a faded blue velvet cloth, to a temporary resting place high above the bookshelves that held the seventy-two volumes of the *Gemara*, those commentaries of Israel's Geniuses on the contents written down in the scroll.

After a light breakfast and a few hours' rest, he conferred with Mother as to who would erect the proper hanging cabinet to house the treasure. It seems to me no earthly possessions could have made Father feel half so happy as the ownership of the Torah, transcribed with a quill in ink made especially for the occasion by a "good man of the Hebrew flock," who not only had to fast every Monday and Thursday while writing the scroll on calfskin but also had to abstain from sexual intercourse during that period. Whether the scribe obeyed the latter decree or didn't, remained a secret between himself, his wife, and his Maker. "Think of it," said Father, "why we can now have a minion (the least number of a congregation for worship), now that we have the Torah. I can read the Scriptures to all those ignoramuses within walking distance who call themselves Jews. That is better than living like 'goyim' and seeing the scroll only on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, when we went for a holiday to our rich but unhappy sister-in-law's . . ."

Mother probably never took this oration quite as seriously as her husband expected her to, for sometime afterward I overheard her say to my older sister: "Father cer-



tainly can be fooled. His brother Mordecai took away all the money and a good house well stocked with everything, and did not even wait for his father to pass away; and your father is satisfied with the Ten Commandments on sheepskin, which you cannot eat nor can it keep you warm in winter." Her bitterness seemed to be directed not so much against the loss of her father-in-law's estate as towards her brother-in-law who had managed to pull the wool over everyone's eyes.

I greeted the arrival of the scroll with mingled feelings. Try as I did to share the spirit of my father's heavenly contentment, I could not prevent a shadow of doubt from marring my bliss. For a whole winter I had heard daily the public school teacher's explanations of the New Testament and of Christ the martyr of the Scribes and the Pharisees, who appeared to have feared an invasion of their sphere of influence. "Of course," I reasoned, "Christ could not have been God, for God could not have had a son; but surely He must have been a great man for how else could He have died for His ideals?" I did not dare to express such thoughts at home but I frequently discussed them with my teacher who during summer recess became my friend.

Rather an unusual friendship: here was a man of almost thirty years, and only recently a Jew-hater, taking long walks on many summer days to the neighboring forest with a little boy who was not yet eleven. There in the woods, surrounded by the long shadows of the pine trees and the air filled with their perfume and the music of hundreds of birds, we strolled. With the song of the meadow lark calling from the distance and amid the mysterious inexplicable noises of the bewitched forest, this tall and humorous country teacher would expound to me, hungry for knowledge, the secrets of nature and the mystery of life.

I must have been instrumental in the arrestment of his Judophobia for he never called me "Jew" any more but would hail me with that typical Russian expression, "Little Brother." He used to tell me how greatly he respected my father as a well-learned man, but he also soliloquized on why a man of learning would not attempt to see "the other side of things" and become a Russian in spirit instead of a foreigner. A staunch Russophile, he could not understand how anyone could reside in Russia from birth and yet not be a patriot of his "otechestvo" (fatherland).

Grateful indeed am I to the memory of that country teacher, who was responsible for the beginning of a certain cosmopolitanism in what was then my narrow and bigoted nature. I remember him once saying to me: "Why does your father allow your mother to cook fish for that worthless town clerk when he has guests from the county seat, Slutzk? Doesn't he by so doing show the enslavement of the Jewish race? Your father hates him, doesn't he? Then why does he cater to him?" Puzzled, I could not answer, but it made me think . . .

The town clerk, incidentally, was quite a character. In his fifties and a bachelor, he resided in the quarters provided by the township, in the Town Hall. His housekeeper, a woman named Antzya, was also his mistress. The only fault he could find with her was that she did not know how to prepare fish and fish chowder properly, a task he turned over to my mother whenever the occasion arose. He displayed a lack of confidence in people around him and even practiced that Machiavellian philosophy on himself. His favorite expression used to be: "My ideas and promises and Antzya's farts have a similar meaning."

Shortly before the approach of spring, while I was still in public school, I was taken ill with the measles and for

two weeks was confined to bed. Except for boiled water (the "feldsher" had prescribed warm water) I digested hardly anything and had no desire for food. On the other hand, my thirst was not fully satisfied by the tepid liquid they gave me and all my pleading for a glass of cold water was futile. "If you drink cold water the 'feldsher' says you will die," I was told. My parched lips and throat must have subdued finally whatever thoughts I had about living or dying for in the middle of the night when everybody was asleep I crawled out of the bed and walked barefooted across the length of the four rooms to reach the kitchen. There, with a copper dipper, I proceeded to gulp down ice-cold water, after having first cracked the thin layer of ice in the large water-tub. After three dipperfuls I tiptoed back to my bed. My semidelirium and high fever abated immediately and for the first time during my illness I slept soundly.

It was almost noon when I awoke and I could scarcely believe that not only did the cold water not kill but it actually seemed to have cured me. I demanded food and plenty of it! Only long afterwards did I dare disclose to my family the episode of the cold water. Mother, however, persisted in believing that the "feldsher's" orders to feed warm water to a fever-stricken patient was much the better way.

So back I went to school to prepare for final examinations. Playing ball with the pupils of the upper group, I used to talk with them about what they were going to do after they were graduated. "Ah," they would tell me, "you are going to make something of yourself, but what will happen to us? Very soon you will be going to high school in the big city. When you come back with a swell uniform on you will not even want to recognize us." Despite my verbal assurances to the contrary, I also felt that a black blouse with a wide leather belt, which I would wear in high

school, would certainly set me apart from the homespun peasant classes. On examination day our teacher relaxed discipline and removed the barrier between teacher and pupil, telling us to sit near him and talk about anything that entered our minds. He conversed separately with each of the eleven graduates. He told us we were to appear the following morning at a village six miles away, where all the graduates of the various public schools of the district would assemble for final oral tests to be supervised by the county examiner, delegated by the "Gymnasia" from Slutzk.

"He may not ask you very many questions," the teacher told me, "but he may try to trip you up and trap you with some catchy questions. For instance, he might ask you from what metal the cross on King Solomon's Temple was made. Of course, you will know the answer."

Before daybreak our group started the long hike towards the oral exams. We carried bread and cheese in our pockets as we plodded on our way to receive those diplomas, which for all but me marked the end of freedom and the assumption of the farming chores of an adult muzhik. "It will take only a couple of years," I thought, "for the meager knowledge they gained in school to evaporate completely." The wooden plow, the scythe, and the sickle would soon not only callous their hands but also erase all traces of education. I learned subsequently that not even in the army was a muzhik subjected to anything loftier than military drills. "Give a muzhik an education," his superiors would say, "and he will want to be something he is not. Why not keep him happy in his state of ignorance?" The muzhik was not happy, but he did not understand the principle of cause and effect. . . .

When we reached our destination, the town of Beryozovo, we flopped down on the grass outside the schoolhouse

and after several hours were ushered in singly before the examiner. I tried to memorize mathematical problems and hoped he would ask me to recite poems of Nekrasov or Pushkin. "I shall show that examiner what a smart boy I am," I said. Nevertheless I nervously swallowed saliva to keep clear the passage of my parched throat. When my turn came after an interminable wait, and when he did ask me about the metal of the cross on King Solomon's Temple, I was so disappointed that the smug examiner dropped his gaze. I almost snapped at him: "What would King Solomon be doing with a cross?" I stood there awaiting other questions, hoping against hope that the final day of public school would not be spoiled by the man's callousness. No other questions were asked . . . he smiled at me, waved his hand . . . my legs buckled as I walked away, a disillusioned youngster.

Our walk home was in easy stages. Once in my house I flung the diploma on the table and walked to my room, exhausted more spiritually than physically. A cloud was over me during the next few days in spite of the bright sunny spring weather.

"Why did he ask me such a ridiculous question?" I kept repeating to myself.

My mental wounds healed quickly in the drudgery of farm chores and I looked forward to the haying season; it had to be accomplished at the beginning of summer, at a time when Nature had so many things in store for little boys, even for those not yet disillusioned by crude examiners, when there is a constant battle against the elements that try to destroy new-mown hay with buckets of rain. The load of dry hay on the wagon, the horse standing immobile and probably asleep, the smell of the fields . . . all were ineradicable portions of the perfect pastoral. They

gladdened my heart and seemingly urged me to hope for a future veiled in mystery.

In mid-August I was packed off to "the big city," the town of Slutsk, of whose fifteen thousand population more than half were Jews. It was situated near the military highway, the "chaussée" between Moscow and Warsaw. Since that road was within six miles of our home, it was necessary only to give the horse free rein, once on it, to arrive at my destination about twenty-eight miles from our village. The road was maintained all summer by gangs of men who leveled the crushed stone and kept it in excellent shape. Another highway leading to Slutsk ran almost parallel and within a few miles of the military road. It was one of the most picturesque I have ever seen, shaded through its entire length by large birch trees. It had been constructed in the period of Catherine the Great, when she was at war with Poland, with Suvorov as her general. But it was passable only in dry weather; otherwise it was a mudhole.

My father lacked the money, influence, and desire to enter me in the "Gymnasia," where the number of Jews admitted could not exceed ten per cent of the total enrollment and even these had to face stiff competitive exams. So I was placed in a school for Jewish boys, operated by the State Board of Education especially for the education of Jewish male children. Its teachers were graduates of the Wilno Teachers' Institute.

Although the school building was more attractive and better equipped than our village institution, I felt I was not going to like it. I thought the headmaster an artificial prig in comparison with my emotional and humane village teacher. This Mr. Levinson, who tried to shield his bald pate with a few strands of side hair, had an expressionless face. He was a cruel and calculating old man who seemed

to derive intense satisfaction from putting his pupils in the wrong. Doubtless his lot was not a particularly happy one, for while he was appointed and paid by the State he was watched carefully by various Jewish groups who sought to influence his conduct, his family life, and his practical obedience to the Laws of Israel. He was continually torn between his duties as a teacher, which he took with seriousness, and the constant complaints of some parents that their children were not adhering to the straight and narrow path of Judaism.

The first-grade teacher, a Mr. Halpern, disliked me from the start and so did most of my classmates. It was a new experience. From a village boy accustomed to peasant children, to whom I was superior in studies, I became one of a group of ambitious, bright but extremely narrow-minded sons of small businessmen, or offspring of well-to-do assistant advocats. (A Jew was not permitted to bear the title of a full-fledged counsellor-at-law. There were some exceptions.)

It may be true that had I liked the school I would have made an effort to be among the leaders. Instead, I lost interest in studies and received the mark of "3," barely passing in my courses. Hard as I tried I simply could not "find" myself amid the bedlam of my surroundings.

Military training was compulsory. An old top sergeant, whose coat-breast was flanked with medals, would give us military instruction twice a week. I liked him because he was the son of a peasant and closer to my understanding. My joy in that class was short-lived, however, for the never-ending Jewish cusswords thrust at the head of that poor top sergeant served to destroy all interest in the military. He once led the whole student body on a long hike in military formation. On the way back I managed, being

one of the tallest in the group, to walk alongside the instructor. We exchanged a number of irrelevant remarks and he asked me, "You are a zemliak?", meaning, "You are from my part of the farmlands?" I replied, "Yes, how did you guess it?" "Well, for one thing, you don't talk like the kikes around here," he said.

For generations the Jews were told by their forebears of the proud past they once enjoyed and the youth of Israel was told also that God's wrath was poured upon them for their sins. That kind of philosophy and rearing served naturally to push the Jew further into his own shell, thereby causing his gentile neighbor to eye him askance, as a people that lived so differently from their Christian neighbors, whose very wearing apparel distinguished him from others. The difference in religion, attire, and habits, plus isolation or nonintercourse with Christian neighbors, fostered distrust, then hate. Both parties seemed equally responsible for this vicious cycle of hatred.

On the Czar's birthday the top sergeant paraded us to the synagogue to pray for the Czar-Father and his family. If but a few of the curses uttered by those Jewish boys had befallen the Royal Family, Lenin and Trotsky would never have had the opportunity to emerge as heroes.

These students were not revolutionists, nor were they or their fathers ready to go out and fight for their freedom. They did not have a clear conception of what freedom was like; they were the product of a class of people who seemed sorry for themselves, ever willing to shed tears while praying for the day when they would be led back to Zion.

To say that these schoolboys were not revolutionary is perhaps erroneous. True, they whiled away their time in gossip and small talk, with only a few interested in discus-



sions of books and studies. Their condition was ripe for the blind acceptance of almost any type of propaganda that would alleviate their hopeless situation. Being city dwellers, they did not have the fields and meadows and farm chores to fall back on for the consumption of their surplus energy. Their schoolyard was minute, athletics did not exist, and the semimilitary drills were farcical and a failure.

Of all those schoolmates I have known, only one have I met in this country: the widely traveled lecturer and author, Maurice Hindus.

When I returned home after my first year in school I was greeted with stern and cold appraisal. The report card indicated I was wasting my time, else why the low marks? Furthermore, the report of my deportment from the place where I boarded was not good; the Maisels regarded me unfavorably. They were people who had made their fortune in the wholesale whisky business, according to some, but other reports had it that their affluence depended on the charms of the wife, who reputedly was well paid for her favors by the wealthy landowner of a neighboring town. He must have been starving for affection if he could succumb to the hidden charms of that roly-poly, dumpy little woman . . . She was called, "Little Mouse," and personified the answer to the eternal question, "What's in a name?" She not only never wantonly threw away bread crusts but refused to buy fresh bread until they were consumed. Her stinginess was a byword in the neighborhood. She was the family boss and grasped tightly the purse strings. She was the matriarch of a family that comprised a number of children, mostly girls, ugly little gnomes but bright in school.

I had been taken into this household because the Maisels were friendly with a cousin of my father, a wealthy landowner in that region. Mrs. Maisel deemed me more

or less of a burden since the compensation she received for my keep was small. They frowned at my refusal to accompany them to synagogue on the Sabbath, but to me it seemed the height of hypocrisy to do this after she had tried to starve me the other days of the week.

An inventory of nine months in Slutzk revealed I was *persona non grata*; only the eagerness with which I tackled the work in the fields in the haying season helped to reinstate me somewhat in the good graces of my family.

I was not happy that summer although I enjoyed meeting again a number of the public school boys and the friendly village teacher. The thought of returning to Mr. Levinson's school and Mrs. Maisel's boarding house at summer's end did nothing to bolster my spirits.

But I did return, and, now promoted to the first group of the second year, found my position even more untenable. For my new teacher was Mr. Levinson himself, instead of Mr. Halpern who occasionally dismissed class early so that he could join a volunteer fireman's parade. Mr. Levinson's undeviating willfulness brought suffering to one of his own sons. The latter, in his last year of "Gymnasia," wanted to become an engineer and sought his father's permission to enter a school of technology. But old man Levinson ruled: "Your mother and I decided you are to be a doctor and a doctor you will be. Put those foolish engineering ideas out of your head, for we won't allow it." Ilyusha, the son, brooded on the reply and committed suicide shortly before he was to have been enrolled in medical school.

The embittered pedagogue, Levinson, reminded me of the character of Simon the cobbler, to whom the son of Louis XVI was entrusted by the Revolutionary Tribunal for an education. The uniform of the Ministry of Education (teachers as well as pupils wore uniforms in Russia) must

have affected him as much as the process of turning upon a worm.

I boarded in the house of Nekrich, a "petition writer," that last school year. He was a wizened red-headed Jew with the face of a baked apple. The profession of the "petition writer" was widespread in Russia for the muzhiks were constantly calling for mercy against exorbitant taxes and heartless tax collectors. For twenty kopeks one could have his tale of woe inscribed in black and white by the "petition writer." As the mills of Russian justice ground exceedingly slow, it frequently required more than one petition before the call was heeded and "petition writers" reaped a harvest. While on vacation, after my first school year, I also collected several kopeks in this manner.

Nekrich's wife was more than six feet tall and well-developed in girth. They were childless but she was always complaining of a pain in her abdomen. "She must be pregnant," I told my roommate, Friedman, the son of an assistant advocate from Kletzk. "No, no," replied my better-informed colleague, "what she needs is a good physic, that'll take care of her big belly." I regarded Friedman with awe. "How can a boy be so well informed about conditions of women?" I queried with admiration.

Friedman was a handsome youth. His skin was soft and smooth, he had big brown eyes and a shock of wavy black hair. I was very fond of him, but one night I awoke, startled to find him alongside me . . . He had to move shortly afterwards. Apparently he tried his tricks on other boys in "Gymnasia," where he was a pupil, because he was expelled. That was the last I heard of him.

The monotony of my second school year caused me to lose interest in my work and I anticipated with real fear being a "captive" of Levinson, the cobbler of the Tribunal.

In spite of my indifference I passed with better grades, for my report card contained but one "3" for Latin, with the others rated at "4," equivalent of "B," and deportment "5," or "A." But I was determined not to return to that school, for when I returned home after the second year I had a proposal to make to my parents.

"My education is sufficient for the present," I said. "I know how I can get a job if you will listen and help me." They listened and helped . . .

2

B o g g e d

## B O G G E D

**T**HE three years that followed my short-lived education were perhaps the most useful of my life. At thirteen I had already "grown up" and I don't know that any educational institution could have given me as much knowledge and as many opportunities to learn human nature as that section of Russia called the Pripet marshes (Polesiye).

Those marshlands, ranging east of the Pripet River over hundreds of square miles and peopled by as near primitive men and women as I have ever met in my travels, taught me more about life than modern civilization could possibly have done, even in the scholarly classrooms of a college. It was owing, perhaps, to my eagerness to get away from that high school in Slutzk and the stifling atmosphere of home surroundings that my spirit, seeking an outlet, was appeased for the time by the giant redwoods of Polesiye. At any rate they enabled me to achieve quickly the lightning transformation from farm boy to woodsman.

The forest exerted a strong, pleasant influence. Its restfulness, balanced with its inquietude under the fury of a storm, nourished my impressionable mind and seldom did I feel alone among my friends the redwoods. They seemed so familiar I felt almost certain they were nodding their heads to me in the soft breeze.

My introduction to this enchanted kingdom came as a result of my request to the family that I be allowed to work. My mother's youngest sister, Sara, must have married when I was too young to remember or else the time has eluded

my memory. Anyway, on several occasions I had overheard mother say that Sara's husband "was coming right along in the business world" as superintendent of a large forest owned by Agarkoff, a fabulously wealthy Odessa nobleman.

Other conversations indicated that when my aunt Sara married this man Rubenstein, he was of no particular consequence, merely a country yokel from the Pripet marshes. It must have been a year before, during vacation, when Aunt Sara visited us with her husband, Leib Rubenstein. I watched with awe their arrival in a carriage drawn by two fine coal-black horses that pranced at the sharp commands of a coachman.

"What does this man do to deserve such riches," I asked my oldest sister, "and why all this air of uppishness about him?"

I was given to understand that he had charge of hundreds of men who cut down trees into timbers of certain dimensions, that he was engaged in business with foreign countries where most of the finished products were shipped via the River Pripet . . .

Although her explanation was vague and entirely beyond my imagination, I longed to see such a forest, to watch the felling of the giant trees. With my formal education checkmated by my own will, that longing was revived within me and I spent many minutes rehearsing the speech I would make to my parents, a plea that they would write to Aunt Sara and ask her if I could be placed in some sort of a position with her husband, the man of the carriage and fine horses.

"You shall have all of my earnings aside from my actual board," I finally pleaded, "for surely I will not need many clothes in the forest. Please write a very urgent letter and tell them how badly you need the money."

After numerous conferences Father said: "Son, you may regret this step, for you are going to find yourself among a bunch of roughnecks and it will serve to erase all traces of a good upbringing in a good Jewish home."

Nevertheless for the next eight weeks I walked on air, waiting, waiting for a letter, building up hope that the letter would be favorable and that at last I would be lifted from surroundings that were choking me. Flashing through my mind was a desire for better things in life: I was in revolt against starvation, against continually seeing my parents worry about meeting the tax bills, and about whether we should eat meat once or twice a week. Why? Why should I have desired better things, not having been born to them, since the little we had had gone with the fire and I was too young to remember when our larder was well stocked? I cannot tell, unless it was the craving for things that were enjoyed by the Slutzk schoolboys. For there I had seen carefree children of my age who wore good clothes and seemed free from worry. Again, it might have been a symptom of that relentless urge within most of us, the will to create a better mousetrap than our neighbor, that obsessed me and initiated me into the torrent of life.

Without any experience or understanding of the world of business, I had no actual realization of my wants and desires. Business was never discussed at our house: conversation at the dinner table generally had to do with Jewish culture, for had not a great rabbi said: "Three who have eaten at the same table and have not uttered the words of wisdom from the Torah are as if they had partaken with the vultures in the field"? Father saw to it that we did not imitate the vultures; business was so prosaic, why speak of it? So, if a favorable letter did indeed arrive, the job it promised, the future it held forth, would be something



beyond my comprehension. All I was interested in was that the job should provide me with an easy existence and enough money to assist my parents.

I should mention, however, that while my parents certainly needed money, I was yet looked upon as one who had slipped a notch. For instead of following the high profession of learning, the wisdom of the printed word, I was about to embark on a career foreign to the expectations of my parents. I could see in their relations with me that summer that they were being more or less patronizing, as much as to say: "He is one of our children and he must be treated equally as well as the rest. But the boy surely has a will of his own which will not lead him to any good." Outwardly, my own reaction was a stubborn silence . . . inwardly, just the desire to get away, to get away from everything . . .

I wandered about the fields that summer with my sister, Bluma, and occasionally picked wild strawberries in the nearby woods. But never did I discuss with her the painful question of breaking family tradition, of embarking on a strange and unknown career. What would be the use of talking to her, I thought? She wouldn't know what it was all about and probably would only berate me for being a stubborn fool. No argument then could have changed my mind; I was determined to withstand hell and high water, if only the letter was favorable!

It was a long time coming, so I seized an opportunity to earn some money in the meantime. Within a mile of our house was a cheese factory operated by a man who owned other cheese plants in the vicinity. Only one kind of cheese was made there, "Münster," a good bit larger in size than those on the American market. Every once in a while when the family enjoyed a windfall I would be delegated to go there to purchase one of the cheeses. A tiny piece of it spread

on a fresh piece of sour rye bread was a delicacy not often known to our household.

On one of those errands I noticed a new face at the factory, that of a stout Jewish girl in her twenties. She waited on me and questioned me about my family. She spoke in Yiddish but answering in Russian I asked her where she came from. I was not surprised to hear her reply in Yiddish that she could not speak Russian since she came from a nearby Jewish town where the language of the land was taboo. "I am going to be here some time as the manager of this factory," she said, "and while here I should like to learn the Russian language. Do you know anyone who could undertake the job?" I explained that I expected a permanent position shortly but would meanwhile be glad to instruct her in conversational Russian a couple of hours a day—except Saturdays, of course.

My breadwinning, therefore, dated from the day when I became a teacher of this twenty-four-year-old girl who was almost twice my age. She came each evening and we would retire to my room where good-naturedly she followed my instructions on how to speak Russian. The fee was a ruble a week for my labors but I must confess that, aside from teaching her how to sign her name and a few ordinary expressions, I failed in the role of pedagogue. Mother insisted she was a hopeless failure as a pupil but the differences in our ages must have had something to do with it. Nevertheless when the period of instruction ended, she gave me, in addition to seven rubles, a huge cheese and two fat ducks.

I struck a bargain with my mother telling her: "The ducks and the cheese and three rubles are yours but the rest of the money goes to buy me clothes if I get a job in the Pripet marshes."

It was agreed.

Once a week I rode horseback to the post office seven miles away and for seven successive weeks returned empty-handed. In the eighth week, toward the end of July, the near-sighted postmaster handed me a blue envelope. I looked at the postmark, "Starobin," and knew it was the letter for which I had been waiting, but I did not open it. Quickly I mounted the saddleless horse and at breakneck speed started for home.

Father was somewhere in the fields so Mother read the letter to all of us. Its contents, starting with the conventional "We are all well and hope this finds you the same," are as clear and fresh in my mind as if it all happened yesterday. Jobs were not available during the summer and could not be created, but immediately after the Jewish holidays, around the middle of September, a position would be ready for me. My compensation was to be between twenty-five and thirty rubles a month. I was to give my age as sixteen (that portion of the missive was heavily underlined three times) and if I behaved, a golden future awaited me in the lumber business. Aunt Sara also pointed out that all the money I earned, except the minimum charge for board, would be transmitted to my parents since I would need for nothing except leather hip boots and a heavy hooded mackinaw.

It was the first time a letter had been received at my house in which I was the sole subject of discussion. It made me feel proud and important. What matter that the words were cold and perhaps deceptive! Each word made a separate mark in my brain, as if I had been branded with them. I memorized, jumbled, and picked them apart to see what was hidden behind them, to visualize the sort of future they portended. Like shooting stars they would appear and dis-

appear before I could make them make sense. The most I understood was that I would have leather hip boots and a heavy mackinaw with a hood . . .

When Father returned from the fields the excitement had subsided: a feeling of relief seemed to have invaded the household, the relief that would come with one less mouth to feed, one less to argue with and fewer disturbances, but principally, that another of the children had found his goal. Our aim in life was a prime factor deeply instilled in all of us as children: my eldest brother had decided to be a teacher and had entered the Teachers' Institute in Wilno; my oldest sister liked to make hats and wanted to be a modiste so she was sent to Warsaw (at that time the style-creating center for women's fashions), where a sister of my mother was married to a teacher who would help her get located. She had taken with her a brother, four years my senior, who entered a "Reeal School," a commercial Gymnasium. Another sister directly older than myself remained to help Mother take care of the house and the rest of the family. I had been a problem, a serious one. For as time went on, it dawned on my parents that they could not cope with the restlessness in my make-up. Deep in their hearts they possibly bemoaned the fact that I was about to dress up like a "Polesiyuk," a man of the swamps, in high leather boots and a hooded mackinaw, but other considerations must have prevailed, for my remaining short stay at home was pleasant. I was given freedom to do as I liked, no more regimentation, no more orders. Besides my savings, those four rubles I had garnered by teaching the cheese-girl, I was provided with sufficient additional funds to go to Slutzk and procure the outfit that was to make me free—the hip boots and mackinaw—the garb that would transform me into a provider instead of a parasite. Subsequently, when I tried on

my new "uniform," my mother begged me not to wear it until the day I was ready to depart.

I was invited that summer to a peasant wedding of one of my schoolmates who was four years older than I. He was marrying a girl as beautiful as anyone I had ever seen and I recalled a sentimental longing for her from the day that I saw her almost naked in the office of the village "feldsher," where she was being examined for some minor ailment. The peasant men and women at the wedding all got drunk on vodka but everything seemed coldly primitive and devoid of spontaneous exhilaration; seated at the head of the table upon their return from church, the couple ate a few of the goodies which were shared by the invited guests, then everyone fell to drinking vodka and kissing the bride. This beautiful, young, and graceful peasant maiden was the first strange woman I had ever kissed and the thrill for me was the more heightened when she not only kissed me but flung her arms around me and held me close to her apple-shaped breasts. . . .

After the liquor was exhausted, groups of people stood awkwardly around giving vent to their feelings on the various evils of the day. It wasn't long before their naturally emotional bent affected those Russian muzhiks—you could hear weeping and moaning over the loss of dear ones or wailing that a cow or a horse had dropped dead or had been slaughtered by a wolf. In another corner rose the din of a terrific quarrel where one muzhik was accusing his neighbor of having ploughed land under which was of no use whatsoever except as the site for a good mud-rolling and face-scratching contest. Elsewhere in the room an old man was crying because he had suddenly realized he was an orphan. . . .

Even the musicmaker who was doing his best with an

accordion to provide tunes for dancing became dull and listless, and the young bloods who in the beginning had tried to outdo each other's steps in the Trepak or Komarinskaya to his music finally gave up. The tears, the quarrels, and the teasing came to an end. The bride and groom retired for their honeymoon to the hayloft not far from the house and upon entering the barn locked the gates behind them. . . .

I looked longingly at the barn, bathed in moonlight that quiet summer evening, and thought what a beautiful girl this boy friend had married and wondered whether some day I would also be in love and be married. My first drink of vodka at the wedding and my first kiss on the red lips of that stately peasant girl left me wobbly that night: for a long time I remained looking at the skies trying to solve in my mind the great mystery, the riddle of love, and I tried to imagine myself infatuated with some fair maiden of the story books I had read.

Summer was drawing to a close. Fall saw me for the last time as a permanent resident of the town of my birth, for while I did revisit the place on one particularly sad occasion no longer was it home. That autumn meant for me the complete severance with life that could never again be the same.

When harvesttime came I followed the men and women over the hills and flats of our farmland and continuously took leave of familiar places where I had passed my not altogether carefree youth.

After I attended the wedding my popularity in the village grew and I was looked upon as their friend instead of a stranger and a Jew. The girls and men who helped gather our bare harvest frequently invited me to sit with them while they ate lunch and tried in other ways to make

me feel completely at home with them. This pleased my vanity for I not only shared their food when no one of the family was around but also joined them in song on the way home from the fields. Those songs related the sorrow of a bridegroom about to die in defense of his homeland, another of a bride dying of consumption who sang a farewell hymn to her beloved. Yet others were about the tax collector who was selling the last cow to satisfy the tax bill. Only occasionally was there merriment in the melodies of the peasant boys and girls: then their songs told of love everlasting or their voices would recapture a primitive ballad depicting their love for Mother Russia.

The Jewish holidays were at hand and with them my final few weeks at home. We were not going to visit our moneyed aunt, the owner of the water mill, during the holidays this time, for we had our own holy scroll containing the Holy Scriptures. While Father was busy organizing the prayer meetings for the occasion Mother and my sisters prepared to make these holidays the happiest. Father rehearsed himself every evening, practicing the various hymns he would sing to the congregation. Occasionally we all joined in the chorus. Outstanding in my memory was the blessing of the congregation by the "Kahaman," the tribe of Israel supposedly descended from Aaron, brother of Moses. Only those descendants are permitted to bless "the remnants of Israel" during the holidays. I had been confirmed when I reached my thirteenth birthday so I could, therefore, join with my father and brothers in observing this event. I remember that I surveyed critically the flock that I was about to bless: our blacksmith, our tailor (whose daughter was having a clandestine love affair with the village priest), another blacksmith from a nearby village, a saloonkeeper and his two sons and others, and I wondered

how sincere my blessings could be and whether they cared for them.

In preparation for the occasion I had been told to borrow a prayer cloth from the saloonkeeper; I borrowed one from our blacksmith instead. True, it was extremely soiled but it was from a man I liked. Even the body odor and perspiration of that cloth with which I covered my face did not diminish my warmth for the kind-hearted blacksmith, Kulakowski, whose open-handed consideration for all of us preserves him forever in my memory.

On Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement devoted entirely to fasting and prayer, I violated for the first time one of those rules when I went at midday to our outlying vegetable garden, dug up some carrots, and ate them to satisfy my gnawing hunger. I devoured the carrots on an empty stomach after having abstained from food and drink for almost twenty hours. When I returned to the room in which the congregation was praying, the tall lighted candles filled the atmosphere with such a stench of burning tallow that it became difficult to breathe . . . In addition, the smell of human bodies that had remained in the same room since sunset of the previous day increased my discomfort and forced me, the sinner, to run. Holding my breath I hastened behind the barn—where up came the carrots.

The Day of Atonement expired with the setting sun when the final prayer was delivered by Father, for according to tradition the Gates of Justice closed at sundown leaving open only the Gates of Mercy. The "shofar" (ram's horn) was sounded in a long solitary blast and the people of the congregation wished one another the happiness of the ensuing year in Jerusalem; it was the traditional wish of an optimistic people who had been expressing such hopes



for hundreds of years. "Jerusalem for them," I smiled, "but the Pripet marshes for me next year."

Everyone received a drink of wine and some cake to break the fast. After that the congregation scattered on the lawn in front of the house where women and children unpacked their bundles of food. They ate cold chicken and pickles and white bread baked in the form of a twist—they ate and ate and ate . . . Our family retired to the kitchen to eat cold meat. None of the other rooms had been sufficiently aired from the habitation of people who had begged atonement in the previous twenty-four hours.

The days following sped by rapidly. The Holiday of the Tabernacles came and went and the last day, that of the Celebration of the Torah, was at hand. Again the congregation made merry by drinking wine and by wishing each other the next year in the Promised Land.

Sukkoth, the eighth day of the fall holidays, held more meaning for me than any other Jewish holiday including the Day of Atonement and Passover. For it was then that Father would read to the congregation the impressive final chapter of Deuteronomy. Listening to my father's intonation of the words of Moses and his final parting with the tribes of Israel I would visualize the re-enactment of that great drama. My father's voice and enthusiasm over that unforgettable passage made me live through it. I felt myself actually present at the magnificent leave-taking of the leader from his flock, a flock that had grown fat under his guidance.

I could see Moses peering from his vantage point into the Promised Land he was not allowed to enter. I could feel the wonderful poetry of the 32nd, 33rd, and 34th chapters—the blessings to his children, praising them for their good qualities while not unmindful of their faults. I forgot

the stuffy room where had been celebrated the Jewish Thanksgiving; I was in the wilderness with Moses listening to beautiful Hebraic expressions whose flexibility created whole meaningful sentences from a single word; and I hoped the service would never end.

There was rare beauty in passages like, "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee." (Chapter 32, Verse 7.)

The climax would come with the reading of the blessings to the Twelve Tribes of Israel. I was truly proud of my heritage when I heard my father read: "And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, who thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah." (Chapter 33, Verse 8.)

Moses knew his Jews well, I felt, especially when he said: "For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck . . ." (Chapter 31, Verse 27.) But I also felt like weeping when hearing the passage about Israel weeping for Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days.

Suddenly the reading of the Torah would come to an end and the morning prayers and wishes for Jerusalem would be uttered by the congregation. The last three chapters of Deuteronomy, the greatest in the Old Testament, were done with and Moses was no more . . . Quietly, I walked into the garden and watched the sighing wind finger lightly the sparse remains of summer vegetation . . . the fall holidays were over.

On the very next day with heavy heart I took leave of my family. Father and I and the hired man started on the long journey to my "Promised Land," the land of red-woods and bogs. Throughout the first two days of the trip

it rained incessantly. Averaging about forty miles a day we reached Polesiye on the third day and traversed the marshes where we could only guess at the road. During the next two days we forded many streams and I wondered how our wagon held together as it continually rolled over large sprawling roots that lay across our paths on the way to Gornoye, our destination.

In the final stretch we paused at a tiny hamlet where we conferred lengthily with one of the old-timers as to the best way to Gornoye. "The distance from here is not very far, no farther than you can hear the roaring of a bull," he told us. "And how far is that?" asked my father. "In the woods," said the old-timer, "you can hear a bull roar seven versts (about five miles) away, but you cannot drive straight for you will get bogged and never get out." With that he gave us proper directions. It took us nearly all day to travel the final road—not once did we hear the roaring of a bull.

Overwhelmed with anticipation I hardly spoke. It was Friday and my father was apprehensive about being on the road after sunset, thereby defiling the Sabbath. In the late afternoon, however, we spotted a clearing in the distance and the outlines of a large house at the end of the clearing. The land appeared to be much higher than that over which we had traveled and I realized the reason for the name Gornoye (*mountainous*).

Two things occupied me upon my arrival: one, that my age had been advanced to sixteen; also that the men who worked and with whom I would have to match wits were two or three times older than I. As to the first—I tried to imagine myself sixteen years old, but how did one act at sixteen? Did one act like an old man uttering only words of wisdom? By the same token should laughter and

other youthful explosions be eschewed? To me the chasm between thirteen and sixteen seemed a bottomless one and hard as I tried I failed to accept this portion of the bargain; I could not imagine myself as an old man of sixteen. The second phase of my dilemma, of necessity associated with the first, made me feel the men would regard me as a greenhorn and know-nothing in their complicated business. Assuredly, I would be looked upon with suspicion for was I not the nephew of the superintendent, their superior, and therefore not an equal? Furthermore, was I not too young to be trusted?

When we entered the large frame house, built of the finest timber available in the vicinity, we were scrutinized carefully but greeted cordially by my aunt and uncle. I could not help noticing the apologetic demeanor of my uncle who seemed to be asking himself: "What am I going to do with this boy? How am I going to fit him into this highly specialized industry?" His two chief assistants were there to meet us, too, for it was almost sunset Friday and the Sabbath was approaching. One, a young man named Epstein, was more than six feet tall, stout but loose-jointed, with black hair, large features, and negroid lips. I saw registered in his mien: "That kid'll be easy meat for me!" The other, who stood still and looked on blankly, seemed to me an old man—he was not past forty. He was short and stocky, his hands were folded in front of him, his lips were tightly compressed, and he breathed heavily through his nostrils. He reminded me of a colored lithograph I had seen some time before of an executioner in *La Juive*. He lacked only the red coat.

My uncle had the face of a poker player. A smart, able business man, he was tall and lean with thin blond hair and blue eyes. Although he was not more than thirty, he held

a position of trust and earned many thousand rubles a year. His executive ability and resourcefulness were quite remarkable and in time a source of pride to me. He knew how to handle men and a curious admixture of cruelty and kindness in his disposition enabled him to properly administer a job where the handling of men of many nationalities was involved.

The only person who could destroy his equilibrium and change his poker-face expression into one of despair was his wife, my aunt. She nagged him continually about his lack of attention to her and his display of interest in other women. Who were the other women in Gornoye? Aside from a Jewish servant who had seen better days, a woman in her thirties, whose face was yellow from some hidden complaint and lack of washing, I never saw other females.

For the moment I must not overlook the women whom the Latvians and Norsemen had with them in the woods, those who were called "camp followers." The majority of these were not married to the men with whom they lived, the tall blond "beasts of the forests," as they were called. They dwelt in the bottommost pit of civilization. They were satisfied to endure the rugged men of the wilds of Polesiye, living with them in small lean-to huts put together with tree branches and covered with bark for protection from the elements. I learned later that no one could molest these women. Their feeling of love and admiration for their men was mingled with a sense of fear of the giant ax the woodsmen carried with them as their mark of trade. The ax was like the one brandished by the Lord High Executioner in *The Mikado*. Its blade was some eighteen inches long, which when attached to a beautifully curved long handle was sufficient indeed to inspire fear and respect in their ill-begotten

women. The life of the men employed by my uncle is so interwoven with my own life in Gornoye during the next eighteen months that it is best to leave them for the present, and return to my initiation into new and strange surroundings.

My father seemed ill at ease when he was introduced to my uncle's two assistants; he was hardly civil to the two men with whom I was to be associated. Uncle soon took a hand in this odd situation by sending me away to get washed up and ready for dinner. My aunt, meanwhile, ordered tea. I went back to the wagon for my belongings and carrying my long boots returned through the living room where all were seated. I could have gone through the floor: again their eyes were on me, the boy of thirteen who was about to dress like a man, and the color of my face must have resembled that of one caught in the act of committing a crime. The crime in this instance was that of trying to grow old before one's time; of that I was guilty. I stumbled to the room assigned to me, the one I was to share with the "Executioner," and for the first time gave vent to my feelings. I wept. . . .

Uncle's household, as I came to know afterwards, did not live up to the letter of the Mosaic Law, principally because of life in the wilderness and the absence of the influence of a rabbi and synagogue, but also because of his contact with certain types of Jews and gentiles from Germany who came to inspect timber. For the sake of my father, however, everything that Friday night was arranged so as to have it appear like a real orthodox home on Friday nights. The food and wine were excellent. In reply to my uncle's hypothetical question on a strictly Jewish problem, Father explained deliberately and precisely and expounded on other timely questions of the day pertaining to Judaism in Russia

and elsewhere. He touched on the Dreyfus case which was still a burning issue of the day and said that every Jew suffered with the artillery officer, Alfred Dreyfus, on Devil's Island.

Seated around the dining table they listened to him with great respect and when he prepared to depart Sunday morning they followed him to the wagon and warmly shook his hand, telling how glad they were to know him. They also assured him how well they would look after me, his sixteen-year-old son.

My stock rose considerably, for being a born optimist I placed much credence in what they told my father. I probably felt I could bask in his glory, and their promises to him seemed conclusive evidence that I had nothing further to worry about. On the next day having donned my hip boots (it was too warm for the mackinaw) I started out with Sholom Epstein for my first lesson.

A guide led us through the woods for about an hour, then stopped and said: "This is where we begin our estimating today." Epstein took out his instruments and proceeded to measure the diameter of each sizable tree. The guide sliced off a piece of bark leaving a bare spot on which my instructor marked with crayon the tree's size and the number of timbers and railroad ties it could produce according to his estimate. He told me that trees that looked absolutely healthy and straight and were at least forty inches in diameter at waist height could be cut down the coming winter. The crayon markings on the trees were for the woodsmen to read before they proceeded to convert them into pay-wood. Epstein also kept a record of each tree mark in a little book he carried with him. The process of estimating the amount of timber in each of the trees, so tall

that their tops seemed almost to disappear into the upper blue, amazed me.

"How should I ever be able to learn such an intricate science!" Epstein's answers to my questions were vague and thin. He tried to impress me with his great knowledge and several times during the day asked me whether I was really sixteen years old. In spite of my affirmative assurances he did not look convinced. "How old do you think this chap is?" he asked the guide. "I don't know his age," the guide replied, "but he was never in the woods before, that I know."

The guide, Vassily, a native of the section, knew almost every tree by heart. Though illiterate he was a man of fine character and understanding and no Epstein could change this real nobleman of nature. Of medium build and wiry, he was ashen blond and almost thirty years old. My attachment to him grew stronger daily. He was the only one who defended me in a place where I was on the defensive most of the time because of my age and the fact I was the nephew of the man in whose hands rested the destiny of most of the men. Had I taken advantage of my position I could doubtless have "gone places" by instilling fear into those who taunted me. Failing to understand my advantage and wanting most of all to overcome the deficiencies of youth and ignorance all by myself I found the road ahead thorny and rocky.

On the way home our guide led us across water-laden marshes and my new boots received a thorough baptism. Soon they began to ship water and as I walked along the sound emerging from my water-logged boots echoed like that of a horse pulling its hoofs out of the mud. Epstein laughed at the noise and muttered something under his breath. The sober-faced guide said: "When you get home be



sure to dry your feet and bathe them in hot water or you'll catch a death o' cold. Try stuffing your boots with a lot of straw or hay so they won't shrink while drying out. Then be sure to rub them with plenty of whale oil and they won't ship water anymore." In response to my gratitude he said: "You'll become a native soon enough, don't worry, and come to me with your problems." I promised I would and I kept my promise.

