

A.S. MAKARENKO

THE ROAD TO LIFE
(AN EPIC OF EDUCATION)

In Three Parts

Part Three

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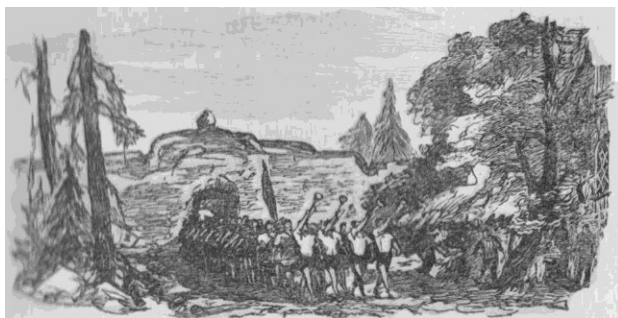
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taken by Makarenko at the Maxim Gorky Colony

CONTENTS

1. NAILS	5
2. THE ADVANCED DETACHMENT	24
3. THE DAILY ROUND	43
4. "ALL'S WELL!"	57
5. IDYLL	71
6. FIVE DAYS	84
7. THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-THREE B.	101
8. HOPAK	113
9. CONVERSION	130
10. AT THE FOOT OLYMPUS	147
11. THE FIRST SHEAF	162
12. LIFE GOES ON	185
13. "HELP THE POOR LITTLE BOY!"	200
14. REWARDS	214
15. EPILOGUE	232



I

NAILS

I was to start taking over the Kuryazh colony in two days, but first there was something I had to do at the Commanders' Council, something I had to say to them, to enable the colonists to organize, without my help, the hard task of getting all our property ready for transport to Kuryazh.

Within the colony, fears, hopes, "nerves," sparkling eyes, horses, carts, a veritable tidal wave of trifles, of objects listed as essential, and nevertheless forgotten, of ropes mislaid, had all become so inextricably tangled, that I did not believe in the ability of the boys to disentangle them.

Only one night had passed since we had received the agreement for the transfer to Kuryazh, and a campaigning spirit already prevailed in the colony, affecting everybody's mood, desires, and tempo. If the colonists were not afraid of Kuryazh it may have been because they had not seen it in all its glory. I, on the other hand, could not get away from the inner vision of Kuryazh as a terrible, fantastic corpse, capable of seizing me by the throat even though its death had long been officially certified.

It was resolved at the Commanders' Council to send only nine colonists and one teacher with me to Kuryazh. I asked for more. I pointed out to them that, with such small forces, all we should be able to do would be to upset the prestige of the Gorky Colony, that the whole staff of Kuryazh had been discharged, and that there was a great deal of feeling against us there.

Kudlaty, smiling quizzically, answered me:

"It really doesn't make the faintest difference if you take ten with you, or if you take twenty. You won't be able to do anything,

anyhow. When everybody comes, it'll be different – we'll take them by storm. Don't forget, there are three hundred of them. We must make our arrangements here thoroughly. Think what it will be to load three hundred and twenty hogs! Besides, you've noticed, haven't you, they send us new kids almost every day – perhaps they've gone mad in Kharkov, or, perhaps they do it on purpose to annoy us."

I myself was depressed by the new arrivals. They, if it were, diluted our collective, making it harder for us to preserve the Gorky Colony in its full strength, its purity, and its flexibility. And we should have to master a crowd three-hundred strong with our small detachments.

In my preparations for the struggle with Kuryazh I kept before me the idea of a single lightning stroke – the Kuryazhites must be taken by storm. The slightest delay, any hopes of evolution, of "gradual infiltration," would jeopardize the outcome of our operations. I was well aware that the traditions of Kuryazh anarchy were just as likely to be "gradually infiltrated" as our own forms, traditions and tone. The sages of Kharkov, with their insistence on "gradual infiltration," confidently advanced the time-honoured notion that the good boys would have a beneficial influence on the bad boys. But I knew very well that the best of boys can easily become wild beasts in a collective based on a flabby organizational structure. I did not cross swords with the sages, calculating with mathematical precision that the decisive blow would have been struck long before any gradual process had time to begin. But the new arrivals were in my way. The wise Kudlaty realized that they would have to be prepared for the transfer to Kuryazh with the same solicitude as everything else under our care.

And so it was not without many an anxious retrospective glance that I left for Kuryazh at the head of the "Advanced Mixed Detachment." Kalina Ivanovich, although he had promised to look after our affairs to the very last moment was so dejected and so overwhelmed by the thought of the coming parting, that he could only stump about among the colonists, recalling with the utmost difficulty the various details of work, and forgetting them again immediately in the rush of an old man's bitter grief. The colonists received the orders of Kalina Ivanovich with respectful affection, replying to them with a cheerful "very good" and emphatic salute, but they quickly shook off the embarrassing feeling of pity for the old

man, and did their work in their own way.

At the head of the colony I left Koval, who feared nothing so much as being cheated by the Lunacharsky Commune, which was to take over from us the estate, the sown fields, and the mill. Representatives of the commune had begun to show themselves in various sectors of the Gorky Colony, and the red beard of Nesterenko, their chairman, was constantly turning distrustfully in the direction of Koval. Olga Voronova disliked the diplomatic contests between these two, and would try to get rid of Nesterenko.

“Go home, Nesterenko! What are you afraid of? There aren’t any crooks here. Go home, do, now!”

Nesterenko, smiling cunningly, with his eyes alone, nodded towards the angrily flushing Koval.

“D’you know what that man is, Olga? He’s a kulak! He’s a kulak by nature.” Koval, now thoroughly worked up, continued stubbornly.

“And what did you think? Did you think we were going to give up everything to you, free, after the boys have put such a lot of work into it? Why should we? Just because you’re taking over our estate? Look at your fat bellies, and you pretend to be poor! You’ll have to pay!”

“But do think! How am I going to pay you?”

“Why should I have to think about that? What did *you* think about when I asked you if we were to sow the fields? You gave yourself high-and-mighty airs then – sow them! And now, kindly pay! For the wheat, and for the rye, and for the beets.”

His head on one side, Nesterenko unfastened his tobacco pouch, felt delicately for something in the bottom of it, and smiled guiltily:

“It’s quite true, you’re right there... the seed-grain... of course. But why should you ask payment for the work? The boys might have been working for society, as they say.”

Koval leaped fiercely from his chair, and, turning round on his way out, his feelings worked to fever pitch, exclaimed:

“Why should they, you damned drones! Are you sick, or what? Call yourselves a commune, and want to profit by child labour...! If you don’t pay I shall give everything to the Goncharov people.”

Olga Voronova chivied Nesterenko away, and a quarter of an hour later she was whispering with Koval in the garden, reconciling within her bosom, as only a woman can, her conflicting sympathies for the colony and the commune. The colony was like a mother for

Olga, but in the commune she ruled supreme, impressing the men with the broad scope of the agronomical experience she had gained with Sherre, and coaxing the women with her dynamic, and often virulent advocacy of woman's emancipation. For crises and occasions of all sorts she had in reserve a battering ram composed of a score of lads and lasses who followed her as if she were Joan of Arc. She won all hearts by her innate culture, her energy, and her boundless optimism. Surveying her with pride, Koval would emit a terse: "That's our handiwork!"

Olya gloried in the generous gift left by the Gorky Colony to the Lunacharsky Commune, in the form of the well-regulated estate with its six-field system, but for us this gift was utter catastrophe. Nowhere is the enormous importance of past endeavour felt so keenly as in agriculture. We knew – none better! – what it had cost to weed, to organize crop rotation, to set in order, to see to every detail of equipment, to look after and keep intact each element of the slow, endless, almost imperceptible process. Our true wealth was hidden away somewhere deep down, among the interwoven roots of plants, in the convenient scientifically-erected stalls, in the very heart of such simple objects as wheels, the shafts of carts, gear and sails for the windmill. And now, when so much had to be abandoned, and so much to be torn from its native soil and thrust into the cramped quarters of stuffy freight cars, it was not hard to understand why Sherre looked blue, and why all his movements were like those of a victim of disaster.

His melancholy mood did not, however, prevent Eduard Nikolayevich from getting his treasures ready for the journey with his usual methodical calm, and, leaving for Kharkov with the advanced detachment, I had little difficulty in shaking off the thought of his drooping figure. For all around me the colonists, like so many elves, danced in a joy and excitement precluding anxious thoughts.

The happiest hours of my life were passing. I sometimes regret now that at the time I did not dwell on them more longingly and attentively, that I did not force myself to gaze firmly and steadily at this life, that I did not commit to memory forever the lights, the lines, and the colours of every moment, every movement, every word.

Even then I realized that a hundred and twenty colonists did not merely represent a hundred and twenty waifs who had found a home and work for themselves. No, they represented hundreds of moral endeavours, hundreds of harmoniously coordinated units of energy,

torrents of beneficent rain, which even that self-willed, opinionated wench, nature, awaited with joyous impatience.

In those days you would hardly ever come across a colonist walking at an ordinary pace. They all got into the habit of running from place to place, flitting like swallows, with

A businesslike twittering, clear, joyous discipline, and grace of movement. There was actually a moment when I indulged in heretical musings, as to happy people not needing any authority over them, for its place could be taken by that joyful, novel human instinct which shows every one what he has to do, how to do it, and the reason for doing it.

Such moments did occur. But I would rapidly be dashed from these anarchistic heights by the voice of Alyoshka Volkov, for instance, bending his blotchy countenance wrathfully upon a miscreant:

"What are you doing, you blockhead! Look what nails you're using for that box! I suppose you think three-inch nails can be picked up in the road!"

The eager, flushing boy thus reproved would lower the hammer helplessly, rubbing his bare heel with it in his embarrassment.

"And what size is needed?"

"You can use old nails for that, you know, ones that have been used before. But wait a minute! Where did you get these – the three-inch ones?"

And then the fat would be in the fire. Volkov would stand over the youngster, wrathfully picking to pieces a character which had shown itself so glaringly inadequate in regard to new three-inch nails.

Yes, tragedy still stalks the world!

Not very many people know what a used nail is. It has to be wrenched by all sorts of cunning means out of old boards, broken defunct objects, from which it emerges crooked, gouty, rusty, its head awry, its point blunted, often bent in two or three, often distorted into spirals and knots which the ablest locksmith in the world could not have fashioned. It has to be straightened with a hammer on a fragment of rail, the wielder of the hammer squatting on his heels, and hammering his fingers almost as often as the nail. And when, finally, the old nail is hammered again into something, it is apt to bend, to snap, and to go anywhere but in the right place. No doubt it was all this which inspired the Gorky youngsters with such a loathing for old nails, tempting them into all sorts of suspicious

dealings with new ones, dealings which formed the steppingstones to official investigations on the part of the Commanders' Council and cast a cloud over the great and joyous adventure of our move to Kuryazh.

And it wasn't only nails! The unpainted tables, the pretentious benches, the innumerable stools of all sorts, old wheels, cobblers' lasts, worn files, tattered books – all the odds and ends which accumulate as a result of settled residence and thriftiness – obscured the glory of our heroic campaign.... But we could not bring ourselves to throw them away.