In the days that followed I was preoccupied with learning various phases of the business. One day it would be with my uncle who would make a final check on the estimating; the next day would find me with the guide and one of the clerks watching them receive the finished timber from the tall Swedes and Letts. The latter process seemed more exciting, for instead of sentencing a tree to oblivion through the mechanics of estimating I could survey the perfectly square, long white timbers finished off to precision by the long-bladed antedeluvian axes of the woodsmen and laid on the grass. They were the most perfectly hewn timbers I have ever seen. Our guide, Vassily, on the other hand, taught me the difference between the perfect and imperfect "schlipper," a German word they used to indicate a certain type of timber. He instructed me in measurements and how to find a hidden flaw or crack or hidden cog in the wood. Eventually I learned many phases of the business such as estimating, for one, but I admit with some shame that I never could be the sole judge of whether timber was acceptable. In response to my pleas my uncle would point out that I was entirely too young to match wits with the Norsemen who were wont to burst out in long harangues when they found "schlippers" cross-marked at each end with red crayon indicating a rejection. Possibly it had taken the woodsman an entire day to square the timber and he natu-

rally protested the loss of his work of art just because a flaw appeared after two or three weeks of drying.

Those tall woodsmen who would appear in the forest early in the spring and remain until the blasts of winter drove them out were a perfectly contented lot; and as they virtually monopolized the work, since no Russian peasant would even attempt that sort of labor, they naturally commanded high pay. So it was not unusual to see some of them turn in enough acceptance tickets at the end of the month to amount to almost two hundred rubles. In spite of that only a few had money in their pockets when they quit the woods to return to Latvia, Esthonia, and Sweden. High prices at the commissary, supervised by my uncle, where the men were provided with slabs of salt pork, dry beans, tobacco, and even clothes, ate up better than half their earnings. What was left they spent on aquavit and women in the town of Lelin, thirty miles away. There the main office of Agarkoff was situated and conducted by a distant relative of Chaim Weitzman, the well-known Zionist.

Acceptance tickets could not be cashed by my uncle, a restriction perhaps to keep him in check. Therefore the woodsmen after working a whole month would band together and walk to Lelin where they would cash their tickets minus commissary charges. Relatively few would start back for the woods. Most of them retired to an upstairs brothel kept by Chana. Hers was the only two-story house in the town of Lelin and frequently you could hear a bunch of drunken Norsemen tramping up those steps and hailing the place in song. There they would stay until their last kopek was spent on the charms of derelicts kept by the Jewish woman, Chana. There was an unconfirmed legend about Chana's place that a Swede upon finding himself in a room with a woman whom he recognized as his long-missing sister

rapped on the wall to attract the attention of the occupant of the next room calling out: "Let's change goods, I have a sister here . . ."

It seemed unusual to my innocent mind that the men rarely discussed anything aside from women and vodka or aquavit. Even those who kept a woman in the woods with them would desert her on pay day to go to Lelin for cash and Chana.

On one of those occasions, when our forest population descended on Lelin in quest of wine and women, my friend Epstein received quite a setback. He had once pointed out to me a lean-to in the woods where a Latvian made his seasonable home with a stout female, a youthful buxom brunette with expressionless eyes, who looked and acted like a hunted animal. The giant she lived with must have displayed his love and affection in more than the ordinary way, for she seldom appeared at the commissary without at least one side of her face badly bruised. The commissary had no particular storekeeper. Everyone took a hand in handing out the miserable supplies. I had the occasion to wait on her several times, but my friend Epstein would usually interfere and while waiting on her would throw in something free to make an impression. After a few times he felt sure he had impressed her. So when the giant departed for Lelin with his pay tickets, Epstein disappeared into the woods. Nobody knew where he had gone as there was no activity of any kind there. All the men were away.

Towards evening Epstein appeared—his clothes torn, his face scratched, and fear written all over him. Although he had never taken me into his confidence, he now called me into the woods and told me his tale of woe. Not only had she refused to succumb to his pleadings, this daughter of a devil, but she tore his clothes and scratched his face and

was going to tell her "husband" to boot, upon the latter's return from Lelin.

Sholom Epstein and I, the only one who knew the secret, consulted each other frequently with our eyes the next few days, expecting almost any minute to see the outraged giant come rushing with his ax straight for Epstein in search of vengeance. On the third day, after Epstein had suffered all the tortures of the damned and was literally shaking as though he suffered an extreme case of malaria, my aunt asked him whether he had drunk any water of the swamps and suggested that he take a dose of quinine. That evening the giant appeared at the door, having just returned from Chana's, where he had stayed two days. I was the one to open the door for him and when he looked at me with eyes that almost bulged out of their sockets and lips that quivered, he said: "It is not you I want to see. I want to see the man who tried to get the best of my woman while I was away."

Sholom Epstein was nowhere to be found. Uncle and Aunt looked at me realizing I knew something—but I gave them no information. Naturally they knew what the trouble was for they had seen Epstein make a dive for the back door when the blond giant appeared at the front entrance. My smart poker-faced uncle assured him that Epstein, if he ever stopped running and returned to the house, would be sent away for good and all. When the hurt woodsman departed, my uncle spoke at length and emphasized the fact that Epstein had transgressed the one accepted rule of the forest. When given a job in the timber business the "city slickers" were warned not to mix with the workers' women, that the latter were degenerates and disease-ridden, and were married and kept by men who considered them their property and whose sense of ownership went beyond the

mere jealousy displayed by any civilized or noncivilized being ever known. I asked my uncle why he did not tell me of this code. "I will have to wait for your mother's milk to dry on your lips first before I let you in on any secret moral codes of the woods," declaimed my uncle. "How little does he know," thought I to myself, "that not only do I know and understand life in the raw, but I was even kissed by a bride who held me close to her breast. But why tell him? He will not understand. . . ."

Late that night Epstein returned. I had left the back door open for him. After a sleepless night he was sent to Lelin with a letter from my uncle recommending his transfer to another branch of Agarkoff's estates.

In his place came Albert. Albert Kursinger was a young German with laughing eyes, twenty-one years of age and intelligent, whose slave I became from the first day.

Life in Gornoye should perhaps be more fully explained. Located in the wilderness with the nearest town, Lelin, thirty miles away, an assortment of people lived under its roof, each with a fair amount of intelligence and all aware that at best theirs was but a transitional period. For upon the felling of the tall timbers in the immediate vicinity the huge house we lived in would necessarily be abandoned and we would move elsewhere into another forest, providing that forest contained trees that measured forty inches in diameter, waist high. It was therefore quite natural that everyone under that roof in Gornoye lived more or less in a constant state of nervous tension. Everyone was aware that after the tall timbers had been felled human heads might fall also. The personnel would have to be curtailed to fit in with the amount of business at hand—a condition which served to create a constant state of expectancy and distrust. Shortly after my arrival in the middle of Sep-

tember several new clerks were added to meet increasing activities. When winter set in towards the end of October (late for that section of the country), the skeleton crew was increased and now Albert replaced Epstein.

A man whose name I have not mentioned, but whom I described when I first met him as a fellow who impressed me as an executioner and a servant of the Spanish Inquisition, regarded me as the only one who might inherit his mantle since I was the nephew of the superintendent. This man, Voronin, was a typical small-town character upon whom the tall timbers of the marshes of Pripet had no marked effect. He viewed life with a narrow, personal interest and disregarded anything which did not concern him. Short in stature, he used to make me laugh when talking about his "little wife" who was somewhere in White Russia in a town some hundreds of miles away. An introvert by nature he seldom mentioned her. His views on life, like his stature, were small and mean. He never went anywhere: with the end of his day's work, after filling himself with an abundance of food, he would write his daily report and immediately retire to his bed which he kept immaculately clean—the only passion he ever displayed. I remember him saying once that he hoped towards spring the roads would be passable so that he could go home for "Peisach" and sleep with his little wife. This provoked a laugh from me for I imagined him, the stocky, small, homely individual, embracing a Lilliputian creature that was his wife. "What do you know about life?" he demanded when he heard me laugh. "You are only a daydreamer and a fool, spoiled because of the nasty little books that you insist on reading, and you don't give me a chance to have a good night's rest for you keep your lamp burning into all hours of the night."

Shortly after this outburst I asked Albert if I might

share his room which he occupied alone. "Sure," said Albert. When I warned him about my reading at night, he said: "You can read all night so far as I am concerned. When I go to bed I sleep and I don't have to worry about a little woman who may be sharing her charms now with a couple of tall peasants while waiting for her husband to come home for Peisach." This served to bring Albert and me closer together, leaving Voronin completely to himself, for which he was grateful. Nor did he protest Albert's aspersions on his wife; he knew better . . . Albert was rough and ready to back up his statements with a pair of fists that even the tall Letts respected. He could move like greased lightning and when a Lett once called him a bastard for rejecting some of the "schlippers" he had hewn under the influence of aquavit, Albert made him eat that word with the most efficient pair of fists I had ever seen.

My admiration for Albert was boundless. An orphan, he had suffered the pangs of hunger in early childhood. He had to make his way alone with no helping hand and I feel certain he eventually achieved success. Somewhat primitive in his outlook on life he nonetheless showed an appreciation of things beyond daily bread. He had a golden voice that carried for miles around. We always knew when Albert was coming home for we could hear him sing about the Gretchens of Kurland, his native land.

The day's activity would start long before daylight and breakfast was a ritual, as the only other meal came late at night. Only a sandwich or two were taken along for the day in the woods. It goes without saying that we would stuff ourselves to capacity at breakfast time when we would devour hot cereal, eggs, cheese, bread and butter, and gallons of coffee.

Sometime during that winter my aunt made a trip to

Pinsk to consult a physician about her nerves. This medico must have been smart, for finding nothing the matter with her he prescribed a new diet, mostly caviar. She returned with a large case of caviar and carefully placed it under her bed. "Ah," she said to me when I asked her how she was feeling, "I am a real sick woman. The doctor told me that the only way I can get better is by eating caviar. You know I hate that stuff." With that she pointed to the box under the bed containing her "medicine." She allowed me to examine this unusual prescription and when I opened one of the large jars and saw its black contents I truly sympathized with her—with my tongue in my cheek. Had I not read in the Russian classics about the feasts of the nobility whose first bites always sank ecstatically into caviar? "I must keep that a secret," I thought. "She must never know that this so-called medicine (for which she had paid a high price) is really the food of the élite."

"I would just as soon eat herring," she continued to lament, "if salt is a tonic for one's nerves. Surely there must be more salt in a herring than in this black soot?"

From the day the caviar arrived I must have contracted a bad case of nerves myself for the jars began to disappear from under my aunt's bed—she never did find out what became of them. When spring-cleaning time came the box under the bed was empty. The jars that held the precious caviar were no more and I was as nervous as ever—for more caviar, even as I am today.

When winter's fury lashed the Pripet marshes, Uncle was highly elated and jumped for joy when the first sub-zero temperature settled for a long stay. With the marshes frozen solid he could now send word for some fifty teamsters to come to Gornoye to pull out the "schlippers," the railway ties, and telegraph poles to the canal. An open winter



(a rarity there, and when we finally had one it was disastrous for me!) meant that all material cut during the summer would have to remain in the forest and would have no market value. Therefore it was natural that Uncle should be happy when he announced at the breakfast table that he had heard the horse manure explode during the night under the window of his room: a sure sign of at least twenty-five below zero.

Within the next few days almost from nowhere there appeared teamsters with horses that had seen better days. Their owners were not much better looking. Most of the teamsters were Jews who accepted as a last resort the lowly trade of "vozaks," a special name for those who hauled wood products to the navigation center. They were housed in a large barrack not far from our house which contained also the commissary and the office. The horses were kept outside and only occasionally could one be seen with a rag over its back, a meager excuse for a blanket.

With the hauling season in full blast my work was clearly defined: I was stationed at the canal where all the deliveries of various materials were made by the teamsters. This canal was dug, I believe, not only with the primitive tools, pick and shovel, but also without the benefit of engineering skill. The only scientific contribution towards the creation of this waterway for the transportation of materials from our forest to Germany and down the Pripet and Dnieper Rivers to the Southern Russian States and the Steppes was a line staked out by a surveyor. It began at the river Slutch, a tributary to the Pripet, and continued for nearly fifty miles through the forest up to Gornoye. The canal was approximately eighteen feet wide and, as no depth had been indicated by the surveyor, it was excavated to a depth to permit the water from the River Slutch to follow the work-

ers. The water that trailed those primitive empire builders through the marshes of Polesiye was not more than a few inches deep. It was explained to me at the time that by following this method the reverse would occur, that while the water was coaxed along by the pick and shovel gang in its progress, no sooner was their job completed than the water would flow the other way, back to the river. At every few hundred feet there was a lock in the canal; it took a good many men to operate those hand-locks.

There I checked the load, stamping and marking each piece separately so that no teamster could claim payment for it a second time. Then I would give a receipt to the driver for material delivered. The receipts he eventually cashed in the main office at Lelin. At night I would make out my detailed report of deliveries made, the names of the drivers, and enclose the stub of each receipt in a large envelope which was forwarded daily by special courier to Lelin headquarters.

A heavy mackinaw with a couple of extra coats underneath, several pairs of pants, woolen socks and hip boots, completed my outfit. Walking several miles each morning through the woods six days a week regardless of the weather kept my circulation high. To keep it going for the rest of the day, at thirty-five to fifty below zero, I had to get plenty of exercise and at each load of timber I hustled around as if they were so many match sticks. This timber had to be piled according to size alongside the canal, so that when navigation finally opened in the spring only the slightest effort would be needed to dump it into the water. With activity at fever pitch all day long I do not remember ever suffering from the cold. It was only towards evening, when the sun disappeared beyond the silent panorama of the Pripet marshes and the mercury was dropping by the minute, that

a feeling of loneliness and a biting cold that made it difficult to keep one's eyelids open created a sense of panic within me—the boy who was acting like a man, a man of sixteen. But that feeling would soon disappear, for in the distance the last teamster could be heard hauck-haucking to his poor horse, the last piece of material would be stamped at each end, my blue, freezing fingers would write out the final receipt and I would start for home and warmth.

A single-barreled shotgun, my only protection against the beasts of the forest, would be over my shoulder and I would start walking a path so familiar that I never lifted my head. Only in a snowstorm would I have to gaze at landmarks on the way home, markings I had fixed in my mind: a tree bent almost double, a high, burnt stump, or a clearing guarded by only a few giant sentinels, trees to guide me to the next comforting landmark. I anticipated with great pleasure the trip home each evening over the lonely path. I was not afraid of wild beasts for I knew they were more afraid of human beings. To the best of my knowledge there was never a horse or a man attacked by any of the timberwolves of which there was an abundance and of which I shall speak afterwards.

On my way home I never accepted a ride with any of the drivers. I was in no particular hurry to get back, for my daydreaming would start with the first step: I would think of a book I had read the previous night, the description of the elements in some sea story, the adventure of an explorer in the Far North, and sometimes the details of a tragic love story vividly described by some Russian author.

My work for the day was done and I could do what I pleased with my time. More and more I grew silent and crawled into my own shell. Life in the forest affected me that way. It was too bewildering; apparently it bore me

upstream and left me in a state of uncertainty. Albert could not shake me out of my only natural reaction, and when the evening meal was over and the final report tucked away in its envelope, I would retire to my corner and devote my time to the only thing I considered worth while and which gave me most pleasure in those lonely evenings in Gornoye.

Books were provided for me by a chance acquaintance from Lelin on the only visit I made there that fall. He was a boy about a year older than I, the son of Paul Weitzman, a brother of the English chemist and Zionist leader. Each week he would forward by courier two or three books to his friend in the woods and I would return those I had already read. Most of the books were Russian translations of French, German, and English classics. Young Weitzman knew that although I had finished reading most of the Russian classics in novel form, my mind was still not quite ready to absorb more serious literature; therefore, for the time being, I was limited to novels. Instead of being alone in that forsaken place then, with teamsters for companions during more than half my waking hours, I was surrounded by those books, my closest friends.

The only book by a Russian author I read that winter was Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. After reading it twice I kept it for a long period and would open it at random just to read a page or two of the incomparable masterpiece. Byron's translated poems were also literary food that winter and my love for him was even greater when I noticed his style so closely resembled Pushkin, my hero poet. The inimitable "Mazeppa," so closely paralleled by a poem of the same name by Pushkin, made me wonder how two poets of different lands could possibly write a poem on an identical subject. The description of the vengeful father tying the lad who betrayed his daughter to the back of a wild horse, then

turning it loose to gallop to the Steppes, made me wonder how an Englishman could imagine such an episode in a setting possible only in the Kalmyk and Kyrghyz districts of the Russian steppes. When I learned afterwards that Pushkin and Byron were great friends the riddle was solved.

It must have been toward the end of October that my aunt showed me a money order purchased by the courier at Lelin for twenty-five rubles which she was mailing to my parents. That first money order gave me a queer sensation—the feeling that must come to all men who realize they are contributing to the support of a family. Little as I knew about business this much was clear to me, that twenty-five rubles a month was a large sum for a family like ours, where in some lean years the total sale of surplus grain amounted to less than five hundred rubles a year.

For the first time this situation seemed like real tragedy and I had no one with whom to share this feeling. How could I speak to strangers about such a personal and intimate matter, which concerned my family—a family that to me seemed so superior to the people around me. For in spite of the fleshpots and milk, butter, cheese, eggs, and even the caviar that I stole from under my aunt's bed, I could never erase the feeling that the people around me were identical with the vultures of the field. After all, did they not forget to speak the wise words of the Torah when they gathered at the dinner table?

The tall trees that shut off the horizon on all sides also served to make me feel thousands of miles away from my native village, and gradually I overcame my early yearning to see my people and my home again. The boy who from an early age had assisted with the farm chores and was glad on all occasions to be helpful in his home, suddenly, under the influence of a monthly money order for twenty-five

rubles, did not care to see his home again for fear of hurting the feelings of his parents.

The brave knight who marched to work every morning through the woods with a gun over his shoulders and handed out receipts to a group of teamsters, and whose signature on the receipt represented sums of money that those teamsters could collect, was only a boy after all—a mere boy of thirteen and a half years, who while trying to submerge himself in a sea of self-importance actually spent most of his time daydreaming.

The persistent nagging of my uncle by his wife, who was accusing him of affairs with other women, gave me my first glimpse into a family life which was new to me. Even in the novels I read I had not been impressed by the subject of the "eternal triangle." The heroes of those novels seemed so unreal. Only Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and *The Idiot* struck me as grim reality, but these did not seem to concern ordinary married people; furthermore they were people about whom Dostoyevsky wrote, and who were my uncle and aunt to be classed among those about whom books are written?

Her constant accusations against her husband that he was in love with all the women he saw made me wonder about my aunt's sanity. Because it was common talk around the house I once asked Vassily, our guide, whether there was any truth in the accusations. The guide was married to a strong, plain-looking peasant woman who like himself had no illusions and was quite content with her life. Vassily pondered the question and then said: "If you promise not to get mad I will tell you my opinion." I promised and he continued: "The thing that your aunt needs is about half a dozen good strong Latvians to take care of her, for your

uncle is no match for her, especially since he was bitten in a vital spot by a dog when he was a young man."

My red face spoke louder than words and Vassily's wife, who sat nearby spinning flax, stopped her work long enough to say to her husband: "What are you trying to do to this innocent boy? Can't you see that he is blushing? No man around these parts blushes." Maria's remarks made me blush all the more, for how could I tell this peasant that I was truly a man of the world?

Whatever the reason for Aunt Sara's suffering, the fact remained that she was miserable most of the time. No sooner would her husband leave the house for the day than I could tell from her expression that there was trouble brewing. She had to find a victim to whom she could talk and who would sympathize with her. From a slow tempo she would gradually work herself up into hysterics which at first lasted only a short while. She would then wash her face and begin anew a discussion as to what made men so fickle, especially her husband who, according to her lights, was so much inferior to her.

This woman of medium build, well proportioned, with a soft olive skin and rather prominent features, radiated an inner glow which was pleasant to look at. Her hair, like her eyes, was jet black and when she let down those black wavy tresses over her bosom she looked like one of Raphael's figures. She had two children; a girl of five who promised to be a replica of her mother and a boy of three who was the image of his father; small-featured, thin, expressionless, yet with a will of his own.

I remember saying to my aunt that a woman of her looks should not worry so much about her husband. "Why not start an affair of your own?" I asked, worldly wise.

While on the subject, a subject that used to have a

pleasant yet somewhat disturbing effect on me, she became confidential. "Do you remember that big Dutchman Frederick who came from Memel recently to check on the 'schlip-pers'?" she said.

"Yes, I do. I even remember you holding hands with him," I blurted.

"Did you notice that? Well, do you know what he told me? He said that hands like mine were meant for playing a grand piano and not to be spoiled with raising a family and looking after a kitchen. I could almost kiss him for that!" said my aunt softly. She spoke as in a dream and I could see the warmth of her body rising to the surface, a warmth which, when it appears, converts any woman into a desirable creature. She looked me over and apparently decided that I was only a child and that it was safe to talk to me for the release of her emotions. Unable to fix the blame on anything she made her husband the target.

She talked at length about her short-lived youthful romances, her deep-seated desire to marry a professional man so that she could take a rightful place in society. Then came her parent's choice of marrying her off to a rabbi, a little red-haired warped product of the Yeshiva. To escape this marriage she ran away from the house in the middle of the night and after many hardships landed at her rich mill-owner sister's place where she eventually met the man she married.

"What made you marry him?" I asked naïvely. Her answer spoke volumes: "He was the first man to whom I was introduced who did not speak of the Torah. He was worldly and the first evening we remained alone he was not afraid to put his arms around me. He made love to me without fear of Gehenna."

While some portions of her tirade were vague, one



thing that made me pity her from that time on was the impression she gave that there was really no cure for her condition. She would have to get old before she subsided, thought I, and I must have lifted the idea from a book I had read.

One incident concerning this aunt sticks in my memory. It was on a scorching hot day in mid-August toward the end of my first year in Gornoye when, to escape the heat, I stretched myself out; but with the heat beating down on the barn roof, it was scarcely better than lying out of doors. It was too hot even to daydream. I lay there blankly but was aroused by a commotion nearby; my eyes, accustomed to the semidarkness, fixed on the apparition of my aunt standing completely nude not more than twenty feet away. She must have dozed off and had not heard me come to the same retreat from the heat she had chosen.

For a while I lay there on my haunches peering at the naked woman, forgetful of the heat. Finally I called out to her and upon hearing my voice she did not seem unduly frightened and said: "I wish it were my husband instead of you! . . ." I suppose I wished the same. . . .

There was a wolf hunt during the first winter of my sojourn in Gornoye. The foray took place one night in the mating season. It was Vassily, the guide, who told me several days in advance that it was to take place and I was not to speak of it in the house. As it was on a Saturday and the Jewish teamsters were not working, Vassily with four other wardens and I started out on foot, each with a supply of food, sleeping bag, and several blankets, not forgetting the rifle supplied by one of the wardens.

After stalking through the wildest parts of the forest the better part of the afternoon our guide decided, after looking over any number of wolf tracks in the snow, to call

a halt and camp overnight. He picked out a spot well sheltered by old pines whose extending boughs formed a protective bower. There we rested our weary legs and when the shadows started to deepen we built a fire; after suspending a cauldron on Y-shaped sticks we filled it up with snow and proceeded to fry salt pork on heavy twigs. The guide made sure that we had a sufficient supply of wood to last us all night; to me it looked like a week's supply. As the night was not too cold, only my teeth chattered in expectation: the men around the fire were telling of the habits of the timber wolf and my hair stood on end most of the night. It must have been around midnight when Vassily took from his knapsack an earthen utensil somewhat in the shape of an urn with a small opening on top. Placing his mouth close to the opening he proceeded to make the weirdest sounds I have ever heard.

These were supposed to imitate the sounds of the male wolf calling for his mate. The reverberation of sound from that urn seemed to fill the entire air and echoes from every side multiplied in rapid succession when Vassily stopped long enough to catch his breath. After some fifteen minutes of this diabolical music one of the wardens nudged me and whispered: "*Listen!*" Sure enough in the distance which seemed close at hand the identical sound, first very low then louder and louder, floated through the night. Those answers to Vassily's song of the wild seized me with such nervous tension that I am sure I could not have taken accurate aim if the animals had been in front of me ten paces away. I was shaking and my teeth were chattering. One of the men made me drink some hot water out of the cauldron and told me to get busy and put more wood on the fire as we were in for a "night of horrors."

Soon we could see the eyes of the beasts shining like

sparks in the darkness. I was assured that the wolves would keep a respectable distance from us for fear of our bonfire, which by this time was burning high enough to singe the tops of the boughs extended over our heads. Vassily in a crouching stance with his gun ready was waiting for a victim. "You need not worry about having a wolf pelt," said one of the men to me, "if we are lucky enough to kill one, the rest of the pack will not leave enough to make a pair of gloves." Suddenly Vassily fired a shot that must have hit one, for a sudden howling and screaming filled the still night air. This continued for almost an hour then everything was quiet—no more sparks, no more wolves, no more screaming. The victim of Vassily's gun had been devoured by the rest of the pack.

We ate more bread and sizzled pork, added more wood to the fire and crawled into our home-made sleeping bags. Before many minutes the only sounds in the forest were the crackling of burning logs and the snoring of the men. I was the only one who kept vigil, my eyes wide open, peering all around me, seeing imaginary eyes of imaginary wolves, expecting any minute that something would spring at me from the darkness and wondering how those men could sleep so well in the face of such danger.

Toward morning, after a substantial breakfast of the preceding night's menu and after looking at the gruesome remains of the wolf, a bloody mess on the snow with even some of the bones scraped, we were ready to start for home. Only the wolf's head, the mouth wide open showing the frightful looking fangs, remained more or less intact and served to inspire fear within me on many a night afterwards.

A few days later I witnessed the slaughtering of a cow in the back yard. The legs were bound, drawn together with ropes, and then followed the slow droning ritual of the

"schochet," who, after deliberately selecting the spot on the throat, drew his enormous knife and sealed the doom of the cow. I refused to eat the meat of that cow, for I could still see the remains of that wolf devoured by the pack.

With the advance of spring, activities in our section of the woods were increasing rapidly. My uncle had the faculty of making men under him follow him blindly and accomplish things not so much for remuneration as for the glance and smile he would bestow for services rendered. Even I, his nephew and his severest critic in my mind, eagerly sought a smile and a "well done" upon the completion of the day's work, when I would hand him the daily report on the number of pieces shipped through the canal. Like a hungry man happy over the "crumbs" handed out by my uncle I would seek his sparsely scattered praise. It takes men of his type in any age to get things done, political and economic systems notwithstanding.

We had very little snow that winter and the materials had to be shipped out quickly through the narrow canal along some fifty miles to the River Slutch and thence to other destinations. The last teamster had departed, a sure sign of spring, and the materials prepared during the summer and fall had been drawn out and piled up alongside the canal. From that point every one of the executive force worked feverishly to manage the crews that were rolling the materials into the canal: shutting the lock again so as to prepare for the next batch. Along the entire path of the canal crews were doing the same thing from early morning to late at night.

That must have been the first spring of my life when I was not given to daydreaming—there was no time for it. Walking every morning through the once solid paths that were now almost knee-deep with water or with ice in some

spots where the sun had not penetrated, made it a difficult task and kept my mind too occupied to appreciate even the time of year. What did I care for the works of art of the Eternal Creator? I had a deadline to meet—the fifteenth of April was the last day for my sector to be cleared, when the last “schlipper” or railroad tie would forever part with its native woods, eventually to be put through the baptism of a hot oil bath and placed somewhere in a bed of crushed stone with two steel rails over it.

The sensation caused by the sudden ending of spring transportation activities must have reacted on me like brakes stepped on while going full speed. It might have been the realization in the back of my mind that the work lacked permanency, that the same process would have to begin all over again, and that perpetual motion, instead of forging ahead, moves only in circles and gets nowhere. It may be the same let-down one suffers when watching a horse race or any other sport. When the race is over and the din of the crowd has subsided, there is an empty feeling that can be replaced only by the next race—but not always. I should hate to think that the let-down after each race is inspired by the final “race.”

My enforced idleness, from the termination of shipping to the beginning of estimating when the big fellows, the Letts and Swedes, would return for the cutting, was spent largely in eating, sleeping, and gazing at no particular object. Only once was this monotony broken by a trip to Lelin where I stayed for a few days with my friend, young Weitzman, who with his fine character did much to alleviate my moodiness. He was kind and considerate and seemed to have understood what was passing through my mind. Our long walks on the muddy streets of Lelin and his encouragement about the future were a great inspiration.

"After all," said he, "at your age what you are doing now should be a great experience to you. You can always drop it and go back to the career of education. No doubt that's on your mind and it was only interrupted by conditions beyond your control. Why not, then, learn all you can from a situation completely new to a boy like yourself?" For a chap who was only a year older than me he possessed not only intelligence but wisdom beyond his years, a fine spirit, and plenty of poise. Coming from a family of learned people and natural leaders he inherited their superb qualities, and I hope that wherever he is he has made his place among the leaders of the world.

So with a supply of new books and a determination to see it through I returned to Gornoye about the middle of May, 1902, ready to take whatever there was in store for me. Except for a few expeditions into the woods far away from the circle of our activities, with an occasional stay to watch the wild life at the break of dawn, a picture beyond my ability to describe, nothing of particular interest occurred. Even the outbursts of Aunt Sara failed to arouse in me any undue interest. As time went on my feelings for her turned slowly from indifference to contempt and from contempt to hatred. I saw in her a power of destruction and often when I heard her threaten to leave her husband and run away into the wilderness as far as her "eyes and feet" could carry her and become the prey of vultures, I wondered why she did not carry out her threat. I knew that she would not go very far before cold feet and faint heart would make her run for cover.

Late one evening after an extreme outburst she ran into my room with her hair hanging down and announced that she was running away. I looked at her blankly and uttered not a sound. At first Uncle took her escapade as a

joke and told me not to worry about my aunt. It was seldom that he exchanged confidences with me but I asked him what he thought she might do, where she might go. "I am sure she is hiding somewhere near the outlying buildings and will return when she gets hungry, unless the rain that is threatening brings her home sooner," he replied. Time went on—he became uneasy. He hated to show any doubt of his own prediction; he tried to laugh it off. I could see the man was becoming more and more upset; the quick turning of his eyes toward the door, the way he heeded every sound, told me a far different tale from the one he tried to imply. Perhaps three or four hours after she had left "his bed and board," her husband, who was by this time completely crushed, came in to ask me whether I would accompany him on a search. I pretended I was reading when he entered the room, for I began to wonder whether some wild beast or a big Lett had helped my aunt carry out her threat. So Uncle and I, armed with kerosene lamps and guns, started out. After searching the various outlying buildings, the winter quarters of the teamsters, the storage house, the barn, and similar places, we decided to separate, each of us to scour a section of the woods near the house. After what seemed hours I returned empty-handed having almost got lost on the way back. I decided to wake up Vassily and have him help me continue to look for the body, for by that time I was sure she had taken herself to a better world.

When I entered the house my thoughts were concerned with all the things that would have to be done when her body was finally found. But I encountered a lovey-dovey picture of the Silly Symphony type: my aunt was sitting on a bench near the wall with her raven black hair still hanging down; her eyes shed quiet tears of joy and sorrow, reminding one of a sunshower after a storm, and her husband, that

big strong man who knew how to manage all those powerful Norsemen, sitting on the floor with his head on her knees, petting her and telling her how much he loved her. "Catch me falling like that for any woman," said I to myself, who only a few minutes before had tried to picture the best way of informing my mother about the departure of her sister and all the other inconveniences that might befall me with this calamity.

My appearance did not seem to disturb them for she was too happy, in spite of tears, over the conquest of her husband, the proud man at her feet, a position she undoubtedly had read about in some silly romance. On the other hand, he too was elated over her return, which meant the saving of his job, the thing he valued most and the loss of which he greatly feared. For I feel certain that in spite of my conviction that he had no real love affairs with other women he did not love my aunt, considering all the explosions and hysterics he had to withstand in the years of their married life.

The season of surveying new sections of forest and estimating was at hand. A detailed daily report had to be made in writing to my uncle, who became more and more critical and more exacting from the time his runaway wife had made him look ridiculous and humble in my presence. I could see that the incident had pierced his armor and that I was the witness to the destruction of his ego.

I have witnessed many a crack-up in the egos of men who considered themselves pretty good. Sometimes it was liquor and other times it was a woman. In most instances they accepted the situation with grace and helped themselves out of their difficulties. The weakest part of my uncle's armor was his lack of grace and that must have been his reason for directing his vengeance at me, the innocent victim.



Once when I was walking back from an unusually grueling day's work in the woods, where distances between producing trees had to be measured and diagrams drawn with the stifling heat making each motion a task, we happened to meet. I suggested a rest at the edge of a clearing where there was a slight breeze. He looked me over and bracing his shoulders back tried to hide his own fatigue, as if to imply: "You poor weakling," but finally he said: "If you need a rest I will sit with you a while." The strenuous day and the terrific heat must have dulled my mind. I groped for a quick retort. Fortunately for me I did not say what was in my mind. I merely laughed, kicked at a small stone underfoot, and said: "It is you who needs a rest!" With that I walked home by another path. By failing to consult him the following morning about the best plan for the day's surveying (a daily custom) I must have aroused his ire, for that evening he told me in the presence of my aunt that no boy could behave as I did and get away with it. I refused to be drawn into argument and for the remainder of that summer we hardly spoke to each other.

When my aunt tried to teach me how to act I merely listened and made no answer. My development, mentally and spiritually, was arrested that summer—more and more did I become a peasant. It must have been the revolt within me against conditions as they were and in saying "from whence will come my help" that encouraged my intellectual retardment. Even my "friends," the books, must have suffered a blow for I used to look at them with hatred. Regardless of my immediate surroundings, bad as they seemed, the fact that I was merely a source of revenue to my family must have weighed heavily on my spirits. My lack of self-importance suffered the more when letters from home emphasized I was not to forget to show gratitude to my very

dear aunt and uncle for their kindness. I resented the advice.

As before a storm the air was breathless and all animation seemed to be suspended toward the end of that summer. The clouds seemed to have been gathering from every direction, getting ready for the deluge, and when it broke I was the only one who showed no emotion. The weekly courier arrived from Lelin one late afternoon with a message from headquarters: "SUSPEND ALL OPERATIONS. DISCHARGE ALL MEN. AGARKOFF IS DEAD."

It took a few days to round up all the woodsmen and at the end of the week the only sounds that could be heard were those of the native forest population: the birds in the daytime, the screech owl and the wild beasts at night. The reverberations of a falling tree, the echo of the ax, the songs of the woodsmen and their drunken orgies were no more. Voronin and Albert departed with the rest of the immediate population and the only persons who remained in Gornoye, besides myself, were my aunt and the yellow-faced servant who looked more sour than ever. Uncle had gone to Lelin and was not expected back for some time, for it was anticipated that he would remain away until something definite was known about the disposition of the Agarkoff estate. That nobleman, as far as I was concerned, could have been a phantom for he was never discussed. No one knew him or saw him in our vicinity.

I expected hourly in the first few hours to be told to start for home—back to the farm; but as the hours grew into days and the days into a week it became apparent that my aunt had different plans. In the first place she needed someone to talk to and her loyalty to her sister, my mother, must have had some bearing also, for she finally told me not to worry but to wait until the estate was settled, that if her

husband remained, he would also find a place for me. Toward the end of August he returned and from the expression on his face I could tell that he had not spent all of his time on estate business. He looked rested and satisfied and if he did not visit Chana's brothel, he undoubtedly found a place more suitable to his station. My aunt did not fail to notice what I saw but with a different perspective. Red and gray spots, the sign of a storm, appeared on her face and her first greeting to him was "Noo—how many women did you sleep with?!" For once I was sorry for the man she had married and I turned away in disgust.

The feeling that comes to people who find themselves face to face with situations of that sort, when they instinctively turn towards someone who understands and sympathizes, must have for the first time pervaded my uncle, for instead of explanations to his wife he followed me to my room. We both sat on the edge of my bed without uttering a word for the longest while. I finally suggested a walk in the woods until the storm should blow over. And this man, more than twice my age and a master of strategy, followed me meekly outdoors. After getting a safe distance from the house he told me that the entire estate, consisting of several thousand acres of woodland, was divided under the late Agarkoff's will among his three surviving daughters, each one married. He related further that operations would start immediately and owing to the fact that he was to retain but one clerk it was natural that the main office desired him to keep Voronin. Albert and myself were to be transferred immediately to Berezniki, within eight miles of Gornoye, directly across the big marsh. This marsh through some subterranean heat-producing element hardly ever froze until forty or even lower below zero. For almost nine months of the year a cloud covered it, a cloud generated by the steam

that emerged from the bowels of the marsh. Many an unfortunate beast, bear or wolf, when being chased by a hunter and caught in that marsh, would quickly disappear below the solid-looking surface. The natives, to maintain communication from the village of Berezniki to the villages east of the marsh, had laid logs tied with heavy rope in zig-zag fashion to pick out the better spots. Even these disappeared after a heavy rain and new ones had to be provided. Walking across those logs, across that marsh, where a misstep meant slow death, was indeed to me a real adventure. For had not the natives told me of the gruesome things that happened in the marsh? Even the ages of children and the dates of important local events were reckoned from the time Ivan lost his life in the marsh. There was one story which I never took seriously about a bear that came walking on his hind legs and approached one of the women who was digging potatoes in the field. The bear extended its paw to her, pointing to a splinter in the other paw, and she, after her fright passed, obligingly extracted it. From that day the bear would visit this peasant woman every once in a while and bring her honey from a beehive he had just robbed. I never saw that woman but I did see many hives robbed by bears.

On the following Sunday Albert and I were walking across this much-dreaded bog on our way to Berezniki. Not being able to carry our belongings we sent them on with a courier to Lelin and from there to our destination, sixty miles all around whereas the shortest distance was only eight miles, Berezniki being directly opposite Gornoye.

Berezniki, a village about the size of the one where I was born, had a special building constructed for the exploitation of the Agarkoff forest. This section became the legacy of a daughter who lived somewhere in France with her hus-

band. The management was entrusted to a man who had been superintendent of the section under Agarkoff. His name was Rockman, a distant relative of Weitzman. Of medium height, fair complexion, and perfectly rounded-out features with a red short-cropped moustache and hair slightly combed back in the style of a Prussian officer, he seemed like a man of learning and poise and an iron will.

His wife, a soft, rather pleasingly plump young woman with gray eyes and heavy blond, almost platinum hair, did not look Jewish in spite of the fact that her father was a prominent rabbi somewhere in the Ukraine. They had a daughter about six or seven years old, the image of her father.

Neither our new superintendent nor his good-looking wife attracted Albert's attention or for that matter mine. A stately, tall, willowy, chestnut-haired maiden with soft brown eyes and long lashes, with a pert little nose, a saucy small mouth and pearly teeth, with small well-rounded breasts, was our distraction. At his first glance Albert's mouth began to water. This beauty was the servant of the house and belonged to an age when cosmetics were seldom used, especially by the class she came from—poor Jewish tradespeople. There was hardly a sign in her face to indicate that she was aware of her beauty. Only an optimistic mistress of the house, such as hers was, would have engaged such a strikingly beautiful girl as a domestic.

I must say that I took the situation in at a glance: Albert's age and looks and his ability for small talk with women immediately eliminated me as a rival and I accepted the fact gracefully without a murmur. That girl never knew of my secret glances in her direction nor did she ever realize how much of a disturbing factor she became throughout the time of my stay in Berezniki. She had no education and was

not able to read even Jewish, so I could not capitalize my only stock in trade—books.

So she became Albert's girl and the only time I had murder in my heart was one night when I came home late, after spending some hours in a camp listening to the songs and stories of the Letts, and found my side of the bed occupied by the servant in the arms of Albert. This was something new, but my first impulse was to ask her to move over and make room for me. Albert told me to get the hell out of the room and wait for a while in the living room. He said he was having an awful time as it was with this young tigress. I obeyed his order without protest, as I had all his previous orders, but my feelings while waiting in the living room were bitter.

At breakfast, before the superintendent and his wife appeared, the girl berated me in a sobbing voice and said I was even worse than Albert, for as a Jew I should have tried to protect the good name and reputation of a coreligionist from the attack of a Christian.

"Don't believe a word of it," Albert told me. "This tigress could not be attacked by anybody. She is well able to take care of her virtue without your help." From his expression, knowing Albert, I could tell that he was speaking the truth.

The undersized, underfed, yellow-faced, cross-eyed Jewish shoemaker of the village finally won the heart and hand of that girl—and I was confronted once more with an insoluble riddle.

Our new boss lacked a sense of humor and placed the forestry business on a much higher plane than my uncle. He liked to lecture us each morning on things which to Albert and myself were "old stuff." A pedant, with a certain lack of self-assurance, he not only lacked confidence

in those under him but, arriving at a definite conclusion on action to be taken in some problem, would start immediately to unsell himself on his own idea. Neither a scholar nor a student of the Jewish Theological School, this particular trait seemed unusual since he possessed all the mannerisms of one trained in polemics. Aside from that trait he was fairly easy to get along with; he feared only the possible arrival of an inspector from headquarters and the finding of something amiss.

His wife was so thrifty that the food suffered a good deal by comparison with the fleshpots of Gornoye. The work, generally speaking, was not as hard, if for no other reason than the boss's insistence on double-checking the estimating surveys of Albert and myself, his only two assistants. To avoid any possible criticism we used to take our time in determining the number and size of marketable timber each tree could produce. Mistakes were permissible and expected in Gornoye but taboo in Berezniki.

Shortly before the Jewish holidays (Rosh Hashana) a special courier brought a letter from home which was delivered to Bornoye, stating that my brother who had recently completed his third year at the Commercial School in Warsaw had been taken ill with a kidney ailment and had not yet returned to school. I found the letter upon my return from work toward evening and stopped only long enough to turn in the report. Then I followed the courier to Gornoye across the bog.

I arrived late in the evening tired and worried and was scolded by my aunt for walking the distance after a day's work; she assured me there was nothing to worry about. The only reason she had despatched the letter to me, she said, was to keep me informed. I did not spend much time talking with her for she showed no interest. Uncle, on the other

hand, seemed glad to see me, talked at length about my new job and made sure I had something to eat before retiring. At dawn the following morning I returned to Berezniki and throughout the trip was engrossed in the thought of home and my family gathered around a sick member, each one trying to do something for him while I was away in this forsaken wilderness.

My imagination magnified the seriousness of everything. I worked as in a trance the following days and when Rosh Hashana came all operations were suspended for two days. The wife of the superintendent tried her best to create a holiday spirit even in Albert the gentile. This included going to prayer meeting at the "schochet's" (a Jewish cleric of some veterinary knowledge authorized to slaughter cows, chickens, and so forth for food consumption). He stood about four feet eight inches high and looked consumptive; he had a roly-poly wife and ten children, the oldest about fourteen and the youngest an infant. His house looked and smelled like a pigsty. I was impressed by the fact that in spite of the filth, poverty, children, and even the falsetto voice of the schochet (who acted as cantor and sang the prayers so familiar to me), they all seemed to be very happy.

Like a group of marionettes his entire family gathered around us and, with voices and expressions that sounded like the babel of the builders of a stairway to heaven, those little unwashed brats turned out to be the gayest poverty-stricken family I have ever known. What did a cough, a running nose, watery eyes or any other physical ailment matter to them? They were just happy with the Lord, the Lord of Israel. Their father sang the prayers, prayers that brought me still closer to home in my thoughts, prayers my father was so careful and precise in enunciating; and little did the children know the mistakes the schochet made, the



words he skipped, the prayers he mixed up, nor did he seem to care or worry. He was sure that those at the prayer meeting knew no better.

At the passage where forgiveness is asked for adultery committed during the year I laughed out loud. Even my new boss got into the spirit of this burlesque and remarked to me that the schochet had better not commit adultery else he would have to enlarge his headquarters.

With the second and last day of Rosh Hashana and the end of the vacation my worry about my sick brother started anew. On Saturday afternoon we were all invited for a treat at our schochet's home, the forest superintendent and his assistants and a lot of teamsters to whom winter meant a livelihood. We remained there until late in the evening and on my way back to our house I encountered the courier from Gornoye. He bore a verbal message: I was to return with him to Gornoye at once. There was a messenger from home waiting to take me back as my brother was very ill and was not expected to live. Quietly I followed that messenger of evil tidings over the swamps back to Gornoye; fearing the worst I did not give myself to conversing nor did he.

A short while before, in the schochet's house, we had a good time singing songs that were popular in those days. There was no song in my heart on my way back to Gornoye. The house was dark, everyone was asleep as it was after midnight when we arrived, but I recognized our horse and wagon and hired man fast asleep. I shook him and asked him how serious was my brother's condition. He merely said "quite serious," and that was all I could get out of him for the next three days while driving home.

My aunt had not held out any hope to me and had refused to discuss anything on the Sunday morning I departed for home. On Wednesday, the day before Yom

Kippur, I arrived. The familiar mile mark—a windmill on top of a hill, conducted by a man with the biggest nose I have ever seen—told me I was home, and had it not been for the haze that cold and raw fall morning I could have seen our house from there. I tried to peer into the distance of that short mile offering a prayer that my brother might survive. A short space from our house one of the neighbors drove by and I was about to ask him how my brother was but changed my mind. If my brother was dead I did not want to hear it from a stranger.

The sun was rising through a mist on the southwestern horizon when we drove into the long narrow road of our farm. I saw my father pacing the meadow in the rear of the house with his hands firmly clasped behind his back as if he were trying to solve a problem. I leapt from the wagon, rushed over and put my arms around him: "How is Brother?" I gasped. "He has taken a long journey," Father replied.

I could not or refused to understand. "Where did he go?" I asked. "Never to return . . ." said my father haltingly. "He died Saturday, two days after the hired man went after you."

The dry-eyed members of the family, in spite of the early morning, were wide awake awaiting my arrival. There were no exclamations, no outbursts, and only the pictures and mirror turned face towards the wall (a Jewish custom for the first seven days of mourning) seemed to bespeak with a still voice—the voice of death. I could see from the faces around me how much they must have suffered, especially Mother. Then, as since, I could not cry, but something within me seemed to reproach me for not expressing any sorrow in the only way known to a people who have always worn their hearts on their sleeves. Much as I felt like it no

tears came and I retired to my room. I was left alone for what seemed to me an age, when finally I was persuaded by my sister to come out and have some breakfast. But there was a lump in my throat; I couldn't eat and I couldn't speak.

Father and I finally took a long walk through the fields and I remember he tried to convince me that Brother was in a better world, a world where sorrow and want were unknown. I listened for a long time to the expressions of his deep-seated faith and wished I could feel the way he did. . . .

That final visit to the village of my birth left a lasting impression on me, the sort of tragic and unforgettable impression that is left with anyone unfortunate enough to have a last visit so associated with tragedy. Father broke down while reading from the Scriptures the next day, Yom Kippur, the line, "and thou shalt sacrifice thy son Isaac." Sympathy was extended by the congregation for our bereavement.

I was complimented for my robustness and was told how much I had grown in one year. After a sad parting I started back for Berezniki, having assured my family that I would continue to remit each month my entire salary, less actual expenses. This must have been of some solace to them considering the money they had expended for the medical care necessarily imported from a distance of some miles to administer to my brother. I do not recall the trip back nor my arrival in Berezniki. The fall season was longer than usual and a continuous drizzling rain did nothing to cheer my spirits. Day after day I would work in silence. There were no more outbursts or even remarks or side glances at the beautiful servant; nor did I receive much encouragement to forego my morbidity—they let me alone.

My appetite was poor and I began to lose weight. The daily task of walking fifteen or twenty miles through mud and underbrush in the woods must partly have caused this. When winter came I braced myself and gave up composing, both in my mind and on paper, poems to my deceased brother. One day, while walking back from an extremely hard day's work, my legs seemed to buckle under me and I had to rest every few minutes, for something seemed to be interfering with my breathing. A feeling of helplessness, of being alone in the woods with snow falling several miles from my destination, took hold of me. Every once in a while I felt I was losing consciousness and I do not know how I finally reached the first settlement. With the help of one of the peasants who carried me most of the time I flopped into the house of the superintendent.

There I removed my mackinaw and heavy hip boots and, realizing that something was seriously the matter, lay down on the couch in the living room. Occasionally I awoke to receive some hot tea the superintendent's wife forced on me, but I remained on the couch without removing my clothes for five days. The pains in my chest were like needles and I could not rest comfortably in any position. I must have passed most of the time in a semidelirious state and did not particularly notice or care what was taking place.

On the fifth day my aunt in Gornoye was notified of my illness by a special messenger and on the next day she arrived in a fine sleigh, a troika with any number of bells, and was dressed in an expensive fur coat and hat to match. She asked why she had not been notified sooner, and ordered me wrapped up in blankets and furs and carried to the sleigh. Before I was removed they gave me two glasses of tea with lemon. This and the blankets and fur coats, together with fresh air saturated with hoar frost, was like a tonic

to me. I started to perspire and with that the weight on my chest lifted and I began to breathe more easily. The troika with the bells seemed to fly over the road closely guarded on each side by fir trees hundreds of years old. There came to me the sound of horses' hoofs against the solid frozen snow, the pealing of bells, and the heavy breathing of the horses while flying through the distance—everything seemed to have been poured into one chord of sound, a symphony of carefree lightness or a lullaby of sweet dreams.

I fell asleep before we reached Lelin but I remember being carried into the doctor's house and feeling completely at peace with the world. The doctor, a tall bony fellow who lacked the usual professional air, helped remove my garments which were sticking from perspiration close to my body. Then he applied the stethoscope several times to my chest, looked at me with amazement and said, apparently to my aunt: "He has pneumonia but has just passed the crisis." This statement, while it had a devastating effect on my aunt, did not worry me at all. I felt fine and could take long breaths without a million needles trying to interfere.

After the doctor had given my aunt instructions for my care he ordered them to take me immediately to Gornoye. I slept all the way back. I awoke the following morning in my old room where I had spent so many evenings trying to unravel the great mystery of a boy in the process of transition towards becoming a man. The care lavished upon me for the next two weeks was bewildering: the breakfasts in bed, the port wine and the eggs and the roasts, made the world seem glorious. Even the cynical explanation of my aunt that she was doing it for her sister, as she could not see her lose another son so quickly, did not lessen my obvious pleasure. The daily trip to the storehouse to be placed on

the platform scales to be weighed seemed to me ridiculous, for I felt fine and was being suffocated with kindness, a kindness I did not and could not appreciate.

When the scales in the storehouse indicated that I had regained sufficient weight I was free to return to Berezniki. I almost shouted for joy while riding back on the same sleigh, with the same troika, across the big bog that was now frozen solid under a temperature of forty below zero.

It was good to get back into harness and feel useful again. Away from home for more than a year now, my thoughts gradually crystallized into the definite knowledge that I was completely on my own and that I had not only to look out for myself but also to provide support for my parents. With this in mind I made special efforts to please the superintendent and to renew the trust he had had in me before my illness. But things did not seem to go well for the very reason that he lacked the ability to carry out his own convictions.

Another spring came and with that the feverish activity of shipping was in full swing. To me, the "veteran," it was purely routine, and the excitement and romance of the first spring were lacking. Not being born to leadership my new boss failed to inspire the feeling that makes men go over the top, to build barricades or to wage pogroms against less fortunate men. When the spring activities ended and the last report was in the hands of the courier, a feeling of uncertainty settled suddenly over our staff. Our superintendent told us that for the time being we would have to wait for further orders before starting to estimate and two weeks later the final blow came.

The son-in-law of Agarkoff, whose wife had inherited that section of the forest, decided against continuing the sale of materials; the office was to be closed at once and the entire

staff discharged. It was rumored that after reading a few conservation papers about the deplorable way the forests of Russia were being ransacked he had decided to "save the trees."

I don't recall feeling at any time more desolate over the loss of a job as when I quit the mud-bespattered huts of the village of Berezniki. The world seemed suddenly to have crashed about my ears.

It was a very disheartened boy who walked one beautiful spring afternoon across the big bog over the slippery logs on the way to Gornoye. After crossing the bog and reaching high land an unusual sound attracted my attention and a brown bear loomed ahead, a hundred feet from me, its front paws hugging a tree. I was paralyzed with fear and recalled the lesson Vassily had given me to start walking backwards while looking straight at the animal. "Never turn around and run," he had said, "look straight at him and walk backwards." The big bear, after sniffing once in my direction, apparently decided to look for more tender game or else he was not hungry, for he quickly clumped into the underbrush. It was only then that I remembered the gun over my shoulder, loaded with a big shell for just such an occasion, and with my numbed faculties restored I continued on my way. To abate the fear within me I occasionally fired my gun at no particular object.

For the first time in my adolescence I was eating humble bread—the bread that was my aunt's and for which she could not deduct each month from my wages. Then, as since, whenever the occasion arose, bread that I could not fully pay for has been obstructed by a lump in my throat. For several days I remained in Gornoye with nothing in view. I was abashed at meeting the gaze of my uncle and aunt whom I expected momentarily to ship me off to my village,

the thing I feared most. I tried hard to make myself inconspicuous and spent most of my time in the woods reading myself to sleep under the trees. To make myself somewhat useful I would bring back a hatful of mushrooms, thereby helping to earn my keep. One late afternoon while the aroma of those young forest mushrooms (a fragrance that only those who have picked them will appreciate) was suffusing the kitchen my uncle asked me what I intended to do with myself. To my reply that I would be willing to do most anything to earn a livelihood he told me with a smile that spoke volumes that he had a plan whereby he thought I could make some money. He then proceeded to outline a proposition which I wasted no time in accepting. "You have noticed," he said, "that the only part of the trees that is being exploited at present is the trunk up to the upper branches. The rest is left to rot where it falls. If those branches should be cut away you would find a nice log twenty-five or thirty feet in length and in its thinnest part not less than six inches in diameter." He offered to finance the payroll for a gang of men to reclaim all those treetops during the summer months and he also guaranteed to find a market for them during the winter. I would supervise the gang.

"This will be entirely your business and, for financing the cost of labor plus your keep and plus paying the Agra-koff estate a minimum sum for each top, the balance will be divided fifty-fifty," my uncle explained.

It would not have mattered what his proposition was like; all I was seeking was some useful occupation, I told him. Again he reassured me of his confidence and he told me to start immediately to round up a gang and get to work.

The rest of that summer witnessed my getting up at



dawn and returning way past sunset six days a week, tired but happy.

At the age of fifteen I became a business man, and strange as it may sound it did not produce any marked effect on me for the job had its roots a year and a half earlier in the capacity of clerk for my uncle. In my own judgment I was a full-fledged grownup who had rightfully taken his place among other men of importance. I even forgot that only a short time back I had picked mushrooms to make myself somewhat useful in my uncle's household. I must have had beginner's luck for it could not have been brains and business ability that carried me through successfully in my first venture. Late that fall there were several thousand tops of trees from twenty-five to forty feet in length all nicely cleaned up and trimmed, each one put away with loving care in spots where I could easily find them when winter came. Throughout the woods the logs awaited the first frost so that my teamsters could get busy and deliver them to the shores of the familiar canal. Except for a few conferences my uncle and I had about financial arrangements we had little to say about the venture, for after all it was not supposed to be known that he was in the picture and I was strictly on my own. Even the payment to the Agarkoff estate for the materials salvaged by me was made by me personally at the Lelin office when I went there for a well-earned vacation.

It was no longer the mooncalf who bemoaned his lot to young Weitzman; instead it was a proud business man who came to brag no end about his achievements and to picture a brilliant future for himself in the forestry business.

Winter arrived early that year and the familiar faces of the teamsters appeared shortly after the Jewish holidays. I must have given some of them cause for merriment when

I announced that those who were not employed at once by my uncle could come to work for me. They wanted to know if I had cornered the cranberry market. They looked at me with awe when it finally dawned upon them that they were talking to a young business man and no longer a clerk. My vanity must have been fully appeased that winter with the teamsters and Vassily and others showering compliments on my head for my ability and knowledge of the business. Only rarely the thought intruded that it was Uncle's idea and not my own, that as a matter of fact I was merely executing the conception of another.

Towards spring Uncle, after an extended trip to Pinsk and Novogrudok, the former being the county seat and the latter a small town on the west side of the Pripet River, returned with the announcement that in his travels he had sold my treetops to Friedmann Brothers, dealers and jobbers in logs, for a price that should leave nine hundred rubles net profit. Of course I was to be careful in navigating those treetops through the canal into the mouth of the River Slutch, the point of delivery to the aforementioned firm. I felt hot and cold all over. The business man who for almost a year had kept on producing and delivering, bossing gangs of men and teamsters, was about to fall into a large sum of money, something that in the general scheme of things seemed hard to realize. I knew that my uncle was to receive half of the profit but even half, four hundred and fifty rubles, was a sum I could hardly visualize. My aunt who was present at this conversation managed to take some of the conceit out of me. She reminded me that out of my share of profit at least half would have to go home to my parents to whom for nearly a year now no money at all had been forwarded. The balance would remain in her possession as a nest egg for future business. She also told me

that for a whole year I had not been charged one cent for my board and that therefore the half of the profit which belonged to my uncle was in reality the price of my board. Her husband signaled to me not to continue the conversation and said:

“You used to charge him six rubles a month for board, which is a fair price. Surely he did not eat four hundred and fifty rubles’ worth these past ten months.”

With that he left the room.

Up to a certain adolescent period of my life I retained the lesson of respect to my elders and regardless of how I felt towards my aunt I never let her know it. It was not my timidity—I was not timid.

The final delivery of logs that spring must have taken place sometime in May about fifty miles away from home where the Slutch empties into the Pripet River. There, in a small hamlet, I had all my treetops bound together in rows fifty logs to a unit and each unit fastened to the next one with a strong rope made from home-grown hemp. There I rested on my laurels, the first fruits of my efforts as a producer in the forestry business. Even Columbus could not have been more proud of his flotilla than I of that float of treetops waiting for the checking-up by a clerk from the Friedmann Brothers of Novogradok. There, while boarding in a houseboat on the river, I saw my first steamboat of the Pripet-Dnieper Navigation Company, plying between Pinsk and Kiev and farther down into Southern Russia along the Dnieper. The sidewheeler passing by the houseboat looked like a Juggernaut in spite of its slow speed—to me it seemed to have the speed of a zephyr.

I had to wait for two weeks for a final acceptance of my flotilla, anchored the while not far from the houseboat. Besides eating quantities of excellent food and exploring

the swift-moving river I spent most of my time fishing with three of my trusted crew. I had the scare of my life when my hook snagged something that looked like a bundle of clothes but turned out to be a drowned man. Two years later I saw many men and women dead and dying, but none gave me the same sickening sensation as the corpse of that drowned man at the mouth of the Slutch as it empties into the Pripet River.

The final check-up was made and with that I parted with the beautiful river and started for Gornoye the same evening. The River Slutch in the spring of the year is almost half a mile wide at this point and it was in a flat-bottomed boat that my crew and I made our way back to the canal where a team could be secured for the drive to Gornoye. The cool breathless spring night and the three men paddling upstream against the swift-moving currents stirred me again to daydreaming. The stillness of the night and the dark giant trees on either side of the river under a full moon, which produced unusual lighting effects through the thick branches of ancient fir trees, left me spellbound and it must have had the same effect on my oarsmen. They were silent most of the way—not even a song came from them. The tableau to me was fear-inspiring—a fear that still lingered possibly because of the unknown corpse that had dangled from my fishing hook.

Within a week after my return to Gornoye my uncle came back from another trip and after flashing a number of hundred-ruble bills, our capital, told me that Friedmann Brothers had a job for me, for the summer only, to take care of the logging crews on the Pripet and Dnieper Rivers.

Flotillas of logs, as I have described previously, would be navigated down the Pripet River into the Dnieper, thence to various destinations such as Kremenchuk, Yekaterinoslav,

and so on, in Southern Russia. A flotilla was in the care of a crew of men headed by a foreman called a "dubovik," meaning "of oak." Most of the duboviks I knew looked and acted as if they were made of oak. To take a long flotilla of logs through treacherous streams without a smash-up required men of nerve and muscle equal to the strength of oak.

I had to meet each crew at a given point and replenish their commissary. As the crews got paid for each trip at their destination I had to provide, besides their grub and transportation, facilities for their return trip mostly by steamer. In addition to providing food and first-aid supplies I would also accept shipments of logs at points along the Pripet from various producers who dealt with the Friedmann Brothers.

I have traveled many miles since but rarely with such enjoyment as I derived that summer as the traveling representative for the two brothers from Novogrudok. With an unlimited expense account and a generous supply to purchase food supplies for my navigation crews I could not help but suffer from self-importance. Though it was against orders my real pleasure came from spending a couple of days and nights in the little straw tents pitched on the logs that were taken by the current to Southern Russia. On those floats, sometimes more than a mile long, I learned how much stamina a human being possesses. To watch the front part of the float swiftly carried toward shore and destruction while the center and rear parts were getting ready to pile up, thereby destroying not only the entire float but also the crew: to watch the dubovik, in a small boat that was tied securely by a rope to the front part of the float manned by a crew of four, lead the van of the flotilla out and away from the shore—all this was a spectacle of fortitude. When the white flag was hoisted on the dubovik's tent, located at

the first float, it was a signal for the crew on the last float to drop anchor so as to prevent the whole flotilla piling up. Two big oars were tied securely on the bow of the front float. For hundreds of yards one could hear the thunderous shouts of the dubovik, "Bey nah babaikoo!" meaning, "Man the front oars!" To sleep at night on one of those floats with only a little moist straw for a mattress, and to listen to the stories of death and destruction encountered on previous trips, was hair-raising to a boy in his early teens.

At sunset the anchors would be dropped and the crew would retire to a cold supper and tell me, their boss, gruesome details of their varied experiences as loggers; then they would turn in for a well-deserved rest of scarcely a few hours in the short Russian nights.

Stopping at the best hotels, eating the finest food, wearing clothes made by a master tailor, helped nurture a fat ego within the boy who only recently had paraded in leather hip boots and a mackinaw. I would occasionally find myself at night with a bunch of older men in a hotel and take a hand in a card game, invariably with disastrous results. After some of those games I would feel jolted out of fool's paradise and awoken to the fact that I was not quite so smart as I thought.

While waiting in a small town on the Pripet for one of the crews to take on supplies I enjoyed my first short-lived romance, perhaps the shortest on record. I was staying at a small Jewish guesthouse and it was a Friday evening; it was only natural to be invited to the evening meal of the couple who owned the place and who had an only daughter at least five years older than myself. We must have exchanged glances at the table while her father was blessing the food, for shortly after the meal she asked me to join her in the orchard . . . On an old bench, by the light of

the moon, I professed love and affection everlasting for this maiden who wanted more than confessions. While I was telling her in choicest words from the mouths of book-heroes that my love for her had come at first sight, she was drawing my hands around her and endeavoring to rest them on more tangible proofs of Venus. . . .

But I, the big business executive and man of the world, tried to "keep the flesh clean" and could hardly understand her desires. Hours later she finally gave up in disgust and ran trembling to her room which adjoined mine. I also trembled, attributing it to the great love that had befallen me. Toward dawn a terrific desire to see her again overcame me; I could not sleep. So Don Juan-like I entered my lady's chamber and shook her by the shoulder, having in mind nothing more than another speech on love. She opened her eyes, looked at me with amusement and dealt a death blow to my budding romance: "Go away—you are only a boy. I thought you were a man . . ." Thus spoke the object of my love and thus ended my first love affair.

Towards the latter part of July the last flotilla of logs passed on with its dubovik crew and was checked at Yekaterinoslav, and I was on my way back to Novogradok, a trip of four days by boat, to give a final accounting of my stewardship, an expression that was literally true for I was in reality a steward to the loggers. I was frightened when I faced the Brothers Friedmann whom I had never seen before, and was rather pleased with the reception accorded me in the home of one of the brothers in whose living room I was asked to await his arrival. It was a large room, decorated with Venetian blinds that kept out the light and heat of outdoors, and with furniture covered for the summer. It seemed to me more like a museum instead of a home. Mr.

Friedmann, a scholarly type, appeared shortly and from the first minute I knew I would like him.

The average Jewish business man in the higher brackets in Russia wore the stamp of refinement and culture. There were only a few of them sparsely spread here and there throughout White Russia and their time was divided evenly between business and civic betterment. Mr. Friedmann impressed me as an excellent example of this type and when he asked me to remain in his employment as a clerk in the office until the following spring it was with reluctance that I declined the job. He already knew of my first venture in the business world and told me that should I ever need employment I was not to hesitate to call on him. After paying whatever wages were due me he opened a strongbox, took out five gold pieces of five rubles each and gave them to me as a gift. My gratefulness to him, not so much for the gift but for his consideration and kindness, was glowingly warm.

So with the money and two brand-new suits of clothes I had had made in Kiev I started back to Gornoye and the exploitation of treetops for the coming season. I found the house completely renovated, inside and out, with new furniture in almost every room, with the yellow-faced cook replaced by a small peasant girl, but everything else the same: my aunt still complained of her husband's neglect, Voronin still sulked in his corner thinking of his little woman, and Uncle still looked wise and said little. I gave my aunt one hundred rubles, which included the gold pieces received from Friedmann, to be transmitted at once to my parents, and proceeded to busy myself in work.

After a long conference with Uncle we agreed that the treetops in the immediate vicinity were practically extinct



and that if I were to continue in the business I would have to move to another section forty miles up the River Slutch.

I left most of my good clothes in Gornoye and took with me only necessary articles as I traveled to Zamostye, a village in a remote section, even wilder than Berezniki and Gornoye. The manager of that section was a German named Frederick. He lived in a palatial estate recently vacated by the owner, also a German, who spent most of his time in Western Europe. After hearing my proposition Frederick agreed on a price to let me exploit the treetops in the vicinity.

During the next two months my gangs prepared another harvest of logs. The only room available in the village, in a house slightly better than a peasant hut, was owned by a widowed Jewish woman with six daughters. Frederick recommended the place to me.

This woman upon whom life had played a mean joke while yet in her middle age was the sole support of six females. On the evening of my arrival Frederick paid a visit to the house and I thought he was calling on me. Fancying myself a host I proceeded to treat him to vodka obtained from this Jewish woman of many enterprises.

After several drinks Frederick told me that the Levy girls were very nice and should also be treated to a drink. "Surely that cannot be so," said I, "Jewish girls don't drink vodka."

"These Jewish girls are different—they are human," said Frederick in German.

It took me some time to learn which one of the six girls was Frederick's. The clerk who shared my room and was also in the forestry business as an estimator gradually revealed the secret that Rebecca, next to the eldest, the one of the rough skin and features that matched so well the

other portions of her body (a body that looked like a sack of flour tied in the middle), was actually Frederick's mistress. She had taken the place of her older sister who had grown a little too old for Frederick. Poverty and want had weakened that Jewish mother into selling her daughters; it was not solely a desire of hers to get rich that way. I could tell from her glances at me and the questions she asked about my family and my parents and the deep sighs that accompanied her questions that she felt painfully the tragedy of her situation.

Had I not already given Frederick several hundred rubles to seal the bargain I would have quit the house at once for I was perplexed by my sordid surroundings. But the die was cast—I was there and had to stay there until the final log was dragged out to the canal and sent down the River Slutch. Frederick dared not take his concubine Rebecca to the palace of his employer fearing lest the servants would eventually inform the owner. So he would get drunk every evening in the only other room in the house, a chamber connecting with the room occupied by the clerk and myself. Getting his fill of vodka he would retire to this chamber and Rebecca's arms, regardless of the fact that the rest of the family including the mother slept in it.

When I first lived there Rebecca looked unusually stout and in time seemed to be gaining weight. It must have been towards the end of the awaited period that Rebecca, with yellow blotches covering her naturally unattractive face, looked completely forlorn. In order to hide her shame from me, the stormy petrel in the otherwise loose household, she used to carry something in front of her, a pail or pan or pot, so that her belly would be shielded, for by this time it had grown enormously. I saw her peel potatoes once; she squatted on a footstool and her knees almost

touched her chin just to conceal her obvious condition. Evidently she was fooling herself, for just then one of my men happened to come through the door and after observing Rebecca in her potato-peeling position whispered to me: "Frederick must have had too much liquor one night and got overoptimistic." That explanation was not quite clear to me then, but I understood when the climax came.

Late one rainy night towards the end of January I heard a commotion in the room occupied by the mother and daughters. A constant moaning grew louder and louder, a moaning that dissolved into a continuous wailing, a piercing cry, then occasionally screams of "Help me, Mother, you brought me to this—Frederick has ruined me—now I am dying. . . ."

I lighted the kerosene lamp, turned to my roommate, and with teeth chattering asked him what he thought was going on. This middle-aged man, with a gleam in his eye, said in a perfectly calm voice: "Don't you know?—Rebecca is having a baby."

"A baby?" I echoed, and light flooded my brain: "So that is why she was so fat of late!" My roommate snickered and said nothing.

The moaning continued, the screams growing louder and louder until I could stand it no longer. I slipped into my clothes quietly and ran out of the house. I walked aimlessly through the mud and rain and sleet and got a thorough soaking before I returned to the house after several hours. Before entering I listened from time to time for sounds but none came. Like the calm after a storm, stilled were the curses aimed at Frederick, stilled were the reproaches showered at the mother, gone was the moaning, groaning, and piercing cries of a woman in labor—all was quiet and serene.

Disbelieving and puzzled I questioned whether the whole thing was not a nightmare. It did not seem real to me; I was bewildered. The stillness seemed even more unnatural than the screams and moanings of a few hours before. For if Rebecca had given birth to a baby surely there should be the sounds of the new arrival; but there was not a sound or any indication of a new-born. Again the wise roommate explained to me: "The infant was never given a chance. The old woman took care of that, having had a hand at it many times before . . ." For the next few days Rebecca failed to make an appearance and the rest of the family were quiet and apologetic. Frederick came, polished off a quart of vodka, and visited Rebecca behind the thin wall that separated the two rooms.

Nature again intervened that winter to add more misery to the situation in which I already found myself. With five thousand logs in the forest there was no sign of winter. My gangs had departed and I was left in this mad-house with nothing else to do but gaze at the sky hoping for winter to set in, hoping for some salvation to free me from the orgies of Frederick. Winter months were creeping on, yet there was no sign of heavy snow. An occasional snow flurry and much drizzling rain left my logs slowly disappearing in the mire.

Frederick's feelings towards me were not of the best for he saw in me an antagonist and silent critic. He knew how distasteful it was for me to watch the panorama as it was unrolling in that house. While my contract called for the balance of the money due him to be paid when the material was at the canal, yet as an excuse to browbeat and

humiliate me before the household, he constantly reminded me that the balance of the treetops had not been paid for and that he was not going to wait for winter to get what was coming to him.

I knew I could not stand this much longer for it was already February. The nest egg of my fortune was almost dissipated and conditions in the house were intolerable. I tried hard to muster up my spirit and tell myself that this was the time when strength of character should prevail; but it was of no avail. To remain in Zamostye would be of no use so I packed my few belongings, settled the bill with this daughter-trading woman, and started back for Gornoye, my only port in a storm.

The roads were a sea of mud and it took me nearly three days to get there. Uncle was away when I arrived and my aunt, who must have had one of her spells, wasted little time in letting me know that I was no longer welcome. I asked her whether it was my fault that the usual season of winter had failed us. She paid no attention, declaring sarcastically that I spent the money I earned because I was so sure I was such a smart business man. She intended doing nothing further for me. With that, she retired to her room.

The accumulation of months of misery, the pent-up revolt against that family with whom I lived in a house that was not much better than a brothel, and finally the loss of the few hundred rubles of which I had been the proud possessor, created in me feelings of resentment, hatred, and bitterness. I pushed open the door to my aunt's room and told her that I was tired of my position in her household. I told her I did not care for any help from her and that I had never received any charity from her hands. I had paid well for everything, I declared. I slammed the door behind

me and walked out for the last time, leaving all my belongings including the two new suits made to order in Kiev.

With only a few rubles in my pocket I hired the same team that had brought me there to take me away from the place.

"Where to?" asked the peasant teamster.

"Anywhere—just to get away from here," I shouted.

My anger cooled and I added: "The nearest railroad station," which I knew was quite a distance away.

For the next three days and nights we traveled through strange territory. Momentarily I expected a courier to overtake us and lead me back to the place which by that time I hated and feared. Throughout the trip I listened for sounds of horses' hoofs, the signal for my return to slavery. Deep in my heart I knew my aunt did not want me actually to go. What she desired was for me to crawl again so that she could once more display her great influence over her husband. It had been done once too often and my mind was definitely made up never to go through that again. My bridges were burned behind me on my retreat from Gornoye.

I don't remember the name of the place where we finally reached the Polesiye railroad line and stopped in a tiny wayside railroad station lighted by a single kerosene lamp. There was no ticket office and the watchman could only tell me that the next train for the West was due the following morning. I had decided to go to Warsaw where my eldest brother and my oldest sister were staying with another sister of my mother. I took quick inventory of my capital and hoped the few remaining rubles would be sufficient to take me to my destination. I did not sleep a wink all night while waiting for the train. The moonless night was clear and cool with a million stars hovering over the desolate region and me the lonely traveler. The sing-song

of the telegraph wires alongside the tracks, the only sounds in the night, were to me like messengers of joy and freedom. I could close my eyes and almost form words from their mute wires, words that can be understood only by one who has undertaken a similar exodus. After boarding the train the next morning I was informed by the conductor that I would have to change at Stolptzy for a train to Warsaw, and in the middle of the following night we were at Stolptzy where for the first time in my life I saw an electric light. A carbon lamp strung up at the top of a high watchtower beckoned to me with cold rays of welcome.

The train for the old Polish capital (then part of Russia) consisted of a wood-burning locomotive and a few coaches that squeaked and rattled with every revolution of their rusty wheels. When I boarded a coach and told the conductor my destination he mentioned a sum far more than in my possession. He must have noticed my distress for he told me that a couple of rubles would be enough for him so long as I managed to keep out of sight of an inspector who might board the train. Unceremoniously he pocketed the money I gave him—the first graft I ever paid out in a land where the word was as popular as baksheesh in Turkey—and he left me in peace.

During the entire trip I remained on the platform between two coaches, not so much in fear of an inspector as because I wished to be left alone with my thoughts. With the few kopeks of change that remained in my pockets I purchased some bread and cheese (I was back on the old diet) and managed to retain a few additional kopeks so as to hire a droshky to the house of my relatives in Warsaw.

At noon of the following day the train finally puffed into the old picturesque station on the east side of the Vistula River. With eyes, mouth, and ears full of dust and my

face covered with dirt I alighted from the coach and after passing through several gates and dodging hundreds of people I came upon the cobblestoned yard. Here I saw an assortment of droshkies from highly-polished carriages with beautiful horses to the most decrepit-looking hacks drawn by nags that looked as though they had escaped from the glue factory. I approached the worst-looking one manned by an old Jew whose livery looked as if he had been poured into it; dirt and perspiration oozed from every seam which beyond indicating its age, perhaps older than its owner, lent credence to my guess that he hardly ever took it off. His dejected look as he sat in front of that cab made him and the horse one and inseparable; the motions he and the horse were going through reminded me of the actions of the educated cat that went in circles in Pushkin's "Ruslan y Ludmila."

This patriarch of cabbies scrutinized me carefully and smiled benevolently when I mentioned the address "Marianskaia 20." He knew I was heading for the Jewish ghetto. "Twenty-five kopeks will be enough for you," he said. I wondered how much he would have charged me only a short while back in my made-to-order clothes.

There was so much to be seen that from the time we started to cross the bridge spanning the Vistula until we arrived at Marianskaia 20 I hardly saw anything; this in spite of the slow motion of the horse which carefully picked each cobblestone and placed his weight on it as if he knew each stone by heart. At first glance I did not see Warsaw as it actually was with its ancient monuments to hero-kings, its beautiful old cathedrals, the Opera Palatz, and the old palace where the kings of yore had resided.

I thought only of Gogol's Taras Bulba's son, the son who strayed for the love of a fair Polish maiden. I was



seeking that house so vividly described by Gogol, where Bulba's wayward son climbed to her balcony and thereby sold out the secret strategy his father had conceived for an attack on the capital city of old Poland. That unforgettable story of a father who after defeating the Polish hordes finds his son among his enemies and addresses young Bulba with the words: "Get off your horse, son . . . I have made you and I am going to kill you," caused me to see Warsaw with book-drugged eyes. I looked even for the fair maiden among the slender Polish damsels, dressed in colorful costumes of their native land, along the sidewalks of that long-suffering city.

I was awakened from my dreams by the sudden realization that I had arrived and that the tiresome trip had had the effect of a physic on the cabby's horse.

A high gray wall that once had been white, with a solid iron door over which was inscribed "20," was all I could see from the outside. Beyond the iron door I found myself in a courtyard filled with all the odors of overcrowded existence as it was in that part of the city. A public toilet for the convenience of more than sixty-five families who lived in that court at Marianskaia 20 filled the atmosphere with a fragrance quite different from that to which I had been accustomed in two and a half years in the woods. The janitor, the only gentile in the place, directed me to my uncle Withek's apartment. Passing through several dark staircases, up and down, then up again, I finally came to a small room that served as a combination kitchen and dining room. Two beds near the wall warned of another transformation of the room at night.

I was confronted with a tall, gaunt, thin-faced woman who seemed unable to stand erect and whom I hardly recognized as my aunt but who quickly recognized me.

I could easily see what was going through her mind: the desire to be nice to her sister's child, coupled with the fear that he would have to be fed and housed in an already overcrowded place with only the meager earnings of her teacher-husband to support a family of four daughters and an ailing wife. She suffered pains in her back. I took the situation in at a glance but also knew that a good part of the revenue for their care came from my sister and brother. My outward appearance, on the other hand, related a true picture of my financial condition.

Toward evening her husband arrived followed by my sister and brother. Surprise and worry were registered on their faces and these were augmented with fear as to what they would have to do for this woodsman. My brother, with common sense and grace, broke the spell by asking me whether I had had something to eat. "Let us eat first and talk afterwards," he said.

The small kitchen table could not provide for nine persons so the meager food was consumed by some of us sitting and the others standing.

The Witcheks' oldest daughter, born on the same day and year as myself and who was attending a girls' gymnasium, at first paid little attention to me, the roughneck. But when my sister asked her to accompany us to a pastry shop one evening she put her arm through mine. Having subsisted for several days on short rations I found the morsels of the dainty pastry in that hole-in-the-wall pastry shop of delicious flavor.

Shortly afterwards my brother called a conference to decide what was to be done with me. With times as they were (for some reason or another times are always bad on such occasions when there is nothing else to blame) a conference was deemed necessary. The outcome was a col-

lection to purchase a railroad ticket from Warsaw to an undetermined destination. This was for me to decide; on that point I remained emphatic. My uncle suggested that I try my hand in some small town as tutor to young Jewish children.

"You will have to advance your age a couple of years if you expect a sympathetic ear for that kind of job," he advised. "Considering your size you can pass for almost any age above your own." "So I shall have to add another few years to my age," I thought. "Will this have to go on forever?" With my fate decided everyone seemed to breathe easier and once again we were loving relatives. Besides selecting my own destination I insisted on remaining two additional days in Warsaw to see the city—this also was granted.

All day Saturday, my second day of grace, I listened to discussions on Zionism by three young men of my brother's age who were urging him to accept the candidacy of delegate to the World Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland, which was to take place shortly. Their conversation was strictly in Hebrew, the vogue in that Zionist period; hence a number of words under the urge of modernization have been added to the rich but otherwise dead language of the Biblical era. Those words had no meaning for me; they were foreign to my Hebrew knowledge.

It seems worth mentioning at this point that I vividly recollect listening for three days to Zionist propaganda in that overcrowded apartment of eight persons in three tiny rooms of the crowded ghetto of Warsaw. I readily sympathized with their ambition to migrate to the hills of Judaea if for no other reason than to breathe better air. To me, on the other hand, the dream did not seem convincing. I did like the stories and songs of the past Jewish glory and,

realizing the size of the Holy Land, pictured a ghetto all of its own making. But the outdoor life impressed me.

I walked a good deal through the city and saw my first automobile which seemed to me like a carriage that was running away without horses; the scared look of the driver serving only to enhance the illusion. To me, the boy of the woods and the wide open spaces of my village, those massive buildings with myriads of people running (another illusion) as from some pestilence did not help to make Warsaw appear lovable.

I was no better in some respects than the young peasant from our village who went to Warsaw in quest of a policeman's job hoping that my brother's recommendation would help him. Upon arriving, he lost my brother's address and, after walking all day in brand-new boots hoping to meet my brother among the million inhabitants, he wound up at the police station for the night. There, among a bunch of petty thieves, he was robbed not only of his remaining capital but also of his new boots and so, barefooted, he returned finally to the village. When his chums asked him his impression of Warsaw his reply seemed quite natural: "Everybody walks barefooted there."

My stay in Warsaw was ended and again I was crossing the Vistula River; again I was at the old railroad station but this time accompanied by my brother and sister and cousin, the girl whose birthday was the same as mine.

This girl, like a cellar plant, whose skin revealed the lack of sunshine and fresh air, had grown to like me. Perhaps my well-fed features and otherwise robust anatomy appealed to her.

Up to the last minute I did not know my next jumping-off place. After looking over a map at the railroad station and tracing with my finger the Moscow-Warsaw Railroad

line, I was attracted by the name, "Baranovici," located in the state of my birth within a hundred miles from home. At least I would not have to change trains I thought. By that time I had definitely decided the occupation I would pursue to earn my daily bread.

The ticket was purchased and an additional few rubles were given to me. After a friendly parting with many kisses from my ghetto-bred cousin I was on my way in pursuit of a new career—a career that took me through all the passions that surround human endeavor and embroiled me in the very cataract of the Russian revolution for the next two and a half years. In those years was crammed into me economic and political education "according to Marx." They showed me human character at its best and at its worst, death and destruction, and the final abyss where the order of the day was a re-enactment of the French Revolution in its worst form. Yes, those two and one-half years even brought me to prison and the Arctic Circle. But out of it all a modest Phoenix rose from the ashes, free of the mire of the Pripet bogs, delivered from the seven plagues of the "isms" and landed me at the ripe old age of eighteen years in the Land of the Free—America.

3

Those Who Drowned

## THOSE WHO DROWNED

NEVER was I more sure of myself and never did I possess more confidence in the future than on the day of my arrival in Baranovici with no money and unknown to a soul. Whenever a similar occasion confronted me later I tried to look back to my cocksure attitude on that early cold spring day in a town from which I derived much more than I gave—Baranovici.

Walking from the station with my meager belongings I came across the town common, or market place, surrounded on every side by drinking places, stores, and hostels. It was raining that morning and, not wanting to ruin what remained of my garments, I ducked into the first building with a hotel sign on it. The lobby, a combination living room and office, was at first sight rather pleasant. A middle-aged Jewish woman with a masklike face, who acted as though she were trying to conceal her thoughts as well as her actions, asked me in a pleasant enough voice whether I wanted a room. I noticed that she wore a wig, a sign of extreme Jewish piety and customarily worn then by women who clipped their hair shortly after marriage as a sign of submission, an announcement that they were "out of circulation." I knew that some pious women wore these transformations but I could not imagine a woman in business, operating a transient hotel for soldiers, as it turned out, daring to wear the sign of retirement.

She asked me my business and I told her I had just come from Warsaw where I had had a successful career as

a private tutor and would like to continue the same profession in Baranovici. The lie pleased me immensely when I noticed the impression I made on this Jewish woman. She assured me that her husband was influential in circles of young married people who had children of school age and that he would be glad to help me to become acquainted. She spoke Russian fluently, employing the language of the market place, the jargon of the peasantry.

Taking inventory of my clothes I decided that with my last few kopeks they would have to be cleaned for appearance sake and that food would have to be charged. My landlady even agreed to that. She then accompanied me to my room on the other side of the house. This dwelling was divided into two parts by a long narrow hall with a number of rooms on each side, each separated by thin walls no better than temporary partitions and colored on the inside and out with an imitation mahogany paint that had seen its best days. A small wooden bed with a straw mattress, a pillow filled with feathers that stuck out through the seams and through the center of the pillow case, completed the furnishings of the room. There was not even a chair—but there were several nails over the door where one could hang one's clothes.

The landlady was loquacious and told me that she would like to have me meet her daughter, guessing that I must be of about the same age. Curious, I asked her what her daughter's age was and she told me twenty-one. "We have a lot of money for our daughter if she meets someone with an education and looks," said the woman meaningly.

"Your daughter should have no trouble meeting a suitable fellow in a city like this," I said.

"That is just the trouble," she replied. "All she wants to do is run around with a watchmaker who is not only poor and a lot older than herself but is sickly and coughs. If you



will be good to my daughter, for you look like a young man of good family, I will be a mother to you, too. . . .”

I smiled pleasantly at her but made no commitments.

That evening started off with an excellent meal in the family circle of man, wife, and daughter. The husband, who spent his days in the synagogue (the only club known to the Jewish men there) and who on first acquaintance asked me a lot of questions about the Talmud, also confided in me the secret that he could not hold his water and had to carry a rubber bag inside his trousers. He reminded me in many ways of the long-suffering husband of that little Maisel woman of my boarding-house school days in Slutzk.