And then the new arrivals! I could hardly bear to look at them, when I came across their slack, unfamiliar figures. Wouldn't it be better to leave them here, to hand them over to some needy children's home, throwing in by way of bribe a pair of piglings or a sack of potatoes? I was always going over them and putting them in batches, classifying them according to their human and social values. By now I had a sufficiently trained eye, and a multiplicity of outward signs – an almost imperceptible shade of expression, the tones of a voice, a person's gait, and many another trifling quirk of individuality, perhaps even a smell – enabled me to tell at a glance with a fair degree of precision, the finished product which the given specimen of raw material could be expected to yield.

Take Oleg Ognev, for example. Was it worth while taking him to Kuryazh, or should he be left behind? Somehow I felt he ought not to be abandoned. He was an unusual and interesting specimen, Oleg – an adventurer, a traveller, and a coxcomb; possibly a descendant of ancient Normans, for he was, like them, tall, loose-limbed, and blond. Perhaps a few generations of fine Russian intellectuals had intervened between Oleg and his Varangian ancestors, for he had a high brow, and a wide but clever mouth, balanced by a pair of fine, cheerful grey eyes. Oleg had got himself mixed up in an affair of postal orders, and was therefore brought to the colony under convoy of two militiamen. He stepped jauntily and good-humouredly between them, gazing with curiosity into his own uncertain future. When released from surveillance, Oleg listened to my initiatory adjurations with courteous, grave attention, showed pleasure on being introduced to the older colonists, surveyed the younger ones with wondering delight, and said, standing in the middle of the yard, his slender legs set wide apart:

“So this is a colony! The Maxim Gorky Colony, is it? Fancy

that! I shall have to try it!"

He was placed in the eighth detachment and Fedorenko said, narrowing one eye at him suspiciously:

"I don't suppose you're much of a worker! Are you, now? And then your jacket's not very suitable, you know...."

Oleg glanced smiling at his smart jacket, held up one corner for inspection, and looked cheerfully into the commander's face.

"That's nothing, Comrade Commander! My jacket won't be in the way, would you like me to give it to you?" Fedorenko broke out in peals of laughter, in which he was joined by the other athletes of the eighth detachment.

"Come on, then, let's see if I can get it on!" Fedorenko went about in Oleg's short coat till the evening, amusing the colonists by a smartness never before seen in our midst, but at nightfall he returned it to its owner, saying sternly:

"Put that thing away, and put a sport shirt on, you'll be trudging behind the seed drill tomorrow."

Oleg gazed at the commander in astonishment, and cast a quizzical glance at his jacket.

"You mean this garment doesn't suit here?"

The next morning he appeared in the sport shirt, murmuring to himself ironically:

"Now you're a proletarian! You've got to trudge behind a seed drill. This is something new."

Everything went wrong with Oleg in his new occupation. For some reason or other the seed drill did not suit him, and he trudged mournfully behind it, stumbling over mounds, and every now and then dancing on one leg in a clumsy attempt to extract a splinter. He could not manage the blades of the seed drill when in motion, and every three minutes would cry to the leader:

"Signor, stop your beasts, there's a little obstruction here."

Fedorenko changed Oleg's task, and sent him to bring out the other team, with the harrow, but half an hour later Oleg caught Fedorenko up, and informed him politely: "Comrade Commander, d'you know what? Mine has sat down."

"Your what?"

"My horse. Please come and see – it sat down, and it's still sitting down. Do go and talk to it!"

Fedorenko hastened up to the reposing Mary, and broke out furiously:

“What the devil... how on earth did you manage it? You’ve muddled everything up. What’s this shaft doing here?”

Oleg did his best to enter into the feelings of a farmer.

“You see, some flies were buzzing about, or something. So she sat down, and she ought to be working, oughtn’t she?”

Mary looked balefully at Oleg from under the collar, which was almost touching her ears. Fedorenko, too, was angry.

“Sitting! A mare never sits down! Get her up!”

Oleg seized the reins, and shouted at Mary:

“Gee-up!”

Fedorenko laughed.

“What’s the good of shouting ‘gee-up.’ You’re not a cabdriver, are you?”

“You see, Comrade Commander...”

“Why do you keep on calling me comrade commander?”

“What shall I call you, then?”

“I have a name, haven’t I?”

“Oh-h! You see, Comrade Fedorenko, then – I’m not a cabdriver of course, and believe me I’ve never been on intimate terms with any Mary before. I’ve had some friends who were called Mary, but it was quite different with them, you see... there was none of those traces and horse collars....”

With eyes which were at once infuriated, and full of restrained force, Fedorenko regarded the shabby elegance of the Varangian figure. Then he spat.

“Now you shut up, and see to the harness!”

In the evening, throwing out his hands, Fedorenko passed sentence – unhurriedly, with the broad stroke of his Ukrainian dialect:

“What the devil’s the use of him? He can gobble up pies, and make up to the girls... but I don’t think he’ll do for us. If you ask me, he shouldn’t be taken to Kuryazh.”

The commander of the eighth looked gravely and anxiously at me, awaiting confirmation of the sentence he had passed. I realized that the suggestion came from the whole eighth detachment, which was notorious for the solidity of its convictions, and the demands it imposed on others. But I answered Fedorenko as follows:

“We’ll take Ognev to Kuryazh. You explain to the detachment that they’ve got to make a worker of Oleg. If you can’t do it, nobody can, and Oleg will become an enemy of the Soviet government, and a tramp. *You* know what I mean!”

"I know!" said Fedorenko.

"You explain it to the detachment, then."

"All right, we shall have to talk it over," agreed Fedorenko with alacrity, but with the same alacrity he raised his hand to the back of his head in the gesture habitual to us Slavs, when in perplexity.

And so Oleg was to go with us. And Uzhikov? I replied with finality and wrath that Arkadi Uzhikov ought not to be taken – what the hell was Uzhikov to me, anyhow! In any other industry if such worthless raw material is foisted on a man, he can form half a dozen committees, draw up as many acts, appeal to the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs or some other authority, in the last resort even write to *Pravda*, and one way or another he will expose the guilty party. No one is expected to turn out engines from old buckets, or canned food from potato peelings. And am I expected to make not an engine, or canned food, but a real Soviet citizen out of Uzhikov?

Arkadi Uzhikov had spent his life from childhood up, hanging about the highroads, and all the chariots of history and geography had passed over him with their heavy wheels. His father had abandoned the family when Uzhikov was very young, and his place at the family hearth had been filled by a new parent, some puppet in the Punch-and-Judy show which was the Denikin government. Together with this government, Uzhikov's new daddy had decided to go abroad, taking the family with him. A whimsical fate landed them in Jerusalem, of all places. In this city Arkadi Uzhikov lost everything that had ever stood for parents, for these died, victims of human ingratitude, rather than of disease, leaving Arkadi alone in the unfamiliar environment of Arabs and other "national minorities." In the course of time Uzhikov's real father, having successfully mastered the intricacies of the New Economic Policy, and consequently become a member of some sort of combine, decided all of a sudden to reconsider his attitude to his progeny. He discovered the whereabouts of his unfortunate son and availed himself of the international situation so skilfully, that Arkadi was put on a steamer, and actually provided with an adult escort to the port of Odessa, to be enfolded in the parental embraces. But two months had scarcely passed before the parent was unpleasantly struck by certain glaring effects of his son's foreign education. Arkadi's nature was a happy combination of the broad Russian scope with Arab imagination – and so Papa Uzhikov was completely cleaned out. Arkadi managed

to sell on the street-market not only such family treasures as a watch, silver spoons and glass holders, not only suits and underclothes, but the very furniture, and even used his father's office cheque book, his youthful autograph displaying a touching family likeness to the elaborate signature of his parent. Those same powerful hands which had so recently removed Arkadi from the Holy Land, were set in motion a second time. In the very heat of our active preparations for the move, I had a call from Uzhikov senior, an individual with a European gloss and a kind of professional respectability, who showed few signs of wear and tear. Planting himself opposite me, he gave me a detailed biography of Arkadi, ending with a scarcely perceptible tremor in his voice:

"You alone can give me back my son!"

I looked at the son, seated on the sofa, and felt such an antipathy for him, that I should have liked to give him back then and there to his troubled father. But as well as his son, the father had brought me a paper, and I was not in a position to argue with a paper. Arkadi remained in the colony.

He was tall, lean, and awkward. Enormous transparent pink ears stuck out on either side of his flaming head, and his face, with its faint eyebrows, peppered with large freckles, seemed to be dragged downwards by the heavy drooping nose, which was out of all proportion to his other features. Arkadi always looked from under his brows, but it would have been better if he had never looked at all, so powerful was the disgust inspired by his dull eyes, with their yellowish whites. To all this add a drooling ever-open mouth and a perpetual hangdog expression, and the portrait is complete.

I felt sure the colonists would beat him up in dark corners, knock against him when they met, that no one would want him in the same bedroom, at the same table, that they would loathe him with that healthy human distaste which I myself was only able to suppress by the exercise of pedagogical efforts.

From his very first day Uzhikov began to steal from his comrades and wet his bed. Mitka Zhevely came to me, knitting his black brows, and asked gravely:

"Anton Semyonovich, do explain to me why we should take a fellow like that. Look – from Jerusalem to Odessa, from Odessa to Kharkov, from Kharkov to us, and from here to Kuryazh! Why should he be carted about? Haven't we got enough to take, as it is? Do explain!"

I maintained silence. Mitka waited patiently for my answer, frowning at the smiling Lapot. Then he began again:

“I’ve never seen such a creature! He ought to be given a dose of strychnine, or we ought to make a ball out of bread, and put pins inside it, and feed it to him.”

“He wouldn’t take it,” said Lapot, laughing.

“Who? Uzhikov? Let’s try, just for fun – he’d gulp it down. You know how greedy he is. And how disgustingly he eats! Ugh, I can’t bear to think of it!”

Mitka shuddered fastidiously. Lapot looked at him, raising martyred eyes. Secretly I was on their side, asking myself:

“What’s to be done? Uzhikov brought such papers....”

Seated on the wooden sofa, the boys brooded over the situation. Suddenly the clean, smiling countenance of Vaska Alekseyev peeped into the room, and Mitka instantly cheered up.

“As many as you like of that sort!” he said. “Come here, Vaska!”

Blushing furiously, Vaska proffered his bashful smile and infatuated glance to Mitka, dropped on to Mitka’s knees, and breathed out his overwhelming emotion in an indescribable sound – part sigh, part groan, part laugh.

Vaska Alekseyev had come to the colony of his own free will, had come tear-stained, broken by the brutality of life. He had walked straight into a session of the Commanders’ Council, one wild, rainy evening. Such apparently unfavourable meteorological conditions turned out lucky for Vaska, who, it may be, would never have been admitted in good weather. But as it was, the commander of the mixed sentry detachment brought him to the office, and said:

“What shall I do with this? I found him crying in the doorway, and it’s raining.”

The commanders interrupted their debate on current affairs and bent their gaze on the new arrival. He rapidly got rid of all signs of grief by every means at his disposal – sleeves, fingers, fists, the hem of his jacket, his cap – and blinked moist-eyed at Vanya Lapot, instantly recognizing in him the chairman. He had a nice rosy face and neat country boots, and his short, worn jacket alone was out of harmony with his decent appearance. He was about thirteen years old.

“What d’you want?” asked Lapot sternly.

“I want to be in the colony,” said the little chap solemnly.

“What for?”

"My dad's gone away, and my mother says – go anywhere you like."

"What! A mother couldn't say that!"

"She's not my real mother."

Only for a moment did Lapot seem perplexed by this new detail.

"Wait a bit! What's this? All right, she's not your real mother. Then your father ought to take you. He's bound to, you know."

Once more tears shone in the little chap's eyes, and once more he set about to destroy all traces of them before beginning to answer. The keen eyes of the commanders softened at the applicant's quaint ways. At last, with an involuntary sigh, the little chap brought out:

"My father – my father's not my real father, either."

There was a moment's silence in the Council, and then a loud, shrill laugh broke out. Lapot, laughing till he almost cried, said:

"You're in a nice muddle, brother! Tell us about it!"

The applicant, simply, without the slightest affectation, without removing his gaze from Lapot's smiling countenance, told us that he was called Vaska, and his surname was Alekseyev. His father, a cabdriver, had left his family and disappeared, and his mother had married a tailor. Then his mother had begun to cough, and last year she had died, and the tailor had "gone and married somebody else." And now, at Easter, he had gone to Kongrad, and sent word that he was never coming back any more. He also wrote: "You can shift for yourselves."

"We shall have to take him," said Kudlaty. "But you're lying, perhaps, after all. Eh? Who taught you?"

"Taught me? A man – who lives over there – he taught me – he said the lads live there and sow the fields."

And so we took Vaska Alekseyev into the colony. He soon became a general favourite, and the question of dispensing with Vaska at Kuryazh was not so much as raised in our confidential discussions. It was not raised, if only owing to the fact that Vaska had been accepted by the Commanders' Council, and consequently was fully entitled to be considered a "prince of the blood."

Among the newly-arrived were also Mark Scheinhaus and Vera Berezovskaya.

Mark Scheinhaus had been sent by the Odessa Commission for Juvenile Delinquency for stealing, as the paper he brought with him

testified. He arrived with a militiaman, but my very first glance at him told me that the Commission had been mistaken – nobody with eyes like his could be a thief. I will not endeavour to describe Mark's eyes. Such eyes are seldom met with in real life, they are only to be found in the works of painters like Nesterov, Kaulbach, Raphael, in their depiction of saints, preferably in the faces of madonnas. It is hard to understand how they came to be in the countenance of a poor Jew from Odessa. And Mark Scheinhaus displayed every sign of poverty – his lean sixteen-year-old body was barely covered, and his feet were thrust into the disreputable remains of boots riddled with holes. But his face was smooth and clean, and his curly hair was nicely combed. He had such long, thick eyelashes that it seemed every sweep of them ought to have caused a draught.

"It says here that you have been stealing," I said. "Is it really true?"

A stream of light that could be almost felt radiated from the black, saintly melancholy of Mark's enormous eyes. He raised his eyelashes as if with an effort, and bent his sad, lean, pale visage upon me.

"It's true, of course. I... yes... I did steal."

"From hunger?"

"No, I can't say it was from hunger. I didn't steal from hunger."

Mark still kept his solemn, mournful, steady gaze on me.

I felt ashamed. Why was I torturing a weary, sad boy? I tried to make my smile as cordial as possible, and said:

"I'm not going to remind you of that. If you stole, you stole. All sorts of things happen to people, they must be forgotten. Have you been to school anywhere?"

"Yes, I've been to school. I've been through five classes, and I want to go on."

"That's fine! You'll go into Taranets's fourth detachment. Take this note and go and find Taranets, the commander of the fourth. He'll do everything necessary."

Mark accepted the sheet of paper, but instead of moving towards the door stood irresolutely at the table.

"Comrade Director, there's something I have to tell you, I must tell you. All the way here I kept thinking how I should tell you, and I can't stand it any longer!"

Mark smiled sadly and looked straight into my eyes with an

imploring glance.

“What is it? Of course you can tell me! Out with it!”

“I’ve been in a colony before, and I can’t say it was so bad there. But I felt that my character was being ruined. The Denikinites killed my father, and I’m a Komsomol, and I’m getting soft. That’s wrong, I know that myself. I ought to have a Bolshevik character. It began to worry me. If I tell you everything, will you promise not to send me back to Odessa?”

Mark turned the full blaze of his eyes on my face.

“Whatever you tell me, I won’t send you away.”

“Thank you, Comrade Director! I thought that’s what you’d say, and I made up my mind. I thought so because I read an article in the *News* called ‘Where the new man is being forged,’ about your colony. I understood at once where I had to go, and I began to beg to be sent here. But ask as I might, nothing was any good. They told me – ‘that’s a colony for delinquents, why should you go there?’ So I ran away from the colony, and got straight on to a tram. It all happened so quickly, you can’t imagine! Scarcely had I put my hand into a man’s pocket, when somebody got hold of me and wanted to beat me up. And then they took me to the Commission.”

“And did the Commission believe the charge against you?”

“Why shouldn’t they? They’re decent, just people, and there were witnesses and an act, and everything as it should be. I said I’d picked pockets before.”

I laughed openly. I was gratified to discover that my distrust of the Commission’s findings was justified. Mark, reassured, went off to arrange matters with the fourth detachment.

Vera Berezovskaya was quite another proposition.

It was winter. I had gone to the station to see Maria Kondratyevna Bokova off, and hand her a very urgent dispatch for Kharkov. I found Maria Kondratyevna on the platform, arguing violently with a sentry on railway duty. The sentry had a girl of about sixteen by the hand. Her bare feet were thrust into galoshes, and she was wearing a short, old-fashioned dolman, probably the gift of some kindly old soul. The girl’s uncovered head was in an appalling state – her fair, matted hair was no longer fair, jutting out behind one ear in a solid clot, and clinging to her cheeks and brow in dark, sticky wisps. She was trying to free her hand, smiling broadly and seductively all the time. And she was very pretty. But in her bright, laughing eyes – silver-grey, Russian eyes – I caught sight of the dull

fire sometimes seen in the helpless despair of a stricken animal. Her smile was the only form of defence known to her, her pitiful diplomacy.

"It's all very well for you to reason, Comrade," the sentry was saying. "You don't know the trouble we have with them!"

He turned on the girl:

"Were you, or were you not on the train last week? Were you, or were you not drunk?"

"Me? Drunk? He's making it up!" said the girl, now throwing a frankly seductive smile at the sentry. But at the same time she tugged her hand out of his grasp, putting her fingers to her mouth as if they hurt her.

"You let me alone!" she murmured, demurely coquettish.

The sentry moved towards her, but she stepped back three paces, and laughed loudly, paying not the slightest heed to the crowd beginning to form around us.

Maria Kondratyevna turned her head in embarrassment, and caught sight of me.

"Anton Semyonovich! Dear Anton Semyonovich!"

She drew me aside, and whispered eagerly:

"Listen – it's simply terrible! Only think of it! Why – she's a woman, a beautiful woman! I don't mean only because she's beautiful, of course.... It has to be stopped!"

"Maria Kondratyevna, what d'you want?"

"Want? Don't pretend, you monster!"

"I like that!"

"Yes, a monster! Nothing but your advantage, nothing but calculations, eh? This wouldn't be to your advantage, eh? Let the sentry cope with her, eh?"

"But listen – she's a prostitute! How can you expect me to take her into a collective with boys?"

"Stop your reasoning, you miserable... pedagogue!"

I turned pale at the insult, and said ferociously:

"All right! She shall go with me this minute to the colony."

Maria Kondratyevna put her arms round me.

"Darling Makarenko, oh, you darling! Thanks, thanks!" She rushed up to the girl, seized her by the shoulders, and whispered something in her ear. The sentry bawled at the onlookers.

"What are you gaping at? D'you think you're at the cinema? Go away, and see to your own business!"

He then spat, shrugged his shoulders, and departed. Maria Kondratyevna led up to me the still smiling damsel.

"Let me introduce you – Vera Berezovskaya. She agrees to go to the colony. Vera, this is your director. He's a very kind man, you know, and you'll be all right there."

Vera smiled at me, too.

"I'll go... I don't mind."

Maria Kondratyevna and I took leave of one another, and then I went with my new charge to the sleigh.

"You'll be cold," I said, getting a horse blanket from under the seat.

Vera wrapped herself up in the horse blanket, asking cheerfully:

"What'll I be doing there, in the colony?"

"You'll do lessons, and you'll work."

Vera kept silence for a long time, and then suddenly broke out in a capricious "feminine" voice:

"Oh, Lord! I'm not going to do lessons, and don't you think it!"

Night was approaching – cloudy, dark, ominous. We were in the field path by now, skidding on the slippery surface. I said to Vera quietly, so that Soroka, who was on the box, should not hear:

"All our boys and girls do lessons, and you will. You'll be a good scholar. And a good life will begin for you." She leaned close to me, and said loudly:

"A good life! Oh, how dark it's getting! I'm afraid! Where are you taking me?"

"Be quiet!"

She fell silent. We entered the copse. Soroka was swearing softly at someone, probably at whoever invented darkness and narrow forest paths.

"Shall I tell you something?" whispered Vera.

"Go ahead!"

"D'you know what? I'm pregnant."

A few minutes later I said:

"Aren't you making it all up?"

"No. Why should I make things up? It's true, really it is!"

The lights of the colony twinkled in the distance. We fell to whispering again.

"We'll get rid of it for you," I said. "How many months?"

"Two!"

"We'll get rid of it."

"They'll laugh!"

"Who will?"

"Your... kids!"

"Nobody will know."

"They'll find out."

"No. I'll know, and you will. And nobody else."

Vera gave a knowing laugh.

"Oh, you go on!"

I said nothing. We ascended the slope to the colony at a footpace. Soroka clambered out of the sleigh, walking beside the horse's head, and whistling. Vera suddenly bent over my knees, and began to weep bitterly.

"What's the matter with her?" asked Soroka.

"She's in trouble."

"Relations, probably," surmised Soroka. "There's nothing worse than relations."

He got back on to the box and brandished his whip.

"Trot, Comrade Mary, trot! That's the way!"

We drove into the colony courtyard.

Maria Kondratyevna came back from Kharkov in three days. I told her nothing about Vera's tragedy. And a week later we gave it out in the colony that Vera had to be sent to the hospital with kidney trouble. She returned from the hospital meek and mournful, and asked me in a low voice:

"What am I to do now?"

I thought a moment, and answered discreetly:

"Now you'll begin to live."

Her embarrassed and vacant glance showed me that nothing was so hard or so puzzling for her as to live.

Of course, Vera Berezovskaya will go with us to Kuryazh. As it turned out, everybody was to go, even the twenty newcomers so recently flung at me by the People's Commissariat for Education, without the slightest consideration for my strategic plans. How nice it would have been if no one but the original, well-tried eleven Gorky detachments had been going to Kuryazh with me! These detachments had fought their way through the six arduous years of our history. They had so many thoughts, traditions, experiences, ideals, and customs in common. With them, I felt there need be nothing to fear. How nice it would have been but for these new ones, who, while apparently engulfed by the detachments, seemed to be every-

where, causing me uneasiness whenever I came across them: they walked and talked all wrong, and still retained the crude, inferior faces they had brought with them.