Upon my answers to his questions about my Talmudical knowledge his comments, “excellent” and “perfect,” sounded convincing; he knew the questions but certainly not the answers—nor did I! By adopting the role of a man of learning I was supposed to know all the answers and he heard them from me—right or wrong. I knew that should this farce continue I would soon be put out of the cast; but, fortunately, the performance ceased.

The daughter, who had remained silent and morose during the early evening, suddenly took a hand in the conversation. This silenced the old man completely and he soon retired to change his artificial bladder.

Aside from being well-formed the girl did not vary so much from standard statistics that one should describe her: she was merely a female of mating age and no more. She knew that—and no more. Listening to her various escapades with boy friends was not even exciting and so, feigning fatigue, I wished her a pleasant good-night and retired to my room. But, alas, not to sleep.

The city of Baranovici garrisoned three peace-time regiments and several companies of hard-tack bakers in one

of the largest hard-tack bakeries in Russia. It was one of those soldiers, who might have been an engineer, a baker or a trench-digger, who kept me awake this first night of my arrival. Through the thin walls of my room I was the silent auditor of a love-making orgy between this lascivious soldier and a woman of the streets. This continued, with a few intervals of silence, all night, and the pleadings of the woman, first that she was tired and second that she wanted more money, were met with abusive words and more love-making.

The partitions between the rooms ran all the way to the ceiling—the only seeming difference between this and the house of infamy at Zamostye was that the partition at the latter's did not reach the ceiling.

In the morning at breakfast I begged the woman with the wig and the inanimate face to provide me with a different room. "Ah, sonny, a soldier had his wife in the room next to you and they must have kept you up till all hours," said she, full of apologies. "You can take your belongings to our side of the house and take any room you want and call it your own. I am certainly sorry. . . ."

My new room was well furnished with a bed, down pillows, and a soft mattress. I remained for two weeks before I was finally advised that my reputation would suffer an irreparable blow should I stay there much longer.

This counsel was given to me by a young girl with long blond hair, a pretty but hard face, and a tall hour-glass figure. I met her at the dinner table on the third day of my stay. As she was unquestionably gentile I was puzzled about her position in the house. Eating kosher food at the table with the family, attired in a sort of lounging outfit, she certainly could not have been a servant. She missed many a meal and frequently I saw her looking extremely

tired and spied her tear-stained face. She would hide herself quickly when caught disheveled.

A few days later when I returned from an extensive search for private lessons I found the blonde in hysterics and the hotel mistress doing everything possible to pacify her and shoo her away from the lobby living room.

"You are living off my body, you Jewish witch!" raved the girl as I came through the door, "and I want this young man to know it. You are not going to pull any wool over his eyes."

I ran to my room and remained motionless, wondering what to do. Shortly the Jewish woman came to the room in tears and assured me that the girl was sick and suffered hallucinations. She said she was merely taking care of her out of kindness of her heart as a favor to a rich landowner, father of this "poor child." I did not believe her and yet the mystery was too perplexing. In a few days the situation was seemingly clarified.

The blonde, in a heavy silk dressing gown, was lounging in a room adjoining the foyer. She hailed me as I passed through on the way to my room telling me this was the only chance she had to tell me who she really was: "My father, a poor peasant, sold me into white slavery to this Jewish woman who has kept me here for nearly a year," she said. "She has exploited me to all the soldiers she could entice into this house. She does not even allow me any street clothes for fear that I will run away."

"Why are you telling me all this?" I asked.

"Only because you are a clean and honest young man," the blonde replied.

Who she actually was continued to be a matter of conjecture and I was not concerned. I felt she was lying. Her good manners, intelligent conversation and language could

have been acquired by association with some of the officers of the regiment before she became the common property of the entire command. It must have been her motherly instinct in spite of her profession that made her pour her heart out to me, the unsophisticated young fellow whose profession was teaching, a profession to be revered even by a prostitute in Holy Russia.

Her revelation was the last straw however. Immediately I started to look for different quarters. In the first few days of my arrival I managed to obtain the tutorship of two little girls aged six and eight, children of a wholesale wine dealer, a family of good reputation and some intelligence. The next victim was an army tailor who looked and acted like the Valiant Little Tailor of the fairy tale. His long Russian cigarette, stuck on the end of a still longer holder, was the only thing about him that was different. He was the "contact man" for his establishment; he called steadily on various officers and in his best Yiddish-Russian tried to sell them new uniforms. His wife, a colorless woman, remained entirely in the background so as not to interfere with the career of her brilliant husband. She had all she could do to raise a family of four children, three boys and a girl, and also feed six or more master tailors who worked between fourteen and fifteen hours a day sitting in a bent-over position on top of the long table of the ill-lighted shop. I went through that shop many times and the only other sounds I heard, beside the whirring of the sewing machines, were the coughing and wheezing noises of those human slaves of the sweat shop.

I was tutoring his two youngest sons who attended Hebrew school most of the day where they were exhausted by their Jewish pedagogue and his ruthless method of pumping knowledge by physical force, if necessary, into their medi-

ocre brains. Those browbeaten boys of nine and eleven took a liking to me and to my method of conversation, a method acquired while teaching them the language of the land.

I had also another pupil, the only child and daughter of a retired farmer. She had been born to the couple late in life. At the age of fifteen the girl was very small and constantly sick. She had the face of an old person; crow's feet marred her eyes and she looked like a big woman who had shriveled up to midget-size. Her parents, a tall old man and a tiny fat woman, took a special interest in me mainly because of their daughter who they wished had been a son. I decided to take a room at their home so as to get away from my second and last brothel. Their house, small and tidy, consisted of two bedrooms, kitchen-dining room, and parlor. They turned the parlor over to me and gave me my board. In addition to the tuition allowance for their shrunken daughter I paid them a couple of rubles a month.

Once more fortune smiled at me; again I was acquiring good clothes, this time from my military tailor. And now there were places to go to, invitations for Friday night meals hurriedly accepted with parents whose children I was tutoring. I was a sixteen-year-old man and sociable among friends and companions whom I met easily. As my education suffered by comparison with that of other tutors whom I met I determined feverishly to read and study the subjects I lacked most. I could not afford to have my friends suspect me of being a fraud.

With my financial condition more secure my spirit became bankrupt and needed an overhauling. A month after landing in Baranovici in the spring of 1904 I allowed myself only Friday nights to meet friends and loaf. The remainder of the time, aside from the few hours in tutoring others, I spent on my own education. The library in that city was filled

with books on all the subjects in which I was deficient and I proceeded to devour them with the enthusiasm of an opportunist. I would listen on Fridays to discussions by my enlightened brethren on subjects foreign to me, and on Saturdays, entirely my own, I would visit the library and read up on those subjects. When the topics under discussion became more complicated, leadership fell to a sharp little fellow whose aptitude for civics and economics inspired in his friends greater affection for those subjects than for any other studies.

This youth, known to us only by the name of Zhama, was born and reared in our State capital city of Minsk. With no apparent means of support this young man of about twenty years, with fiery piercing eyes and a face that would screw up like a cobra about to strike, would make us all regard him with awe when he was emphasizing to us pseudo-intellectuals the law of culture and development in the capitalistic system. He fed us fire and brimstone of which he was full, and once, at an opportune moment during a heated discussion on the political system in Russia, banged the table and declared: "The day is approaching when Czarism will be no more!"

We were speechless.

At that particular time I must have possessed a deep desire to attach my humble wagon to a star; this was not opportunism but was dictated by a craving to worship. I found my hero in this bold, brave little spitfire named Zhama. He was David and I, Jonathan, and he graciously accepted an invitation to join me for an evening meal at my house when the discussion was ended. With the fire of dialectic now low his face became expressionless and placid. Only after the meal, when we retired to my parlor-bedroom and he asked me about my past, did his eyes come to life

again as he absorbed my every word. I hid nothing from him and when he observed the room and commented that it was entirely too big for one person I quickly asked him to share it with me.

Our conversation began to lag and finally we prepared to retire for the night. Reverently I asked him to choose his side of the bed. Noticing my clean underwear and socks he remarked: "This bourgeois outfit of yours does not speak well for one who is craving ideals . . ." I looked at his clothes—his down-at-the-heel shoes and a shirt of uncertain color, wrinkled with dirt and perspiration—and I felt terribly sorry for myself and apologetic for my innate desire for the better things in life. These evidently conflicted with the idealism of such great leaders as Zhama.

Trying to sleep and at the same time digest some of the wonderful phrases I had never heard before, worrying at the same time about the health of my bedfellow who seemed to suffer from a chest cough and would wake up every once in a while to expectorate, I resolved that night to follow men like him to the end of time. For had I not finally found something that would make my life much more interesting than the prosaic quest for daily bread? I had no idea what it was all about, but impulsively I plunged ahead.

The time must have been ripe for an upheaval; it was in the air. For the giant of Czarism was a sick man; the gigantic machine that encircled the walls of the Kremlin, which the boyars defended with their blood in the early seventeenth century while supporting the rise to power of one Michael Romanoff, a monastery-bred youth about whom the nucleus of a future empire was developed, was now hurtling groundwards.

The Far-Eastern policy of the Empire met an obstruc-

tion in 1904 in the form of a little yellow man across the China sea. Ill-equipped, ill-shod, and ill-fed Russian soldiers were being mowed down by the well-trained and well-disciplined little Japs of whom the Russian Commander Kuropatkin had said before he went to the theater of action: "We will bury them under our caps." Kuropatkin collected ikons at every wayside station as good luck mementoes on his way to bury the Japs under his cap; while the Japanese were leaving unburied on the battlefields of Manchuria thousands of the leaderless Russian soldiers. Those gruesome sights of the battlefields inspired Leonid Andreieff to write his book of horrors, *The Red Laugh*. In those days the monarchy was tottering and I, in Baranovici, was joining the movement—that very movement to abet its downfall and of which I was not even aware. It was exciting! With carefully measured potions Zhama fed me revolutionary ideas at first with the calm voice of the idealist. Then gradually it grew louder and louder like the rumbling of distant cannon or the thunder beyond the horizon actually moving closer and closer, and suddenly it blew aside the curtain to allow me a peep into the future. Like the old penny arcades plastered on the outside with pictures of a naked woman, it dangled a mystic allure which I could not know was only the rustle of some tawdry skirts on the inside. The future when the proletariat would rule was depicted for me in dazzling colors.

I knew proletarians: our old shoemaker, who used to visit my boyhood home once a year; the walruslike tailors; the Norsemen of the wilds of the Pripet bogs; the cabby of the Warsaw droshky, and, last but not least, our peasants. For the life of me I could not see how those men could become rulers of Russia. I tried to picture them in the splendid gray uniforms, adorned with medals and buttons and



the well-fitted military caps of the few rulers I did know, and the proletarians quite naturally suffered by comparison—indeed, they seemed a sorry spectacle.

Nonetheless, Zhama had spoken. He had told me of the eventual salvation of the world through the proletarian revolution; and it is not surprising, considering my character and my youth, that at those words which painted a world rid of misery, hatred, and jealousy, I drank deeply of this highly seasoned but otherwise unappetizing boiling concoction. My neatness in attire and appearance began to deteriorate as I imitated my roommate and teacher Zhama, and soon my desire for economic security also waned.

Like Fagin who made criminals out of the neighborhood gamins, Zhama was creating revolutionary timber out of me and many others who came within his sphere of influence. Only after severe tests could one hope to become a member of *the* party or a member of the steering committee, the committee which controlled the members. One had to be approved absolutely by Zhama, the severest critic of them all.

The name of *the* party was the Bund, at that time a branch of the Social Democratic movement of Russia. Shortly before that period, in 1903, Plekhanoff and Lenin had disagreed over some of the means of achieving the end—the Social Revolution. They split up into the Mensheviki, under the guidance of Plekhanoff, and the Bolsheviki led by Lenin. Both leaders were in Switzerland. It was Plekhanoff's theory that the achievement of a Democratic order with a constitution similar to that of the United States would suffice for the time being, that the masses would have to be educated first to handle their new-born freedom before absorbing the tools of production and completing the eco-

conomic revolution. Alexander Kerensky sided with Plekhanoff.

On the other hand Lenin, more practical and less humane, insisted on direct action, on the immediate surrender of the political and economic branch of the Government to the proletariat. The Bund, strictly an organization of Jewish workers within that region called White Russia, started immediate discussions in each branch as to which faction it would join. Several months later when I was a full-fledged member and when Zhama was no longer in Baranovici, I had a chance to voice my opinion—the opinion of a small time bourgeois, as Zhama had said on many occasions before, in spite of his affection for me—that half a loaf was better than none at all and that the Russian masses were certainly not ready to absorb the entire book of Karl Marx without previous political education along constitutional lines.

The Jewish Bund remained strictly a Menshevik organization under the influence of the steering committee. This fact, however, did not halt debate on the issue within the Bund.

A couple of weeks after Zhama moved into my room I obtained a clearer conception as to what he expected from his pupils. Slowly his dogma penetrated our collective mind: that to have a revolution one must obtain the good will of the masses; and their good will could not be obtained unless they were tossed a bone in the form of improving their immediate conditions without waiting for the ultimate Utopia.

Methodically Zhama proceeded to organize each and every worker, first individually, then the entire shop, whether a bakery, wood-working plant, tailor or shoemaker. With the average worker receiving a pittance and with sixteen hours the average work day it was comparatively easy

to reach the ear and mind of those semislaves. My big test finally came when I was ordered to create a strike in the shop of my Valiant Little Tailor who was busy making uniforms for the nobility of the army—the officers. I was astounded and torn by emotion between two paths. My conscience ached. For, despite the fact that this tailor was exploiting a half-dozen or more semiconsumptive workers whose spines were arched from their constantly bent position, in spite of my deep sympathy for the “slaves” in his shop, I was yet grateful to the little tailor for the money he paid me weekly, for the good suit he had made for me at a ridiculously low price, and, finally, for the free weekly dinner I enjoyed in his home. Even his eldest child, his seventeen-year-old daughter, was always kind and tried to make me feel at home.

It must have been several days after I was given the strike order that I showed some weakness which led Zhama to question my progress. He threatened to move out of my room (for which he was not contributing any money) unless I “got wise to myself” and I succumbed to his arguments.

Having the full freedom of the tailor’s house, including the shop, I advised the head master-tailor to bring the others to my house the following Saturday. How can I forget that assortment of derelicts with sunken eyes, wizened faces, and arched backs, with arms dangling loosely like skeletons’ arms, who crowded my room, to receive their first lesson in economic agitation from a boy of sixteen who only recently had exploited many a dubovik without giving it a thought? Remembering the instructions of Zhama I proceeded to tell them of their sad lot and pointed out that the future belonged to them and that they could have it for the asking. I uttered the great proletarian slogan: “You have nothing to lose but your chains!”

Respectfully they listened to my childish half-baked ideas and assured me they would think it over and let me know the day they would go out on strike. Afterwards I wrote out for them their minimum demands—a seventy-two hour week, more kerosene lamps, and eight rubles a week in wages—and they humbly departed.

That night I had dinner at the tailor's house. After the meal, when the eldest daughter and I were left alone, I told her that she could make her life more interesting and much more useful by joining the movement that would eventually lead us into Utopia. Casually I pictured to her a future that would justify our efforts. Thus did I undermine the economic security of my benefactor the tailor and add insult to injury by disturbing his family life. For this good-looking girl helped me with the first strike—against her own father's shop.

Within a few days the wheezing and coughing noises in the shop died; the machines were stilled; the demands had been served, and the hollow-chested tailors had joined the movement. Like some new Adam and Eve they suddenly became aware of their economic nakedness and have been unhappy since.

The Valiant Little Tailor, who must have slaved in his youth as his workers were slaving now, was bewildered. His was the consternation of the chicken that discovered one of her brood had turned out to be a duck; he heard with amazement that his own daughter had espoused the cause. And like the chicken, he ran around in circles and could do nothing about it. Quickly he granted the demands of his men and fired me, the instigator!

It was an era of heroes and heroism when the rabbits were turning upon the dogs and the most timid of men under the influence of a red-hot agitator or a clever spell-

binder were ready to do the bidding of their leaders. As in all ages, they were prepared even at the risk of their lives to be heroes, even for that short period between the deed and the rope. I wonder now whether youth will continue forever to be the tool of those masterminds who understand mass psychology and can send thousands of them to an early grave to gain the selfish objective of power.

Those thoughts, it is true, did not enter my mind at the time of the tailor shop strike. I was not even concerned with the resulting economic improvements for a few wretches. I became a hero and probably made every effort to cash in on the effects of my deed. Now a full fledged member of the party, I was asked to join in the first meeting of the organization, a secret conclave that was to be held on a July evening in a forest a couple of miles from the city. Every member of the organization, which boasted more than a hundred, was quietly notified in advance by the Central Committee (consisting of six members headed by Zhama) of the meeting place, the hour, and the password to be given to the sentries on duty at various points leading to the appointed place. Everyone was warned to walk separately, not in groups, so as not to attract attention. The first sentry loomed up at the edge of the woods, so homelike to me, and in a gruff voice demanded the password. With chattering teeth I gave him the exalted word and in turn was greeted with the encouraging: "Proceed, tovarisch!"

It was late when I was finally guided by the last sentry to a clearing where dimly I recognized the outlines of people and soon heard the subdued voice of a speaker. With trembling heart I approached the gathering and sat down on the ground among a group of young people whom I had never seen before. The speaker, who stood on an old

stump, was also a stranger to me. I did not pay much attention to the subject for I could not absorb the speech in this totally new environment, fearing at any moment I would be apprehended by a representative of the law. So I sat there for a while and tried to get my bearings. Gradually my eyes became accustomed to the semidarkness and I recognized some of the faces near the speaker's stump. They were faces I had seen on numerous occasions moving up and down the sidewalks of four city blocks especially chosen for the workers of the Bund and called the "bourse" or curb market.

Every city in Russia had a "bourse" of this type where workers who belonged to the organization would march up and down every evening exchanging confidences and trying to recruit new members. It was not safe for a policeman or a total stranger to walk on the bourse for no sooner did word spread that a provocateur was marching with the workers, noting names and seeking information, than he would find himself off the curb and flat on his back in the street and in need of medical attention.

Uncertainty still hovered about for the government lacked organizing power to combat the revolutionary movement and at the same time fight the Japs in Manchuria. Shortly after midnight the last speaker ascended the stump; it was Zhama, the fiery little spellbinder who knew how to speak to the masses. Whereas the previous speaker had indulged mostly in explaining the economic system in the slow advance of capitalism, something unheard of in that great agricultural country where the peasant still used wooden plows, Zhama spoke of the proletariat militant, the naked and the hungry, in whose lap lay the destiny of the huge Russian Empire; all they had to do was to go out and take it for their own.

It was a strange sight to see those shadowy figures of men in the dark woods react to the verbal whip of that emotional orator who bade them conquer the land of their birth and to shape its rule for their own, the rule of the proletariat.

Having been reared in the spirit of Judaea and the tradition of eventual salvation only through the opening of the gates of Jerusalem his speech to me was as exhilarating as a tonic. For he did not refer to us, the Jews, as strangers in a strange land. We were natives and belonged there and we could solve our problems without emigrating to the unknown wilds of Judaea. That was the only part of the speech that I absorbed fully, the only part that mattered to me. He harangued the group until early dawn, descended from the stump and was swallowed up by the underbrush. I did not follow him. Instead I joined the young people, the boys and girls, who at first quietly and then louder, started to sing a revolutionary song—the first one I ever heard. They sang it in Jewish and I sang with them; I even forgot to worry about the police. The words of their song were, in short:

*Brothers and sisters of work and want  
Together, together the banner is made  
From misery and blood—its color is red!*

My enthusiasm knew no bounds when a good-looking girl started to sing a revolutionary song, a prison chant of far-away Siberia where a victim of Czarism was dying for the just cause. In me, the novice, the meeting, Zhama's speech, and the revolutionary songs fomented the desire not to stop, not to call a halt, but to continue on and on until the goal had been accomplished. Why let enthusiasm die

if freedom is to be won, why not go on and win it? We were still at the edge of the woods and from almost nowhere came the command to disperse. Again each one chose his own path through the backwoods, back streets, and back alleys on the way to each one's home.

In that year the Russian Baltic Fleet was headed for the Pacific Ocean to "blow Japan out of the sea," but thus far it had accomplished only the sinking of a few British fishing smacks in the North Sea. It was at the time when the *Petropavlovsk*, one of the capital ships of the Russian Fleet, was sunk by a torpedo near Port Arthur, carrying to a watery grave the famous Russian painter, Vereschagin, among others. Togi Nogi and Tamimura were hammering at the gates of Port Arthur when suddenly the revolution in Russia started in earnest. Even in our small town of twenty-five thousand population the Bund had grown from a hundred members to an enrollment of more than one thousand.

Zhama was ordered by the Bund headquarters in Minsk to go elsewhere. In his place came a young man about nineteen or twenty years old whose name was "Koziol" (meaning goat). He was tall and thin with stringy blond hair, an oblong forehead, prominent cheekbones, cross-eyes, and a long willowy neck a good part of which was taken up by his Adam's apple. In short, he looked like his name: a goat.

Koziol was a direct opposite of Zhama; not only did he lack the brow-beating qualities of the former leader but he was actually solicitous about the welfare of his friends. Nor did he think that anyone who was not a revolutionary did not count and should be destroyed. The means were of more consideration to him than the end. His only fault, if so it could be called, was his mania for spies, and he



always imagined he was being followed by some agent-provocateur. This neurosis was caused, doubtlessly, by some previous experience.

After familiarizing himself with conditions in Baranovici and after several meetings with the Central Committee he told me that we would have to move (he had inherited his predecessor's side of my bed), for he suspected that our landlord was in the pay of the "Third Section," afterwards to be known as the OGPU. I knew, of course, that our old landlord was not a spy but this was no time for arguments. After a long search we finally rented a cottage at a summer resort. It was a beautiful little home of four rooms, built of square timber painted white, with green shutters and a wide porch three-quarters around the house and surrounded with tall birch trees. It was one of the loveliest houses I ever lived in and was situated within walking distance of the city.

Since Koziol had no objection to one's appearance and was somewhat of a dandy himself in spite of his looks, I again started to pay a little more attention to my clothes. It was more in keeping with the house we had recently occupied. My earning capacity improved also, for in addition to some of the children whose parents were yet ignorant of my subversive activities I acquired a number of labor groups whom I taught reading and writing.

Although I was allowed to take part in some activities of the revolutionary movement, my status was still more or less that of an outsider. My ambition, naturally, was to become a member of the Central Committee. It comprised half a dozen men, of whom I only knew one, my roommate. I had not identified the others.

With the arrival of winter, meetings in the woods came to an end. Only small group meetings were held two or

three times a week in the homes of several of the labor members. I would be told to stay away from my house for an entire evening once a week to enable the Central Committee to confer there. So near and yet so far! Under my own roof decisions of great importance were being made, yet I could not be present. Word had been received that the three Engineering Regiments stationed locally were about to be entrained for the Manchurian theater of war and that the Czar would come for an inspection and give his blessings before they departed. Again I was ordered out of my house for a special meeting of the Committee. I used to imagine most unusual decisions at that meeting. In view of the Czar's visit to our city I could almost see this bumpy-necked Koziol with the stringy hair and comic face running through the parade ground with a bomb in his hand aimed at the last of the Romanoffs. I could see the entire regiment roaring with laughter when it saw this scrawny messenger leaping through space, only to be mowed down by the fire of the army that swore allegiance to God, Czar, and Country. How comic this oath of allegiance to a weakling, the Czar, I would think. But when I returned home late that night, Koziol was quietly reading Thomas Paine's essays as if nothing unusual had taken place. Everything was calm and serene. Knowing I could obtain no information by questioning I merely prepared for bed.

Finally Koziol asked me whether I had spunk enough to do a little job. I pictured that it was I who had been delegated to toss that bomb at the Czar and I began to swell with pride. When he finished explaining what the mission was and what was expected of me I felt somewhat ashamed of my dreams. All Koziol wanted me to do was to distribute a few thousand proclamations on the eve of the Czar's arrival throughout the houses of Baranovici. Those handbills

usually printed in a cellar would appear now and then and I often wondered how they were delivered.

"You need not think that this is an easy job," said Koziol. "The last two who volunteered to distribute the pamphlets are on the way to Siberia now, but they were not only reckless but fools."

I answered that the job should be easy and was surprised to hear him say that if my undertaking was successful and I escaped arrest my eager ambition to become a member of the Central Committee would be granted. My admiration and affection for him were profound.

The Emperor of all the Russias was due in Baranovici around the middle of December. The night before his arrival I was given my final instructions by Koziol as to the whereabouts of the pamphlets to be distributed during the night to the populace. In eight homes located in different sections of the city I was to pick up those rabble-rousing leaflets after giving a secret code. I was told of certain necessary precautions I should follow in entering those homes if I suspected I was being trailed. Nature did her best to intervene on the night of the great test which was to determine whether I could be admitted into the inner circle of the Secret Six at revolutionary headquarters. It snowed all day and toward evening a violent hailstorm broke out with the snow turning into fine particles of ice that cut my face and hands every time I headed into the wind.

The going got heavier as the storm progressed and long past midnight, when I called on the last hideout for the last bundle of pamphlets, a girl who occupied the small poverty-stricken room insisted that I remain for a while until I should thaw out. I must have fallen asleep as soon as I sat down, for when I awoke with a start sometime later the

kerosene lamp was still burning on the small table and the girl was fast asleep on her bed.

Not knowing the time an inward feeling of fright left me almost speechless. Without wasting another moment I stuffed the pamphlets in my pockets and ran out of the house. My energy must have been renewed with whatever sleep I got in that dingy room occupied by the little friend of the revolution. She had found an interest in life other than bearing children and like most women of that period took her place alongside the men of the country. They did not seek glory or honors; meekly they laid their lives on the altar of the Russian revolution.

When the time came for the erection of street barricades in many of the Russian cities it was the women who shouldered the guns—small wonder the casualties among them were the heaviest. Neither an Amazon spirit nor vanity led the young girls to war on Czarism; more than likely it was their motherly instinct that made them fight alongside their men in the hour of greatest need.

Sloshing through the snow after leaving the girl fast asleep on her bed I suddenly heard a strange noise mingled with the weird sound of the storm, and I almost froze in my tracks when I saw my young girl come up to me and with outstretched bare hands, calloused from hard work, beg me to give her half of the pamphlets. All my protests were in vain; in simple language she told me that her place was beside me and not in a warm house while I was battling the elements.

I gave her directions as to which streets to cover and, after instructing her to make sure to put each pamphlet under the front door so as not to have it blown away, I told her to meet me on a corner not far from the road that led to my suburban home. With additional vigor I dis-

tributed the rest of the pamphlets and in prankish mood left the last few on the wind-swept porch of the Chief of Police. From there I hastened to meet the uncrowned heroine of the night, that poor little girl who like many others of her sisters died among the unsung heroes of the Russian revolution. Waiting for her seemed an age; my limbs were almost frozen and I was about to give up and go home when my strained eyes spotted something I thought was a dog—it was the puny little girl, bent almost double into the gale, who at last caught up with me and without saying a word followed me to my house.

It was nearly dawn when we finally mounted the high porch of my white and green cottage located among the tall but now bare birch trees. We had not spoken a word. We entered the cozy little kitchen where I got busy over the samovar. When Koziol came into the kitchen he did not exhibit surprise. Taking everything in at a glance he merely shook his head and said: "The women must like you if they go out to help you on a night like this!"

Some bitter reflection must have moved him to utter those words; perhaps he resented the fates that had given him such a homely countenance when he saw the waif almost in a heap on the bench near our kitchen table. Immediately he proceeded to help her remove her shoes and stockings and rub her feet and hands; even a mother could not have been more solicitous and genuinely concerned about the half-frozen creature than Koziol that morning in December, 1904.

At eleven o'clock I saw the Czar of all the Russias, King of Poland, Prince of Finland, emerge from his special train surrounded by tall, handsome, high-ranking officers, with the Arkhimandryt (a high priest and one of members of Holy Synod) close at his heels. The latter was

decked out in the full regalia of the old Byzantine period, sweeping embroidered robes of gold, surplice of elaborate design, and a ludicrously high velvet hat of purple and a silver cross.

By that time the storm had subsided and the day was gray and murky with the thermometer forty below zero and the representatives of power and glory, of country and church, on a mission of duty to give official farewell to the three regiments. Soldiers of these regiments were arranged on the parade grounds in U-shape and in answer to the greeting by the Czar: "Health to you, my lads!" responded in unison, "Health to you, your Imperial Highness!" This greeting over, the Arkhimandryt indicated the sign of the cross to the three sides of the U. Duty was done—the comedy was over. The spectators were silent—not a word of encouragement or reproach.

The Czar, hidden from view by his tall officers, headed for his train alongside the parade grounds. The soldiers with tall Siberian fur hats shouldered their outmoded rifles and marched to their trains, whose cars were rather less elaborate than the Czar's Special. Clearly marked in white paint on the cars' exterior was the legend: "EIGHT HORSES—FORTY MEN."

The next episode in the struggle for freedom concerned the Priest Gapon who on January 9th, 1905, led a peaceful number of followers to the Czar's Winter Palace in St. Petersburg to present a petition for the liberalization of the Government. We were astounded at the news of the shooting without warning of the unarmed masses led by a God-fearing and Czar-loving priest. But it served to create millions of more followers of the revolutionary movement and put the Government on the defensive.

In our small city of Baranovici we reaped the harvest

that had been sown in St. Petersburg by the bullets of a monarchy that was administering the last futile kicks of a dying mule. Instead of coaxing a prospective comrade for days to have him join we were now receiving applications by the hundreds and from most unexpected sources. Not possessing any facilities for mass meetings we planned temporarily to expound economic and political education, in so far as it was possible, to individuals and groups of not more than a dozen each at various secret houses that were made available. In spite of the success of my errand I had not yet been admitted to the sacrosanct membership of the Central Committee.

The groundwork was being prepared for a spring campaign, for it was widely anticipated that a revolution of national scope would take place then. As our best material was still deemed the working classes and as they were not available for pep talks during the week because of their long hours, we had to limit those meetings to Friday and Saturday nights; the remainder of the time we spent in the process of self-education under the direction of Koziol.

He was one of the most enlightened individuals I have ever known, for in addition to his fluency in German, English, and French he was well versed in philosophy from Aristotle to the most modern; and when his career was cut short by the hangman's noose I lost one of the best friends and teachers I ever had. Russia suffered an irreparable loss, for who knows but that the outcome of this particular revolution with him as one of its leaders would not have been entirely different?

He ordered us to study prorevolutionary philosophy as well as contradictory principles. He was not a hard-shelled socialist and willingly permitted expression of diversified opinions. The individualistic philosophy of Hegel was accorded as much time as the totalitarian and com-

munal idea of socialism. Nietzsche and Spinoza and the various schools of thought on the early history of the civilization of England were reviewed dispassionately. Even the *Child Psychology* of Spencer was touched upon. Watching this literary group on any given evening with burning eyes and open mouths absorb this great food of enlightenment one could perhaps be reminded of the stories of the early Christians who received their guidance from Peter and Paul.

It was not a revolutionary group, per se, for Koziol's instructions were that it was up to us eventually to carry the torch of enlightenment to the masses in turn. Even religion, when it came in for its share of criticism, was discussed unheatedly—it was never wholly condemned. I remember Koziol telling us of the usefulness that religion had imparted during the history of civilization throughout the world and not once was there a suggestion of its ultimate extermination in Russia. They shunned the impulses of the hotheads and crackpots who succeeded the earlier strugglers.

On those memorable evenings a group of three girls and three boys studied every available philosophy of government and economics. While the study of the French Revolution occupied the most attention, it was nevertheless the history of the thirteen colonies that sought freedom from George III that was closer to my heart. I used to argue that while the French form of government was more liberal the American Constitution was more practical.

Late one night, when our literary circle was in full swing with the addition of two more members, we were discussing a particularly interesting chapter by the youthful Buckley in his *History of Civilization in England*. A sound of steps on the porch sent me posthaste to investigate and I soon was convinced that my once legal residence was no



longer legal: two men in gray uniforms were walking away quietly towards the city and another was lurking behind the trees that had just begun to sprout tiny delicate birch leaves.

Tremulously I returned to the group and announced that we were being watched. Not a word was spoken. It was like an anticipated blow . . . Everyone took the news resignedly. The excellent sense of humor of Sonya, an unusually good-looking, olive-skinned girl who was the only daughter of the druggist, brightened the stiff silence. Child-like she wagged her index finger saying: "I told you children not to play with revolution—now you will get burned." We laughed and looked to Koziol for orders.

After a quiet discussion and after listening to various individual opinions Koziol suggested we extinguish the lights and go to sleep since it was bedtime anyway. But how were we all to sleep on one bed? Sonya, however, suggested that we should make ourselves as comfortable as possible under the circumstances.

I did not know about the other fellows, or even the three girls, but to sleep in the same bed with a girl was not a part of the revolutionary activities in which I thought I was being trained. This was different and I was abashed. True, I had read biographies of men and women who had sacrificed all for the revolution and had not given any thought to their personal lives. But I could not reconcile myself to lie down on that wide, large bed together with a girl, especially with Sonya whom I secretly admired and desired. I stood there in the darkness while the others, fully clothed, quietly got into bed. Sonya put her arms around me and with a most sisterly kiss led me, the youngest of the group, to the bed where I lay near her.

Instead of being tense and nervous I was relaxed. There was something in her kiss that made me older and docile,

and when the early spring sun awakened me in the morning I found my head alongside of Sonya's ample bosom and she still fast asleep. I was not unduly disturbed—perhaps the fire of the revolution, which burned in my breast and was burning even more hotly under the influence of that kiss, affected me so strongly. Even the pleasant fragrance of her young and healthy body did not alter the situation (Freud to the contrary).

Outdoor meetings that spring had to be called off, for soon after the incident at my cottage martial law was declared and group meetings and occasional strikes, accompanied in many cases by arrests of some of the instigators, were our only activities. Of course one of us six (of the Central Committee) had to go every week to the State Revolutionary headquarters in Minsk to bring back new literature: pamphlets, proclamations, and so forth. I always welcomed the opportunity of going and returning with a large suitcase filled with illegal material that would mean many years in prison if I were caught.

Looking back at those days I can readily understand why youth is so fearless. When there is a lack of any other outlet youth delights in speeding in an automobile, for youth has no conception of death. Only when one starts to grow older, to feel occasional aches and pains—the first messengers of the natural process of chemical disintegration—does the realization dawn that life is very dear. Life that is wasted so casually by so many youths. . . .

Martial law, at first, was not such a hardship on us, for the colonel in charge was not trying to enforce it too strictly since no real disturbance had taken place in the immediate section. Nothing did happen until one day, while Koziol was getting off the train with a bag full of revolutionary pamphlets, a bomb exploded killing three officers

and wounding many soldiers and civilians at the railroad station.

Koziol, lugging the heavy suitcase, was apprehended and when the bag was opened and the contents discovered he was accused of throwing the bomb! Late that night I managed to call the Central Committee together. We deliberated all night as to what could be done to save Koziol. Only one of the group, Aaron, an artist woodcutter, voiced the opinion that our friend was beyond help. We others still clung to the hope that truth would out and that our humane and kind friend would be freed. We finally decided to seek legal advice and in the early morning called on two lawyers—the only two whom we were not afraid to approach. Had we suffered from the black plague those lawyers could not have made themselves more scarce when they heard what was expected of them. There was no hope and with an empty feeling (I did not want to go to my house, fearing that the police by this time would know where Koziol lived) I walked aimlessly through the streets and into the woods.

Late that evening I returned and made my way to the shop of my friend and fellow conspirator, Aaron the woodworker. He was almost ten years older than I and lived with his parents in a fine house. His parents wholly approved his revolutionary activities, the only parents to my knowledge who acquiesced in such activities for their children. I went to the back door and quietly let myself in without knocking. The strange silence surprised me at first. The house was usually filled with talk and laughter and I felt apprehensive. Aaron's mother met me without saying a word and motioned me towards his room. In a daze I followed her directions and entering the room saw that tall

robust mountain of a man lying on his bed sobbing convulsively. Explanations were unnecessary.

Aaron wanted to know what I was still doing in town: "If they got a confession out of Koziol when he was alive, you will be next." I paid no attention to that; I wanted to know the gruesome details. He did not know exactly when the military trial took place; it was about four o'clock that afternoon, he thought, that a scaffold was quickly rigged up in front of the railroad station, the scene of the bombing, and it was there that Koziol paid with his life for a ghastly crime committed by some fanatic of the other faction, the terroristic Social Revolutionaries (S.R.'s). From eyewitnesses I learned a few days later how poor Koziol, completely bewildered and yet stoic, took his final glimpse of the surrounding mob and quietly put his long neck out to be fitted with a Stolypin tie. (A common expression in those days of the revolution, for the Minister of Internal Affairs was Stolypin who ordered public officials "to hang them first and ask questions afterwards.")

With Koziol dead my usefulness to the organization grew less and less important. Although martial law was in force I could still go on living in Baranovici since none of the military officials had any knowledge of me. Towards the middle of July the government, to throw a bone to the various "zemstvo" organizations composed of the nobility and some of the merchant class, rescinded its orders for strict enforcement by the military, and the civil authorities were back in the saddle.

Ever since the night my house came under the surveillance of the police I was a marked man but did not realize it. A few hotheads in the organization demanded some form of a protest against the "murder" of our friend Koziol. With the latter's influence gone I could not prevent them

from this foolish step. It was decided that an open demonstration would be held between seven and eight o'clock in the evening. (The sun does not set there until nine o'clock in July.) I could see the folly of the unnecessary risks of exposing the members of the secret organization to the eyes of the police and the agent-provocateurs. But unable to out-argue the others I yielded to their wishes.

We arranged for a black flag with Koziol's name in red and bearing the legend "Glory to the fallen comrade." Our whole group was to chant "The Dirge of the Revolution." The words, set to music by Chopin, were approximately:

*You have fallen the victim*

*In the fight for freedom:*

*So young, so brave, so unafraid! . . .*

For the first time in my life, that hot summer evening with the sun still high on the horizon, I openly defied the existing order by coming out at the head of a few men and women, boys and girls, to protest the murder of an innocent man by the government. We arranged for certain members of the organized workers to be stationed at the various intersections along the line of march; they were to fall in with us along the route.

Apparently no agent-provocateur knew of our plans in advance, for we managed to gain momentum and were joined by a hundred or more converts in the procession. But they scattered in all directions at the sight of the Chief of Police (a man about whom I shall have more to say later) mounted on his favorite horse and followed by a half-dozen policemen. He knew me personally as I was tutoring a little girl of twelve in a house adjoining his, and he often spoke to me never revealing that he suspected me of leftist leanings.

So here we were face to face—I, alongside the bearer of the black flag, singing the forbidden song; and my nemesis, the Chief of Police, who had made a name for himself as one who curbed the revolutionary spirit in that section of the country by destroying the radicals. He looked straight at me with a grimace on his face. Involuntarily I turned my head to see the size of the army that was following us and was amazed to note not more than two dozen altogether, mostly girls. The rest of them had run like scared rabbits for cover upon hearing the baying of the hounds.

It was no longer a question of matching wits with my little army of high school girls and a handful of intellectuals against this armed police detachment. It was not long before someone in the mob or from some house hurled a missile at the police. This was a provocation for them to attack us. For the first time I saw the efficiency with which trained horses can break up a mob. A moment later I was running for cover, running as fast as I could to get away from a constable who was following but could not overtake me.

Only too late did I discover that with Koziol gone the organization such as it was had passed out of existence; for certainly I could not hope to take the place of the late leader. With that thought came another shock to my already weakened self-importance. What had I accomplished with a whole year of my life in Baranovici? The inventory showed very little on the credit side. My state of mind degenerated under the terrific suffering I endured at the loss of Koziol and served to destroy whatever confidence and self-reliance I had managed to store away throughout my ego-building period.

I looked back upon the weeks and months of secret meetings, literary circles, plans and discussions for the better future of a Great Empire and I felt my face burning with

shame, the shame that comes to one nearly grown-up when he suddenly discovers that instead of engaging in things worth while he has only been playing childish games. For how else could I evaluate this recent demonstration and its fiasco?

Other thoughts ran through my mind, the thoughts of a youth wasted, of my cocksure attitude in Gornoye, of my independent thought and action which led me nowhere . . . This form of self-punishment continued for the rest of the evening.

It was almost midnight when I finally arrived at the railroad station after evading the police by circling the town. There I picked out the darkest spot behind some freight cars and decided to wait until some passenger train arrived. Sometime later I heard the rumbling of a train. Cautiously I stuck my head out between two freight cars and came face to face with two soldiers, their guns fixed with bayonets aimed directly at me. Right behind them was the towering figure of the Chief of Police (who, it was said, wore a corset), his shoulders braced exaggeratedly. His figure was that of a comic opera hero but his face that of a Greek god; many a young girl would sigh longingly and steal glances at him when he walked or rode his white horse along the streets of Baranovici.

My terror at that moment has obliterated from my mind all the things he told me while I was being led to the police station. But in a way I felt relieved because my recent self-punishment seemed hardly important in comparison to what I was about to face now. If I had any plans I did not have to waste any time thinking about them because plans were being made for *me*. As we neared the station I pondered that if there ever was a time when the teachings and the inspiration given to me by a man who had

recently paid with his life were useful this was it. Koziol's example urged me to act like a man and not to be sorry for myself.

With this change in attitude I felt better and even smiled at the Chief of Police when he apologized to me for the six-by-six hole-in-the-wall cell which had no windows and was devoid of any sanitary conveniences. Into this cubicle I was pushed on that sticky hot night of July 14th, 1905, the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille and for me the day of my initiation as a full-fledged member of the revolution. I had won my spurs. I smiled and said nothing when mockingly the Chief told me how sorry he was not to be able to provide me with lamplight and how it would be of no use anyway since he had no Karl Marx to give me to read.

It must have been morning when, completely exhausted, I fell asleep on the jail floor which was covered with the mud of ages. Soon, however, I was awakened with a kick by one of the soldiers who told me to follow him to the front office.

The inquisition was on . . . It seemed hours before the ordeal was over. The Chief asked me all about myself, my education, my age, my family, my activities, smiling benevolently at me, showing all sorts of kindness and consideration—characteristics of this Police-Officer of which I had previously been warned. He could wring confessions from his victims by his great ability to sympathize with them. He was getting nowhere with me, though. Finally he began to threaten me with prison and Siberia. My repeated answer was merely: "I have nothing to tell you that would be of any value to you. You would not understand."