Never mind! My eleven detachments seemed to be wrought out of steel. But what a catastrophe it would be if those eleven little detachments came to grief in Kuryazh! On the eve of the departure of the Advance Mixed, my soul was filled with grief and confusion. And Dzhurinskaya arrived by the evening train, locked herself into my room with me, and said:

“Anton Semyonovich! I’m afraid! It’s not too late, yet. You can still cry off!”

“Has anything happened, Lyubov Savelyevna?”

“I was at Kuryazh yesterday. It’s appalling! I can’t stand such sights! I’ve been in prison, you know, and at the front, and I never felt so miserable in my life as I do now.”

“What’s the matter?”

“I don’t know, I don’t know how to put it. Just try and imagine – three hundred absolutely depraved, embittered boys, sunk in lethargy – it’s a kind of bestial, biological ruin, you know! It’s not even anarchy! And the poverty, the stink, the lice! You mustn’t go, it was a mad idea!”

“Wait a minute! If Kuryazh makes such a terrible impression on you, that’s all the more reason for doing something about it.”

Lyubov Savelyevna sighed heavily.

“Oh, it can’t be dismissed in a sentence! Of course something must be done, it’s our duty, but your collective ought not to be sacrificed. You don’t know its value, Anton Semyonovich – it should be protected, developed, improved, it can’t be thrown overboard at the first whim!”

“Whose whim?”

“I don’t know whose,” said Lyubov Savelyevna wearily. “I don’t mean you, your attitude is quite a special one. But – oh, yes, this is what I wanted to tell you – you have many more foes than you are aware of.”

“Well, what about it?”

“There are people who would be glad if you came to grief in Kuryazh.”

“I know that.”

“There you are then! Let’s be serious. Let’s give it up! It’s not too late!”

I could only smile at Dzhurinskaya's proposal.

"You are our friend. We value your care and affection more than I can say. But, forgive me, aren't you taking up the old pedagogical attitude?"

"I don't understand."

"The struggle at Kuryazh is necessary not only for Kuryazh and for my enemies, it is necessary for ourselves, too, for each one of our colonists. This struggle is of vital importance. Just go about among the colonists, and you'll see that retreat is now impossible."

The next morning the advance detachment left for Kharkov. Lyubov Savelyevna went with us, in the same carriage.



Setting-up exercises

THE ADVANCE DETACHMENT

Volokhov was at the head of the advance detachment. He was taciturn, never gesticulated, and seldom changed his expression, but knew how to show his attitude to events or people, and this attitude was always tinged with a certain lazy irony and an imperturbable self-confidence. In their primitive forms these qualities are inherent in every self-respecting hoodlum, but when shaped and polished within a collective they lend the individual a certain noble and restrained glamour, the profound play of calm, unconquerable strength. Such commanders are needed in the struggle, for their boldness and self-control may be counted on. My greatest consolation was the fact that Volokhov never wasted a thought on Kuryazh and the Kuryazhites. Every now and then, goaded thereto by the perpetual chatter of the boys, Volokhov would reluctantly contribute his own retort:

“Stop gassing about these Kuryazh kids! You’ll find they’re made of flesh and blood, just like other people.”

But this did not prevent him from regarding the composition of the advance detachment with the utmost seriousness. He considered every candidate conscientiously and silently, and gave his decisions with authoritative brevity!

“He won’t do! Hasn’t got the guts!”

The Advance Mixed was very ingeniously made up. Every one in it was a Komsomol, and at the same time all the main ideas and special skills to be found in the colony were represented. Its members were as follows:

1. Vitka Bogoyavlensky, upon whom the Commanders’ Council had bestowed a new name – and what a name! They renamed him – Gorkovsky! Gorkovsky was lean and plain, but as clever as a fox terrier. He was splendidly disciplined, always ready for action, and had his own opinion about everything, sizing up other people rapidly and decisively. Gorkovsky’s great talent lay in his ability to see through any boy, summing him up at a glance with unerring precision. At the same time he never lost sight of essentials, and knew how to synthesize his conception of the individual in terms of the collective, thereby enriching his knowledge of the group and discovering tendencies, distinctions, and typical phenomena.

2. Mitka Zhevely – our old friend, the most successful and

charming exponent of the true Gorky spirit. Mitka's development was a happy one, and he had become a graceful youth with a well-set head, and a bright diamond-black glance from slightly slanting eyes. There were always plenty of little chaps in the colony striving to imitate Mitka's energetic speech with its accompaniment of brief, unexpected gesture, the order and cleanliness of his clothes, his gait, and his deep-rooted, but gay and good-humoured loyalty to the colony. Mitka regarded our transfer to Kuryazh as an important affair of immense political significance, was convinced that we had discovered the right forms for the "organization of kids," and considered that our discovery ought to be spread abroad for the benefit of the proletarian republic.

3. Mikhail Ovcharenko – not a particularly bright lad, but a splendid worker, and extremely enthusiastic about the colony and its interests. Misha had a very complicated past, the details of which he himself had great difficulty in mastering. He had lived in almost all the towns in the Union, but not one of these towns seemed to have contributed anything to his knowledge or development. He fell in love with the colony from the very first day, and there had hardly ever been a black mark against him. Misha knew how to do all sorts of things, but had no real qualifications, for he could not bring himself to stay at any one lathe, or to work long in any one place. To make up for this he had a real gift for management, could organize the work of a detachment, of packing, of transport; he invariably worked with expedition and success, interspersing his activities with business-like growls and injunctions, only not irritating because there was always about them the pleasant flavour of Misha's well-meant stupidity and inexhaustible good humour. Misha Ovcharenko was the strongest boy in the colony, stronger even than Silanti Otchenash, and Volokhov, in selecting Misha for the detachment, must have been thinking principally of this quality of his.

4. Denis Kudlaty – the strongest personality in the colony during the era of the Kuryazh campaign. Many a colonist felt his blood run cold when Kudlaty took the floor at a general meeting, and referred to him by name. His was the power to trample an offender in the mud, most lustily, most thoroughly, and to demand his expulsion from the colony in a manner that was appallingly convincing. What made him still more terrible was that he really was a clever fellow, and his arguments were frequently devastating in their weightiness. It was his profound and unshakable conviction that the

colony was a useful thing, securely welded and firmly established. No doubt he conceived of it as a well-oiled farm cart in good repair in which one could jog along quietly for thousands of kilometres, then get out, and use the oil can and a hammer for a bit, and get in and go another thousand kilometres. Although Kudlaty was ridiculously like a kulak in his appearance, and always acted kulak parts in our theatre, he was the first organizer of our Komsomol unit and its most active worker. A true Gorkyite, he never wasted an unnecessary word. Orators he regarded with silent disapproval, while long speeches made him feel really sick.

5. Evgenyev was chosen by the commander as a bait to the “toughs.” He was a good Komsomol, and a staunch, cheerful comrade, but his speech and all his ways still retained reminiscences of his stormy days in the street and reformatory, and, like the able actor he was, he had no trouble in talking to a man in his own jargon, when necessary.

6. Zhorka Volkov, Koval’s right hand in the Komsomol organization, acted as Political Commissar and creator of the new constitution in our mixed detachment. Zhorka was a born politician – fiery, self-assured, determined. Of him Koval said: “Zhorka will touch up their political nerves. They seem to think, confound them, they’re living in the imperialist epoch! And if it comes to fighting, Zhorka won’t be behindhand either.”

7. and 8. Toska Solovyov and Vanka Shelaputin, representatives of the younger generation. They both had smartly-brushed wavy hair, Toska’s being fair, and Vanya’s auburn. Toska was good-looking in a fresh, youthful way, and Vanya had a snub-nosed, saucy face.

Ninth and last came the colonist Kostya Vetkovsky. His return to the colony came about in the most rapid, prosaic and business-like manner. Three days before our departure Kostya came back to the colony – thin, pallid and embarrassed. He was received in reserved fashion, and Lapot was the only one who teased him.

“Well, have you been to that tight place in the Caucasus – ‘take me across’?”

Kostya smiled demurely.

“No! I’m through with all that!”

“A pity!” said Lapot. “Why should the confounded thing stand there for nothing?”

Volokhov narrowed his eyes at Kostya familiarly.

“So you’ve been cramming yourself with all sorts of good things?”

Kostya replied unblushingly:

“Yes, I have!”

“Well, what will you have for the sweet dish?”

Kostya laughed loudly.

“I’m going to wait for the Commanders’ Council,” he said. “You know how good they are at preparing sweet things – and bitter ones, too!”

“We have no time to waste over your menu,” said Volokhov grimly. “But I tell you what – Alyosha Volkov’s got a blister on his heel. You can have his place in the advance detachment. What d’you say, Lapot?”

“I think it’s a good idea.”

“And what about the Council?”

“We’ve declared martial law for the time – we can settle it without the Council.”

And so, unexpectedly to himself and to us, without any proceedings, or “psychology,” Kostya got into the advance detachment. The very next day he was going about in colony dress.

A new teacher, Ivan Denisovich Kirghizov, went with us too. This was a man I had taken in the place of the departing Ivan Ivanovich, luring him from his pedagogical martyrdom in Pirogovka. To the uninitiated observer Ivan Denisovich might have seemed just a village teacher, but in reality he was that very hero whom Russian literature has been so long and so painstakingly seeking. He was thirty years old, kindly, wise, calm, and, above all, hard-working, the last-named quality being one of which neither the heroes nor the villains of Russian fiction can boast. There was nothing Ivan Denisovich could not do, and he was always doing something, though from a little way off it always seemed as if yet another task could be laid upon him. On closer inspection you would discover that nothing more could be added to his occupations, but, unable in time to rein in your tongue, you would stammer out, blushing slightly:

“Ivan Denisovich, the – er – physics apparatus has to be packed.”

And Ivan Denisovich, who had been bending over some box of exercise books, would straighten himself and say, smiling:

“Physics apparatus? Oh yes – all right! I’ll take some of the

lads, and we'll see to it."

You would move away embarrassed, while Ivan Denisovich, who had already forgotten your cruelty, would be saying sweetly to someone:

"Go and call a few lads, there's a good chap!"

We arrived at Kharkov in the morning. We were met by Inspector Yuryev, of the Department of Public Education, his beaming countenance in full harmony with the brightness of the May morning and our campaigning spirit. He went about clapping shoulders, and exclaiming: "So these are the Gorkyites! Fine! And Lyubov Savelyevna is here, too! That's fine! Look here! I have a car, and we can go for Khalabuda, and drive all the way to Kuryazh. Will you come, too, Lyubov Savelyevna? That's fine! And the boys can take the suburban train to Ryzhov. It's no distance from Ryzhov – just two kilometres. You can go across the meadows. But I suppose, you must be fed – or shall we wait till we get to Kuryazh?"

The boys looked expectantly at me, and ironically at Yuryev. They were highly sensitized by the spirit of adventure, and their electrified "feelers" stretched out eagerly in the direction of their first Kharkov object of interest – Yuryev.

"You see," I said, "our Advance Mixed is a sort of storm brigade of the Gorky Colony. If we're to drive, let them drive, too. I suppose we could get two cars?"

Yuryev fairly jumped for joy.

"Fine! Upon my word! They do everything in their own way! Isn't that splendid? And look here! I'll hire one at the expense of the Department of Public Education. And look here! I'll go with them myself – with the lads!"

"Come on, then," said Volokhov, showing his teeth in a smile.

"Splendid! Splendid! So off we go! ... Let's go and hire cars.

Volokhov ordered:

"Go with him, Toska!"

"Very good!" squealed Toska, saluting, and Yuryev, his delighted gaze fixed on Toska, rubbed his hands and fairly danced.

"Well, I never!" he exclaimed twice over.

He started towards the square at a run, looking back at Toska, who naturally wasn't going to forget his dignity as a member of the Advance Mixed by skipping about the station.

Our lads exchanged brief glances. Gorkovsky asked quietly:

"Who's that – funny guy?"

The three automobiles reached the top of the Kuryazh hillock in an hour, and drew up behind the dilapidated wall of the old church. A few shaggy, unclean forms moved languidly towards our cars, the tatters of their long ragged trousers trailing behind them. The apparition of Gorkyites, slender as pages, stern as judges, seemed to inspire them with no particular curiosity.

Two teachers approached, exchanging glances which plainly showed their hostility to us.

“Where are we to put them?” they asked and, turning to me: “We can put a bed for you in the teachers’ room, and the boys can find themselves places in some of the dormitories.”

“We don’t care! We’ll find places somewhere or other. Where’s your director?”

The director turned out to be in town. But a personage attired in light-grey trousers adorned with spots of grease, grudgingly overlooking the unfairness of being made to work out of turn, agreed to show us over the colony. There was nothing new for me here, nor was Yuryev greatly interested in sight-seeing; Dzhurinskaya maintained a melancholy silence, while the lads, dispensing with the official guide, rushed off to have a look at the colony. Ivan Denisovich followed them with leisurely steps.

Brandishing his stick towards various points in the sky, and recalling certain organizational exploits of his own, Khalabuda began to enumerate the elements of Kuryazh wealth, reducing them all to one common denominator – rye. The lads came running back with bewildered faces. Kudlaty’s look seemed to say: “How could you get yourself into such a mess, Anton Semyonovich!”

Mitka Zhevely, his eyes bright with anger, his hands in his pockets, kept looking over his shoulder, and this contemptuous movement did not escape Dzhurinskaya.

“You don’t like it here, boys, eh?” she asked.

Mitka did not answer. Suddenly Volokhov burst out laughing.

“It’s bound to come to fisticuffs sooner or later, here!”

“What d’you mean?” asked Lyubov Savelyevna, turning pale.

“We’ll have to tackle these fellows,” Volokhov explained, suddenly seizing by the collar with two fingers, and bringing up to Dzhurinskaya a dark puny little fellow in a long jacket, but barefoot and capless.

“Just look at his ears!”

The little fellow obligingly turned round. His ears were cer-

tainly a sight. It was not only that they were black and that the wear-and-tear of life had caused the dirt in them to form a shiny crust, but these ears were further adorned by the angry scars of bleeding sores, partially healed scabs and rashes.

“What’s the matter with your ears?” asked Dzhurinskaya.

The little chap smiled diffidently, and started rubbing one leg against the other. And the state of his legs matched that of his ears.

“They’re scabs,” he answered in a husky voice.

“Aren’t you afraid you’ll die?” asked Toska.

“Why, heaps of us are like this, and no one has died yet.”

For some reason there were hardly any colonists to be seen. In the untidy club, on the spittle-covered stairs, along the befouled paths, there wandered a few melancholy shapes. The unkempt, stinking dormitories, where not even the rays of the sun could penetrate the fly-specked window-panes, were just as empty.

“Where are all the colonists?” I asked.

The teacher on duty turned away from me haughtily, muttering through his teeth:

“An absolutely superfluous question.”

A round-faced boy of about fifteen followed us.

“Well, boy, how’s life with you?” I asked him.

He raised an intelligent little face to me, like all the little faces in Kuryazh, unwashed.

“Life?” he answered. “This isn’t life! But they say things will be getting better soon – is it true?”

“Who says so?”

“The chaps do. They say soon everything will be different, only they say that we shall be birched for the least little thing.”

“Birched? What for?”

“They beat thieves. There’s lots of thieves here.”

“Tell me, why don’t you ever wash your face?”

“How can we? There’s no water! The power plant’s out of order, and the water can’t be pumped up. And then there are no towels, and no soap ”

“Don’t they give you any?”

“They used to.... But everything got stolen. Everything gets stolen here. And now there’s nothing left in the storeroom....”

“How’s that?”

“One night the storeroom was broken into. The padlocks were broken, and everything stolen. The director said he would fire....”

“Well?”

“Well, he didn’t. ‘I’ll fire!’ he said, and the lads said: ‘Go ahead!’ But he didn’t fire, he only sent for the militia....”

“Well, and what did the militia do?”

“I don’t know.”

“And did you take anything from the storeroom?”

“No, I didn’t. I wanted to take a pair of trousers, but the older lads were there, and when I got there, all I got was two keys that were lying on the floor.”

“When did this happen?”

“In the winter.”

“I see.... And what’s your name?”

“Pyotr Malikov.”

We turned in the direction of the school, Yuryev listening to our conversation in silence. Khalabuda, lagging a little behind, was surrounded by Gorkyites, who have an astonishing flare for amusing personalities. Khalabuda, his red beard in the air, and his thick gnarled staff trailing behind him, was telling the lads about the crops.

We entered the school. Formerly it had been the monastery hostel rebuilt by the Children’s Aid Committee. It was the only building in the colony without any dormitories – a long corridor with long, narrow classrooms on either side. Why had the school been housed here? These rooms were no use for anything but dormitories.

One classroom, its walls covered with posters and feeble children’s drawings, was shown to us as the Pioneers’ Corner.

Apparently it was kept specially for inspection commissions, and for the sake of political appearances, for we had to wait at least half an hour before the key was found and the Pioneers’ Corner could be opened.

We sat on a bench to rest. My lads had sobered down. Vitka whispered cautiously from behind my shoulder:

“Anton Semyonovich! We must sleep in this room. And all of us together. Only don’t take their beds! They’ve got lice, you know, and how!”

Zhevely bent towards me across Vitka.

“Some of the lads here are all right. But how they hate their teachers! You won’t be able to make them work unless....”

“Unless what?”

“Unless you make a row.”

The order of our taking over had to be discussed. The director had come from town in a cab. Looking at his dull, colourless face, I thought: it’s no good giving up such a miserable creature to justice. Who could have appointed such a wretch to the sacred post of director?

The director assumed an aggressive manner, and tried to prove that the colony should be handed over as soon as possible, and that he would not be responsible for anything that might happen.

Yuryev asked:

“What d’you mean – you won’t be responsible?”

“Simply that the boys are in a dangerous mood. All manner of excesses may be expected. They have firearms, you know.”

“And why is their mood so dangerous? Isn’t it your doing, perhaps?”

“My doing? They can see for themselves which way the wind’s blowing. You think they don’t know? They know everything.”

“What, for instance?”

“They know what is in store for them,” said the director significantly, and turned still more significantly to the window, as if to show that our very appearance boded ill for the colonists.

Vitka whispered in my ear:

“What a beast! What a beast!”

“Be quiet, Vitka!” I said, and, turning to the director: “Whatever excesses are committed, it is you who will answer for them, whether they take place before or after the handing over of the colony. For that matter I ask nothing better myself than the quickest possible winding-up of all formalities.”

It was arranged that the transfer should take place on the morrow at two p.m. The whole staff – there were forty teachers alone – were declared discharged, and told to give up their apartments in the course of the next three days. An extension of five days was allowed for the transfer of personal belongings.

“And when is your supply manager coming?” asked the director.

“We haven’t got a supply manager. We will assign one of our pupils to receive inventory.”

“I’m not going to hand anything over to a pupil,” the director said, bristling up.

All this stupidity began to irritate me. And what had he to hand

over, anyhow?

"I'll tell you what!" I said. "I personally don't care whether an act is drawn up or not. All I care about is that by the end of three days not a single one of you should be left here."

"Aha, you're afraid we'll be in your way!"

"Exactly!"

Stung by the insult, the director leaped up and made hastily for the door. The teacher on duty followed him. Standing in the doorway the director fired a parthian shot:

"*We* won't interfere – others will do that."

The boys laughed, Dzhurinskaya sighed, Yuryev examined something on the window-sill to cover his embarrassment. Khala-buda alone, studying the posters on the wall, was imperturbable.

"It's time for us to go, I suppose," said Yuryev. "We'll come again tomorrow, won't we, Lyubov Savelyevna?" Dzhurinskaya looked mournfully at me.

"Don't come!" I begged her.

"Why not?"

"What's the point of your coming? You can't help me, and we should only waste time in talking."

Yuryev took leave a little resentfully. Lyubov Savelyevna said good-bye to the boys and me, pressing our hands warmly.

"You're not afraid? Really?"

They left for town.

We went into the courtyard. Apparently dinner was being served, for pots of borshch were being taken from the kitchen to the dormitories. Kostya Vetkovsky tugged at my sleeve, laughing: Mitka and Vitka had stopped two boys carrying a saucepan.

"Is that the way to do things?" Mitka was saying reproachfully. "What funny people! Don't you know any better? Are you savages?"

I did not at first realize what was happening. Kostya was lifting one of the Kuryazh bread-carriers by the sleeve. Under the other arm the boy was carrying a loaf, most of the crust of which was broken off. Kostya was shaking the abashed boy by his sleeve – the whole sleeve was dripping with borshch, and covered to the elbow with fragments of cabbage and beetroot.

"Look here!" Kostya was helpless with laughter, and the rest of us could not contain ourselves, either, for a piece of meat was clenched in the boy's fist.

“And the other one?”

“Just the same,” said Mitka, through his laughter. “They fish out pieces of meat from the borshch on the way. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you idiot! You might at least have rolled up your sleeve!”

“Oh, what a time we shall have here, Anton Semyonovich!” said Kostya.

My boys went off in various directions. The sweet May day leaned over the monastery hill, but the hill did not smile back. It seemed to me that the world was divided into two halves by a transparent, horizontal plane – the upper half was the sky, filled with an azure brilliance, fragrant air, the sun, the flight of birds, and the crests of calm, lofty cloudlets. Right against the sky as it descended towards the earth stood distant groups of huts, attractive copses, and the gay ribbon of a winding brook. The fields, black, green, and rust-coloured, were neatly laid out in the sunshine, as if in preparation for a holiday. Heaven knows whether this was good or bad, but it was nice to look at, simple and charming, and made one want to become a part of the clear May day. And beneath my feet was the befouled soil of Kuryazh, the old walls, saturated with the stench of sweat, incense and bugs, oozing the filth of waifdom. Oh, no, this wasn’t the world, it was something else, someone must have made it up!

No one came near me in my wanderings about the colony, but there seemed to be more colonists now. They were watching me from afar. I went into the dormitories. There were lots of them, I simply couldn’t make out any place that wasn’t a dormitory, in the numerous huts, houses, and annexes. There were a great many colonists in the dormitories now. They were sitting about on heaps of rags, or on the bare boards and iron strips of the bedsteads. There they sat, their hands folded between their ragged knees, digesting their dinner. Some were squashing lice; there were groups of card-players in corners; and other groups supping cold borshch from soot-begrimed saucepans. No one paid the slightest attention to me, I had no existence in this world.