This irritated him, because, apart for having seen me in the demonstration, he had no real case against me. For-



tunately nothing incriminating was found in my suitcase or at the house where I lived, which had been ransacked in my absence by police officers. Angrily he told me to leave Baranovici the same day and never return. I was not to cross his path again or I would get the worst of the bargain. "Furthermore," he said, "we are retaining your passport so that you cannot go anywhere but your home town and will be unable to do any further damage to our form of government. The village where you were born will take care of you in time to come. Get going now. . . ."

I quit Baranovici the same day and never returned. But our paths crossed many times since that day and each time it was I who got the worst of it. Like Jean Valjean hounded almost to the end by Javert, I kept encountering this man under the most precarious circumstances and in the most unexpected places. Only an assassin's bullet, the bullet of little David who did not use a slingshot but a real Browning automatic, cut short this official's career.

I have spoken earlier of the fact that everyone in our family had a definite idea of what he or she wanted to make of themselves. Of necessity other plans had to be followed at times. In my case, when the forestry business came to naught, I took up private tutoring merely in order to obtain an education while tutoring others. I would then pass the necessary examinations in order to become eventually a full-fledged teacher or, at least, to obtain a place in an allied profession. Even after plunging into the revolutionary movement my aim was still the same, with the additional desire that I might secure even a better future in a country of greater opportunities.

Even while waiting between the two freight cars that night in Baranovici I was still formulating plans: where to go and how to continue my education. The two fixed bayo-

nets of those two soldiers in the command of the Chief of Police put an end to all my planning and ended all thought of any betterment—tomorrow ceased to exist. . . .

The humiliation of the arrest and the inquisition method of that police official served also to produce a complete breakdown of my personal ego. I became a picture of arrested animation; the ambitious fellow who was building a little world all his own, dreaming dreams of a career that would make him the envy of his immediate surroundings, felt crushed. From that day until I finally boarded a ship headed for another continent I merely functioned like a machine.

After arranging a conference late that evening with the remaining members of the committee, who expressed joy at seeing me released, several plans were suggested for my future. It was Aaron the woodworker's plan that prevailed—I was to be shipped off to Volynia, in the southeastern part of Russia, where the government was adopting a "mad-dog" policy by inciting one part of the population against the other. Pogroms against the Jews in Gomel and in other smaller towns were rife. Protective Societies were being set up by the Jewish youth in those communities with the help of their more enlightened gentile neighbors to fight fire with fire, to spread propaganda among those whom the government was inciting. When all other methods failed, the last resort was to use force when attacked instead of submission—the time-honored Jewish custom. It was no time for dilly-dallying. The war was on and if the government insisted on shedding the blood of innocent women and children in order to remain in power there was only one answer: the revolutionists would have a little blood-letting of their own. Only in self-defense, however, would a shot be fired by the "Schutz-verbund." Ammunition and arms for this

grim retaliation were purchased by underground methods in America and transported to any point where a pogrom threatened.

Unknown to me there existed an underground committee for distribution of ammunition for the arming of Jewish youth throughout the pogrom-infested districts of South-eastern Russia. The store of ammunition was in charge of the son of a hardware dealer who was a member of the Secret Six of our Bund. It was he who persuaded Aaron to have me deliver a consignment of Browning revolvers to Rovno. To be caught with such merchandise meant, of course, the Stolypin necktie. My state of mind must have been quite low for me to have accepted such an assignment.

It was arranged that I was to board a train at Baranovici, get off at the next small station, and wait there until a teamster should deliver to me thirty Browning revolvers in two suitcases. Personally I never knew what the cases actually contained; I could not vouch whether they had any ammunition in them; all I know is that a telegram in code was sent out for someone to meet me at the train and relieve me of the dangerous baggage. Nothing of note occurred during the trip or the dispensing of the "hot load." A young man of college age, not a Jew, met the train, spotted the two suitcases, and after an exchange of passwords I followed him to the wagon. He did ask me to remain in the town but I had decided to visit my brother, late of Warsaw, at Zhitomir-Volynsk where he had recently been assigned to a teacher's post in a school for Jewish boys.

I arrived at my destination after midnight and alighted at a quaint little wayside station whose brick walls were covered with ivy. The air was filled with the perfume of roses, reseda, acacias, and the fragrance of ripening fruit. The stars were hanging low over the peacefulness of that typical

Ukrainian night. Ukraine—that colorful section of Russia, so rich in soil, landscape, color, song, and custom, a land that was a joy to artists and a treasure to poets who named it the land of ample contentment—all this romantic wealth and beauty lay in silence about me. After the rumbling train wheels for nearly three days and three nights the restfulness of that little railroad station on that cool and balmy July night was soothing and comforting.

A solitary droshky was there to meet that lonely midnight train. I was reluctant, indeed, to leave the charming setting for human habitations and the hustle and bustle that accompanies them.

The town proper was within a few miles of the station, mostly uphill, and I desired the trip never to end. Gradually the fragrance of the fruit trees and the perfume of flowers waned, to be displaced by other odors. These were the smells of human beings in an ill-kept and ill-cared-for, typical, small town with narrow streets and old houses, some of brick with many bricks missing, with cornices badly damaged by the elements, and with stucco houses in a bad state of disrepair.

Not wishing to disturb my brother's household at this time of the night I asked the cabby to take me to some guest-house. In a brick building with walls some three feet thick and otherwise built like an armory I was given a room very much in keeping with the rest of the house but which smelled a little worse. The proprietor told me to be sure to register my passport with the police in the morning if I expected to remain any length of time. I told him to send word to my brother, the one who was in charge of the Jewish Boys' School, emphasizing the sentence. The hotel man immediately dropped his pompousness and was gracious to me.

"If you are his brother you will not need any passport in this town," he said.

For the first time in many days I slept the sleep of the innocent. The reassuring remark of the hotel man put me at ease: I knew that at least for the immediate present I would not be hounded . . . I woke up from an uninterrupted sleep to find the scared face of my brother in front of me. My first impulse at seeing his worried face was to laugh. For a man who wore the uniform of the Ministry of Education, who lived in a narrow, sheltered world full of ideals based on Zion as the eventual salvation of the Jewish question, who could not possibly allow himself to think in any other terms, it was natural to be frightened when confronted with a brother ten years younger than himself and about whom he must have heard from our old home reports that were not favorable.

My better judgment, of course, told me that this was no time to shock the eldest offspring of my family with revolutionary agitation. My precarious position demanded shelter and rest. Practically a refugee, with no passport, without the right to travel away from my village, I could not afford to incur disfavor in a potential temporary haven. To all my brother's questions I managed to say as little as possible and when we arrived at his spacious, well-furnished home, a part of the school building surrounded on every side by thriving fruit trees and flowers, the strain between us seemed diminished—I was again among happy relatives and friends. His wife, whom he had recently married, came out to greet me and I could not help noticing that she was pregnant and seemed very happy about it.

For the next few days I had a good time meeting numbers of their friends, mostly professional men such as doctors and druggists. These men with middle-of-the-road leanings

in politics did not exactly appeal to me. Their discussions of recent books, music, and culture, made me think of the story of Nero fiddling during the burning of Rome. Were not the cities and towns of the very section where my brother lived being run over by hordes of impassioned peasants whom the government in its death struggle had aroused against liberals and Jews? Was not all this going on almost within earshot of these people who calmly sipped their tea and discussed a new book or a new pamphlet on Zionism?

I was still smarting under the impact of recent events: the hanging of Koziol, my arrest and the kick administered to me by the soldier in that small dungeon in Baranovici. These memories did nothing to calm my nerves to the point where I could become a participant in such futile discussions. Imbibing tea and eating my sister-in-law's delicious cookies among those unruffled, imperturbable people of high education reminded me of a poem I had read some years before about a banquet held during the bubonic plague.

A couple of days later, while meandering the streets of that quiet old town, I noticed small gatherings of young people talking in whispers. I recognized them as people who were closer to my understanding: laborers and girls from mediocre homes. I could guess what they were saying without actually hearing the words. The flame of the revolution seared their quick furtive glances and gave the lie to their seemingly serene strolling. Like a person up to his chin in water and yet unable to take a drink, I was unable to converse with them, much as I wanted to. Not possessing any introduction from a thoroughly reliable party member I could not very well tell them that the flames that were consuming them were also burning within me. After a few days of this calm existence, getting fat on good food and the comfortable home provided for me, I dis-

patched a letter to my dear friend Aaron the woodworker, asking him to establish contact for me with the local Bund in Zhitomir-Volynsk.

Contacts were slow to be made; an introduction could be given only in code and the codes varied in every State and sometimes there were several in the same State. Some days elapsed therefore before a decrepit-looking young man came to my brother's home and asked to see me, thereby ending my easy and otherwise prosaic existence in a family that moved along happily in its appointed groove.

My brother and his wife sensed what I had done and begged me not to ruin their lives as I had "ruined" mine. I sincerely promised to keep them out of any danger and to the best of my ability I kept my word.

The letter of introduction must have been a good one for I was given every consideration and shown every kindness by the local political group. I was even offered a false passport should I desire to remain there. That I refused to do. After attending several of their secret meetings I knew that I could not go on being merely a silent member. I craved action, so I decided to leave this Ukrainian town before bringing shame and perhaps disaster to my brother's household. But destiny ruled otherwise . . . In the calm of the night I was aroused by a shrill whistle, a prearranged signal for me to go out. Fortunately, my brother and his wife did not hear it. I got dressed quietly and met the owner of that rebel whistle. I followed him to the nearest churchyard where amid the tumbled-down markers over the old graves he told me that word had just been received that a pogrom was about to take place in a town not over six miles away. He informed me that the local "Schutz-verbund" was getting its members together to go to the town that was about to be attacked by the mob.

In groups of six we started out during the night for a town whose name has escaped my memory. Altogether there were five groups and I was in the last one. It was arranged that each group would take up a separate vantage point and would wait for the signal which would be given when the mob approached the market place and started to ransack the Jewish stores—always the beginning of a pogrom. With no food or drinking water we lay down in a wheat field and waited for something to happen. From the clouds of dust hanging over the roads leading to that town we could tell that this was no false alarm. Hundreds of young and old men of the peasantry, on oxcarts and horse-drawn wagons or on foot, were slowly closing in on the doomed Jewish population. Our group, like the others, was not to move until notified by a special messenger. He never showed up. Even when we heard the screams of people in agony and when we knew the pogrom was in full swing we dared not move. The leader of our group, a product of the ghetto who valued his life too much, carried a revolver in his pocket. I am sure he did not know how to use it and wouldn't have employed it even if he had. He was a sorry person. I urged him not to wait any longer but he paid no attention to my pleas, or for that matter, to the urgings of the others.

From our hide-out we could see that the town was in flames and we could hear the unforgettable wild roar of the mob, a terrifying sound which surged in waves just like that of crowds at a football game—it lacked only the accompaniment of music and cheer leaders.

“What can a small group like ours do to such a mob?” pleaded our panic-stricken leader. It was past midnight when we started on our way home. Shame was so great within me that I refused to talk to anyone during the long struggle through the fields and swamps on the way.



When we approached the town our leader asked us to surrender our ammunition to him for safekeeping but I hurled mine as far away as I could; I did not want to touch his hands. Disillusioned, I continued on my way to the schoolhouse, the home of my brother.

There were lights in the living room and my brother was pacing the floor when I entered. Not caring much for any human companionship I made my way to the porch facing the orchard where I slept. He followed me and sat on the edge of the bed; without one word of reproach he talked about the unfortunate lot of the Jews. He told me how he envied me, the free lance, the fellow who was not afraid of realism. Little did he know how much I had suffered that night from the self-accusation of being a fool and a coward. Toward dawn we heard the squeaking of approaching wagon wheels that seemed in need of grease. Then followed the loud wailing of men and women—the wailing for the dead.

I had been a coward the previous day for not disobeying the order of my leader, but nobody could prevent me from attending the funeral of six young boys who had paid with their lives in the pogrom. Again it was from eyewitnesses that I learned the whole episode. One of our groups refused to wait any longer and with guns drawn approached the mob warning the rioters that unless they dispersed shooting would commence. The mob, armed with clubs, surrounded them on all sides and a leader finally proposed to this unsophisticated group of six that if they would surrender their revolvers they would in return be permitted to leave town peacefully. If they insisted on brandishing their weapons they would be torn limb from limb.

Never having been placed in a similar situation it is difficult for me to tell what those six youths thought when

they finally surrendered their only chance for protection against the bloodthirsty mob of the Black Hundred (a name given to all those who partook in pogroms against the Jews and the liberal element of Russia at that period). No sooner did they turn over their guns than the real purpose of the mob became clear to them. In desperation the six made their way to the nearest building which happened to be the Public Bath House. With the mob hard behind them they managed to climb up on the roof. From there they were flung one at a time to the cobblestones below, to the great delight of those beasts in human clothing who roared with laughter each time another youngster, the oldest not more than seventeen, struck the ground. There they were left to writhe in their final agonies until their bodies were eventually claimed by their parents from Zhitomir-Volynsk and borne in the procession which my brother and I witnessed that early morning as it passed the schoolhouse for Jewish boys.

With our heads bowed low we sat until daylight not daring to look at each other. The tragedy was entirely too great and we could not find words to alleviate its significance. With clenched fists I proceeded several hours later to the Jewish cemetery, a desolate treeless plot of land where almost every marker was covered with wild grass.

There I witnessed the tragedy of a race that has given itself so much expression in tears. It is difficult to describe the lowering of the bodies into the black graves of the Ukrainian soil. The graves looked to me like monsters of Hades, like gaping mouths ready to receive and swallow the six mutilated bodies that only a short while before had been activated by an errand of mercy. Those broken corpses were buried in the very clothes they had worn on the previous day, for according to the Jewish tradition the blood of the victim, if spilled on his clothes, was interred with the

victim and the usual cleansing of the body was not administered. Somehow, it brought to my mind a print I had seen some years before of a crocodile on the Nile lying in wait for a fair maiden who was being sacrificed by the early Egyptians to the lovely River as a token of respect. "Have we improved since the days of those ancient Egyptians?" I asked myself then.

With the lowering of the bodies the wailing mingled with the sorrowful cries of parents and relatives, and somewhere in that cemetery was heard the prayer to Jehovah: "Listen, O Israel . . ."

On the next day I was back at the little ivy-covered railway station. It was a balmy day after an early warm rain; the fragrant flowers smelled just as sweet and the fruit ripening on the vines exuded its inviting aroma. But gone was my enchantment and appreciation, gone was the enthusiasm, gone was my desire to linger and enjoy the peaceful beauty of the Ukraine . . . I was leaving that town for good.

It was when the sailors on the battleship *Potemkin* raised the red flag of the revolution at Odessa, while the ships of the fleet that remained loyal to the Czar chased it all the way to the Rumanian city of Jassy where it was interned for some time; when barricades were being thrown up in Moscow and St. Petersburg and the first peasant's and worker's Soviet was being organized in the capital cities; when for the first time the revolution emerged from underground into the open everywhere; it was in that time, the last week of August, 1905, that I landed in Minsk after my tragic visit to my brother's town.

I hardly recognized the orderly, quiet, provincial capital. Day and night it was alive with humanity. Revolutionary workers were marching openly through the streets

without being molested by the police, and rumors were flying about that the day was near for a general strike that would tie up every function pertaining to the life of the Empire. They were quite different from the days I had known several months before when nothing was uttered openly or above a whisper.

It was amusing to watch the police give wide berth to the underfed and underclad crowds who were kings for the day. I felt real contentment in Minsk. "Haven't I just left a part of the country where the reactionary powers of the government were still going strong?" I thought.

To observe Minsk in the throes of revolutionary fire was like watching a hero of an old-time Western thriller about to conquer the villain. Though I had seen one installment in Zhitomir-Volynsk and a couple of days later the second installment in Minsk, it did not matter. It compensated for my memory of the six victims of reactionary power. It was different in the capital city of my province where the Black Hundred was running for cover like the dragon before St. George.

The "contact man" I knew there was a schoolteacher. He was married to an intelligent woman who fully shared his views. I used to put up at their house whenever my revolutionary activities took me to Minsk. In that house on the next day I told him of my recent experiences and he outlined a plan that would take me back to Slutsk, the scene of my youthful schooling. He was sending me there, he said, to convert a well-organized group of young Jewish boys and girls who were following the wrong revolutionary theory by being Zionists but at the same time were waging the political revolution. "With your outlook on such factors as narrow nationalism, you should not have much trouble in breaking

up that ridiculous group which is neither flesh nor fish," he said.

I pondered how one could be for a better Russia with a constitution founded on lines similar to that of the United States and simultaneously battle the cause of Zion. It didn't make sense. Although the scheme to undermine the Zionists and merge them in the tide of revolution did not wholly appeal to me, yet I was proud to be entrusted with the mission. I was glad to go to Slutzk for two other reasons: one was that a passport would not be required of me as I belonged to the county; and second, a desire to even up scores with some of the self-satisfied prigs I had gone to school with under Levinson.

It is difficult to describe with detached clarity the events that took place from the time of my arrival in Slutzk until the Duma was granted by the Czar's degree on the 17th of October, 1905.

The press of Russia was generally somewhat liberal, except for the *New Time* (*Novoye Vremya*), a semiofficial conservative mouthpiece. The newspapers supported the fight for freedom. They, representing the middle class, the liberal element of Russia which then consisted of professional men, small landowners, and university students, more than any class or single factor were responsible for the ukase of that October day which proclaimed a limited monarchy. Assuredly it was not the proletariat, which in reality hardly existed in that great agricultural country, except for a small number of factory workers in the large cities. The few tailors and domestics scattered through the Empire had no hand in the revolution; the completely ignorant muzhik certainly did not know what it was all about; he was prepared for pogroms on the Jews and to expropriate the land of his

nearest large gentile landowner—depending on who had the most influence with him.

Peasants and workers could be crushed easily by the police and an army that was not able to withstand the Japs. It was different, however, when the minds of the liberals were poisoned with revolutionary ideas. Officers of the various regiments had asked for a limited monarchy in 1825, after acquiring the spirit and desire for freedom upon their return from the Napoleonic wars where they saw democracy in action. Eighty years later the officers of 1905, in whose hearts still smoldered the desire for freedom, were fostering a revolution against the Czar-Father.

Daily the papers carried stories about entire regiments being mustered out of service and their officers arrested for insubordination. When the University of Moscow went on strike and the faculty as a whole backed up the students, and strikes followed in the Universities of Kharkoff and Yuriev, various zemstvos joined in. The stories and propaganda of the liberal press describing in detail those unforgettable events were weapons against which the monarchy flailed hopelessly. And we in the small towns, like Slutzk, were carrying on. . . .

Instead of going to Minsk every week for literature we would print with our own press (set up in my room) proclamations, pamphlets, leaflets of the call to arms, and so forth. I had little sleep in those few weeks preceding the general strike and the celebration of the Duma that followed. Our orders, promulgated by the Central Committee in Minsk, were that when the signal was given for the general strike not a wheel was to turn, and excepting drugstores and houses of worship everything was to be completely paralyzed. I did not expect any trouble from the storekeepers. Everyone co-operated to the fullest extent to make

the strike a success. Some schools had to be evacuated by force but even there we encountered little difficulty.

When the final chapter is written, when future historians weigh the merits or demerits of the 1905 Russian revolution, regardless of faults they may find with the technique, they will agree that this was not a proletarian revolution. It was a revolution of the middle class, that class of Russians who were intelligent enough and had read sufficiently to realize their hopeless condition under the monarchy. It was that class that won the victory for a free Russia—only to be destroyed eventually by the proletariat. Like the salmon fighting the rapids on their way to spawn, only to die when their job was done, so was the middle class of Russia completely erased after it had given the impetus that freed one sixth of the world from the grip of a bureaucracy the like of which the world has never known.

These middle-class revolutionists espoused neither communism nor socialism. These people had never heard of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and their like. A healthy body of citizens, in many respects like the Fathers who founded the Republic of the United States, they were perfectly willing to stop when individual freedom was achieved. The slogan of the French Revolution, "Liberty, Fraternity, Equality," was all they followed.

During this excitement it was interesting to observe the reactions of the inhabitants of Slutsk toward that epochal movement. The "powers of darkness" or the Black Hundred had taken to bomb-proof cellars. Deep in hiding they awaited the day when they could again burst out in all their fury to crush any liberal movement. In those cellars they were recording the names of everyone who had recently emerged from similar hideouts to take part in this belated

French Revolution which had finally reached the steppes and the bogs of Holy Russia.

Important at this point, too, is a picture of the police organization in Slutsk. It consisted of a Chief named Schtanghe who was of German origin, an assistant who represented him at social functions, two deputies each in charge of a district, and, if memory serves, about a dozen policemen. Most of the policemen were ex-soldiers and no better than the average peasant. Their characteristics depended largely on how much Tartar blood they possessed. One of them, Zachary, or Little Zachary (Zacharka) as he was usually called, stands out in my memory as the most cruel and cunning of policemen. Short, slight but wiry, with hair the color of corn and a ruddy complexion on an otherwise typically Mongolian face, he was the terror of those who fought the absolutism in our town. Stealthily he would sneak up to eavesdrop on conferences and whenever he received a beating for it he bided his time and never forgot his adversaries, always paying them in kind when the opportunity came. He was armed with a revolver that looked like a young cannon. Naturally he could not make much headway against a citizenry gone berserk. It was only after the October rising that policemen were equipped with army rifles.

We also had stationed in the city bivouacs a peacetime regiment of soldiers. The method of shifting soldiers from one place to another so as to avoid the possibility of their minds being poisoned by revolutionary leaders and agitators had not yet been devised. All in all, the government fought us as it fought the Japanese: always a little late, always along the lines of bureaucracy. Each paper and each suggestion had to pass through many desks to be approved or disapproved by as many bureaucrats and by the time it reached the heads of departments, such as the Chief of the



Third Section, its usefulness was of negligible quality. So we youngsters had things pretty much our own way as we had no one to consult but ourselves, except that a few very important decisions were made in Minsk by the State Central Committee.

I was selected to head a group of four, one of whom was a girl, to fraternize with the local soldiery. Before long those soldiers were eating out of our hands under the red banner of the revolution. Little Zachary (Zacharka) was the only policeman who would not succumb to our appeals. A descendant of the hordes of Ghengis Kahn, he permitted no progressive thought to penetrate his coarse cruel hide.

The population in general slowly saw the light. Mostly they were small storekeepers who had been wont to sit dreaming for generations in their tiny cubby-holes, roasting in the summer because within their shops there was no ventilation nor even a window in most of them, and freezing in the winter because their only provision for heat was a heavy cast-iron pot filled with charcoal which would be lighted only on the coldest days. The men would rub their hands over the slow-burning charcoal embers and it was nothing unusual for the women to lift their skirts and sit over it to gain some warmth.

At first those bewildered provincials did not know what to make of the revolution. They could not understand how any human being could defy the existing order. But gradually they girded their loins and made ready to kick the dying Bear . . . It was really gratifying to see some of those bearded men and even the old women discuss the iniquities of the House of Romanoff with fire in their eyes. I considered this one of the greatest triumphs. For I had seen only recently that even farmers would turn informers on their own sons so as to save their own skins from possible accusa-

tion. This was, in a way, the Golden Age that even Turgenev had not foreseen when he described the great chasm that existed between *Fathers and Sons*. True, it had a very short life but it was grand while it lasted.

I was even invited out socially to take meals with families who were not necessarily parents of my private pupils (still my only source of income) and I enjoyed this hospitality until free board was provided for me. By inviting me they openly defied the established order. They wanted to know something about it and with the naïveté of school children would ask: "What is the next step in your revolutionary movement?"

I dished out information in very small doses and must have suffered from a great deal of self-importance. After the soldiery our next victims were the Zionists who toyed with revolution. Our attack on them started with an open challenge for debate and the large stucco building that was used as a house of worship only in the summer and could accommodate more than three thousand persons was given to us for the occasion. This itself indicated how far the revolutionary movement had spread, when the use of a house of worship for the ultraconservative Jewish religion was permitted for revolutionary discussion.

Our side presented a fiery, red-hot speaker, David Zhizhmore, a boy exactly my age, blond, blue-eyed, whose appearance did not betray his Jewish origin. He was a born leader and speaker, a student in his last year of gymnasia. (After the crumbling of our October reign he fled, escaping arrest, and as life would have it, having obtained his medical degree, was representing Germany in 1927 or thereabouts under an assumed name in a branch of the Rockefeller Research Laboratories.) On the side of the Zionists were several of the rabbinical type, somewhat older than our group.

They still sang the song of Zion and wanted to use the revolution as a crutch towards their final goal. But the psychology of the masses—the young people, boys and girls, with whom I lived and worked during nearly two years of the revolutionary movement—was clear cut. They were only revolutionary in a sense like the Colonists of the United States whose early slogan was “taxation without representation.” This was also the spirit of the 1905 revolution. They wanted free assembly, free speech, a free press, and beyond that had absolutely no illusions—they wanted a voice in the government so as to improve their educational institutions and improve the lot of the peasant, and that was about all. The middle class, as I have mentioned, caught the spirit of the revolutionary movement and readily, if somewhat cautiously, went along with us. It is no wonder, therefore, that when the call came on October 10th for a complete tie-up of the entire country virtually everyone responded without much urging.

We in our town had committees to look after each industry such as they were in that time. Those committees, while they functioned on paper, in reality had nothing to do. The trades and professions, even educational institutions, were seething with revolt, and when our manifestoes were openly delivered throughout the town as a call for the “final struggle” they responded even ahead of schedule. It was a pleasure to see the old and young people mingle, each one determined to stick it out. The air itself was charged with anticipation. Newspapers carried full accounts of the activities in the capital cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg, and it was gratifying that there was very little terror or property discussion. The bureaucracy of Holy Russia for once suffered from a terror that was not physical—it was scared out of its wits. Daily more and more of the upper classes

joined the movement. Expressing themselves openly in favor of a representative form of government, some of them even went so far as to suggest the complete annihilation of the monarchy. Spoken words of that kind in a country whose regime for centuries had controlled not only the political and economic destinies of its subjects but also the spiritual, owing to the official Church, had a devastating effect upon those in power. Minister succeeded minister, only to resign in less than twenty-four hours and to be succeeded by another nincompoop. It had reached the stage when no self-respecting bureaucrat wanted the responsibility, a responsibility to a Czar whose almost entire population was opposed to him.

When the general strike was about five days old we found ourselves suddenly unable to issue our daily bulletins. My room had been ransacked and the little printing press was gone. I strongly suspected Zacharka, the undersergeant of police. So I was sent to Minsk with a fast-moving team of horses, and driving day and night, changing horses at various intervals but not at the regular State post stations, I arrived in the city to receive further instructions about the handling of the strike, should it be unduly prolonged because of the stubbornness of the Czar's advisors. It was October 16th and I found conditions there somewhat similar to Slutsk: the same defiance of the police and crowds marching through the streets. The only difference was that the crowds in Minsk generally wore more red blouses. I saw a funeral procession and marching in front of the coffin that was carried by eight youngsters of the revolution was a youth bearing aloft a black flag with the gold letters: "Praise to Our Fallen Hero." It brought to mind our premature boyish outburst in Baranovici when we carried a similar flag in memory of Koziol.

I learned that the victim had received a severe beating the previous night while distributing pamphlets and had died in the morning. The procession was soon over and the milling crowds, a sea of red, started to sing in place of the customary dirge another revolutionary song: "On to the barricades we'll go and the red banner we'll take along." However, no barricades were visible and the activities of the city were paralyzed. Even the horsecars were safely in their barns and, as far as the eye could reach along the General's Boulevard with the only obstruction that of the governor's palace, one could see shutters tightly closed. It was the residence of Governor Suvorine, who only a month later tremblingly paid with his life for his counter-revolutionary measures. This man who had been transferred from Moscow to suppress the uprising was assassinated by a sixteen-year-old high school student, who in turn was killed and about whom I shall have more to say in this narrative.

I felt somewhat lost in not having to carry out or give orders for the time being for I was a guest in this city. That night we sat up in the home of one of the leaders whose charming wife was busy serving tea and cake to those who came and went during the small hours. They came for orders and left for their appointed posts.

The 17th of October, 1905, will remain vivid for me till the end of time. From an unusually foggy warm morning it turned into a bright sunny afternoon. I was eager to return to Slutsk. A small makeshift press was packed in the wagon, a guide was provided, and I was on my way to another place where I was to secure materials and ideas for our future bulletins. With the crowds much greater than the previous day I suddenly saw them surging ahead, hats flying in the air, and the next thing I heard was a terrific

roar—the sound of which seemed to have electrified those around me who like myself heard the shouting and cheering and saw the hats flying in the air, not yet knowing the meaning of it. Even the wild acclaim of the crowds on Armistice Day in New York in 1918 lacked the superhuman sound that started around the newspaper office on the Governor's Boulevard in Minsk on that epochal day.

From there it gathered momentum and, like waves in the open sea under the pressure of a sudden breeze gathering together to make bigger waves, those sounds gradually poured into one—the beautiful symphony of triumph. The singing, cheering, shouting, and laughing only helped the illusion.

Soon I heard the meaning: "We won! We won! A Duma has been granted, and an amnesty to all political prisoners who were not involved in the terror!"

How can one describe fully such a moment? Only a youth who has lived and fought and perhaps felt as I did then could understand the feeling of emotional outburst that had overtaken Russia when that news became known. With the crowds I continued to be pushed on and on, red flags appearing almost from everywhere, and with that terrific din in my ears we finally arrived at a large cobblestone-covered square in front of the railroad station, a square large enough to accommodate the thousands of people who had gathered to celebrate the event.

A speaker's platform hurriedly put together appeared in the center of it and speaker after speaker got up to congratulate the crowds and to congratulate Russia, the country about to take its place among the civilized nations of the world. One after another the speakers tried to assure us that the reign of absolutism was at an end and that "Nicholas the Bloody" had been finally forced to give in to the will of

the people. Those were nervous orators unaccustomed to speak in the open. They were mostly men who had recently come out from "underground." But other speakers appeared—I remember a prominent lawyer, Rosenbaum of Minsk, who eventually became a member of the Duma, getting up to congratulate the masses for their conquest. But it was the last speaker who sent a real thrill through the crowd. He wore the gray uniform of the artillery with the insignia of a captain. As he waved his unsheathed sword in the air to the masses, I clearly remember him crying: "I have to this day been true to the service of the Czar—from this day I shall be true to the service of you, the people!"

There he stood, tall, blond, with chiseled features, this son of the nobility with the afternoon breeze playing with his hair.

It was while a young girl, in her desire to improve this picture, was tying a red flag to this officers sword that I happened to think of another similar picture from Turgenev's "Rodin," where his hero mounted the barricades. Before the thought of similarity was completed, the animated face of this officer—this new friend of the masses—suddenly stiffened into fright.

"Lie down! Fall where you are!" he suddenly shouted—and I heeded his order. . . .

The next moment I heard the firing of rifles mixed with the cries of the dying—I don't know which I heard first. . . . The captain of the artillery while sacrificing his life (for he did not lie down) saved hundreds of other lives, and in fulfilling his pledge instilled in the hearts of many, including mine, undying gratitude to his memory.

With my ears ringing no longer from the shouting but from the sound of the shooting I slowly picked myself up, after lying flat on the ground for what seemed to me an

eternity. Dry-eyed I observed the sight before me: human forms, some completely motionless in the most grotesque positions, some convulsed and gasping in their final spasm of death, a twitch of an arm here, a final groan and gurgle close by. I felt bitterly ashamed to be alive. The young girl, who only a short while before had been tying the colors of the revolution to the unsheathed sword of the army officer, must have made a pact with him in death through that very gesture, for here they were lying side by side on the cobblestone pavement with the red flag getting even redder from the slowly congealing stream that was trickling from the officer's mouth.

There I stood with the other survivors among those silent forms that looked so completely alone, forlorn, and forsaken. Slowly came upon me the realization of the magnitude of what had happened. The results of the Czar's latest "kindness" were all around me and my feet seemed to lack responsiveness to the dictate that must have urged me to run for safety. I looked in the direction of the railroad station from where the bullets had come and wished for more lightning from that black cloud. Nothing came.

All of you have undoubtedly read somewhere, some time, a gruesome description of human blood running in streams, and like myself you attributed it to the imagination of the author. This was not imagination for I saw human blood running between the cobblestones of that Railroad Square in Minsk on October 17th. The Duma, born out of blood and misery, had been baptized with the human blood of those who had come to celebrate the event.

I tore myself away from the scene and finally arrived at the place where I had stayed the previous night when I had been full of activity and expectation. Futile conversations and explanations as to what occasioned the slaughter



took up most of the night. It seemed that nobody had known of the soldiers stationed at the railroad. This bloodthirsty outfit had been in command of a Tartar top sergeant who had perhaps taken it upon himself to strafe those who had come to celebrate the Czar's ukase. Who knows what had been going through that top sergeant's mind on that day?

At dawn of the following morning preparations for the burial of the victims were the only activity in sight. Of the hundred and six who died thirty-three were members of our Society. That unforgettable funeral procession with the thirty-three pine boxes carried on the shoulders of brother members through the main streets of the city left an indelible impression on all who saw it. We were not molested by the police. Serene silence accompanied the procession and you could almost hear the breathing of the masses that lined both sides of the streets. This was no time for loud outbursts of resentment, no time for words. Everyone, outside perhaps of agents-provocateurs, bowed their heads, some in prayer, others because of the shame of it.

No sooner had we reached the cemetery and eulogies were being offered by our various leaders than hell broke loose. Hiding behind one of the walls of the cemetery was my enemy, the former Chief of Police of Baranovici, who was now elevated to the same post in Minsk. With him were about a hundred mounted policemen who in addition to their sidearms and rifles carried long whips (the well-known "nagaika" with a piece of lead at its end). Without warning they descended upon us and employed those whips savagely. To this day I carry the mark of the lead tip of the whip slashed at me by the hand of His Honor, the Chief of Police, with whom I came face to face and who did not fail to recognize me. Again there were cries for help, again there were moans from those who were trampled by the hoofs of the

well-trained horses, and again there were the dying. More had paid with their lives while trying to bury their comrades in a land where freedom was ringing from the Caspian Sea to the Arctic Circle, from the German border to Manchuria.

With every hope gone of ever seeing real freedom in a land where outrages of this sort were permissible, I still tried to persuade myself that this was only a game, that the hope eternal which played such a prominent part in my game of life would eventually be fulfilled. Wearily I retraced my steps back to the city. I would go to Slutzk. Mechanically I knew that it was the only place to which I could go and I remember the pain within me was so great that I did not care very much where I was going or whether I ever got there or not.

In the town of Slutzk a new note had been introduced before my return into the otherwise harmonious uprising. It was the sour note of discord, the note of an impossible Utopia instead of the wave after wave of enthusiastic youth who had been fighting simply for political freedom. There now became apparent the injection of a far more reaching aim—the aim as far back as 1905 of fanatics of the revolution to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat. The pure red had received a touch of dirt from the fanatics. They were potentially just the same as the incubated rank and file who now under the banner of Stalin have destroyed the liberty of millions of people. The color of the national banner has changed from time to time but dictators and czars have always been of the same hue.

When news started to trickle through that banks were being robbed to support the revolution, the better element dropped its recently acquired strange bedfellows like hot potatoes. Those robberies in the name of revolution were given the fancy name of “expropriation.” It was this news

that sent chills through me. I had not been taught to rob and steal. I failed to learn to expropriate.

Just as soon as the liberal middle class of Russia started to organize under Milukov, leader of the Cadets (Constitutional Democrats), the 1905 revolutionary movement as such was doomed to failure and the government and the Black Hundred got the upper hand. The revolutionists dug into the cyclone cellars from which the "powers of darkness" had emerged. The Russian press maintained its vigilance. It could not be fooled by the meager promise from the Czar's Palace of a makeshift Duma. This original grant of a representative government was not even worth the paper it was written on. Not only was the form of electing the members of this thinking body ("Duma" means deliberate or deep thought) far from being direct, but also after they assembled in the Palace of Tavrich their function was problematical. They could only think; and while each member was personally immune from arrest, even if he did speak loud, in the long run that is where his function ended. It was not an executive assembly and it lacked the power to create new laws. All it could do was suggest to the ministry, which body was responsible to the Czar alone, some small insignificant reforms—and that is where the power of the Duma ended.

While the more constructive element in the revolutionary forces suggested a respite in order to take inventory, strengthen their forces, and with a united front continue to the next goal, the fanatics wanted to go the whole hog. This eventually led to that great split in the revolutionary movement and created the destructive force of the Bolsheviki under the banner of Lenin and Trotzky (who were exiles at the time and bored from without—from Switzerland) and the Social Democrats, who found themselves in the

minority and were called Mensheviki. I remember raising my voice in the defense of those in the minority movement at a meeting of the secret steering Central Committee. Only one other member, a fellow not older than myself, sided with me. The rest jeered and laughed at me. "You are nothing but a bourgeois and you don't have the interest of the proletariat at heart. Had you studied the true Marxian principle of the government of the proletariat you would never want to make peace with the liberals."

I should like to explain how youths of my age, not quite eighteen, could take part in such serious discussions and assume the burden of a complete overhauling of an Empire. Many observers of this time no doubt know that while in this country and in England youth is retarded, the opposite was true in Continental Europe, especially Russia. This was due to many reasons, the principle one being perhaps the short life span in Russia at that time. The other was because of the custom of most parents to marry off their daughters between the ages of fourteen and sixteen and set up their sons in a business, profession or trade as early as possible. For my part I was not able to participate in many discussions when the division between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviki became an important factor in the revolutionary movement. The entire month of November was spent in fights and snarls over the future course, and when the prisons of Russia began to bulge from the number of those taken into custody (because of the continued struggle) a new crisis appeared on the horizon. Word soon came concerning another general strike—the strike that spelled failure and the complete paralysis of the 1905 revolution.

Winter was late that year and the first days of December saw the ground still muddy and bare. This general strike was called for the fifth day of December but response

to it was completely lacking. I learned afterward that even the bigger cities failed to muster the strength for a complete national tie-up. With renewed vigor the Czar's government ruled with an iron hand. Hundreds upon hundreds were killed and thousands were taken prisoners—prisoners of war of the dying monarchy.

We in Slutsk fully realized the danger of another strike that lacked the sympathy and co-operation of the middle class. But the die was cast. On the first day of the strike I remember a fine snow, the first snow of the season, coming down in tiny flakes at first and gradually getting worse and worse. Most of the stores refused to close and only under the threat of violence did they submit to the shutting of the doors, never locking them and still doing business. The various committees assigned for the enforcement of the strike had their troubles and continuously reported to us at headquarters the futility of the strike. I personally led several expeditions to the various schools and came away in most cases with the knowledge that we were up against a stone wall. Even the son of the Chief of Police, consumptive-looking Vova Schtange who subsequently committed suicide because of his father's position, warned me not to go too far. He as a member of our group knew from conversations at his home what the aim of the police was and told me I was a marked man.

The place where I lived was inhabited also by five Zionists and one young girl of no particular leanings. On this December night I was to attend a midnight meeting of the Central Revolutionary Committee in a little house by the river. While waiting for the appointed hour I was sitting in my room and listening to the chatter of the young girl who was telling me about a book she was reading. It was called *Women and Socialism* and the author was Karl

Liebknecht. Our landlady suddenly ran in and with an expressive look loudly asked me for a pen and ink. She whispered, "Run for your life—the police are in the other room!" I started out through the back door. The snow was still falling and as I was about to climb the back fence a bayonet fixed at the end of a rifle stared me in the face. "Don't waste your time in running away," said the soldier behind his rifle. "You'd better go inside and take your medicine."

So back inside I went. The house was filled with police. The Chief of Police was seated at the dining-room table completely at ease, questioning the poor Zionists whom I'd hoped I could use for a blind when I moved there. These terrified men blamed me for their plight. Without lifting his eyes from the paper the Police Chief shouted, "Search him!" Zacharka, the most hated policeman in our city, proceeded with the assignment. After sticking his hands into all my pockets and not finding anything he resorted to a nasty trick: he stuck his hand under my vest and proceeded to claw me with his long Tartar nails. That man and I had always had it in for each other. So I automatically hauled off and punched him square in the mouth as hard as I could. The next moment a butt of a gun came in contact with the side of my head and I came to the following morning on an iron cot at police headquarters.

It was a cold and drab December morning and I wondered why I wasn't despondent. When something is anticipated for a long time the realization of it is never quite as bad as you expect. The ill-smelling little cell with three or four shelves, with a slop bucket in the corner and with a small dirty window, should have, in addition to the pains in my head, made me feel awful. I remember lying for the longest while daydreaming on that hard iron shelf, plan-

ning what I was going to do with my spare time—now that it was all spare . . . From the turmoil and activity of two years in the revolutionary movement the let-down was not altogether bad. At least I could not blame myself for any further mistakes made by the leaders. I'd made a good many myself. Now I had no decision to make and I didn't have to worry any more about arrest—for there I was.

Around noon the poor Zionists, who must have been arrested with me and placed in the next cell, were freed. They called out good-bye to me and one of them added, "You see how futile it is to be a revolutionary? The only place for a Jew is in Palestine. You'll soon come to the same conclusion."

I winked at him through the bars and laughed. Another voice followed—the voice of the little, green-faced, undernourished, skin-and-bones girl who only last night had been reading to me. She had been reading a passage about the early women of Prussia, whose husbands, according to Liebknecht, spoke to them only in connection with sexual intercourse, and I remembered that a flush had covered her countenance, making her almost attractive—when the police arrived. I still remember listening to her monotone, reading about the sex life of the early Germanic races, while I kept trying to figure out in my youthful mind the reaction of this undernourished child of the ghetto towards this particular subject. I only knew my own reaction. Now, like a shadow, she passed out of the jail on the way to liberty—such as it was.

Later in the day one of the deputies arrived and told me of his orders—to take me to prison. This deputy was slightly sympathetic to the revolutionary cause and looked apologetic when informing me of the transfer. With some effort I walked with him to the prison which was within a

stone's throw of the police headquarters's lock-up. The rusty old gates of the ancient Slutzk prison closed behind me and I still wondered why I wasn't more depressed. Perhaps the blow on my head had something to do with it. I was taken to the second floor of that gruesome-looking structure, the floor assigned to political prisoners and which was completely empty upon my arrival. It was only when the warden took me to my cell, No. 6, and told me that this was to be my permanent residence that I became panicky.

"Wasn't this the cell where Moroz, the ax-murderer of Dr. Sinaisky, committed suicide?"

"Yes," replied the warden, "and the hook in the center of the ceiling is still here for all those who commit bloody crimes or rise against the Czar."