In one of the dormitories I came upon a group of lads who to my astonishment were looking at the pictures in an old number of *Niva*. *

* Pre-revolutionary illustrated weekly. – *Tr*.

"Tell me, boys," I asked, "what have you done with your pillows?"

All faces were turned towards me. A boy with a pointed nose blandly proffered to my view a subtle, quizzical countenance.

"Pillows? You must be Comrade Makarenko, I suppose! Are you?"

"That's me."

"And you're walking about, looking round?"

"That's what I'm doing."

"Tomorrow at two o'clock..."

"Yes, tomorrow at two o'clock," I interrupted. "But you haven't answered my question – where are your pillows?"

"We'll tell you! Shall we?"

He nodded sweetly at me, and made a place for me on the patched, dirty mattress. I sat down.

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Vanya Zaichenko."

"Can you read and write?"

"Last year I was in the fourth class, and this winter – I suppose you know – there haven't been any lessons."

"Very well. So where are the pillows and sheets?"

Vanya, his grey eyes lighting up with humour, cast a rapid glance at his comrades, and seated himself on the table. His tattered, discoloured boot pressed against my knee. The others crowded together on the side of the bed. Among them I suddenly recognized the round-faced Malikov.

"So you're here, too!"

"M'h'm! This is our bunch. That's Timka Odaryuk, and that's Ilya Fonarenko."

Timka was red-haired and freckled, without lashes to his eyelids, or prejudice in his smile. Ilya was chubby-faced, pale, spotty, but his eyes were the real thing – hazel, with firmly modelled lids. Vanya Zaichenko regarded the almost empty dormitory across the heads of his comrades, and began to speak in a hushed, conspiratorial voice:

"You want to know where the pillows are, do you? I'll tell you straight out – there aren't any pillows, that's all!" He suddenly burst out into ringing laughter, flinging out his hands, with the fingers outstretched.

The others laughed too.

"We're all very jolly here," said Zaichenko, "because it's so funny. There aren't any pillows. There used to be, and then – puff, puff – there weren't any!"

Again he laughed.

"Carrots went to bed one night with his head on a pillow, and waked up next morning without any. Puff... and no pillow!"

Zaichenko looked at Odaryuk through the mirthful slits of his eyes. As he laughed he leaned backwards and pressed still harder with his leg against my knee.

"You'll say: if we want pillows, everything must be written down, won't you, Anton Semyonovich? Everything must be counted and written down, mustn't it? When it was issued, and who to, and all that. But here nobody even keeps a list of *people*, let alone pillows! Nobody! And nobody counts them. Nobody!"

"How can that be?"

"It's quite simple! Just like that! Do you think anybody has ever written down that Ilya Fonarenko lives here? Nobody has! Nobody even knows! And nobody knows me! And there's lots here like that – they live here, and then they go and live somewhere else, and then they come back here again. D'you think anybody sent Timka here? Nobody did! He just came and started living here."

"So he likes it here?"

"Oh, no! He came here two weeks ago. He ran away from the Bogodukhov Colony. He wanted to go to the Gorky Colony."

"Do they know about it at Bogodukhov?"

"Don't they just! Everybody knows. Of course they do!"

"Why was he the only one to come here, then?"

"Well, you know, tastes differ. Some fellows don't like strictness. They say it's awfully strict in your colony – a bugle blows, and you have to come running – up with you! – one, two, one, two! You see? And then – the work! Some of the boys don't want anything of that sort."

"They'll run away," volunteered Malikov.

"The Kuryazh boys?"

"M'h'm. They'll run away. As fast as they can. They say: You don't know Makarenko! Why should he get the rewards, and we do all the work?' They'll all run away."

"Where to?"

"There's plenty of places. Aren't there, just! You can go to any colony you like."

“And what about you?”

“Well, you see, this is our bunch,” Zaichenko hastened to say cheerfully. “Our bunch is four chaps. And d’you know what? We don’t steal. We don’t like it. And that’s that! Timka, now, oh well, even he wouldn’t take anything for himself, only for the bunch...”

Timka hushed good-humouredly from the bed, and tried to look at me through modestly drooping eyelids.

“Well, good-bye, bunch!” I said. “We’ll get on all right!”

Smiling, all replied: “Good-bye!”

I proceeded on my way. So I had four on my side already! But there were another two hundred and seventy-six, perhaps more. No doubt Zaichenko was right – there were plenty of people here neither counted nor registered. I suddenly felt appalled by this terrible, uncounted number. How could I have been so fool-hardy as to plunge into this utterly disastrous affair? How could I have risked not merely my own success, but the life of a whole collective? So long as the number 280 was nothing but three figures on a sheet of paper, my strength had seemed unconquerable, but today, when these two hundred and eighty were disposed in a filthy encampment around my infinitesimal boys’ detachment, I began to feel a sinking sensation in the pit of my stomach, and actually noted a disagreeable and alarming weakness in my knees.

Three persons were approaching me from the middle of the yard. They seemed to be about seventeen years old, their heads were actually neatly trimmed, and they had decent boots on. One of them, who was red-haired, was wearing a fairly new brown jacket, beneath which, however, a crumpled, food-stained shirt was visible; another was in a leather coat, and the third wore a clean white shirt. The owner of the brown jacket had his hands in his trouser pockets, held his head on one side, and suddenly whistled right in my face a jaunty Odessa street song, exposing a row of fine white teeth. I observed that he had large dull eyes, and reddish shaggy eyebrows. The other two stood beside him, their arms round each other’s shoulders, smoking, and ever and anon shifting their cigarettes with a movement of the tongue from one side of their mouth to the other. A few more Kuryazh figures were approaching our group.

The red-haired youth narrowed one eye, and said loudly:

“So you’re Makarenko, eh?”

I halted in front of him, and replied calmly, making an enormous effort to prevent my face from expressing anything whatsoever.

"That's my name. And what's yours?"

The red-haired individual whistled again without replying, gazing steadily at me from his narrowed eye, and balanced himself on one foot. Suddenly, turning on his heel, raising his shoulders, and continuing to whistle, he walked away, throwing his legs wide apart, and fumbling in the depths of his pockets.

His mates followed him, still with their arms round one another's shoulders, and chanting deafeningly:

*A lad, a lad, a laddie –
He had a jolly time...*

The group which had formed around me continued to survey me, while I overheard the hushed remark:

"The new director," and the equally hushed reply:

"What's the ruddy difference?"

"Where d'you mean to begin, Comrade Makarenko?"

I looked round – a black-eyed young woman was smiling at me. It was strange to see a snow-white blouse and severe black tie in this place.

"My name's Gulyaeva."

I had heard of her. She was the instructress in the dressmaking shop, the only Party member in Kuryazh. It was a pleasure to look at her. She was beginning to put on flesh, but she still had a slender waist and shining black curls, and there was about her an aroma of unexpended spiritual forces.

"Let's begin together," I replied cheerfully.

"Oh, no, I'd be no good! I don't know how!"

"I'll teach you."

"All right, then! I came to invite you to the girls, you haven't been to us, yet. They're expecting you. They're simply longing to see you! I'm a bit proud of them – the girls here have been under my influence, there are even three Komsomols among them. Come on!"

We walked towards the two-storey central building.

"You did very well," said Gulyaeva, "in demanding the discharge of the whole staff. Send them packing, every one of them, don't allow any exceptions! And send me away, too."

"Oh, no, we've already arranged about you! And I'm counting on your help."

"Think it over – you may regret it!"

The girls' dormitory was a very big one, containing sixty beds. I was amazed – there was a blanket, old and worn, it is true, on each bed, and under each blanket there were sheets. They even had pillows!

The girls really were awaiting us. They were clad in worn print frocks, almost all of them patched. The oldest of them was fifteen or so.

“How d’you do, girls!” I said.

“Well, I’ve brought Anton Semyonovich to you,” said Gulyaeva. “You wanted to see him.”

The girls whispered a greeting, moving quietly towards us, smoothing out the blankets as they passed the beds. For some reason I began to feel very sorry for these little girls, and I wished I could procure for them some little pleasure, however trifling. They seated themselves on their beds around us, and looked timidly at me. I couldn’t make out why it was that I felt so sorry for them. Could it have been because they were so pale, with such bloodless lips, and furtive glances, or was it because they wore patched dresses? The thought crossed my mind – girls mustn’t be allowed to wear such rags, it might mark them for life – but surely it couldn’t have been only for that I pitied them so!

“Tell me how you’re getting on, girls,” I said.

The girls said not a word, but continued to gaze at me, smiling with their lips alone. Suddenly I realized – they only know how to smile with their lips. They don’t know what a real smile is, these girls! I let my gaze travel over their faces, and come to rest on the face of Gulyaeva.

“I’m a person of experience, you know,” I said, “but there’s something here I don’t understand.”

Gulyaeva raised her brows:

“And what is that?”

Suddenly a little girl seated right opposite me, a dark little girl in a pink skirt so short that her knees showed, said, with an unblinking stare:

“Come quick with your Gorkyites, it’s very dangerous for us, living here.”

And suddenly I understood what was wrong: there was fear, real, unmistakable fear on the face of this little dark girl, in her fixed gaze, in the involuntary twitchings of her lips.

“They are terrorized!” I said to Gulyaeva.

“They have a hard life, Anton Semyonovich, they have a very hard life.”

Gulyaeva’s eyelids grew pink, and she turned quickly towards the window.

“What are you afraid of?” I asked the girls insistently. “Tell me!”

At first timidly, pushing and interrupting each other, and then more boldly and in appalling detail, the girls told me about their life.

They felt comparatively safe only in the dormitory. They were afraid to go into the yard, because the boys persecuted them, pinching them, pestering them with indecent language, peeping into the toilet, and opening the door when they were there. The girls were often hungry, because no food was left for them in the dining room. The boys seized the food, and bore it off to their dormitories. It was forbidden to take food to the dormitories, and the kitchen staff did not allow this, but the boys ignored the kitchen staff, and carried off the saucepans and the bread, and the girls were unable to do this. They would go to the dining room and wait, and then they would be told the boys had taken everything, and there was nothing to eat – sometimes they would be given a little bread. And it was dangerous to stay in the dining room, for the boys would go in and beat them, calling them prostitutes and still worse names, and trying to teach them all sorts of bad words. In addition to this the boys would demand all sorts of things to sell, and when the girls would not give them, would run into the dormitory, seize a blanket or a pillow, and take them to sell in the town. The girls only dared to wash their clothes in the night, but now it had become dangerous even in the night, the boys keeping guard in the laundry, and doing things that could not be related. Valya Gorodkova and Manya Vasilenko had gone to do some washing, and when they had come back they had cried all night, and the next morning they had run away from the colony nobody knew where. And one girl had complained to the director, and the next day when she had gone to the toilet they had caught her, and smeared her face with... the stuff in the toilet. Everybody was saying it was going to be different now, but some of the boys said nothing would come of it, because there were very few Gorkyites, and they’d all be driven away, anyhow.

Gulyaeva listened to the girls without taking her eyes off my face. I smiled, not so much at her, as at the tears she had just shed.

When the girls had finished their melancholy narrative, one of them, whose name was Smena, asked me solemnly:

“Tell us, are such things allowed in a Soviet country?”

“What you have told me,” I replied, “is a great disgrace, and such a disgrace should not and will not be allowed under the Soviet government. In a few days everything will be changed here. You’ll have a happy life, nobody will do you any harm, and we’ll throw away these dresses.”