The wizened little warden's handle-bar moustache accompanied every word like the baton of a maestro. I looked up at the hook in the ceiling of that small room, which had been whitewashed once, and memories of that murder case came flowing through my mind like the sudden bursting of a water main:

A beautiful late spring morning . . . I was on my way to Levinson's school for Jewish boys, when the sleepy town suddenly became all agog—people were running out of houses, shouting, talking in excitement . . . From mouth to mouth in the streets went the bloodcurdling news that Dr. Sinaisky, a most honorable physician, and his quiet daughter of sixteen had been killed with an ax by their coachman, Moroz. Now murder had not been a thing of every day occurrence in Slutzk. People sometimes lived through their lives before the revolution without hearing of even one murder—of anybody they knew. And here, in this very town, had been the murder of *two* people whom everybody knew. It was said that the coachman, Moroz,



while attacking the daughter had been interrupted by the father who had heard some commotion, and in the struggle he had killed both father and daughter.

Accompanied by one or two boys of my school I used to walk by the prison so as to see this man Moroz whose face was often at a barred window in the east corner of the top floor. I remember trying to look deep into that man's face in order to see the hidden power within him that had made him take a human life. All I could see was a scared peasant face without anything behind the curtain. It was within that cell that he finally gave up his life and now—I was locked in it. Apart from a creepy feeling, which was only momentary, there was another—the feeling of hopelessness and futility that the hook in the ceiling inspired.

Late that day one of the attendants brought me a basket which contained several books and a meal fit for a king sent from the outside. If any note accompanied the basket it must have been removed before it reached me. With the exception of a few times that I was awakened by the pain in my ear I must have slept well the first night. I saw no visions of the long departed soul of Moroz the murderer. On the following morning when they let us out of our cells (as the custom was in all those old Russian detention prisons), I met my fellow inmates in my new surroundings.

As I have said, I was the only political prisoner there, for the time being. All the rest were common criminals, pick-pockets, horse thieves, common thieves, burglars, bandits, brawlers. A few of them made a lasting impression on my mind during this first visit to the first floor—the floor of the criminals. I was frightened by a giant of a man who stood on the first landing with two chains suspended from his belt and welded solidly to a ring on each one of his

ankles. The only thing about that man's face that made him dangerous-looking and cruel was his small green eyes that seemed to give one the impression of a tiger. For the rest, his face was weak with a small sentimental mouth, thick lips, hardly any chin. I well remember his first greeting: "I was waiting for you to come down. Your rent dates from this day. You are to pay us room rent each week in advance or we will make it tough for you, as we do not like politicians."

With the clanging of his chains and his green jungle eyes he certainly made me wonder about my security, even in prison. He told me that I would be obliged to hand over to him each week a couple of rubles—cigarette money—for the boys. Unless I did that promptly without mentioning a word about it to the warden my future would be cut short. After some suggestions on my part he finally gave me till the following week to comply with his commands. Then, spitting at my feet, he clang-clanged down the stairs. The reason he had chains welded to his ankles was because of several escapes from various prisons. As a man who existed by the law of the jungle, he had lived up to his reputation by scaling prison walls as easily as his brother beasts scaled trees.

The next inmates I met were two Jews who lived in a large cell on the first floor. This cell, which under crowded circumstances could accommodate nearly fifteen, had a raised floor over the regular one where the prisoners all slept huddled one against the other. One of these two Jews was a man in his late fifties. To all appearances he looked like a smalltime storekeeper; there was nothing in his face to indicate criminal habits. The other one looked about twenty-five years of age, handsome and blond, with a red face and eyes that were somewhat shifty. It was the young fellow

who spoke first. He told me how much he envied me for being a political prisoner. He said that his friend and himself were also political prisoners—only “by mistake” they were listed as criminals. He continued: “We were transferred here from Gomel where we had taken part in the defense of the Jews in that great pogrom.” He told me that it was during the struggle in the defense of the Jews that the two of them had been arrested. It might have been true. It was only later I learned that the two Jews were well-known con men who had served many sentences under various aliases.

I was introduced to another Jewish convict who appeared to be in his sixties. He was extremely stout, but the obesity was apparently diminishing under his present life, leaving him flabby with rolls of fat hanging loose from face and body. His eyes were somewhat watery and his lower lip was twitching constantly. He had tried to kill himself, I was told, when he’d been arrested. He had been doing a little “private banking” on his own; had been considered a prominent member in his community—a sort of Ponzi on a smaller scale. The day of reckoning came when he could no longer meet the high rate of interest that he promised his investors and so the police appeared at his door. He had cut open the veins in his wrists.

One other Jew completed the Jewish circle there—a debonair, dark-skinned, black-eyed young man of indefinite age. Even the meager reddish-brown prison uniform looked different on him than on the rest of the criminal inmates. The tunic fitted him perfectly and looked almost chic on him. His moustaches were waxed and upturned. It was explained to me that he was in the white-slave trade and was a famous pimp. As this alone was not, to the best of my knowledge, considered a crime in Russia, I never did find

out for what supplementary crime he had been put there. He soon made his escape. . . .

Two more of the criminal family of about one hundred are foremost in my memory. One was named Koorochkin. He was less than five feet in stature, most of it taken up by the torso, with underslung legs, and his ability to get around on those short legs of his was simply incredible—he was here, there, and everywhere, almost at the same time. He was a petty thief and spent most of his life in one prison or another. When our family of political prisoners later increased to nearly fifty, it was Koorochkin whom we all adopted as our messenger, and, for better or worse, our trusted fellow conspirator.

The other was a forlorn little figure of medium height with all the features of the ordinary Russian peasant. Of all the prisoners at Slutsk none looked more unhappy, pathetic, and bewildered than this muzhik. In a crying voice he would buttonhole anybody he could and try to plead his case. He was serving four months for stealing his own horse! It seems he had sold a horse to a peasant in a neighboring village with the understanding that he was to get paid for it one month later. After waiting for several months he finally decided, in all sincerity, to reclaim his property. It was for taking away his own horse, or so he said, that he'd been branded as a criminal and sent to prison. After making a wide sign of the cross he would get down on his knees and bow low and then look up heavenward from whence he hoped for deliverance. It came soon enough, but not in the way he expected.

Not having eaten the regular prison fare, as plenty of food was being delivered to me from the outside, I can't describe it in detail, but judging from the appearance of the inmates I would say that it could not have been very

bad. But the place was extremely dirty and the sanitary conditions were primitive. There was a steam bathhouse, however, that provided us not only with personal cleanliness but also a lot of fun.

It was on Fridays that the political prisoners enjoyed the privilege of a steam bath—the steam being made by pouring water over red-hot stones. Saturday was the day the criminals had their bath. The little anteroom of that bathhouse served as the reception room for visitors who were permitted to come on given days to see the criminal inmates. It was this little anteroom that was a source of money-making by the graft paid to some of the keepers for allowing prisoners to remain alone with some female caller, while the keeper waited outside and did not allow anyone else to come in. We political prisoners were not allowed the privilege of that anteroom and had to talk to the visitors in the open yard; but we could receive them every day of the week.

The prison itself was a square brick building consisting of two floors and a basement, with a few cells for those to whom the warden wanted to mete out extreme punishment. Within fifty feet of the building, in each direction, there was a wide brick wall nearly ten feet in height and on the south side, next to the wall, there was the official residence of the warden. These quarters had no door leading to the yard—only a few small windows with well-laundered curtains indicated human habitation. The tall iron gates had a box-lock almost a foot wide and a key that looked the size of the one given to prominent visitors when welcomed to New York.

The criminals did all the manual work, including the cooking and the preparing of the steam bath on Fridays and Saturdays. The political prisoners were not called upon to

do anything. They could sit in their cells all day if they wanted to, sleep on bedding and pillows brought from the outside by relatives and friends, and have their food sent in. They could wear whatever clothes they owned, even a red blouse—a privilege of which very few availed themselves. Only in one respect were both types of prisoners treated alike: at six o'clock in the evening the cell doors were locked. They were wooden doors with a little peephole at an average man's height so that the guards could look in to see if all was well. At six o'clock in the morning those doors were unlocked.

It must have been a few days after my arrival at the prison, while still alone on the political floor in cell No. 6, that a guard came for me one afternoon and took me to the office of the prison. This was a large room with shelves full of old dusty books—the prison library with most of the bindings in shreds. There was a long table with several wooden chairs around it. At the center of that table in all his hulk I saw Schtange, the Chief of Police, seated, with both hands drumming a staccato on the top of the table. He ordered me to sit down and in a highly agitated voice started to scold me for the disgrace I had brought on myself and my family. Not being prepared for such a reception I sat there looking at him bewildered.

It still seems to me that this was a sincere and honest man, certainly not a Jew-hater or Jew-baiter but one thoroughly convinced that the revolutionary movement was a curse. Weighing nearly three hundred pounds and well over six feet in height, he seemed to experience a little trouble in breathing while in an emotional state. In perfect sincerity, while banging the table, he told me that only the devil himself was responsible for this revolution and that no God-fearing man or woman, whether Jew or Christian, should

ever think of opposing the will of the Czar-Father. He said it was the more shame to me not because I was a Jew but because I was educated and the son of honorable God-fearing parents. Between indignant breaths he said: "Look! You are an intellectual. And I ask you—How many classics has the revolution created? Apart from Maxim Gorky, the poet of tramps and loose women, has the revolution been able to produce men like Lermontov, Zhukovsky, Nekrasov, Gogol, Dostoyevsky or Turgeniev?"

"No," I replied, "we of the revolution have not been able to create men of that type, but it was Dostoyevsky and Turgeniev and men like them who created the revolution."

With his face suddenly turning blue from excitement, trembling all over, he got up and threw back the chair he was sitting on, and shaking his fist right under my nose he said:

"You will pay for this . . . My report about you to the Minister of Interior will include your very answer—you anti-Christ!"

This was the end of the interview—this was also the end of my hearing and the end of my "trial." I was given no further opportunity to establish my innocence, for in their dumb and honest eyes my guilt was a fact. . . .

My "room rent" had been long past due but the giant in chains had ceased to molest me after a quiet talk I had had with the dapper little procurer with the waxed moustache. It was this pimp who had asked me whether I had been threatened by the green-eyed monster. It seems that it was the latter's habit to try to get some money from all newcomers. As the strong man of many prison convictions, he took it upon himself to rule the prison population with an iron hand. I confessed to the pimp that I was being

held up. He told me to pay no further attention but to watch them that day in the yard from my window.

While the hundred odd criminals were promenading through the yard a tall blond hatless young man with the face of a pugilist approached the giant and after exchanging a few words with him laid him flat with a one-two-three to the chin. He then quickly disappeared among the milling crowd. The oily-haired pimp waved up to me with both hands in a quick horizontal movement and grinned. I don't like pimps and I have often wondered why this pimp befriended and protected me.

It was while the last vestiges of the revolution were being quickly mopped up by the antirevolutionary forces in December, 1905, that our prison in Slutsk began to get new boarders. They were generally brought in during the night. Perhaps one explanation for this was the fear of a mass attack on the place by the friends of those arrested. Every morning upon awakening I found new arrivals. Most of the newcomers were from the outlying districts of the Minsk Province. Not one of them was from Slutsk. I was the sole representative of the city. Around Christmas time our political population was forty-seven and the entire second floor was crowded to the last space. Even my cell, which was originally intended for two and was about six feet by twelve, had six inmates including myself. The crowded condition of our floor was mainly due to the fact that outside of the regular cells and a toilet there was also an infirmary.

This infirmary was nothing more than a large cell, except that instead of shelves to lie on it had single metal beds with mattresses filled with straw. It was used for housing the sick—criminal and political alike. Once the sick had been removed to the infirmary all further responsibility on the part of the prison administration ceased. There they



were left lying, and also dying, to their own ministrations. Food and water were placed at the side of each bed at regular intervals and taken away, if not consumed, at regular intervals.

If it hadn't been that my earache was getting worse, the increase of the political population would naturally have helped my state of mind. The short stay alone in No. 6 cell at night and spending the rest of the waking hours with a book or else talking to some of the criminals was gradually wearing upon me. The severe pains in the right side of my head served to dull my desire for freedom and human companionship. The pain prevented me from enjoying the companionship of new arrivals.

With the increase of the prison population other problems developed. The number of visitors suddenly increased so greatly that the guards could not cope with the situation. Continuously, all day long, through snow and sleet or zero weather, one could see in the yard groups of visitors talking to political prisoners, bringing packages of clothes, cigarettes, food, and candy, and the poor guards who numbered exactly three had all they could do to run from one group to another, untying packages and seeing that nothing of illegal character was smuggled into the prison walls. After the first few days the guards became lax and smuggling became extensive.

The first batch of new political prisoners had consisted of five young men, three Christians and two Jews, from Nesvizh, a city forty miles from Slutsk. Of these five, two were brothers sixteen and seventeen years of age, Boris and Sascha Sverzhensky. I had known them slightly some years back when I was living in Slutsk as they had lived there before moving to Nesvizh. They were sons of a prominent attorney whose leanings were toward assimilation as the only

solution of the Jewish problem. This Jewish lawyer had a large family, most of them good-looking, living in the most modern house of the town, and he counted among his friends some of the wealthiest landed gentry. One of his daughters was married to the most prominent physician in Slutzk, Dr. Schildkraut. I knew her by sight. She was an extremely handsome, slightly stout, young woman. The eldest son was a professor of mathematics in the University of Warsaw; another son was in Moscow; yet another was a druggist madly in love with the daughter of a prominent family in the printing business in Slutzk in whose house I had often spent pleasant evenings. My surprise was great upon seeing the youngest sons, Sascha and Boris, as my fellow prisonmates.

That early frosty morning of December when I first met the new batch from Nesvizh I heard them before I saw them. They were singing a revolutionary song. With my earache gradually growing worse I did not fully trust what I heard and followed that voice into an adjoining cell, encountering this group of five standing in the middle of the floor and being led in song by Boris Sverzhensky. As a veteran of almost ten days I was naturally respected by those new arrivals who surrounded me and asked all kinds of questions about prison life. Forgotten for the moment were my pains. I was happy at hearing again those melodies that were part and parcel of our daily life, the songs of the revolution. It required a song to pull the barges up the River Volga. It became almost a universal tune ("Ay oukhnyem") and similar revolutionary songs of Russia were played in the same way on the strings of the human heart.

Alas, that first singing of the first reunion in our prison, the reunion of the five and one, was interrupted in the mid-

dle. The little warden, almost on the verge of apoplexy, appeared wanting to know what we thought this prison was like. "What do you think I am conducting here, a well-organized prison or a singing school for insubordinate boys?" he screamed, to the accompaniment of his baton-moustache. He looked quickly around; a victim had to be found and he picked the older of the two brothers, Sascha, and led him away—down to a punishment cell in the cellar.

"This will teach you how to spoil my well-ordered, everyday prison life!" he shouted.

Instead of being disheartened Sascha waved back to us, remarking with a grin that he would spend his time in darkness praying for the warden's soul.

There were others who come to my mind out of the long ago. One was a woodworker, a Christian, who seemed to be brooding about some particular charge that was hanging over his head and who did not care to confide it to any of the rest of us. He was of medium height, blond, with strong features and with a pair of blue eyes that seemed to express a world of determination. He was always the last one to join in any of our discussions while in prison. He liked to listen a lot and say very little. He often found a short-cut in settling some of our discussions. I remember wondering how a man with only an ordinary education, working over a lathe to earn a livelihood, could possess such a fine brain—a brain that at that time I thought only college professors were endowed with.

There was also an elderly man (at least he seemed elderly to us youngsters) whose name was Brudzell. Nobody seemed to know what his political past was for he came from a small town far away from the beaten path. Someone in our prison family named him "teacher" and it stuck to him from that day. As he suffered from asthma he was immedi-

ately placed upon arrival in the infirmary, and it was several weeks later that I occupied a bed next to him.

The last one I now think about was a shoemaker's apprentice who seemed to have had all the misfortunes that went with his trade. He had been an orphan or a foundling who, while being knocked around and not being wanted anywhere, usually found his way to some cobbler's house. This meant that, in addition to his "trade," he had been forced to help with the general housework and look after his bosses' children, if there were any. Now this ignorant and illiterate cobbler's apprentice had taken part in the revolutionary movement with idealists and intellectuals. He was picked up by the police one night and accused of distributing pamphlets during the last general strike and here he was with us. I remember he was dressed in knee-high leather boots and seemed in constant fear of losing his proudest possession—for he never took them off. As he looked forlorn upon his arrival in prison I invited him to join us in our cell (against the protest of one of our family), not because of his social standing but on account of his boots. Sascha and Boris, the quiet woodworker, one other whose name has completely disappeared from my memory, the shoemaker, and I, occupied cell No. 6 in the Slutsk prison from that day until we left for exile.

Life in this prison seemed to have found its groove and went along undisturbed for the next few weeks. Our little warden seemed to have realized that this revolutionary crowd which invaded his well-ordered prison was less of a responsibility to him than the cutthroats on the lower floor. Discipline began to be relaxed. Books of every description found their way to our cells and even an occasional newspaper was smuggled in with our food, including secret messages on some of the pages of the books. Those messages

meant little—mostly local gossip or general comment on the state of the nation. The powers-that-were seemed to have forgotten us. Only the terrorists ever received a formal trial. Those who like myself were gathered in the general clean-up were simply held for the pleasure of the Minister of the Interior. It was he who judged each case on its merit, the merit based on the police report only. No other evidence was required.

It must have been early in February, 1906, when my ear started to cause me so much pain that I lost interest in everything. I hardly ever left my cell and the mastication of food pained me so much that I finally had to give up chewing and subsist on liquids. Sascha and Boris called on the prison warden and asked him to provide me with medical assistance. A few days later, after several urgent appeals to the warden, Dr. Feinberg visited me. This doctor, who only a year before had been very sympathetic to our cause and had even allowed me to make our headquarters in his spacious home for several secret meetings, failed to recognize me when he called to see me professionally. His gracious wife, I remember, had made sandwiches for us when the meetings broke up, and the two of them had often sat talking with me into the early hours of the morning when everyone else had left the secret gathering. But he was afraid to recognize me now.

“I will send you a prescription,” he said and hurried away.

The prescription arrived, consisting of some watery substance in a bottle marked: “Cocaine Solution.” It was accompanied by a package of absorbent cotton. I was to moisten some cotton with the solution and put it in my ear. For the next few days I was a new man. It is true that I had to change this application often and at each application I

had to add a little more of the solution—but my pains began to disappear. At night, however, the effect would wear off and I would be pacing around most of the night keeping everybody awake in the cell. Soon afterwards I was transferred to the infirmary and occupied the bed next to Brudzell, “the teacher,” who had a severe case of asthma. There were several other patients suffering from an assortment of ailments. My ear became worse and I was confined to my bed with a constant fever, some of the time falling into a delirious state. The pain was so severe at intervals that hard as I tried to control them the moans came spasmodically.

However, my moans did not seem to disturb the equilibrium of the other patients—for they also moaned. Those sounds of distress reached a new pitch when a new patient arrived in our midst. It was the little God-fearing, much praying muzhik who had stolen his own horse. It turned out that, in his zealously to try to convince the Almighty of his innocence, he had decided to fast twice a week and sustain himself the rest of the time on bread and water. He must have belonged to the same type of people who during the Renaissance period of Russian history put chains around their bodies and walked distances of hundreds of miles on the way to the famous Pechersky Lavry in Kiev, annually visited by 250,000 pilgrims who paid homage to the many saints in that famous monastery. Those pilgrims, who by the time they reached Kiev had parts of their flesh actually torn away by their chains, were sure of their reward in heaven. There were other pilgrims of other nationalities who inflicted self-punishment as the only means of reaching the Pearly Gates. However, I do not believe that any nation has ever had a greater number or could claim to outdo the methods of self-punishment than the Russian in his extreme

piety. The self-punishment administered by this pseudo-horse thief had evidently taken its toll, for a stomach ailment developed with which he could not cope. There he lay for two days—while his moaning became louder and louder and, with his rapid breathing from the fever that was consuming his wretched body, the speed of his moaning became faster and faster. On the final night of his life our guard offered him something to drink, and this was the only ministrations he ever received outside of those from the priest, who appeared some time in the early hours to give him absolution and the rites of the Greek Church.

Shortly after these rites were administered his moaning became lower and hardly audible, and it must have been then also that I lost consciousness, due perhaps to my pains, and was not able to witness the final scene. When I recovered consciousness it was morning. The only indication that a human soul had departed was a single, lighted candle at the head of the now-covered form of the man who had gone to a world, I hoped, where he would not be punished for stealing his own horse. I remember asking one of the guards why the body hadn't been removed. He answered that since the man had died before the expiration of his term the warden would have to get permission from the committing judge before the corpse could be taken from prison. Later I learned that the body was kept two days in the basement before the judge could be located.

With the snow falling incessantly and the days getting longer, the entire political personnel of our prison began to lose the gayety and bravado that had prevailed the first few weeks. Everybody grew tired of everybody else. There were quarrels. These would start with the insignificant discussion of some political problem and end in loud outbursts of anger. These were not really expressions of hatred toward

each other; they were the results of the enforced hibernation within those four walls of young and healthy people suddenly taken from their free existence. They were plainly getting on each other's nerves, but out of sympathy for my illness they became more reunited.

This came about when my state of health was getting worse each day. While I was no longer in great pain I could hardly move my hands and feet. I do not recall the prelude that led to the conflict between the political prisoners and the organized authorities, the warden and his assistants, that forced them to have me transferred to a private hospital. The only thing that stands out clearly in my mind is the terrific din of dishes and pots and other things being broken against the bars when the entire political prison population went on a hunger strike—organized and carried out by the two brothers, Sascha and Boris Sverzhensky. This kept up for two days and two nights without a let-up, and even the threat of the Chief of Police to shoot everybody did not quiet the uprising. Even the criminal prisoners joined the hunger strike—though not for the cause. They were simply enjoying the riot and excitement.

Only Koorochkin, the little petty thief, was rather in earnest when he sent crashing from the first floor down the steps the whole kettle of "kasha" with pork, thereby robbing all the criminals of a meal. "We must help him get well," he shouted with great glee when he saw the thick souplike lava, with an occasional cockroach studding it, make its way to the street below.

I don't remember when the strike was won or when the din subsided. My friends of the revolution carried me into the yard to an awaiting droshky that took me to the hospital and out of prison. Sascha and Boris, through some underground channel, had sent word to their brother-in-law, Dr.



Schildkraut, to take care of me. I remember the big, kind, pleasant face of Dr. Schildkraut with a mirror affixed to his forehead examining the right side of my head and saying to the other doctor: "The drum is completely gone from that blow with the rifle butt and the infection is about to reach the brain. This boy hasn't much of a chance."

There's a proverb that young bodies mend quickly. It must have been my youth and the foundation laid within me in the outdoor life, first on the farm where I was born and then the three wonderful years in the forest of the Pripet marshes, that made me respond to the excellent care of Dr. Schildkraut. With all his skill and with the meager equipment of that hospital he succeeded in saving my life. I remember with repugnance the slimy leeches he put on the right side of my head after shaving it. Late into the night from the first day of my arrival at the hospital through my moments of consciousness I could see the big bulk of this man leaning over me, and every once in a while going into deep thought as if trying to recall some of the instructions learned in his medical school or during his internship. After many days he confessed: "You fooled me, young man. I would not have given a kopek for your chances and here you are actually recuperating."

Some time late that evening while lying awake perfectly contented, with strength gradually pouring into me, I was reminded that I was still a prisoner. The door into my small room opened and a muzhik soldier stuck his head through and greeted me, wishing me well. I invited him in and asked him what he was doing there. He told me that he was stationed in the hall to watch me. A smile came to my face. I asked him how he expected me to run away in my condition. With the utmost kindness he explained he was merely carrying out his orders. After he'd eaten what

was left of my dinner which I had hardly touched, he again wished me goodnight, clicked his heels and disappeared from the door.

It was on the third day after I'd been sent to the outside hospital, and when I was completely out of danger, that a rumor spread through the prison population that I had died. The political prisoners, after a hurried meeting, and with the help of Koorochkin, put up a black flag with the conventional inscription: "Praise to Our Fallen Hero." This flag waved for two hours unobserved before the little warden hauled it down.

The care of the good doctor and the excellent food and other goodies sent in by friends must have spoiled me. After three months of prison life this care and kindness had the effect of making me feel that I was the center of attention. While the visitors were coming in, first with reticence and then more boldly, I took the visits as a personal tribute. The fact that the callers were endangering their own freedom by being exposed to the eyes of the police didn't worry me. I turned egotistical. The cause that I had fought for two years was in the background and I was king for the day.

Spring was now approaching. While the Jews were celebrating with matzoths and raisin wine the memory of a great revolutionary leader who had led them to a Promised Land, in our community the elders of the various synagogues were preaching sermons against all the revolutionary progressive movements which were trying to free them once again. Most of these Jews, who were being accused of revolution against the Russian monarchy, were the first ones to run away from the fight and try to drag their young ones with them to the safety of the home and fireside.

In spite of this general disapproval of their rabbinical elders, girls and boys visited me constantly. If they took

chances they did not seem to care. It was a couple of days later, while I was still flat on my back but feeling strength pouring momentarily into my veins, that a plan was revealed to me by one of the visitors to effect my escape from the hospital. The fellow in charge of this plan told me that on the Saturday night preceding Easter Sunday a team of horses would be parked directly under my only window, and that he would help me get dressed and rush me through the window to the carriage and to freedom. I pointed out to him that my clothes were in the next room and that I would have to ask the orderly, a soft-spoken little Jew, to have them brought in. The mistake was made right there when my friend decided to take the orderly into our confidence.

That miniature Judas of the nursing home in Slutzk sold my plan to the police. I am sure he did not get one piece of silver for squealing. Probably all he got was praise in some synagogue where Jewish youth was being condemned for participating in the revolution. Saturday noon the orderly brought my clothes into my room and carefully placed them on the chair alongside my bed and gave them a little pat of affection, saying: "Here are your clothes all intact and lots of luck to you." He had scarcely left the room when the door opened once more and three soldiers with bayonets marched in followed by a sergeant. They stood facing their superior and heard the following order: "Any attempt to take this patient out of this room must be stopped by you with bullets. If the patient himself tries to run away, don't waste any bullets—use your bayonets . . ." He added that no more visitors would be allowed and no outside food permitted.

However, spring was in the air and strength was gradually replacing months of weakness. This was the time of the year when life had more meaning for me than at any

other season. The sun was shining over beloved meadows and plains and the sod was appearing through the snow in the green patches that I always loved to see . . . In the Pripet marshes the tall cedars and redwoods were changing the dark colors of their winter attire into lovely green; and soon those beloved forests, where I spent the best boyhood years of my life, would be hosts to millions of birds that would come to renew their pledges with nature, filling the air with their song. I could almost see, hear, and smell all this through the heavy odors made by the cheap polish on the soldiers' boots in my little hospital room. Even the heavy perspiration of their young bodies under the layers of their heavy winter uniforms did not destroy the illusion. I could see through those great coats the three soldiers wore that they were the sons of peasants like the ones I had grown up with.

When the orderly—the one who had squealed—brought my soup I asked him to bring in plenty of bread and meat and told him I would pay him for his kindness. The soldiers exchanged glances and I heard one say: "And we have to subsist on hardtack while watching him!" With that they proceeded to pull long thin slabs out of their pockets. It looked like the bark of a tree and I doubt if it tasted any better. Soon the orderly reappeared bringing a large plate of boiled beef, horse-radish and an abundance of matzoth, this being the seventh day of the Passover. I waited for him to leave the room and said: "I'm not as hungry as I thought I was." Again there was the quiet exchange of glances, a whisper, and finally one of the soldiers said: "This is your holiday, why don't you eat this fine meal? We are not allowed to eat meat until after midnight when Christ will have arisen." I told them I knew about Lent and knew that they couldn't eat meat but surely they

could eat the matzoth and some of the other things. Soon there was no more matzoth, no more meat, and no more trimmings; and the only thing left on the plate was the red beet juice that was mixed with the horse-radish.

For the rest of the day nothing happened. No attempts were made to smuggle me out and as I lay helpless in bed there was no need for bayonets. After consuming the boiled beef and the matzoth the guards felt somewhat guilty for transgressing the law of the Church.

Late that evening the guard was changed. In came the sergeant once more with three soldiers who looked rather restless, their eyes running all over the place. They listened to the instructions of their superior and when he left them to the accompaniment of their heel-clicking one of them looked under my bed for hidden explosives.

Tucked in for the night by my orderly, watching them every moment without uttering a sound, I lay there seeing them sitting on the bench by the window—the window through which I had planned to make a run for liberty on this very night according to the now dashed plans. The guards had been told I was a dangerous character and required constant watching. Every once in a while they would look through the window into the darkness of the old pear orchard adjoining it, expecting momentarily for something to happen. They were plainly scared. Only the bells of the cathedral towards midnight, calling on all the faithful to come to the midnight mass to usher in Easter Sunday, seemed eventually to alleviate their fears. How could a healthy young Russian peasant have imaginary fears watching a sick political prisoner when so much reassurance came with the pealing of the cathedral bells? Hadn't they on numerous occasions in the past, when the call came from the altar "Christ has risen," sought the nearest peasant

maiden in the Greek Orthodox Church where there were no pews and where the kneeling congregation mingles close together on the floor? When Christ had arisen embracing was in order. Young and old alike after embracing would kiss each other three times on the cheek and on the mouth, the male saying "Christ has risen!" and the woman responding, "Verily, verily, he has arisen!" This delightful custom always kept up until the desire for the Easter suckling pig became greater than the desire for love-making.

The pealing of the cathedral bells recalled all this to my guards and one of them said: "Here it's Easter Sunday with all the good-looking girls headed for the cathedral and we have to stay with this Jew whose forefathers killed our Christ."

They were being robbed of their fun in the cathedral and what he said was a spark igniting the stifled feelings of the other two. The three went into a huddle, their whispers quite audible to me, and then one, after looking at my seemingly closed eyes, said: "What's to prevent us from breaking the window, putting this fellow halfway through it and then letting him have what the orders called for—bayonets in the belly!"

The other two, after looking at me for a moment, again started to whisper and I could see that they were going to do it. The bells of the cathedral were still ringing, in a little faster tempo, inviting the latecomers to hurry. With a sudden shout I called out a sharp command, "Water! Bring me water immediately!" My calculations and timing were good. The ages of slavery and serfdom came back to catch these three sons of the soil. The loud order is what for generations they had been accustomed to obey. The one who had suggested a moment since the excellent plan that

would have sent them happy to the cathedral and the girls was the first one to rush to me with a glass of water.

"Lift me up," I shouted, "how do you expect me to drink the water lying down?"

Tenderly those three not-bad-hearted pseudo murderers picked me up like a helpless child and held the glass to my lips while I drank. Like a receding storm the pealing of the bells became less audible and came at longer-spaced intervals. The soldiers, I think, were almost as relieved as I that it hadn't happened.

On the other hand I knew with my fair knowledge of the peasant and his thinking processes that peace might not last all night. Quietly, yet with the voice of authority, because what I was saying was true, I told them that I had been born among peasants. In the simplest language I explained to them how well I knew their sorrows and their joys. In trying to take the poison out of the difference between them and myself, Jew and gentile, I quoted some of the passages from the poet of the Gospels, St. Luke: "A light to lighten the gentile and the glory of Thy people, Israel."

But I was still a revolutionary and condoled with them on their hard lot. I pointed out that after they were mustered out of military service their life would be even harder. I tried to explain that we revolutionists, Jew or gentile, were simply trying to make life better for everyone. Presently their ringleader whispered again with them and then suggested that I make a dash for liberty. He promised me they would look the other way and then fire high in the air in the dark.

I knew they meant it. I also knew the punishment that would await them should I take advantage of their suggestion and knew too that I couldn't escape far. I re-

mained in my bed. Sleep, however, was out of the question. On and on to the early hours we talked of the sad lot of 80 per cent of the Russian population—the muzhik. When morning came and the guard was changed once more each one came to my bed, shook hands, and wished me a speedy recovery. I had won a little victory and with a great pride I fell asleep.

When I woke up late Easter morning I asked to be taken back to the prison. The story of the flag flying from the roof of the prison in honor of my departure to a better world had been told me by visitors. I was craving to go back to the friends to whom I owed so much and for whom I could do so little. I sent for Dr. Schildkraut and told him how I felt. After bandaging the right side of my head with layers of cotton and giving me instructions what to do about my running ear, he signed my discharge from the hospital.

On the last day of the Jewish Passover, and the first day of the Greek Orthodox Easter, I enjoyed a sort of triumphal procession through the main street of Slutsk from the hospital to the prison. With all the stores closed most of the population gathered around noon in the streets whose sidewalks were so familiar to me. I was riding in an open droshky between two soldiers and with one soldier sitting with the coachman. I wanted to drink all this in and asked the soldier to have the coachman drive slowly.

Familiar faces of young and old stood looking at the only political prisoner Slutsk had produced. Not a sign of recognition came to their faces. Only one girl, the daughter of the Maisels with whom I boarded the first year while in the school for Jewish boys, called out to me. With boldness unusual for a daughter of that clan, this girl, who was attending medical school and whose name was Rebecca, stepped forward and with a calm voice told me that I was doing well and that she wished me luck. I'm sure there were



others who wanted to say the same thing but didn't dare. Perhaps not, who knows?

The day was warm and we were passing through the market place where the peasants, every Thursday, through the entire winter, assembled with horse wagons and their families to barter farm products for other necessities. A stench of all the manure piles that had accumulated during the winter assailed my nostrils and smelled sweet. I remember having a smile on my face, or at least on the part that was not covered up with bandage, and even the soldiers on each side of me smiled and bowed to the crowd in holiday mood that did not dare to express its feelings now that the revolution was no more.

Back in the prison and cell No. 6 I found life running just the same as when I'd left it. The rumor about my death seemed to have made me some sort of a hero in the eyes of the prison population. They looked at me with awe and respect. It was easy, therefore, despite my youth to assume leadership. Even Koorochkin, the petty thief whom we were using for anything that we did not dare to do ourselves, became my fervent disciple. I overheard him once during the period of the walking exercises of the criminal prisoners say to one of his fellow inmates that I must possess more than one life.

The assumption of leadership meant added responsibility. The thought struck me that we should all write a petition to the Minister of the Interior asking how much longer we were to be confined before a hearing or a trial would be given us. I called a meeting in the infirmary, where by that time there was only one patient, Brudzell, our "teacher." After closing the door leading to the hall we discussed ways and means of preparing the petition. In a friendly spirit suggestions were advanced, mostly of a negative nature. An

appeal to the Minister of the Interior was repugnant to most of my fellow prisoners who were nearly all idealists, whether intellectuals or peasants. The general feeling, as I remember, was that an appeal for mercy would be taken as a sign of weakness, and we were far from being weak. To prove that point, Boris Sverzhensky, the sixteen-year-old boy, told me that if we were to be kept in the same place until May the first a little surprise was awaiting our warden. He had in his possession a red flag for every window on our floor and enough red fire to make our prison look like a red-hot revolutionary sunrise!

While he was telling me of the prospective First of May celebration the door suddenly opened and in marched the Chief of Police, Schtange, accompanied by a number of deputies. Without wasting any time he ordered us to our cells. After being locked up in the middle of the day in our cells, the six of us, somewhat surprised, waited for the next move. When I asked Boris where the "red flags and fire" were, he told me not to worry as they were well hidden by Koorochkin on the criminal floor. It was then that our door opened again and the search began. After searching our persons, one at a time, two deputies carefully went through our belongings. This might not be worth mentioning except for an incident that occurred while our cobbler's apprentice was being searched.

In all the time he'd been in prison I never saw him take off his boots—and I do not remember seeing him go to the steam bath either. Yet here he was forced by the deputies to relinquish his most valued possessions. With the most painful expression on his face he finally stuck his feet out and said to the deputies: "Here they are. I can't take them off without help. But here they are." It seems that Schtange, our Chief of Police, was sure the hidden flags and

other illegal matter would be found in this man's boots. The concentration on his face while watching the operation of the removal of the boots seemed to indicate it. After a lot of tugging by both deputies the two boots finally came off in unison. The explosion of a bomb under the nose of the Chief of Police could not have given him a more violent shock than the stench from this poor man's feet, wrapped in sweat-soaked rags. We all laughed.

"You should be ashamed of yourself," said His Honor.

"I am very sorry for you," was all the shoemaker said.

With the window now opened the search ended. It had given us something to be hilarious about for another little while in that prison of Slutsk.

Shortly after this incident it became known to us that the petition to the Minister of the Interior was no longer necessary. In a monotone the little warden read to us individually our verdict without trial. Sixteen of us, including Sascha, Boris, and myself, were to be sent to Archangel and Vologda for three years. The others were sentenced for various terms of exile to Siberia. The shoemaker was given complete freedom—boots and all.

I remember walking back upstairs to the warm cell I was soon to leave and wondering what three years of exile in the wastes of the Arctic would be like. Memories came rushing back to me of the earlier days of my youth when I was struggling so hard to reach a definite goal and occupy a rightful position. I calculated that at the expiration of my exile I would be drafted into the army for four years. The future for a boy, who only recently had passed his eighteenth birthday, looked black and hopeless.

Even the ever-laughing and ever-happy Boris was crushed by the news. Late that evening, while sitting in the window of our cell and looking at the few kerosene lights

of a now completely deserted street, his silver voice was heard once more. This time it was not a revolutionary song he was singing, it was a song of despair—Frug's "Spring Song." The song is a lament wherein the child asks the father to sing of spring and the parent answers that there is autumn in his heart and soul; he cannot sing of spring, all he can sing is that he was endowed with the yearning for freedom but has the lot of a slave. Dejectedly we looked up at Boris on his shelf. He seemed to have been singing for himself, and slowly each one, as if touched by the same sorrowful impulse joined him in song—not a community song—each one alone . . .

I cannot imagine what it would have felt like to have left prison alone in the company of soldiers on the way to three years of exile in the wastes and tundras of the far-away north. No doubt the picture would have been entirely different. Sixteen of us, all close friends, especially Sascha, Boris, and myself, who became inseparable, were going together and the future that awaited us did not look a bit dark so long as we were united. No wonder, therefore, that when the final day came when we were to leave the prison in Slutzk forever we were not depressed. After all we were leaving the prison to go out into the open country and see nature at its very best.

I remember my father and one of my sisters coming to wish me good-bye. As they had been ashamed or afraid to see me during my imprisonment and illness, I was cool to them upon their visit. Several others took the risk of coming to wish me well. I shall never forget the farewell of the good Dr. Schildkraut, who made a special trip to see me when we were all lined up in the street, in a warm morning sun, ready for the first leg of our trip. He threw his arms around me even before he spoke to his brothers-in-law and

in affectionate terms told me not to be despondent. He furthermore told me: "You really do not need to take along bandages as you are entirely cured. You were cured before you left the hospital. I made you wear those to invite sympathy. Use the bandages when you have to." I did not forget his advice.

Being the acknowledged leader of our political group I had the privilege of being told in farewell by the warden that, in spite of everything that had happened during our stay in his hostelry, he had grown to like us and that as a father of children he was extremely sorry for me. I thanked him profusely. I wished him a lot of luck and no more political prisoners.

As a horse and wagon were provided to carry our belongings, we traveled light and soon reached the city line where the crowds were the thickest. Undoubtedly they hoped that the police would not be there to see them while they were watching the political prisoners on the way to Siberia. It was in the midst of that crowd we stopped and one of our prisoners called out in a voice that carried far and wide: "Comrades, we'll see you again in a free Russia!"

That dangerous outcry gave us the first real laugh of the day when we saw the crowds incontinently disappear. They favored a free Russia—so long as someone else was doing the freeing and so long as their own ears weren't endangered by the forbidden words.

On and on we marched. Never have I enjoyed going to a picnic quite so much. And I am sure the rest of us youngsters, that first day on the way to exile, enjoyed it too. It was late that evening, after walking twenty-eight miles, stopping occasionally for a bite or a drink of water, that we arrived at some town lockup and spent the night on a floor covered with old straw, straw that had undoubtedly

been slept on and used for other human needs for many a year. Late the following evening we arrived in the town of Kletzk. (Then Russian, later on belonging to Poland after the war, and Russian again now.) Our guards, under the leadership of a very kind sergeant, were pleasant to us. When we got to Kletzk, while the sun was still high in the sky, some of the young local people, who apparently at one time or another had belonged to the revolutionary movement, saw us march through the streets.

Soon after our arrival at the lockup, which was even worse than the one of the previous night, the big yard around it turned into a bedlam. All the young boys and girls of the town had turned out en masse to see the "victims of the revolution." As there were only sixteen of us, each one found himself very soon with a couple of girls at his side and just as many fellows standing around looking at us with awe. They were not at all like the crowds in Slutzk who had been afraid of their own shadows.

After being on the road for two days with only an occasional sandwich to take the edge off our hunger and only water from some stream to satisfy our thirst, the food in abundance that those young people brought along certainly tasted good. It was only natural that most of us ate more than was needed and as some even indulged in a little vodka the scenes in the yard looked more and more like a real picnic. Hugging and kissing were general and each girl tried to outdo the other in showing her affection for us poor exiles in the most brazen manner. Sascha suffered the most from all this kindness. With a stomach overloaded with food of all kinds, including chocolates and topped off with vodka, he soon lost his equilibrium, and when a handsome brunette threw her arms around him he quickly turned away and vomited.

Twilight in the spring of the year in that part of Russia seems to last until the late hours of the evening. All that time the girls were still in the yard, talking in whispers and kissing their heroes. Only I felt very lonely that evening, for in one respect I had failed to grow up with the rest of them. I remember sitting beside an attractive young girl and with every fiber in my body I wished to let myself loose and make love to her, who wanted so much to be loved by a hero of the revolution. I was still a boy, with a man's body to be sure, but with tangled immature emotions. Perhaps it was the very thought that was going through her mind that prevented me from being human.

Our guards finally asked the girls to leave. The boys had gone long before. We retired to the lice-infested floor in that lockup. In spite of our tired bodies, the result of walking for two days, sleep did not come to most of us that night. The food and the girls had something to do with that and the crawling vermin on the floor kept reminding us where we were.

Early the following morning, with rain falling, a real April shower, we marched another twelve miles. I do not remember the name of the wayside station where we boarded a train that arrived the same night in the provincial capital of Minsk. We were ushered behind prison walls, again on the second floor, the floor of political prisoners. We were tired, after arriving there past midnight, with the lice that we'd picked up in various lockups crawling all over us. They annoyed us to such an extent that I do not remember even giving a thought to the city where I had seen so much life and activity and where on the previous October 17th I had witnessed massacre and misery.

Quietly we were assigned to cells and must have fallen asleep as soon as we hit the hard, wooden shelves. I can

compare my state of mind the following morning to a time, years before, when I had visited my rich aunt for the autumn holidays. The difference between the prison in Slutsk and this modern building with spacious rooms and sanitary conditions could well be compared to the difference between my own farm home and the rich home of my aunt.

The young and the middle-aged prisoners whom I met that morning were the top layer of the provincial capital intelligentsia. The editor of the newspaper, two or three lawyers, several doctors, and even one Greek Orthodox priest, were among those awaiting their fate at the hands of the authorities. They seemed to be not only sure of the eventual success of the revolutionary movement but also rather happy. The care given to the sixteen of us new arrivals was that given to long-awaited guests. After a thorough delousing process in a steam bath we were handed clean clothes by some of the prisoners who could spare them. They also shared with us the food that was coming in from the outside, food supplied by the Central Committee on the care of prisoners. These committees always worked under the guise of a charitable organization and none of their members was identified with any particular movement.

Knowing that my stay there was temporary and that soon we were to be transferred to Moscow and then north, I tried to meet as many of the veterans in the revolution as I possibly could. Always I had with me the brothers Sverzhensky. While I knew a few of the men who were imprisoned, most of them, especially those who were at the very top of the Central Committee, I had never met previously. And here I was face to face with the idealists of the revolution, the men who guided its very character. With reverence I listened to their informal greeting to us newcomers, and with the deepest admiration I looked at those



men who had sacrificed, in most cases, a brilliant future so as to give it all to the people. To name them all or even a few would be meaningless. Most of them have now gone, never to return, and I am confident that in the last moments of their lives they had no regrets. Theirs was a short but a sweet existence.

In the midst of the great number of sufferers for the cause, agents-provocateurs were planted by the government and reported daily to the authorities everything said and done by those on the inside. Fortunately for me I did not know it—I would have been terribly unhappy if I had been aware of it.

In earlier pages I mentioned the battleship *Potemkin* whose entire crew, from the bluejackets to the officers, revolted in a body and, after being chased by the rest of the Black Sea Fleet, had taken refuge in Rumania where the ship, while flying the red flag, had been interned. Several hundred bluejackets, including some officers, had been arrested in Bessarabia as they tried to make their way from Rumania into Russia. The description of the revolt of a huge man-of-war, where only the captain of the ship had been assassinated, with the entire balance of the staff joining the ordinary sailors in the cause of the revolution, read like a sea romance by Joseph Conrad. I had been drinking in every word of the numerous columns that appeared in the papers when, upon seeing a number of prisoners dressed in sailors' clothes, I was told that those were the boys of the *Potemkin*! I was immediately in their midst, shaking hands and asking questions. Only after being told that most of these (and there were some forty in all) had been condemned to twenty years in the mines of Siberia, and an even dozen sentenced to die before the firing squad (though an appeal from this sentence was on file), did I feel ashamed

of my noisy greeting. Considering their fate, my three years of free exile were trivial. In spite of their hopeless future they seemed very happy. It was only a few days later, when a young girl from the Ukraine came to the prison accompanied by a priest to marry one of those condemned to the Siberian mines, that the sailors and the rest of us became downcast.

The tragedy, which was enacted by the bride on the outside of the prison walls putting her hand through the bars to join in union the man she loved, was too much for all of us. The queerest law that Russia had then was that anyone condemned to the Siberian mines (the worst punishment next to death) could have his sentence cut in half if accompanied by his wife.

Here was a story developing before my eyes that I had read only in the morbid books of a morbid author, Dostoyevsky. In order to reach the window so as to join the man she loved in holy matrimony she had to be lifted on the shoulders of some of the political prisoners while the priest was lifted up on the shoulders of some others. I do not know why ladders were not provided—perhaps the warden, a liberal fellow, had a twist for the romantic.

Next day I spoke to the man who had married this young Ukrainian girl. As a bridegroom he made a very sorry spectacle. He was twenty-two years of age. He somehow looked ashamed and forlorn. Ashamed because he allowed a woman to share the burden with him of a life in "katorga," from where only a few return whole and none is allowed back in European Russia. Ashamed also perhaps because the rest of his fellowmates did not have the good fortune of having girls willing to share the privations of the salt mines in Siberia.

A few days later we were on our way again, the second

leg of our trip. This time we were huddled in a prison car attached to a regular passenger train and instead of sixteen there were forty-four of us with only two guards—one at each end of the car. Late the following morning the train stopped at Smolensk—the historical city that played so important a part in the Napoleonic War in 1812.

We sought and received permission to go out on the platform. It was farthest from our thoughts to have anyone meet us at the station. Therefore, we were surprised when a number of natives, men and women dressed in the picturesque clothes of that region, came out loaded with food to meet the prison car. It was a daily occurrence I was told. The women looked even more picturesque than the men. With their pleated skirts over a number of petticoats, with long woolen stockings, with hand-embroidered gay blouses, and the headgear consisting of layers upon layers of hair at the top of the head, topped off with a long kerchief, their attire was complete.

“Here is bread and chicken for you, tovarisch,” each one of us was told when handed a long wide loaf filled in the center with meat loaf, and a roast chicken. Bewildered, we stood around thanking them.

One of the younger men in the crowd, with slick, highly polished boots, expressed his disappointment in not being able to sing for us as the stationmaster prohibited singing there. However, he said, he would like to entertain us with a dance.

At first slowly, with his hands folded, in a sitting posture, he would surge ahead looking left and right, and slowly he would back up, only to start all over again, gradually faster and faster. His face took on a new expression. He was no longer searching. He had found his enemy. His hands were no longer folded—he was shadow-boxing;

his tempo grew faster and faster; he was going from side to side, fighting this enemy. Suddenly he jumped up high in the air and came down hard, letting out a yell of triumph—the imaginary enemy sprawled under his feet . . . With his right hand high in the air, he was bowing to us and with perfect composure wished us bon voyage.

This son of the peasants, who possessed the great gift of interpretative dancing without music, made me realize that a people of such talent could never be permanently subdued to the rule of any Czar—or any dictator.

The station bell finally rang for the third time informing us that the train was about to leave, and back in the closed quarters of the prison car we no longer felt like prisoners.

If the railway station at Smolensk had provided us, that previous morning, with the unforgettable scene of the dancing peasant and also “kalatchy” (meat loaf baked in bread) and roast chicken, it remained for Moscow, the city of forty times forty churches, to give us the real reception at the end of the second leg of our journey.

Like a mother bereaved at the loss of her young ones and no longer able to pour out her love and affection for her own children, the city of Moscow, which had recently emerged from the street barricades and had lost sons and daughters by the hundreds, showed us on that early cool and misty May, 1906, morning a real motherly affection in a way that even the police could not find fault with.

We walked through the historical streets from the railway station on the way to Boutyrka prison between two columns of gendarmes with drawn swords. Only the street urchins, who peddled the morning papers, kept rushing through the column of gendarmes almost being trampled by them, to hand a newspaper to one of us: “Here, dear

tovarisch!" Those urchins knew that they were too young to have attention paid them by the authorities and they took advantage of it. An occasional kick in the pants from one of the gendarmes did not seem to bother them.

All along the line of march of several miles windows would open and the tear-stained face of a woman or a girl, and occasionally the drawn features of a man under emotional strain, would appear and bow low to us. From the upper stories an occasional silver coin would fly through the air and land in our midst. The most impressive tokens we got, besides the expressions of sympathy in the faces of those at the windows, were the bouquets of flowers. We were showered with flowers. Silently we proceeded in our march, and the gendarme alongside of me, with his unsheathed sword, was emotionally affected and said: "I wish this were over!" Even the trolley cars, loaded to capacity in the morning rush, came to a full stop upon approaching us and the silence of the passengers and crew, while looking directly at us, had the funeral expression of those watching a calamity.

While the government in power was destroying everything that was left of the fight for freedom it lacked the approval of the populace. This march that I hoped would never end was finally drawing to a close, and soon before my eyes loomed the high walls and the bastions of the prison that was shortly to engulf us.

I had read, heard, and imagined a great deal about this grim institution we were about to enter, and I pictured myself and the forty-three others in this line of march as a small ripple about to join a huge wave in the vast ocean of humanity inside the prison, and which was to merge and lose its identity completely as a small ripple. To describe the roster of the Boutyrka prison during my stay there in

May, 1906, I should have to name nearly all past and present revolutionary leaders of Russia; but not having come personally into contact with more than one or two of them, it would be no different from any newspaper account. I shall try to give the picture that appeared before my eyes, as I saw it then, the quick-changing panorama of that institution.

Having been kept in one large cell together with a hundred other exiles, I cannot describe the architecture of the prison, for during the two hours of exercise in a small yard, I could see nothing but the Pougatchoff bastion. I do, however, remember that by coming through some zigzag course, through numerous columns under the low-hanging ceiling of that dungeon, I would get to cell No. 8—the “university” of the prison. There in that cell, which could accommodate hundreds of men, a lecture was held daily on some topic. As revolutionary propaganda was forbidden, the topics of lectures by the various professors of the universities of Russia who were prisoners like myself were on almost any scientific problem. I even heard a lecture on “Child Psychology” by a prominent professor of St. Petersburg University. It is true that in a roundabout way he tried to connect modern thought and revolutionary ideas in his lectures, but principally it was a lecture on child behaviorism. As the cell had dozens of square columns, we were forced to lie on the stone floor as close to the speaker as we could get in order to hear what he was saying. The acoustics were rather poor.

Those lectures reminded me much of another people in exile preserving the spiritual life of their race. The Elders of the Jews, who were led away to Babylon, organized a university there where the Babylonian Talmud was written and the spirit of the nation was preserved. It was

the same spirit that the professors of the various Russian colleges were trying to preserve against a government gone berserk.

While there were in those groups at Boutyrka many hundreds of older men in the forties and fifties, the majority were between twenty and thirty, all on the way either to "katorga" (hard labor in salt mines), or free exile. Those people, a whole generation of Russian intellectuals, were really on the way to complete extinction—I recognized that. I also knew that not all of them were to perish from the cold, hunger, and hard labor, that some no doubt would emerge after serving their sentences or even before through amnesties granted during later revolution. But those people could no longer be the laughing, singing, happy crowds, the generation that went to prison for its high ideals for humanity. When they came back, most of them would be crippled in body and embittered in mind. If later they were to assume leadership again in the various fields of human endeavor, they could no longer administer those offices from the same standpoint of idealism as originally taught to me by the unforgettable Koziol. They would come back, if they did come back, completely changed—and as revengeful monsters, but without being aware of it. This may be part of the reason why Russia is now going through abnormalities that many of the Western Hemisphere fail to understand. I knew even back in those early days that most of those who ever emerged at all would emerge with bent bodies and warped souls. The idea that a man's life, including one's own, is something sacred is not taught or learned in the salt mines of Siberia. I thought of a great Jewish rabbi, who while standing on a bridge over a stream saw a human head carried with the tide and said: "Thou hast drowned—and thou hast been drowned and in the end

the ones who drowned thee shall be drowned." Feeling and believing this, I came to the conclusion that there was only one thing for me to do to preserve my own integrity and future—escape.

There were other contributing factors, of greater importance even than these, that gave me this impetus to escape. Among the hundreds of young, middle-aged, and old prisoners who came manifestly against their will to Boutyrka that summer was a group whose members could readily be singled out from the rest of the prison population. They were the Caucasians. While most of the inmates, excepting those in the chain gang on the upper floor, mingled eagerly with one another and tried like myself to scrape acquaintance and learn the true facts of the revolution in other parts of Russia, this Caucasian group surlily abstained from any mutual or communal activities. Under the leadership of one who answered (when he answered at all) to the name of Nijeradze, but who, I was told, used several other pseudonyms, these mountain men not only kept to themselves in their cell No. 9, but also refused to attend the many lectures given in cell No. 8 by the true idealists of this early struggle for freedom.

Only during the two hours of exercise allowed all of us in the yard did I have a chance to observe this group at close range. "If they would only speak Russian," I said to myself, for the dialect of the Caucasians sounded strange and not at all musical. Yet this group whose voices suggested rain on a tin roof intrigued me from the first. To me, the unsophisticated youngster, they looked like a romantic people, and this in spite of the great tragedies that had unrolled before my eyes during the past two years. Were they not the Caucasians, the people who came out of the hills from the neighborhood of Mount Ararat? Were they not



the offspring of the Biblical Noah, whose sons had spread far and wide from that cradle of civilization? In years gone by had I not read in the picturesque pages of the distinguished reporter, Nemirovich-Danchenko, descriptions of the Thirty Years' War in which a handful of people fought a guerilla warfare against the launched fury of the Russian Army? In song and in story I had read from early childhood of the life and habits of the Gortzy (Georgians), Grouzins, and other small but hard-bitten and capable mountain tribes.

My deep appreciation for music always aroused a longing for the beautiful folk songs and the curious classic music of the Near East. It is true that throughout my romantic observation of a people there ran a note of doubt—the note implanted in me by the able description of the "Caucasian Captive" by Pushkin, and also by Tolstoy. An entirely new picture colored by disappointment materialized before my eyes when I read about the cruelty of those kidnapers of the days of yore and the story of the young Russian officer who happened to fall into the hands of the wild tribes.

At first glance the Georgian group in Boutyrka all looked alike: of medium height and sparse frame and with almost Semitic features, no doubt inherited by them from the early part of the third century when their country was invaded by the Khazars. The Huns and the Avars must have left their mark, too, if not on their physical characteristics at least on their ironlike natures. For those tribes had overrun Caucasia in the sixth century. Only at first glance did the Georgians look like Jews—for their sharp, dark, and shifting eyes belied the primal impression. A certain quickness in their manner of turning, trained into them, no doubt, from childhood, differentiated them from the easy-going, dreamy-eyed Jews that I knew.

Inaccessible as this group of prisoners was to all appearances, my mind was made up that I should have to learn more about them. I knew that many writers of prose and poetry dipped deeply for their material into the Caucasian region of mystery and romance. Pushkin, Gogol, Lermontov, and many other well-known Russian authors explored and obtained material from personal contact with the natives of that country hidden between mountain peaks.

While most of the writers, affected by the beauty of the terrain and the music of the Near East, perhaps, too, by the loveliness of the black-eyed, unapproachable maidens of that land, wrote songs of praise about the country and its people, there were others who were more practical and painted the reverse side of the picture. The guerilla warfare practiced for generations by the tribes against the more disciplined fury of the Russian Army left its mark on these mountain people. They were no longer the brave knights who were ready to meet their enemy in the open, face to face; instead, they acquired the cunningness of the stalking beast in the field and were prepared to spring at their victims while the latter were not looking. One of the best-known cradle songs of Russia tells of a mother keeping watch over her babe because of her fear of the treacherous "Goretz." She sings of these merciless mountain men who may be lurking in the shadows ready to spring at the child's cradle, and of the father, a hardened warrior, who would protect the infant from the stealthy monster. To children in other parts of Russia a "Goretz" was always pictured as a man holding a knife between his teeth while he crawled on his belly through the underbrush.

So here I was, face to face with this assortment of Georgian youths and with their leader. Let me recall that leader as he appeared to me then. He could not have been

more than twenty-five years old; he was of medium height and as thin as a rail; his nose was bold and hooked and his eyes were deep-set in his face; a thin line of moustache fledged an upper lip that curled back over a powerful set of teeth. In a way he was handsome. Dressed in a dark-gray European suit he lounged through the prison yard, aloof, impassive, slowly turning his head (crowned with stiff upstanding black hair) to study his fellow prisoners. He kept his hands constantly in front of him and I observed that one of his arms was crippled. Most of the time he seemed to be in deep thought. He was the axis around whom revolved the group of young Georgians. It was with mixed feelings that I made cursory acquaintance with those mysterious people who came out of the mountains. From several conversations I had with some of them, whose Russian language was primitive and not easy to understand, I came to the conclusion that another phase of the revolution was unfolding before me. The fact that their leader was looked upon with awe and was given a wide berth by all who happened to come near him made me undertake a completely new inventory of the *status quo* of the Russian revolution. Being at the hero-worshiping age, it was only natural that when I was told that this man was the all-powerful leader of the Caucasian-Armenian group I endeavored to puzzle out what made him so big and powerful.

It must have been on the second or third day after my arrival in the Moscow prison that I was first attracted and impressed by this man, Nijeradze. At one of the innumerable stone columns in the cell a group of Ukrainians was singing one of the most impressive folk songs of Little Russia, "The Dnieper Lament." The rise and fall of those voices in perfect harmony indicated that they were accustomed to singing together. Perhaps they had done so during

many months in other prisons before arriving at Boutyrka, or it is possible they belonged to one of the numerous glee clubs of Malorussia (Little Russia).

*It roars and moans,  
Our Dnieper wide,  
While mountains of surf  
Come with the tide,*

were the opening lines of that song. We who listened were spellbound with the volume and tone, with the skill of expression, with the familiar words, and even the Georgians stopped to listen. It was while Nijeradze, with his usually inanimate face, stood with his group of followers and listened to the song that his features relaxed somewhat and I had a better opportunity to study him. Unquestionably he possessed a magnetism, for when the curtains of his eyes were lifted one could readily see a sufficient amount of will power to withstand anything that might threaten him. It was not a pleasant kind of magnetism or will power, call it what you will; there was treachery and distrust behind it. Napoleon might have been like that. It was not a subdued kind of magnetism; it was rather of the compelling type, that type that commands with one's gaze, that inspires fear. Perhaps the gaze of a rattlesnake has the same freezing effect on birds.

On and on the Ukrainians sang of the Dnieper and the peace and quietude along its shores, the foam-flaked storms on its agitated expanse; and this young man who called himself Nijeradze stood motionless and listened, an ironic little smile playing about his mouth. I could sense that his mind had no peaceful intentions. The slight rubbing of his hands before him, while the expression of his

features subtly changed, betrayed his purposefulness and the disciplined co-ordination of his nature. He was the "stalker" patiently biding his hour, the man with an invisible knife between his teeth, in short, the personification of the mountain man, the Georgian.

The only other time I saw him was when someone read aloud a newspaper that had been smuggled into the prison. There was a story in it about Kaiser Wilhelm and Czar Nicholas having a rendezvous somewhere in the Baltic on their respective yachts. "Aha," said one of the listeners, "Nick is going to take a few lessons from Kaiser Wilhelm on how to subdue the revolution. The Germans, who have been for ages the gendarmes of Europe who club down progressive thought and ideals, are sending their emissary, Willie, to put the lid on the Russian masses." Nijeradze glanced contemptuously at the speaker and, with a wave of his hand, walked off. I never saw him again . . .

For nearly two years, through the long winter evenings and the soft summer nights, I had learned from Koziol and other leaders the objective of our banned organization. I knew we were seeking political freedom and I knew also that that freedom could be bought only at great sacrifices. These sacrifices consisted chiefly of personal discomforts, such as being spied upon, arrested, and so forth, in the course of teaching the masses a new theory, the theory that an individual should be given responsibility. Each and every individual, we were told, was an important member in the family of the human race and he was entitled to have a voice in the conduct of the State. It was the individual who was creating the State and therefore it was the State that was responsible to the individual. Being born in an autocracy where the individual existed only at the mercy of the Czar-Father and his lackeys, this was a daring and Utopian theory

to me. It was the seed, though, that fell on a fertile soil. My spirit, as did the spirits of so many young men of my generation, opened happily to this idealistic fecundation. Economic democracy, while being touched upon now and then, was hardly considered. We were told that this was something that should be taken up at a more opportune time in the near or far future.

How were we to attain this beautiful ideal of democracy? By the enlightenment of the masses, was the obvious answer. Time and again we were told that when the majority of the Russian population reached the point of understanding the importance of their existence as individuals of a great country, then would autocracy fall of its own dead weight. We were not given any other instructions. This method was the only means to that glorious end. We were at no time allowed to use force; all we could do was preach. Of course, we knew of the existence of other revolutionary groups, such as the S-R (Social Revolutionaries), whose method of achieving the millenium was more direct. Bombs and guns were their stock in trade and we attacked them just as bitterly as we attacked the existing autocracy, always using our one weapon—propaganda. In fact, we even considered them worse enemies to the eventual success of the revolution than the Russian oligarchy itself. They were beclouding the issue with a dark stain of blood and every time there was a terroristic act committed by one of their group we all suffered a tremendous set-back; for the general population, that amorphous mass swayed by fear and superstition, could not tell us apart.

My shock was great, then, upon discovering that this Caucasian group in Boutyrka, with its leader Nijeradze, composed in reality the strong-arm men of the revolution, the cold-blooded calculating terrorists of the revolution, in-

deed, in spite of the fact that they belonged ostensibly to the same organization that I did. The one superficial difference between Nijeradze and myself appeared to be that he, apparently, was one step higher on the ladder leading toward the goal. I speedily discovered a profounder difference. Remembering several conversations with the Georgians, and a few reluctant words dropped occasionally from the reticent lips of their leader (who, by the way, talked from the side of his mouth), I came to the conclusion that all us preachers of pacifism and idealism, us dreamers who would destroy the chains of the enslaved masses without bloodshed, were merely pawns in the hands of a very cunning set of men who were prowling in the shadows—a cunning set of men who were waiting for the fatal day and the opportune moment when they would let loose their terror after the government had been weakened by the constant hammering of our well-meant propaganda.

I came to the conclusion that behind every man and woman who was ably defending the cause of freedom (that movement instigated by the great leaders of the French Revolution) there was a lurking, latent power that desired to twist our old subjection into a new subjection. I had the feeling of a dark shadow behind me that was using me and thousands of others as dupes, and I could almost hear the shadow laugh and taunt me. The end of my peace of mind concerning the Revolution of 1905 must be dated from that day in Boutyrka when I found out that this man, Nijeradze, was the one who had staged various robberies and “expropriated” over 300,000 rubles from a Tiflis bank to promote the revolution. Now, this was not in accordance with my theory of liberation, and I was all the more convinced of being on the right road when Nijeradze and his Caucasians stubbornly kept away from the lecture cell No. 8.

They were not interested in pure reason. Nor did I change my mind when two months later I read in one of the underground papers the news that Nijeradze, who had escaped either from prison or his place of exile, had attended the Russian Socialist Party Convention in Stockholm as one of the principal delegates. I knew my man but there was a lot that I did not, and could not, know. How was I to know that this man who called himself Nijeradze, Soso, Koba, David, Chijikov, Ivanovich, and God knows how many other names, but who had been christened Joseph after the husband of Mary, Mother of Christ, and whose father was Vissarion Djugashvili of Gori in Georgia, was the man who would eventually become the absolute head of a plutocracy, at whose command millions of people would lose their lives so that he might build for himself a new and terrible political structure that would usurp the place of that ideal emancipated government dreamt of by the great dreamers of the latter part of the eighteenth century? How was I to know that this quiet surly Georgian would eventually turn out to be the man at whose order the best brains of Russia would be blown out by firing squads? How, in short, was I to know that this unemotional sphinxlike man would eventually be called Joseph Stalin, the Man of Steel?

Perhaps there was an unexplained fear in my mind that fortified my resolution to escape and resume my life in a land where honor and integrity made possible a peaceful amelioration of the common people's hard lot.

Immediately I felt better. Again I had a future to look forward to. A goal once again loomed on the horizon.

Apparently the committee on food for prisoners did not function in Moscow. We had to eat the prison fare or buy our meals from the hospital kitchen. We were also



privileged to purchase food from the outside. A big fat German delicatessen dealer would come every morning and take our order for "wurst" and other delicacies. He was a quiet young man, of swarthy complexion, with bulging facial features to harmonize with the rest of him. Only his eyes that seemed to have been thinking of other things while taking the orders were at variance with the rest of him. Nor was his voice in keeping with his torso. He was kind and considerate and each time he noticed some hesitation on the part of an inmate, when the price seemed too high, he would immediately tell him to forget it. "Just order what you want." Only then his sad gray romantic eyes would come to life.

It was this German, I found out later, who was the intermediary between a newspaper office and the prison. As most of its staff was with us, including the editors, the copy was prepared in prison and smuggled out by our friend, the "wurst" dealer. He undoubtedly carried other messages of more dangerous character, but those were only verbal.

In order to avail myself of the hospital fare, I donned my bandages. With that plus twenty-five kopeks I was entitled to a fine meal, which the three of us, Sascha, Boris and myself shared, topping it off with some of the wares of the German delicatessen man.

On the first day of our arrival, in the afternoon, a strange sound filled the entire prison; there is nothing in my experience which would compare with that sound. We all looked out of the windows down into the prison yard. More than five hundred young men, the oldest not over twenty-five years of age, and most of them students from the universities, were having their exercise hour. Each one had two chains suspended from his belt and solidly welded to a ring on his ankles. The sound was that of those five

hundred young men chained in that manner walking through the small yard for exercise. The memory of that sound makes me shudder.

They were all accused, rightfully or not, of belonging to the terrorist organization (S-R: Social Revolutionaries). I spoke to some of those whose sentences ran anywhere from eighteen to twenty-five years in the salt mines. They seemed to be quite happy and were perfectly willing to face the future. One little fellow, evidently a laborer, upon finding out that I was only a pacifist-revolutionary told me I was unwelcome on the floor. "The Russian oligarchy does not understand your language—the language of words. It's only bullets that it respects," he said. Perhaps he is one who survived and may be at the helm of Russia's destiny now. While looking at him and listening to his outburst, I again thought of the symbolic vision of the wise man at the stream: ". . . thou hast drowned . . . and at end. . ."

I felt that the happiness that existed among those "katorga" prisoners was completely artificial. If they had drowned others, they were being drowned in turn and even if they emerged, they would drown and be drowned again.

On the next day, while exercising in the yard, the well-known Gregori Gershuni, who was stationed at the time at the Pougatchoff bastion, stretched his hand through the iron fence and greeted me.

"Where are you from?" asked the great terrorist and the plotter of so many bombings at the turn of the century. I told him.

"Ah, a 'landsman,'" said he. "You look big and strong and so much younger than myself." I tried to study the features of this fine-looking intellectual fellow who started in manhood as a doctor and ended as a terrorist. I came

to the conclusion that in one respect the terrorist and the murderer have in common the lack of ability to take detours upon the road of life.

In living through some of those scenes I once more find myself, as then, at a loss when I try to take inventory of those who surrounded me while in Boutyrka. I knew then, as I know now, that never again shall I find myself, regardless of circumstances, in such intellectual company—irrespective of how wrong some of them may have been in their thinking. There were Boukharin and Radek and hundreds of prisoners from all over Russia. In most cases it was the intellectual leader of his community who had found his way to Boutyrka. Among the Caucasians there were any number of princes and some plain Georgians. It looked more like a convention of scientists, with delegates from the length and breadth of the country, than a prison population. You could hear the Polish delegates sing their beautiful revolutionary melodies; the Ukrainian delegates would sing of the past glory of a people enslaved; and the Cossacks of the far away Don “. . . and quiet does it flow.”

All the “delegates” agreed on one song, sung in the Russian dialect. When our turn came to exercise in the yard someone would always start that song and the great multitude would pick it up and carry it on. The melody is a marching tune and the words start with:

*We are all the children of the people,  
The children of hard working families,  
And all that we are seeking is  
Equality, fraternity, and liberty!  
This is our slogan of war . . .*

It was while we were taking our daily walk one day in the yard that Maria Spiridonova was led by, through the

gates, and lodged in the basement of the Pougatchoff bastion. As she was less than fifty feet away from us we could readily see that she was not very strong. She was dabbing a handkerchief to her mouth and each time that it was drawn away a fresh red spot would remain on the bit of cloth. Her name was a byword then in Russia. A girl from a fine Russian family, who was about to be graduated from a Girls' Gymnasia, she had thrown a bomb that killed the Governor of Rostov. The newspapers had played up the story, especially the part that upon her arrest twelve soldiers in succession had raped her.

Our prison population, especially those who belonged to the terrorist groups, protested loudly against this long-suffering sick young girl being lodged in the raw cold basement of the Pougatchoff bastion and we started an agitation for a hunger strike. It was the editor of the *Son of the Fatherland*, the liberal and most popular newspaper of the day, who settled the argument by offering to go and see the warden. Two hours later Maria Spiridonova smiled and waved to us from the third story of the bastion. The warden harbored a certain respect for the editor and the hunger strike was unnecessary.

With my mind still in a chaotic state, while trying to assimilate the overabundance of spiritual and intellectual food being fed to me in large doses in Boutyrka, I received notice one afternoon to be ready for the third and what I thought was my final leg of the trip—to Vologda. One of the deputy wardens, while notifying Sascha, Boris, and myself, also told us that as we were headed for three years in the wastes of the northern country we were entitled to pick winter clothes in the storehouse. So into the storehouse the three of us followed this deputy. There on the floor were mountains of gray prison greatcoats with a square yel-

low patch on the back of each. There were also piles of grotesque-looking heavy underwear. On the floor throughout the entire storehouse, which was at least a hundred feet in each direction, were strewn chains. Some, with the ankle irons split with a file, looked as if they had been used, others looked brand new. As ours was purely a curiosity-seeking trip into this storehouse (as we did not want and hoped we would not need any of the prison handouts), we merely walked around sightseeing, and finally concentrated on a brand-new set of chains. Boris picked up the set and asked our guide whether he could have them.

"What will you do with the chains? Why don't you wait until you deserve a pair?"

"Ah," said Boris, "this is a special set I want to keep for Nicholas II."

"If you talk that way, you'll be wearing them soon enough yourself," said the guard, and let it go at that.

Our exit from Moscow was not a bit like our arrival. Not being acquainted with the map of the city I did not know whether or not we were purposely led through uninhabited streets on the way to the railroad that took us to Yaroslavl and the Volga River.

We were an even hundred who traveled that morning. In addition to the sixteen of us who had started from Slutzk there were eighty-four who came from the central part of European Russia. Among those who stand out in my mind were three college professors with ages ranging from fifty to seventy years who were accompanied by their wives only slightly younger than themselves. There were also several other women in our outfit, none young and none good-looking. Sascha, Boris, and I were the youngest in the group of a hundred who tramped through side streets and were

quickly ushered into two ordinary railway cars without any bars on them.

It was nearly an hour before we actually left the suburbs of Moscow. Those suburbs, as I understood, consisted of summer houses ("datchy") and were located in what once must have been a forest. I hardly saw a street anywhere among those tall pines; for the most part there were merely paths leading from one summer house to another. Soon the bleakness of the Russian scene in the sparsely settled country took the place of the summer homes. No more delegations met us at the wayside stations. The old rattler of a train swayed from side to side on poorly kept-up roadbeds and averaged under twenty miles an hour. It was late the following afternoon, after passing a sleepless night on the train, that we arrived at Yaroslavl, the old Russian city on the Volga.

After leaving the train we were placed on a float which was to take us across the Volga river to the waiting train on the other side. I remember it was a quiet afternoon with the sun setting in the west. The air was cool, as if the spirit of the North, where we were headed, was trying out his cold breath on us tired travelers. Quietly we boarded this float, with only a few whispers here and there. When the long oars, fitted to the sides of the float, went into action under the powerful arms of the crew, someone suggested we sing the great song of the Volga, "Ay oukhnyem." Somebody did start but quickly stopped under the gaze of the rest of our band. And so the song died . . . and quietly we were slipping along the river to the monotonous splash-splash of the oars manned by the silent crew.

I was filled with emotion—it brought to my mind the psalm attributed to David, but written undoubtedly by

someone else, as it deals with an epoch and era many hundreds of years later:

*By the rivers of Babylon . . .  
We hanged our harps upon the willows  
In the midst thereof.*

I thought to myself, the song has died—we are hanging our harps on our Volga willows, on the way to exile. . . .

Exile! What is it like? It was the thought that preoccupied me from the time we boarded the train on the other side of the Volga River when crossing it from Yaroslavl. Conversation was lagging among us hundred exiles; everybody was still affected by the recent crossing of that river which seemed to have separated us completely from our recent past. As I remember, it is not very wide at that particular point, and yet, due perhaps to the interruption of the train service, the crossing gave us the sensation of reaching a new continent. The bleakness of the countryside through that long twilight had not improved our spirits and with the approach of night we quietly huddled together, each one engrossed in his own thoughts.

I had read books on exile, most of them picturing human beings being slowly broken by the new surroundings. Throughout the wakeful hours of that cold night, on that train carrying the human cargo against its will, everyone was preoccupied with the awaiting fate. Nothing was spoken.

It was about the third or fourth day of June that we arrived in Vologda; tired and hungry we were led through the wide and poorly settled streets of that capital city of the northern province to a one-floor prison that covered many acres. This prison looked comparatively new and the wall surrounding it, made of a light colored brick similar

to the buildings, was something entirely new to me. All the brick buildings I had seen up to that time were red. It was evident that some of the structures were new, in keeping with the recent demands for more space behind iron bars.

Knowing that this was a distributing prison, from which each one of us would be sent to his particular point of destination and there set at limited liberty as an exile, we all began to behave differently towards one another. The community spirit which had prevailed in the other prisons seemed to be lacking at Vologda; gone were the mass meetings and the songs accompanying our walking exercises through the prison yard. Each one was absorbed with his own personal problems and no longer cared much about the others. It was nearing the end of the trail and it was each man for himself.

Only Sascha, Boris, and myself were inseparable. We were still closely bound together and hoped that we might always remain so. It was only when the warden, the thick-set, square-faced, and square-featured Norseman who spoke Russian with a Swedish accent, called the three of us to his office and notified us of our permanent destinations that our hopes were smashed to pieces. The two brothers, Sascha and Boris, were to be located three hundred and fifty miles from Vologda, and I was to be sent directly north eight hundred miles from the nearest railroad station—Solvychegodsk. The warden, looking straight at me, studied my face and then referring to the papers before him said: "Yours is a very bad case. The accompanying papers speak badly of you. This is the reason why you are being sent away to a place you will not readily run away from."

As our warden seemed inclined to continue the conversation we asked him to explain to us about our method



of living upon reaching our destination. Coolly and with great satisfaction he explained to us that we would be "well looked after" during our stay there. Four kopeks (about two cents) a day would be our allowance throughout the entire period of our exile. We were well aware that this would not even buy us sufficient bread to subsist on, let alone a place to sleep or anything else. We therefore asked him whether we could get some sort of a job with some of the natives there. Our Swede informed us that no jobs were allowed to exiles and the natives were discouraged from holding any communication with the revolutionists.

"However," he said smilingly, "there is always an out. I have been getting very interesting reports lately about those who have been sent away before and the percentage of suicides has been increasing rapidly." While saying this to us our warden seemed to wish he had the power to save us the trouble of committing suicide—he had hate and murder in his eyes.

Once more the determination in my inner self got hold of me. While Sascha and Boris looked beaten by the revelation that we were to be separated soon, the fibers within me went to work in preparation to overcome the latest obstacle. I felt that the warden with his wide, bushy, blond moustache on a face that was completely void of human emotions was merely cruel but not smart. Therefore, I told the young girl who had been assigned to look after my welfare while in the Vologda prison to bring me enough material to make bandages. Had not Dr. Schildkraut, while parting in Slutzk, told me to use the bandages when necessary? My plot was already formulated. But first I must say about this young woman who was my guardian angel while in Vologda.

Each political prisoner was temporarily looked after by some girl from the city under the guise of a welfare

worker. In reality, those girls were assigned by the Central Revolutionary Committee in the State to do this work. The one who came to see me, whose name, Nastya, I well remember, was by profession a schoolteacher graduated from a Girls' Gymnasia and who had attended lectures at the Moscow University. She was tall, angular, with very thin arms and a wide upturned nose on a sallow face, with light-gray eyes, ashen-blond hair, and a strident nasal voice. But under that homely outer cover there was a heart of gold—a perfect slave for any man. I sincerely hope that eventually she found a master who recognized those wonderful qualities. When the wind blows from the north I often, even now, think of Nastya, and wish her well.

Late that evening, we prisoners sat in the yard waiting for the sun to set. It was nearly eleven o'clock when it sank beyond the horizon and we finally retired to our cells, only to be awakened in broad daylight again and to find out that it was shortly past one in the morning with the sun again in the sky. The white nights of that part of the world have been described by many people and I am only mentioning it because I remember the fascination it had for me—it almost interfered with my plans for escape. I remember even thinking how wonderful it would be to go to Solvychevodsk, the place of my assignment, and watch nature from nearly the top of the world.

This romantic mood, however, did not last long. I quickly thought of the four kopeks a day and the sub-zero weather and the expectancy of the warden to read of my suicide.

As nearly two more weeks would elapse before my convoy was to lead me on foot for an eight-hundred-mile walk I did not have to hurry. It was Nastya who provided me with the bandages and upon listening to my plans she fully

approved of them. A few days later I found out that I was not the only one who had been making plans. Several professors and their wives and a few other intellectuals had applied for permission to speak to the governor. It was known that he was a liberal-minded young man who was interested enough to offer an occasional kindness to the victims of the revolution. When I appeared before the warden with my head fully bandaged and told him of my experience when first arrested and the other details of the hospital, he did not object to my demanding an interview with the governor.

On the following day an unusual group of men and women and a boy, guarded by a convoy, made its way to the governor's palace. Not a word was spoken among us while on our way to His Excellency. It must have been that each one of us, individually, was developing his own plot. I, for one, knew exactly what I wanted to tell the governor, and my surprise was great when, confronted by his secretary, I was given a sheet of paper and a pen and told to write my petition. There were several small desks in the office and I remember looking at the other prisoners and wondering what they were writing about.

My mind was completely blank—I had been prepared to make an oral request and not a written one. After fingering the paper and pen in my hands I finally brushed them aside and called the bureaucratic-looking secretary over, telling him that my head ached so greatly that I could not write.

"You shall have a chance to speak to His Highness verbally then," said the efficient secretary.

After what seemed to have been an age a tall thin man in a frock coat and striped trousers, with the tragic face of a Hamlet, appeared in the room. Being handed by his

secretary the various petitions by the rest of our band he walked over to my desk and with the utmost kindness said: "What can I do for you, dear?" "dear" being an expression used in the Russian language towards either sex.

It was this man, the Governor of the State of Vologda, and the first governor I ever had a chance to talk to face to face, who completely shattered my built-up hatred towards all bureaucracy and bureaucrats. As with a magic wand, this man transferred me from an objector to all representatives of the existing order, as it was, to a man who could distinguish between individuals and the positions they held.

Whenever I have since condemned, in my mind, a person because of my objections to the position he held, I have always thought of this good governor in the icebound State. If I was still laboring under the impression that all officials appointed by the Czar were monsters and were functioning purely as the Juggernauts of the monarchy for the destruction of all progressive movement, my visit to the young Governor of Vologda in his palace on the banks of the Sukhona river on that day in June, 1906, dispelled that impression.

It was I (the young revolutionary, whose training was never to beg any of the representatives of the monarchy for anything and only to demand my rights, even to the point of refusing to write the petition to His Highness, the Governor) who had to admit my crudeness when this youthful, tall, olive-skinned governor, who was so much smarter than I and possessed so much more finesse than most of the revolutionists, carefully listened to my plea.

After pointing to my bandages and telling him that I could not withstand the hardship of two months' walk with a convoy to Solvychevodsk, I asked to be permitted to pro-

ceed to my point of destination on my own. With kindness he begged me to sit down and compose myself, and, after carefully listening to the rest of my story, he told me that he would undertake to issue me a certificate of passage to Solvychevodsk and that within the next two days I would be notified by the local police department about it. I blushed with shame upon realizing the difference of conduct between a gentleman and one whose manners had been badly warped. With my face crimson I walked out from the governor's palace and joined the convoy. I do not remember getting back to prison—I was so overwhelmed with my recent ill-manners. I was ashamed not only of my manners, but ashamed too of the bandage-trick I had built up to facilitate my plans for escape. I felt that I had to do it, but I felt also that if he had been in my place, he would not have done it.

There were no gendarmes, bloodhounds or police on my trail when I finally made my escape. If there were I did not see them and my method of escape was so nearly normal, like that of an ordinary traveler in the pursuit of pleasure or business, that there was no particular reason for it to be followed by the representatives of law and order.

Some years later, while in this country, I was informed by my parents that a police detail came to our farmhouse in search for me. They ransacked the barn and drove their bayonets through the hay, much to the distress of the family who could not help imagining what would have happened to me had I been within range of those bayonets. Like all things in Russia, the police were slow in coming and so, apparently, was the search for the refugee, who by that time was five thousand miles away.

The reader may gather then that there was nothing unusually exciting in the process of my flight from Vologda

. . . It was while waiting for the governor's decision that Sascha and Boris were taken out one morning and under convoy sent to their supposedly permanent place. It was arranged through Nastya, our conspirator, friend, and consultant, that they were to elude the convoy at the earliest possible moment, as one of the soldiers had agreed to give the signal for them to make their escape. In spite of that, our parting was tragic. So many things could happen to spoil the plan for escape. The sixteen-year-old Boris broke down and sobbed bitterly and I also felt like crying when I considered the possibility of not seeing him again and not hearing his singing voice. Only Sascha was stoic and kept a stiff upper lip. He had perfect confidence that the parting was only temporary.

On the next day, after their departure, I received orders to pack my belongings and to follow a soldier to the police headquarters of the city of Vologda. On occasion, I have known fortunate happenings which have raised me to a state of exultation. But here I was being freed after spending more than six months in the various dungeons of Holy Russia and being a witness to misery which I should remember all my life—yet my inner self, for some reason, failed to react to this sudden freedom. If within me my heart sang for joy its words failed to come to the surface.

The Chief of Police of that city handed me a long official document with a lot of writing on it and said: "This is your permit to travel on your own to Solvychegodsk."

He warned me that owing to a dry spell the last boat down the river Sukhona (the river that flows north into the Arctic Ocean) was leaving only two days hence and that navigation would be suspended with the last trip. Smilingly he scrutinized me, saying: "Be sure not to miss that boat."

Fresh in my memory is the laughter of that Chief of

Police when I told him not to worry about the boat or me. I felt that he knew the boat would be on its way without me. I walked down those two steps from the police building out into broad daylight, while my convoy marched behind at a distance and away from me towards the prison I had recently left. If I felt like jumping, shouting for joy, and doing any other things a normal being would do under the circumstances, something prevented me. I searched for a reason for my failure to respond to the occasion and the realization slowly dawned that one cannot celebrate alone. I was a stranger in a far-away northern city, on a long wide street, totally unfamiliar to me. I was free—free and alone . . . With determination, I proceeded to look for the street address of Nastya, the warm-hearted being in the cold wastes who I was sure would help me celebrate my release in fitting manner.