“In a few days?” a flaxen-haired girl, seated on a window-sill, said thoughtfully.

“In precisely ten days,” I told her.

I wandered about the colony till the approach of dark, beset by the most dismal reflections.

The ancient circular space, shut in by walls three hundred years old and several feet thick, with the clumsy, peeling church in the middle, every square metre of the befouled earth, bristled with pedagogical problems, ubiquitous as weeds. In the decrepit stable, up to its eaves in dung, in the cowshed, which was an almshouse for about a dozen spinsters of the bovine tribe, all over the farmyard, among the shattered railings of a long-demolished orchard, over the entire territory surrounding me, protruded the dry stalks of “social education.” And in the dormitories of the colonists, the empty apartments of the staff, in the so-called clubs, in the kitchen and in the dining room heavy, poisonous fruits were swaying from these stalks, fruits which I would have to swallow in the course of the next few days.

My reflections were interspersed with rage. I began to recognize in myself the fury of the year 1920. Suddenly the seductive demon of unrestrained hatred was behind me again. I longed to seize somebody or other by the coat collar now, this very instant, without moving from the spot, to rub his nose in the malodorous heaps and puddles, to demand immediate action – not pedagogy, or social education theory, not revolutionary duty, or communist fervour, no, nothing but ordinary common sense, ordinary, despised, philistine honesty! Rage destroyed my fear of coming events, my fear of failure. My momentary fit of uncertainty had been radically cured by the promise I had given the girls. This score or so of frightened, hushed, pale girls, whom I had so recklessly guaranteed a human existence in ten days, had now become for me the representatives of my own conscience.

It gradually became quite dark. There was no light in the colony. Grim, prosaic dusk set in on the monastery walls, and encroached upon the church. Everywhere waifs came crawling out from corners and crevices, grabbing at some sort of a supper, and beginning to settle down for the night. There was no laughter, no singing, no cheerful talk. Every now and then a muffled grumble would make itself heard, or the sounds of lazy, evidently habitual, quarreling. Two drunken individuals, swearing monotonously, were trying to get on to a porch leading to a dormitory, but lacking steps. From the shadows Kostya Vetkovsky and Volokhov regarded them with silent contempt.

3

THE DAILY ROUND

The next day at two o'clock the director of Kuryazh condescended to sign the deed of transfer, including the discharging of the whole staff, got into a horse cab, and took his departure. Gazing after his disappearing head I envied this man his radiant success – he was as free as a bird, nobody had so much as chucked a stone after him.

I, who had no wings, must move heavily about amidst the earthly population of Kuryazh, with a sickening pain within me all the while.

Vanka Shelaputin was illumined by the May sunshine. He sparkled like a diamond, all shyness and smiles. The copper bell fixed to the wall of the church would have liked to sparkle beside him. But the bell was old and begrimed, and could only grimace dully in the sun. It was, moreover, cracked, and not all Vanka's efforts could get anything useful out of the bell. And Vanka wanted to ring the bell for a general meeting.

The disagreeable, burdensome, nagging sense of responsibility is in its very nature irrational. It fusses about every trifle, forces its way into the smallest crevice, and sits there trembling with rage and anxiety. While Shelaputin was ringing it fastened upon the bell: how could such jarring sounds be allowed to float over the colony?

Vitka Gorkovsky stood beside me earnestly studying my expression. Then he transferred his gaze to the belfry at the monastery gate, and the pupils of his eyes darkened and widened, until a round dozen of little imps seemed to be peeping out of them. Vitka laughed noiselessly, throwing back his head, flushed slightly, and said huskily:

"We'll organize that, we will!"

He sped to the belfry, holding a flying meeting with Volokhov en route. Vanya, who had twice forced the old bell to emit hoarse coughs, was exclaiming, laughing:

"Don't they understand? I keep ringing, ringing, and they take no notice!"

The club was housed in the old church. It had high windows with gratings in front of them, and two calorific stoves. There was a rickety little table on the rotting platform in the semicircular altar space. The Chinese saying that it is better to sit than to stand was

ignored in Kuryazh. There was nothing to sit on in the club. Anyhow, the Kuryazhites had no intention of sitting down. A matted head would occasionally peep in, and as quickly disappear; groups of threes and fours roved the yard pining for dinner, which, owing to the transitional period, would be late today. But these are mere plebeians – the moving spirits of Kuryazh civilization are somewhere under cover.

There are no teachers in sight. I know now what is wrong. We had not slept very well on the hard tables in the Pioneers' Room, and the boys had entertained me with fascinating stories about Kuryazh life.

The forty teachers had forty rooms in the colony. Eighteen months previously they had triumphantly filled these rooms with objects of culture, crochet tablecloths, and ottomans in the best provincial style. But they had other valuables of a more portable nature, and better suited to transference from one owner to another, and these valuables soon began to come into the possession of the Kuryazh colonists in the simplest manner possible – a procedure known from time immemorial under the name of burglary. This classical form of acquisition was so widely employed in Kuryazh that the teachers hastened one after another to carry off the surviving objects of culture to town, leaving only furnishings of the most modest kind in their rooms, if indeed a copy of *Izvestia* spread on the floor and affording the pedagogues a resting place during their time on duty can be described as furnishings.

But since the Kuryazh teachers had learned to tremble for their lives and for the integrity of their persons no less than for their property, the forty teachers' rooms had acquired, in a very short space of time, the nature of casemates in time of war, within the walls of which the teaching staff honourably passed their hours on duty. Never before or since have I seen such powerful defensive adjustments as those affixed to windows, doors, and other outlets in the rooms of the Kuryazh teachers. The frames of doors and windows were festooned with huge hooks, thick iron bolts, metal bars, and padlocks of enormous weight.

From the moment of the arrival of the Advance Mixed I never saw a teacher. Their discharge was thus in the nature of a symbolic act; I even thought of their apartments as abstract conventions, for only empty vodka bottles and bugs remained to prove that human beings had ever lived in these apartments.

A person of indefinite appearance and age, named Lozhkin, did, it is true, cross my line of vision. He made an effort to demonstrate to me his pedagogical powers, and to remain in the Gorky Colony, “in order under your guidance to lead youth further along the path to progress.” He hovered around me for half an hour, chattering about various pedagogical subtleties.

“Chaos! Simply chaos! You can ring and ring, but they won’t come. And why won’t they? A pedagogical approach is required, that’s what I always say. It’s quite true what is said – conditioned behaviour is required, and how can there be conditioned behaviour if a boy (excuse me!) steals and nobody prevents him from stealing? I have the right approach to them, and they always come to me, they respect me, and yet.... I was two days at my mother-in-law’s, she was ill, and what d’you think? – they took the glass out of my window, and stole absolutely everything. They left me as naked as a newborn babe, with nothing but the coat on my back. And why, you may ask? All right – steal from a person who isn’t kind to you, but why steal from one who’s always been kind to you? A pedagogical approach is required, that’s what I always say. I call the lads to me, to have a talk with them, every now and then, you know. I get their interest, and that’s what’s wanted. I set them a problem. There are seven kopeks more in one pocket than in the other, and altogether there are twenty-three kopeks, how many kopeks are there in each pocket? Ingenious, don’t you think?”

Lozhkin cocked his eye at me roguishly.

“Well?” I said, trying to be polite.

“No, no, you tell me – how many?”

“How many what?”

“Tell me how many there were in each pocket.”

“You want me to tell you?”

“Yes – tell me how many were there in each pocket.”

“Listen to me, Comrade Lozhkin,” I said indignantly. “Have you ever been to school?”

“Of course I have. But I got most of my learning by self-education. My life has been one long self-education, and of course I never got into one of those pedagogical technicums or institutes. And I tell you – there were some people here with university education, one of them even graduated from shorthand courses, and another, he was a lawyer, and just you try and set them a problem like this one. Or this, for instance: two brothers inherited a fortune....”

"Was it the stenographer who wrote that on the wall?"

"It was him.... He kept wanting to form a shorthand circle, but after they robbed him, he said: 'I will not work amidst such barbarism,' and didn't organize any circle, but only carried out preliminary educational work."

There was a piece of cardboard hanging by the stove in the club, bearing the inscription:

STENOGRAPHY IS THE PATH TO SOCIALISM

Lozhkin went on chattering for a long time, and then seemed to vanish into thin air, and all I remember of him is that Volokhov said through his teeth by way of parting words:

"Damned bore!"

In the club we had to face the crushing and disagreeable fact that the Kuryazhites did not intend to come to the meeting. Volokhov looked dolefully at the high bare walls of the clubroom. Kudlaty, livid with rage, his jaw set, was whispering something to himself. Mitka was smiling scornfully, Misha Ovcharenko, who alone was calm and good-humoured, proceeded to develop an argument started by him long before.

"The great thing is to plough... and to sow. Fancy, already May, and the horses eating their heads off, just standing doing nothing!"

"And there's nobody in the dormitories," said Volokhov. "They've all gone to town."

And he began to swear roundly, speaking very distinctly, no whit embarrassed by my presence.

"Don't let's give them any dinner till they come," proposed Kudlaty.

"No," said I.

"No?" yelled Kudlaty. "And what are we doing here? The fields are covered with weeds, not even ploughed, what d'you call that? And they calmly eat their dinners. So lazy bums can do as they like, can they?"

Volokhov moistened his dry, angry lips, hunched his shoulders as if in a fit of shivering, and said:

"Anton Semyonovich, come to us, we must talk."

"And what about dinner?"

"Let them wait, confound them! Besides, they've gone to town."

In the Pioneers' Room, when everyone had seated themselves

on the benches, Volokhov held forth as follows:

“Is the land to be ploughed? And sown? And what the hell are we to sow, when they haven’t got a thing, not even potatoes? To hell with them, we’d sow ourselves, but there isn’t anything. And look what filth and stink everywhere. We shan’t know how to look our chaps in the face when they come – there’s nowhere for a decent person to put his foot down! And dormitories, mattresses, beds, pillows? And clothes? They all go barefoot, and where are their underclothes? And there are no dishes, no spoons, no anything! What shall we begin on? We’ve got to begin on something!”

The lads looked at me with eager expectation, as if they felt I was bound to know what to begin on.

It was not so much the Kuryazh boys who worried me, as innumerable details of a purely material nature, which mounted up to a complex and tangled jumble in which the three hundred Kuryazhites might become hopelessly lost sight of.

Under the agreement with the Children’s Aid Committee I was to receive the sum of twenty thousand rubles for getting Kuryazh into order, but it had already become obvious that this sum was a mere drop in the ocean in comparison with what was required. My boys had not exaggerated in drawing up their list of requirements. But the utter destitution of Kuryazh only really came to light when Kudlaty began to take over the property. The director need not have worried as to the unworthiness of the signatures to the deed of transfer. The director had a front of brass, and the deed was extremely brief. There were a few lathes in the workshops, and a few nonde-script nags in the stables, and that was all – no tools, no materials, no agricultural inventory. Half a dozen pigs were grunting in the trampled, liquid dung of the wretched pigsty. When the boys saw them they could not restrain their laughter, so little did these animals, with their heavy heads, spindly legs and tiny tails, resemble our Englishers. Kudlaty extricated a plough from some remote corner of the yard, and rejoiced over it as if it had been a long-lost brother. And a harrow was discovered among a heap of old bricks. All that could be found in the school were a few legs from tables and chairs, and the remains of blackboards – a perfectly natural phenomenon, since the winter season does come to an end every year, and any householder may find himself in the spring with some slight reserves of firewood on his hands.