After walking a little while I encountered this girl, who apologetically told me how sorry she was at being delayed, as she meant to be at police headquarters when I was given my walking papers. I must have expressed myself in very endearing terms to her, for she quickly turned and assured me that everything would be done to make my stay in Vologda comfortable and pleasant. She lived up to her promise.

Many a fellow exile did she send away happy to his place of destination, or smuggle to the south when possible, without ever expecting even a word of thanks. Unsung, Nastya, like many another Russian woman of that era, kept on doing her bit for the revolution without ever flinching from responsibility. I sincerely regret my inability to paint more clearly the picture of Nastya and her kind of womanhood, who so consistently did things for their fellow men and gave many a tired exile not only a place to sleep and

a meal to eat but a mental rejuvenation and a new lease on life.

The three-and-a-half-month interval from my departure from police headquarters on that June day in 1906 in the city of Vologda until the day when I took final leave of the country of my birth, never to return, seem upon retrospect even worse than the period of my imprisonment. Without a home, moneyless, without a name and without a country to call one's own, I had fallen to the lowest state of human misery.

Looking back, however, on that time I think I can account for my lack of enthusiasm when freed on that day in Vologda. In spite of the kindness shown to me in that northern city something within me kept reminding me of the complete hopelessness of my situation. I knew that I had committed no crime against my fellow men by joining a political movement whose aim it was to liberate the vast Russian population from the yoke of a government that was unpopular. To myself I had no apologies to offer; with my conscience clear I felt rather proud for the little suffering I had undergone in the cause of human freedom. This, on the other hand, was altogether different. The facts that I am about to describe will of themselves justify the unhappiness I suffered.

As in a dream I was taken by Nastya to a spacious house with an abundance of overstuffed furniture, and after being introduced to several other refugees, I had the great pleasure of meeting Mme. Plekhanova. Her illustrious husband was at that time in Switzerland, and was known to all of us as the great leader of the revolution, whose name for years had been a byword to all who fought for a free Russia. This great liberal, whose real aim was to establish a republic in that unhappy country, modeled after the French or the



American form of government, was gradually losing his power under the attacks of the extremists and fanatics of the Lenin-Trotsky type. It was the disintegration of the organization he had built up after many years of hard labor that gave the Bolsheviki a chance to retard the freedom of the individual in Russia even unto this day. Who knows how many more days must pass before that country will tire of blood purges, "peaceful invasions," tyrants, fanatics, and dictators? . . .

The clean soft bed I slept in that night and the lovely breakfast the following morning, presided over by Mme. Plekhanova, a woman in her late fifties and suffering from rheumatism, did not make me feel happy. The knowledge that I was becoming a parasite and accepting handouts without being able to retaliate in kind made my ego suffer the very tortures of hell. The independent spirit within me, accustomed from early youth to make its own way and earn its own livelihood, revolted.

"What does the future hold for me? Is it a life of charity and handouts?" were the questions that haunted me constantly.

Even the day spent with Nastya in a flat-bottomed boat, on one of the most charming lakes I had ever seen, did not dispel my feeling of despair. I just could not relax and let myself enjoy the hospitality of that well-organized group of people, of whom Nastya was an important member, under the leadership of Mme. Plekhanova.

For two days I busied myself, visiting the places of historical interest around Vologda, but all the time wondering what had become of Sascha and Boris, who were two days overdue. On the third morning, while walking aimlessly and alone through the main street of the city, I noticed at a distance two tired travelers—Sascha and Boris.

Sascha was still able to walk without too much effort, but his younger brother, lagging many paces behind, looked as if he was ready to collapse. I hastened towards them and in their happiness the two brothers forgot fatigue. With one on each side of me, with arms around their shoulders, we made a joyful trio. We were happy-go-lucky youngsters, each trying to outdo the other in expressing his happiness.

Those two sons of a wealthy family, accustomed to every luxury from the day they were born, never knowing hardships until the day they were arrested in December, 1905, only seven months back, were now veterans when it came to withstanding want and privation. With their hands and faces covered with dirt and their clothes hanging in shreds, they told me how they had run away from the convoy on the third night after leaving the Vologda prison. Since then they had beaten their way back on foot, subsisting on next to nothing and sleeping in the underbrush of that wild terrain.

The same afternoon, after a long conference with Nastya at Mme. Plekhanova's house, it was agreed that the two brothers were to be dressed in the uniforms of gymnasium students and supplied with summer passes. (Those summer passes were being issued to students of higher schools of learning, instead of a passport, when traveling through the country.) I, on the other hand, the same age as Sascha, was to be supplied with a passport of a man of twenty-seven years of age, a local young man and a printer by trade who resembled me somewhat: bluish-gray eyes, thick blond hair, tall and stocky—a gentile, whose home was in the city of Vologda.

The addition of nine years to my age in my false passport made me chuckle. For the third time in my life my age had been advanced, each time for a definite purpose.

But instead of the high boots and mackinaw I was supplied with a long duster, like those worn in the early automobile days of this country. This was to make me look my age—for I was to act the part of a mentor and guide for the two boys of high school age whose family wished them to travel and see the country during the vacation season.

A few days later, after rehearsing several times the part each one of us was to play, we three were taken to the railroad station at Vologda by Nastya, to be shipped to the starting point of our journey—Moscow, and from there to Minsk. Nastya spotted two young girls, students of the Vologda Gymnasia, who were headed for Moscow. She quickly conceived a plan to have the girls travel with us. This plan fitted our own perfectly, for it made our retreat from exile seem more and more like a pleasure trip.

The girls, both under eighteen, full of life and seeking an outlet for their natural instincts after studying hard all winter, took to the brothers Sverzhensky, like flies to honey. I was entirely out of the picture for I looked so much older with that long light-brown linen duster. Instead of two boys I now had two loving couples under my supervision. I don't believe I was unduly jealous. My mind was still occupied with that eternal question: "Whither and what next?" Several times during the journey Boris tried to pass his girl to me. It seems that in the long months of living together we had learned to share everything, share and share alike, and the younger of the brothers tried to live up to the golden rule all the way.

Again we crossed the Volga River, this time as a happy group in quest of pleasure instead of a saddened lot of exiles. Only when we reached the suburbs of Moscow the following morning did the girls become panicky and seek to be alone. Sascha and Boris must have boasted of our real iden-

tity. In spite of being lionized and worshiped throughout the long journey, those two young females with their sixth sense now smelled danger and retired to the other end of the car to the dismay of my two charges.

A feeling of bravado warmed me on the day we returned to Moscow with false papers of identification. Instead of keeping out of sight of the police I deliberately led Sascha and Boris to the first-class dining room of the "vokzal," the railroad station. At that time there were three classes of railroad coaches in Russia and their equivalents were found in the dining rooms of the railroad station. We three seated ourselves under the very eyes of a tall, fat gendarme, dressed in a white blouse, with several medals on his chest and all the rest of the showy regalia that went with a uniform. It was only the first-class passengers who were given such careful consideration and special police protection. Surely, that black-looking giant of a gendarme, who was protecting and watching over our table, could never have suspected from our behavior that we were not only escaped exiles but Jews as well. (Jews were not permitted in the second capital city of Holy Russia except by special permission, and then only for a certain period and to exceptional students.) I doubt if a smarter policeman would have suspected anything wrong with our happy trio, who were constantly joking, laughing, and even abusing the waiter, in a real high-handed Russian manner. The gendarme knew that much, that no revolutionary would dream of admonishing a waiter—this was a monopoly of the nobility and those who aspired to a title or social recognition.

A Russian who wanted to draw attention in a public place to his position in life vented his wrath upon the waiter. On the few rubles in our mutual treasury I ordered the most expensive courses on the menu. By adopting this

method and that of heaping loud abuse on the head of the waiter I made myself solid in the eyes of the gendarme. After completing the meal we proceeded leisurely to look at the town, keeping a respectful distance at all times from crowds and from our recently vacated Mother of Russian dungeons—Boutyrka prison. Our bravado was superficial, for while we did not admit it to ourselves we were in mortal fear of being picked up and thrown back into prison. Our tense expectancy in a city where we had no right to be, both as political prisoners and as Jews (even though the three of us, at that age, might readily have passed for gentiles), left us exhausted at the end of the day.

We boarded the train at the same station where only a short while ago we had disembarked to be given that ovation by the Moscovites, and we were relieved when finally we were seated on the wooden benches of a third-class day coach. This was to take us back across miles of familiar Russian scenes to the section called White Russia and to the capital of its large province, Minsk. Even the long duster, which was supplied to make me look the twenty-seven years my passport called for, did not soothe my feeling of desolation the night of our ride in the ill-smelling car, filled with the perspiration of the human bodies asleep and half-disrobed. Suddenly I felt alone on this pointless trip to an unknown destination—for Minsk was now merely a name to me. No one was waiting for me in that city; there was no one to extend a cordial welcome and offer a roof over my head. In misery and dejection I sat up all night watching the two brothers tossing and talking in their sleep on the opposite seat.

The following afternoon we fell into conversation with a young man who had boarded the train at one of the stations during the early morning. It must have been some

strange magnetism that made one revolutionary recognize his fellow worker. He spoke with us on various subjects about the doings of the day and gradually led up to the revolutionary movement. Noticing that the two brothers looked to me to be the spokesman, since they said little, he must have sensed something unusual in the situation. He tried to intimate to us that he was well acquainted with many features of the struggle of freedom. It was obviously a case of fearing each other; our training, especially mine, had been: "No password—no conversation." Not possessing a password we both were cautious. It was only when he was preparing to get off at some station that he suddenly turned to us and said: "Don't get off at the Minsk railroad station if that is your destination. The place is being watched and every passenger is being questioned and carefully searched. A bomb exploded at the station yesterday."

Blushing almost to the very roots of his hair he suddenly turned around and left the train.

As the train was due in Minsk that afternoon we had to decide quickly what to do next. Our tickets called for Minsk and we could not afford to arouse the suspicions of the conductor by continuing past that station. There was only one thing to do: we went to sleep and remained asleep until the train pulled out from Minsk. We did not dare utter a sound to each other, fearing we were being watched. After the train left the station and the conductor started tugging us for our tickets we expressed indignation at not being awakened at Minsk. However, we hurriedly settled with the conductor to let us out at the next station, forty miles from Minsk—Stolptzy, a small station of a busy little grain town.

Arriving there, we walked to the nearest peasant house, which must have been a couple of miles, and engaged a muzhik to drive us to the hometown of the two brothers—

Nesvizh, a distance of nearly thirty-five miles. It was a moonless, still, warm July night. We hoped to reach the town unobserved, yet wondered how to get rid of the peasant teamster without arousing his suspicion. We could not converse for the same reason and were likewise afraid to whisper. The sun was high in the sky when we finally approached that old town with its ancient castle of Prince Radziwil, around which black swans floated in an artificial lake. I knew the castle well, for my father and I had often gone there together in past years to pay the rent for our acreage.

Everything looked familiar yet distant. I knew that I was no longer in affinity with those surroundings. We were strangers—I no longer had my own name, my own age; I was an exile, a runaway from the Far North.

Our peasant driver remained ignorant of the turmoil and suspense in the minds of his passengers, and the riddle of how to get rid of him without going into the heart of town was solved rather unexpectedly. The horse, having been driven at top speed most of the night, was exhausted, and, with the hot morning sun and the flies, suddenly refused to go another step. That gave us our chance. We paid the driver and proceeded to a little house at the edge of town where the brothers Sverzhensky knew a girl conspirator and were sure she would take care of us at least for a day. Tired, hungry, and unhappy, we stood at the door of that little house, waiting to be admitted. Within a mile from that shack stood a gorgeous brick building, stuccoed and painted white on the outside—the homestead of the Sverzhensky family.

We dared not go through the center of the town to be picked up by the first police officer, who would doubtless recognize the two brothers, so we were glad to be admitted by a fat and homely Jewish girl, the owner of the shack.

Into her bedroom we made our way, to sleep in the bed she had only recently vacated. The warmth of her body still remained on the bed when we three tired travelers, huddled close together, fell asleep, certain that at least for the day we were safe.

Fortified with plenty of sleep and a good meal, we decided to separate for a few days—Sascha and Boris to go to their home, and I to proceed the same night to Kopyl. This town was within seven miles from the place where I was born; in fact, it had been there that my sister and I had taken refuge, in that house of that ne'er-do-well brother of my father, for a few days after the fire.

A letter of recommendation in code was given to me through the Nesvizh organization by a Kopyl representative with whom I stayed for two days. My family had no knowledge of my escape: one could not trust the mails for fear of involving them in conspiracy. Notified by a special messenger my mother visited me. Her visit turned out as I hoped it would. She was glad to see me alive, assured me that she had full confidence in my ability to succeed. There was no scolding, no admonishing, no shaming, no "I told you no good would come of it." Instead, she added that the reason she chose to come to see me alone was that she wanted me all to herself at our final meeting. It was indeed final—for that was the last time I ever saw my mother and her intuition that she would never see me again was true. There we remained together in my hide-out, and when towards evening she left for our old home I stood there for a long time gazing out of the window, wondering what would happen to me and why I could not accompany her. Something seemed to have snapped within me. The spirit of rebellion, followed by the spirit of hopelessness, was being replaced now by another feeling. Looking at the face of my



mother, who had withstood so many hardships in raising a large family on privation and want, yet who remained so stoic in this hour of trial, made me feel ashamed of my own comparatively small discomfort. The old call to spiritual arms was slowly displacing the spirit of despondency.

My plans for the future had not started to assume concrete form, yet I was aware that a foundation for a new life was beginning to be laid and that my entire career was still ahead of me. Everything that had taken place up to the time I bade farewell to my mother began to fade and hope shone brightly before me.

A vehicle, on the style of a prairie schooner and the only means of conveyance there, was leaving for Nesvizh within the next few hours. Unhesitatingly I boarded it—it turned out that I was the only passenger. The Jewish coachman stopped at the town's only inn to see whether he could stir up some more trade. I was sitting on the bottom of that covered wagon, peering through the weather-beaten canvas, when I saw on the porch of the inn two constables with side arms and rifles with fixed bayonets. I spent a few uncomfortable moments while waiting for the coachman to emerge from the inn, expecting any minute to be challenged.

Nothing happened. The goddess of fortune smiled on me and soon we were off and arrived in Nesvizh within a few hours. Before sunrise the following morning I was in Sverzhensky's house where I witnessed the sad parting between the legal and illegal members of the family: those who had a right to remain and those who were sentenced to become wanderers. It was heart-rending to see mother and sisters taking final leave of those two youngsters who accompanied me the same morning to Minsk.

Those were no ordinary ties that bound me to the soil

of the land of my birth. My case was somewhat different from that of the young man who happens to suffer from wanderlust, decides to pull up stakes, and goes off to another country in quest of whatever he may desire the most. I had taken part in a movement to liberate the Russian masses from their oppressors. Nobody likes to run away from a fight—and the fight had hardly begun. So, whenever I tried to formulate plans for a new future, which was based on migrating to another part of the world and away from Russia, my thoughts always met with internal objections. Those objections were based on things that were the stock in trade of all whose love for their country is above any personal gains. In participating in a political movement one's feelings are bound to sharpen towards the object of one's affection. It must be like fighting a duel for the woman one loves. All those ramifications stirred in my mind when I received a letter from home, after being in Minsk but a short while, suggesting that I go to America, where already some relatives—including three brothers of my father—had made their homes. At the very same time Sascha and Boris received a letter advising them to get ready to leave the country.

After several conferences we failed, for some reason, to reach a decision. While our chances for reinstatement seemed hopeless and our status quo appeared indefinite, yet the decision, the only one we could arrive at, was being postponed from day to day. Some of my friends who had managed to keep out of prison offered me a stipend if I would undertake to be a professional political worker, in other words become a hack at the mercy of some aspiring leader. This I refused even to consider. True, I still attended some political meetings and with ability gained from recent experiences tried to stem the tide towards Bolshevism.

Those few outbursts were merely something to fill the gap of inactivity, for my heart was no longer in it.

Shortly after, the Sverzhenskys received another letter from their home informing them that no further money would be forthcoming unless they made up their minds to seek their future in another country. I also received a similar discouraging letter from home. Then something happened to provide a climax. I met an old friend in the park, who discussed some books with me and who told me that he had a very good book which I could read at his home if I came early the following morning. Thrilled I was indeed to go to someone's home, for I was sure I was going to have breakfast there; but as hard luck would have it I overslept and when I did arrive the door was open, he was gone, and all I could have was the book.

We had to be very sparing with our paltry few rubles, and Sascha, Boris, and I decided to go fishing, thus saving the actual outlay of money for a meal and at the same time killing a day, perhaps a night. Happily we started out for the riverbank, but before many paces we were halted by a policeman who had orders to arrest any group of three or more, since the city was under martial law. While being led to police headquarters I managed to relieve my pockets of anything of a suspicious nature, keeping only the illegal passport. Upon arriving at police headquarters we were locked up for defying the martial law. After being kept there for two days and two nights in a small cell that contained twenty-seven of us (we remained in crouching positions most of the time as there was no space to lie down) we were notified that under the martial law we were sentenced to two weeks' imprisonment, less the two days spent at headquarters.

We were soon packed off to prison, my heart beating

hard and fast when we neared the prison gates which I had entered once before. Any minute I expected to be recognized, as did Sascha and Boris. I was visualizing all over again the trip to the frozen north. However, I was the only one who was recognized by the warden himself. Looking me over carefully, he merely smiled and said, "Under what name now, please?"

I gave him the name on my passport.

"Ah, how interesting," he murmured, dismissing me with the rest of the band. Entering the prison yard after leaving the gate and prison office I met with a real surprise. Koorochkin, that little petty thief who had been so useful to us political prisoners in the Slutzk prison, was sweeping the yard with a broom. He took one look at me, flung up his hands, and shouted, "Kaplan is back—I always said you could not keep that boy down! He'll always turn up!"

Now my heart stood still. The shouts of Koorochkin attracted the attention of many inmates of the prison who were peering through the windows and watching the new arrivals. With my knees shaking and my throat completely dry I went through the entrance, to be engulfed once more in that huge building on the second floor for political prisoners.

Twelve nervous days followed. Almost any minute I expected to have someone from the prison officialdom approach and pin the lie on me. I was scared of my own shadow. I did not blame Koorochkin, for, after all, how was he to know that my name was no longer Kaplan? Then, as always, the period of anticipation of bad news was even worse than the final blow. Sascha and Boris did not seem to take their plight a bit seriously. Of course, they had not been recognized and were bound to be freed after twelve

days. I doubt whether they would have cared even if they had been in my predicament. They had no plans for the future, while already I had started to lay a foundation upon the wreckage of the past. I was not exactly sorry for myself; what I mainly disliked was the interference with my plans.

Even the cheerful words of a man who was the leader of the revolutionary movement for the entire district of White Russia and whom I had previously met on many occasions failed to shake me from despondency. This man, under sentence of twenty years to the Siberian salt mines, was shortly to take leave of the Minsk prison. Observing my shabby clothes one day he insisted that I don his fine brand-new suit, assuring me that he certainly would have no use for it. Instead of being infected with his cheerful spirit I had visions of myself in the new suit on the way back to Vologda and thence to Solvychegodsk in Siberia. But he did prevail upon me to take the suit, which, incidentally, fitted me admirably.

What made it more difficult to bear the suspense was the fact that the prison population was not of the same caliber of a short time back, when we were on our way to Vologda. Most of the young men and women had been sent into exile by that time. Some of them had been shipped to the far north and others to Asiatic Russia, and many of them, according to newspaper accounts, were in their graves. And the merry-making sailors of the battleship *Potemkin* were no longer there. Only the dozen who had been condemned to death hovered near the prison spiritually, for, after having been shot, their bodies were thrown into quicklime in the prison yard. The ghosts of those sailors were ever present and seemed to weigh heavily on the minds of those who still remained and remembered them.

One could hear, occasionally, the funeral dirge of the revolution, but no longer could one listen to the happy songs of a free Russia. When the final day of our prison term arrived we three slowly followed the deputy warden to the prison office. There the liberal warden knowingly smiled at me again and slapped me on the back as I was leaving his office. Yet I was unconvinced. I knew that under that wide arch of the gate several young revolutionists had paid with their lives when the trap was sprung, for it was under that gate that the scaffold was erected during the night. I distinctly remember that upon approaching the center of the arch, precisely where the trap was located, that I felt no better than some of those who had walked there for the last time. The deep shadows of the arch were suddenly pierced with bright sunlight from without. The gates were wide open, we were led out—free. Quickly the three of us retired to a safe boarding-house on Commerce Street conducted by a woman whose lovers were the two policemen on the beat—one in the daytime and one at night. Further discussions as to our future were needless. We knew that there was only one answer. . . .

That evening two letters were posted—one to the home of the Sverzhenskys and the other to my parents. The contents were identical—we had succumbed to their wishes and would go to America.

It was a time when the Russian newspapers had ceased writing fiery editorials in condemnation of the Russian government, for the authors of previous editorials were now somewhere in Siberia; it was when books glorifying the human body commenced to appear, when Artzibasheff's *Sanin* was becoming the bible of the same youth that only recently had worshipped Karl Marx, Karl Kautzky, and others; when the Russian youth was organizing cults of free

love and the homes for foundlings were gradually becoming more numerous. The ranks were already broken but a few still remained, a very few. I hoped for a miracle, but also knew that of the two alternatives I must adopt one on the crossroads of life—the one that leads to hope, or the one that leads to hope abandoned, the abyss.

When a few days later the eldest brother of Sascha and Boris, the professor of mathematics, came to Minsk, he found us meek and docile—we were ready to be led into the Promised Land . . . Our parting was not at all as tragic as the one in Vologda. The two brothers were headed into the sun by way of Helsingfors and Stockholm, thence to New York. I was to follow shortly for the same destination, only by a different route. When my father arrived within a few days our only discussion was as to the future. Nothing of the past was mentioned. Everything was done with an eye to the days ahead. He even insisted on going to a photographer to have some pictures taken. What a spectacle I must have made! Outfitted in that good suit acquired from a man sentenced to a living death, and who had no further use for it—a flowing cape, a walking stick, a hat; all I lacked was a feather and a circus horse. I felt then as I felt on the day I was called upon to bless our congregation on the Day of Atonement so many years before. After our visit to the photographer my father gave me money and a ticket for a second-class passage on the Holland-American Line. Then we were on the way to the station where my father was to take the train back to the old farm. Although he, like Mother, did not admonish, reproach or lecture me, I knew he was bitter. The gap I had created between us when I chose my path at thirteen had grown steadily wider. There were no tears or emotional outbursts, but there was a deep-seated resentment in both our hearts:

in his, for the loss of a son who refused to understand—in mine, for a father who refused to understand. And so a silent handclasp was the farewell of father and son. . . . “We will meet again when Russia is liberated.”

In my final leave-taking of the city of Minsk, where for the first time in my life I had come face to face with a type of human brutality that had no bounds, I recalled the final chapter in the life of the Chief of Police. This man, who was responsible for my first arrest when, as a struggling youngster in the fight for human freedom, I had my first taste of a dungeon, finally paid with his life, thereby justifying the philosophic observation of the Jewish rabbi of the long ago: “Thou hast drowned and thou wilt be drowned. . . .”

The final chapter in the life of this monster was written by a pale, quiet, and unassuming Jewish lad named David, perhaps a year or two younger than myself and whose last name, if ever known to me, has eluded my memory. Ever since the day of the funeral for the victims of the October the seventeenth celebration, this boy David, who had lost a young brother in the massacre that followed the speeches at the Railroad Square in Minsk, nonetheless took it upon himself, and himself alone, to rid society of the man who was responsible for the death of his brother. It must have been early in September, 1906, when I read in the newspaper that the Minsk Chief of Police had been shot by an unknown assassin as he was coming out at midnight from a clubhouse. In spite of the fact that my first reaction to the news was a feeling of relief and satisfaction, this feeling was immediately replaced by the hollow awareness that a human life had been destroyed.

Late that afternoon I visited a tearoom which had served in the earlier part of the revolution as a secret meet-



ing place for the leaders of the revolution and which now suffered from great decay. Only occasionally a few of those who still dared to persevere would meet there to talk things over. It was there that I ran into David that day. His usually pale and gaunt features looked even paler. With his eyes seeking understanding from those around him (there was but a handful of us) he asked us whether we had heard the news about the Chief of Police.

"Yes, we did," we answered.

Suddenly he covered his face with his trembling hands, as if trying to protect himself from the spirit of the man he had destroyed, and sobbed hysterically, "I cannot stand it any longer." He ran out of the place with his hands still shielding his face. Blindly he was running away from us, and I doubt whether he ever stopped running until he reached his goal—the goal of those who drown . . . Three days later his body was found floating in the river. . . .

In accordance with Father's arrangement I shortly received word from an agent, who specialized in trafficking passportless people across the border, that the coast was clear. My belongings were in order and in a droshky I rode to the railroad station.

Suddenly memories rushed back—I realized I had to take leave from those who were no longer able to speak. Approaching the railroad square where only eleven months back the government had administered a bloody bath on that October 17, 1905, I discharged the cabby and with bag in hand remained motionless, staring at the cobblestones. Silently, with eyes closed, I lived through that scene . . . ghosts seem to stretch their arms forward . . . it was difficult to remain immobile, and tears came to my rescue. The train was waiting, the third bell was ringing, a final signal for departure . . . Carefully, as if avoiding the

corpses, I stepped across those cobblestones; mechanically I boarded the train. Slowly it pulled out and I was leaving Minsk, never to see its gruesome square again. . . .

Late the following afternoon, on a prearranged signal, a beautiful young girl boarded the train within ten miles of the German border and went through the various cars calling for "glass." I recognized the signal and motioned to her to sit down near me. Soon we reached the last station on the Russian side of the border and upon leaving the train this girl agent, who looked altogether too pretty and too innocent to be a trafficker in human cargo, took me to a large old mansion within sight of the railroad station in the last mile of Russian territory.

Not a wink did I sleep that night although the room was spacious, the clean bedding excellent, the linen faultless, and the surroundings inviting. Early next morning, after drinking some weak coffee, I boarded the train that was to take me to a foreign land. The only identification I had with me was a border pass, issued to some native near that station. Slowly the train started and soon came to a full stop. Each passenger was scrutinized, his papers checked by some Russian official. Again that conflict was raging within me. Whatever were its faults, I did not want to leave my country—and I hoped against hope that this official who was approaching me and who was about to ask for my pass would recognize that I was not entitled to it, that it was not my pass; I hoped he would kick me off the train . . . I hoped . . . I even laughed when he asked for my pass. Handing it to him, I challenged him with a grin on my face, an expression that invited a question as to the legality of that scrap of paper. But when it came to graft, that Russian petty official was honest—he never double-crossed the one who paid him. No doubt that official was in good pay or

perhaps under the spell of that good-looking girl—he hardly looked at the pass and with an outstretched hand let the paper fall. . . .

The muddy flats were just as muddy on the German as on the Russian side of the border. The rainy fall day was alike on both sides. Only the signs along the railroad indicated the entrance to a new strange country. I felt altogether different, for I was a man without a country. As in a trance I stayed in that train and changed to other trains at other stations, as directed by various conductors with various dialects at various stations, and although my body was functioning my mind was blank. Only two days later, while going through the low country of Holland, where I saw the windmills, did I realize that I was almost at the end of the first leg of my journey to America. Soon the train came to a stop—the wide center doors of the car opened (there were no exits at the ends of the cars in Holland then), and the conductor called out, "Rotterdam."

A two-story building with a small blue pennant at the top of a high mast was the place I was directed to, after getting off the train and emerging from the busy, glass-enclosed, dome-shaped station at Rotterdam. On that pennant were the letters, "N.A.S.M." It was the office of the Holland-American Steamship Company. If a boat had sailed on that day I am sure I would have boarded it. As it happened, the sailing date was four days away and as the possessor of a second-class ticket I was not entitled to the accommodations offered to an emigrant who usually traveled third class or steerage. It was apparent that I must seek a place to sleep until the sailing date. I did not like the directions given by the clerk at the N.A.S.M. office. He was too precise and spoke like a well-wound-up record. With his

lips still in motion, I left him, to walk along the water front—it was all water front in Holland.

For the first time the thought came that I was genuinely and finally free and that, in spite of the fact that I was a stranger in a strange land with no knowledge of the language, I need not fear contact with the police. I did see quite a few policemen while going through Germany; in fact, at the Hanover station I saw one who looked so much like the gendarme of the first-class dining room of the Moscow station, with the same display of trinkets on the uniform, that it brought back to me a day that seemed very far away. I defied him, as I had defied that other gendarme. I bought a glass of beer from a street peddler and watched him from the corner of my eye, while parting with five pfennigs for the treat.

The simply uniformed policemen in Rotterdam, on the other hand, were more to my liking. I approached one of them and tried to make myself understood in my best Jewish-German. After much thought he finally led me to a fellow, a short distance away, who was wheeling a pushcart. Having said a few words to him, he saluted and departed.

This pushcart peddler was an international character; he knew all sorts of languages. Born in Riga, Latvia, reared in Moscow, he had managed to live a few years in England, tried his luck in Germany, and finally wound up in Holland. He spoke to me in excellent Russian, at the same time wheeling his cart back and forth like a mother rocking her baby to sleep. I looked at the top of the pushcart, bent down to see the bottom of the cart, and, aside from some trinkets, shoelaces, buttons, tape, chocolates, and a few other meager wares, I saw nothing. At last I asked him why he was shaking his pushcart. "Is it to attract attention?" I asked.

"No," said he with a laugh. "In this country, my

friend, everybody works. We have no loafers, and the peddler when not busy selling wares must wheel his pushcart back and forth."

He quickly advised me of a place where I could get room and board at reasonable rates for as many days as I wanted, with a family that originally hailed from Latvia and was now in the tailoring business. He directed me to the street address of this family and I rewarded him by buying some of his Holland candy.

After climbing a narrow staircase to the third floor I recognized the name on one of the doors and was admitted by a middle-aged Jewish woman to a spotlessly clean kitchen. In my best school German I explained to her my mission. While she had no separate room, she told me, she did have a bed available on the upper floor where her husband had his tailor shop. Although she hardly understood me she seemed glad to see me. As an immigrant in a country where she had apparently failed to orient herself, she saw in me something that, perhaps, reminded her of her past. She even ran upstairs to fetch her husband. I almost called out for joy when I saw him—an image of my Valiant Little Tailor from Baranovici, only slightly taller and with clothes not quite as immaculate as my former benefactor. Soon I was introduced to the other member of the family, a tall thin daughter of uncertain age. All we could do was bow to each other—she spoke nothing but Dutch and I knew not a word of it.

Having been closely associated for two and a half years with a political organization which had sought personal freedom it was only natural that upon arriving in a country where political freedom was an accomplished fact my natural curiosity should lead me to investigate for myself what it was like. In spite of the stagnant conditions that prevailed

when I was leaving Russia, the feeling built up there throughout the period of my political activities could not be eradicated by merely crossing the border into a new land.

My mind was still occupied with thoughts about a people who still had to secure a police permit even to worship their God in public. Only in theory were we aware that such was not the case universally. While the main emphasis of my political education had been placed upon the Republican form of government, such as I thought existed in France and the United States, nevertheless I knew the processes of other countries under limited monarchies. How to secure first-hand information in a country like Holland, whose language was unknown to me, was the problem I had to solve. In outward appearance Rotterdam represented just another city and no more. The uniforms of the gendarmes and Cossacks, the long sabers, the well-trained ponies, and other monstrosities by which absolutism thrived, were conspicuously absent in this city of the Netherlands. This purely negative aspect, however, did not show me democracy at work. With the smattering of political science that had been drummed into me for all those weeks and months I was eager to know the reaction of the people to things in general, to their form of government, against which were erected no street barricades.

To obtain this information I adopted a plan. The first evening, when dinner at the tailor's house was over and the family gathered in the small living room, I proceeded to tell them the things they were eager to know most—what was going on in Russia. I had first-hand information to offer, but only the head of the family, the tailor, understood me perfectly, since he was more cosmopolitan than his womenfolk. Upon hearing that I was a political refugee he offered to introduce me the very next morning to some

friends of his, members of the Social Democratic Party of Holland.

Thus I met some of the members of the S-D party, attended their meetings, and got a glimpse into the functioning of a country whose government did not have to incite one part of its population against the other in order to exist. Not understanding the language I could still tell easily that the meetings of those young men (there were hardly any women ever present at their meetings) were all business meetings with the heads of the various committees giving accounts of their activities. Lacking were the fiery speeches of the Russian meetings; the setting, too, was so different from a meeting held in the wilderness of some forest, with lookouts posted on all sides. This meeting was held in a public hall with the only sentinel at the door a man who saw to it that only those could be admitted whose dues were paid up.

I was thrilled when the tailor's friend introduced me from the rostrum and I received an ovation—only my ignorance of the language saved me from further embarrassment. The kindness shown me by the various members of that group made me forget, momentarily, my loneliness. I was furnished with a guide who spoke German well and who took me around to various places. He proudly showed me some of the things he knew were lacking in the country of my birth. Well do I remember going through the fish market in the poorest section of Rotterdam. There I spotted a disheveled, shabbily clothed young man on a soapbox; alongside him from an improvised whipsocket nailed to the box was a stick with a small red flag. Again my guide swelled with pride when he explained to me that the man was an anarchist and an enemy of everybody, but that he had per-

fect freedom to say what he pleased. A policeman watched this young speaker from a short distance.

"Isn't he going to arrest him for his utterances?" I queried.

"No," said my guide. "The policeman is there to protect him, this anarchist, from possible harm that may befall him from the aroused mob, which dislikes anarchists."

I could readily compare this with what was taking place in Russia, whose fanatics were becoming Bolsheviki, and wondered how long it would be before police would be provided to save them from the aroused mob.

I made inquiries about the possibility of remaining in Holland and was somewhat encouraged—but for the moment only; the Dutch language caused me too much anxiety. A few sneering references to the United States, from some of my Holland friends, as a purely materialistic country made me wonder which path to choose. To make matters worse, a newspaper giving an account of Maxim Gorki's expulsion from New York City was read to me by one of my newly acquired friends. The paper was several months old then and the friend had dug it up for my special benefit. When the review of the book Gorki had written about the United States was given to me to read, it almost made me tear up my second-class ticket to New York on the Holland-American line.

Fortunately for me I found a copy of the book itself in the library in Amsterdam, after making an overnight trip in a small boat through a narrow canal. Slowly the truth developed before me that Gorki, taking a married woman, not his wife, to the United States, had tried to pass her off as his own spouse, and then, when he was discovered, had besmirched the country that had given him (on a previous



occasion) such a marvelous welcome in Madison Square Garden.

Upon my return to Rotterdam that evening to the home of the tailor I did not care to see anybody. An Edison phonograph with some old records attracted my attention and the record of the March from *Aida* caught my eye. I had heard that record in Russia many times before and it had always given me a peculiar feeling. I have never read the libretto and was not acquainted with the meaning of any of the music. But, in spite of that, while listening to the music with closed eyes, I could picture the hordes of the long-forgotten past—breastplates, odd-shaped hats and long spears, warriors marching like shadows, crossing the horizon, and there falling into space.

While listening to this record that night of October 23, 1906, I again saw those shadowy figures on the horizon with their breastplates and their paraphernalia disappearing into space over the edge of the world. The panorama of my own life began to unfold before me—life on the farm as a boy, then in Polesiye, then gradually into the revolution—slowly the shades began their march across the horizon. The lean and tall wavy-necked Koziol with his prominent Adam's apple appeared and with a wave of his hand disappeared into space . . . The dancing peasant at the Smolensk station was again fighting an imaginary enemy . . . The hundreds of young men, those who drowned and were being drowned, with chains from their waists to their ankles, with their eyes fixed on me, marched quickly over the horizon . . . The good Governor of Vologda with his gloomy-Dane expression appeared for a moment, to be followed by many other unforgettable scenes of those stormy days . . .

I was vaguely aware that all those years packed with

so much activity would be useful to me in my future endeavor. I also knew that those years were of the past and that the slate was wiped clean. The years were across the horizon—with a new horizon appearing in the distance. A new life was ahead of me, to do as I pleased with it in the greatest country of all, the Land of the Free. . . .

The record stopped . . . the spell was broken . . . suddenly my mind was light, for the first time in years I felt my real age, a boy of eighteen and a half; the burden of worry and responsibility rolled off me, I was free to travel to the New World to build my home and future.

The following morning, on the twenty-fourth day of October, 1906, the blue pennant with the letters N.A.S.M. was again fluttering in the breeze and there was also another flag on an adjacent mast, the national colors of the Netherlands, for it was sailing day for the Holland-American Line. The S.S. *Potsdam* was ready. I was aboard it, ready to depart for America. . . .

## A f t e r w o r d

**M**Y story is told.

It is now the summer of 1940. The late spring cold carried little promise or hope. Due to the mysterious mechanism of our brain cells while we sleep we often dream of danger and are yet unable to flee from it. That was how the birth of spring reacted on me . . . and, perhaps, on most of us. There was danger . . . danger . . . and no method of escaping it. Munich was past history; the old gentleman with the umbrella had passed from the front pages; one after another the small democracies of Europe were obliterated by the mechanized divisions of Adolf Hitler. The newspapers and radio carried stories of horror, tragedies, betrayals and disillusionment.

Cold weather, rain, sleet and even snow-drifts continued on and on almost to the end of May. And my annual fishing trip failed to materialize. I was sorry about that. The enforced hibernation contributed to my already over-pent feeling of helplessness. So did the state of affairs in America. The occasional call to arms by a brave soul was stilled quickly by some political opportunist who feared the results of the election year. Only the whimpering remained; as a helpless child this powerful country displayed all the signs of being unable to run away from a bad nightmare.

Then one day I received a telephone call from a lawyer friend of mine and he invited me to join him for a weekend at Long Lake in the Adirondacks where a spacious camp was at our disposal. We would start on the eighth of June. "Only

on one condition, though," warned this friend. "It must be a complete rest. We will listen to no radio, have no telephone calls, read no newspapers." I accepted the conditions reluctantly. There is a horrible fascination in bad news, after all, and the daily story of death and destruction, of blazing towns and blasted beaches seemed to have mesmerized me as an ugly snake mesmerizes a peaceful animal. I'd have rather given up drinking good Scotch and smoking Havana cigars before muffling my ears and mind against this endless repetition of blitzkriegs from the stormy clouds. But, nevertheless, I consented. If my friend wanted to run away from actuality I would do my best to go with him. At the same time I realized my weakness. "If only I did not have a radio in my car . . . !" I thought. Could I keep my fingers off the knob?

The two hundred and ten miles from Poughkeepsie to Long Lake, so close to our embattled neighboring state Canada, were eaten up under the whirling wheels of our car and we reached our wilderness destination. The laughter and hilarity of the previous spring were missing this time. We did not even dare to look at each other too fixedly for fear of reading each other's mind. We were trying, indeed, to exist in a strange interlude. The happenings in Europe, while completely taboo on our lips, were nevertheless foremost in our minds and I think that both of us suspected it. Perhaps we were not good actors.

Shadow-boxing with myriads of black flies, in addition to the usual camp activities of preparing meals, cutting wood, and so on, helped to pass away the next two days. We were busy during the day and that was a relief. But the evenings were long. We managed to eat our dinners later than usual and spend the remaining waking hours reminiscing about the good old days when my friend and I were engaged in

politics. We had many a laugh as we recalled unusually "hot" campaigns, especially those campaigns where we received the scars after the last ballot was counted. I was a little surprised to discover that I could still laugh.

The tenth of June was the last day of our short sojourn in the camp and after breakfast we started to pack and prepare to return to civilization . . . the civilization we had known for so many years and which I felt was being slowly undermined and gradually slipping away from under us. I even jokingly suggested to my friend that he lay in a stock of supplies at the camp that would last us for a year, that we mine the shore (for this place could only be approached by boat), and that we dig in and then emerge a year later—two modern Rip Van Winkles minus beards—and observe, perhaps, an entirely new world. My friend merely snorted at that.

The morning marched on toward noon and while my host was away locking up some of the other buildings a powerful impulse overcame me. I sneaked up to the portable radio in the dining room, heretofore completely silent, and switched on the current. I had been eyeing that little contraption with awe and fear throughout the two days and now I could not resist it any longer. What would come out of it? It was like a game of chance where one buys blind packages. Suddenly the bombastic strains of "Giovinezza" blasted the air and then came an English voice giving a free translation of Mussolini's speech declaring war on the Allies. And so I returned to civilization at the moment when the Italian dagger was being driven into the defenseless back of a great democracy.

I was stunned and yet not fully devoid of emotion, for tears, unabated, came rushing into my eyes. They were not tears of weakness, self-pity or helplessness—they were tears

of hatred and revolt. I was no longer sitting and listening to this jackal from the beautiful and once free land of Italy, the land of a people given to art and music. No, I was no longer listening to this porcine and cowardly dictator striving to deliver the death-blow to our form of life, yours and mine. My early revolutionary training came back, the days when, as a youngster, I was gladly willing to perish on the barricades. I was suddenly in a mental fight to a finish against a much greater enemy than the Russian Absolutism, in fact, the greatest enemy of all times, the enemy who is endeavoring to enslave the human race. He must be destroyed, I said to myself, for he is the AntiChrist.

My friend appeared in the doorway and at first accused me of breaking the pact of isolation from contemporary happenings. But soon enough, after he had listened a moment, he also sensed the situation. Quickly he poured out a drink, a good strong one, too, and we drank to the victorious armies of the democracies, to the potential unbeatable divisions of these United States. We knew, as well as two perfectly sane men can ever know, that the time for whimpering, for procrastination, for hesitation, had gone and the time for action was rapidly approaching. We no longer wanted to be isolated on the shore of Long Lake in the wilds of the Adirondack Mountains. Deep in my heart I knew that the time was imperatively calling for something immediate to be done. I knew that this land, conceived in liberty and baptized in the blood of patriots, would not fail in the hour of its greatest trial. Party politics and sectional interests would disappear from the horizon of this nation, this nation so destined by virtue of its inception to become the ultimate leader in the great fight for freedom against the selfish incoherent ideas and ideals of European maniacs and murderers.

I could clearly see the approach of this new day for

America. I knew that the youth of this country, the youth that had gone through the short Renaissance period in our history since 1920, would respond to this call and that all the "isms" would not stop them from performing their natural and heroic duty to the land that has given so much to each and every one of them alike while demanding very little in return. With two sons of military age, I felt that this duty is more imperative than life itself, for life would be unbearable under a totalitarian form of government.

The time for action, as I write, is almost at hand and we will not shirk our responsibilities. A mother does not betray her children; we, foreign born or local born, it makes no difference, will not fail our mother, either, and our mother is the America of our dreams. America will stand up under this terrible test in spite of all the blathering politicians from the tall sticks.

It cannot fail.