Everything had to be bought, made, rebuilt. The very first act

would have to be the putting up of toilets. Toilets are never mentioned in pedagogical handbooks, and no doubt this was the reason why that vital institution had been so airily neglected in Kuryazh. The Kuryazh monastery was built on a hill, falling sharply downwards in all directions. The southern slope alone was not walled in, and from its vantage could be seen, across the marshy monastery pond, the thatched roofs of the village of Podvorky. The view was a nice Ukrainian view in all respects, capable of inspiring a poet with any amount of appropriate rhymes. And in return for this beautiful view the Kuryazhites had the base ingratitude to present the dwellers of Podvorky with nothing but rows of figures squatting over the edge of the slope, busy converting into their final stage the products purchased with the social-educational millions.

My boys suffered greatly in respect to the problem just touched upon. Misha Ovcharenko, treating the subject with the utmost gravity and sincerity, complained:

“Now, really! What *are* we to do? Go to Kharkov, or what? And how are we to get there?”

And so by the end of our conference two carpenters from Podvorky were standing in the doorway of the Pioneers’ Room, the older of which, a soldierly-looking individual in a khaki cap, eagerly supported my intentions.

“Of course! It’s a disgrace! People have to eat, so they must.... And boards we can get from the Ryzhov depot. Don’t you worry! Everybody here knows me. Just give me the money agreed on and we’ll put you up a fine place – even the monks didn’t have such a good one! Of course if you want it done cheap you can have plywood or thin boarding, and we can make a light shack, but if you want something better I would advise one-and-a-half or two-inch boards – it’ll be healthier, you know – not so draughty, and it’ll be sheltered in the winter, and the heat won’t crack it in the summer.”

It seemed to me that never before had I been so touched as I was by this splendid person, who built with a view to winter and summer, wind and shelter. His name was Borovoy. I gave him a wad of notes, and rejoiced a second time on hearing his lusty instructions to the rosy chubby lad who was his assistant.

“I’m going for wood, Vanya, and you can begin work. Run and get your spade, and bring mine, too. We might as well make a start. One of them will have to come with us and show us where they want it, and how they want it.” Kirghizov and Kudlaty went off,

smiling, to show Vanya the “where and how,” while Borovoy swaddled the money in a mysterious strip of cloth and once more proffered me his moral support.

“We’ll do it, Comrade Director! Trust me!”

I did trust him. I felt better about everything. I had done with the unwieldy, moribund transitional stage, and could begin upon pedagogical work in Kuryazh.

The second problem satisfactorily solved by us that evening – that of spoons and plates – was also connected with everyday life. In the domed refectory, where grave-eyed saints and madonnas, their fingers raised in benediction, peered through layers of white-wash, were tables and benches, but neither spoons nor plates. The Kuryazhites had never possessed any. After half an hour’s bustling about, and diplomatic representations in the stable, Volokhov got Evgenyev on to an old cart and sent him into town to purchase four hundred plates, and as many wooden spoons.

At the gate Evgenyev’s cart found itself in the midst of a joyous, shouting, hugging crowd. Our lads, feeling instinctively the blowing of a familiar breeze rushed for the gate. I ran out too, and fell immediately into the clutches of Karabanov, who had recently become fond of demonstrating his strength at the expense of my chest.

It was the seventh mixed detachment (our *Rabfak* students), under the command of Zadorov, arriving in full force, and from that moment the problem of the mysteriously menacing crowd of Kuryazhites shrank to the dimensions of an infinitesimal task which Lozhkin himself would have thought nothing of.

It was a great pleasure, this of meeting all our *Rabfak* students at such a moment of difficulty and confusion. They were all there – the solid heavy Burun, Semyon Karabanov, on whose passionate temperament traces of learning were beginning to show in such delightful relief, Anton Bratchenko, whose broad nature had managed to confine itself within the narrow framework of veterinary science, Matvei Belukhin, serenely joyful, Osadchy, grave, steel-strong, Vershnev, intellectual and truth-seeker, Marusya Levchenko, black-eyed and intelligent, Nastya Nochevnaya, energetic as ever, Georgievsky, “the son of the Irkutsk governor,” Schneider, Krainik, Golos, and, last but not least, my favourite and “god-child,” Alexander Zadorov, the commander of the Seventh Mixed. The older members of the seventh mixed detachment were soon to graduate from the

Rabfak, and we had not the slightest doubt that in the VUZ*, too, they would do well. We, however, regarded them more in the light of colonists, than students, and just now we had no time to go into the list of their scholastic triumphs. After the first greetings had subsided we returned to the Pioneers' Room, Karabanov went to the table, settled himself comfortably in his chair, and said:

"We understand, Anton Semyonovich – it's as clear as daylight. It's do or die! And so we have come."

We told the *Rabfak* students about this our first day. They knitted their brows, looked round anxiously, scraped their chairs against the floor. Zadorov, narrowing his eyes, looked thoughtfully out of the window.

"No, no! This can't be done by force. There are too many of them."

Burun shrugged his vast shoulders, and smiled.

"Not so many, Sasha, really! That's not the point! It's not that there are so many of them, but – confound it – there doesn't seem to be anything to take hold of. A lot of them, you say, but where are they? Where are they? Who is there to get hold of? We've got to get them in a bunch. And how are you going to set about it?" Gulyaeva came in, listened to our talk, countered Karabanov's suspicious glance with a smile, and said:

"You'll never get them all together! Never!"

"Oh, won't we?" said Semyon, getting angry. "What d'you mean – 'never'? We'll get them together. If not the whole two hundred and eighty, then *one* hundred and eighty will come. And then we'll see. What's the good of sitting here?"

A plan of action was drawn up. We would give them dinner. The Kuryazhites, now really hungry, were all in the dormitories, waiting for their dinner. Let them eat, confound them, and while they're eating all of us must go about the dormitories making propaganda. They must be told, the swine – come to the meeting – are you, or are you not human beings? Come! It's in your own interests, you beasts; a new life is beginning for you, and you scuttle away like cockroaches! And if anybody starts getting tough, you don't have to get excited. Just say – anyone can act tough sitting next to a pot of borshch – you come to the meeting, and tell us what you want.... That's all. After dinner we'll ring the bell for the meeting.

* Higher Educational Establishment. – *Tr.*

A score or so of the Kuryazhites were sitting about the kitchen door waiting for dinner to be served. Mishka Ovcharenko was standing in the doorway giving the red-haired youth who had asked me my name yesterday, a lesson in ethics:

“Anyone who doesn’t work has no right to any food, and you try and tell me he has. You have no right to anything. D’you get that, old man? You ought to understand that perfectly if you’ve got a head on your shoulders. I can give you something, but that’ll be of my own good will, my lad! Because you haven’t earned anything, you understand, pal! Everybody has got to work, and you, old man, you’re just a drone, and you’ve got nothing coming to you! I can give you alms, that’s all.”

The red-haired youth was looking at Misha with the eye of an angry wild beast. The other eye saw nothing, indeed great changes had come over the countenance of the red-haired youth since the day before. Certain details of that countenance had become considerably enlarged, and acquired a bluish tint, and his upper lip and right cheek were smeared with blood. All this entitled me to put a very serious question to Misha Ovcharenko:

“What’s the meaning of this? Who’s been decorating his face?”

Misha smiled gravely, but seemed to question the correctness of the manner in which the inquiry was made.

“Why d’you ask *me*, Anton Semyonovich? It’s not my mug, it belongs to Khovrakh. I stick to my business, and I am ready to give you, as our director, a detailed report on it. Volokhov said: ‘stand at the door, and let there be no going into the kitchen!’ I stood at the door, and that’s what I’m doing now. Did I go after him, did I follow him to the dormitory, did I nag at him? Let Khovrakh tell you himself! They all come here without any business – perhaps he ran against something?”

Khovrakh who had suddenly begun whimpering, nodded towards Misha, and expounded his own point of view.

“All right! You think you have a right to starve us, and knock us about, do you? You don’t know me, do you? Very well, you’ll know me in time!”

At that time the status of the aggressor had not as yet been defined, and I had to think things over. Cases similarly obscure are known to history, and have always been settled with the greatest difficulty.

I cautiously adopted a middle course.

“What right had you to beat him up?”

Still smiling, Misha extended a Finnish knife towards me.

“Look here – it’s a ‘finka,’ Where d’you think I got it? Perhaps you think I stole it from Khovrakh? There was a lot of jawing. Volokhov said nobody’s to go into the kitchen. I never moved from this spot, and he came at me with his ‘finka,’ and said: ‘Let me in!’ Of course, I didn’t let him in, Anton Semyonovich, and he said again: ‘Let me in!’ and tried to push past me. So I gave him a shove. Just a nice little shove, and he, the fool, starts waving his ‘finka’ about. He doesn’t know what discipline means. Just like a block...”

“Still, you did beat him up! Look – he’s all over blood! Is that the work of your fists?”

Misha looked down at his fists in some confusion.

“Mine, of course, whose else could they be? But I never moved from the spot. Volokhov told me to stay here, and I did. And of course Khovrakh, the idiot, started waving his hands about.”

“And you didn’t?”

“Nobody forbade me to wave my hands, did they? So long as I stay at my post, I suppose I can shift my feet, or, supposing one of my hands is on the wrong side, can’t I change it over? And if he ran against it – is it my fault? You ought to be careful where you go, Khovrakh! Supposing a train’s coming. You can see there’s a train coming, so step aside, and wait. And if you stand in the tracks, with your ‘finka’ out, of course the train can’t move out of its way, and there’ll be nothing left of you but a puddle. Or supposing a machine’s working, you must be careful how you go near it – you’re not a baby!”

Misha explained all this to Khovrakh in a good-humoured way, in a voice which was even affectionate, gesticulating in the most convincing manner with his right hand, to show how the train might come, and where Khovrakh ought to stand when it did. Khovrakh listened to him with silent attention, the blood on his cheeks congealing in the rays of the May sun. A group of our *Rabfak* students was listening gravely to the speech of Misha Ovcharenko, recognizing the difficulty of Misha’s position, and the simple wisdom of his arguments.

While we were talking, several Kuryazhites came up. I could read in their faces that they had been charmed by Misha’s logic, rendered in their eyes the more convincing in that it came from a victor. I remarked with satisfaction certain signs that I was able to

read in the visages of my new pupils. I was particularly interested in the faintly discernible gleams of malicious pleasure which, like letters in a blurred telegram, began to shine through the layers of dirt and soup stains. On one countenance only – that of Vanya Zaichenko – was the joyous elation written in letters of flame, as in festive slogans. Vanya, standing in front of his “bunch,” his hands thrust into his trouser belt, his bare feet far apart, was looking into the face of Khovrakh with keen, laughing attention. Suddenly he stamped his foot, his slender, boyish torso flung backwards, and chanted rather than said:

“Khovrakh! So you don’t like it when somebody gives you a sock in the jaw! You don’t like it, do you?”

“You shut up, brat!” said Khovrakh glumly, with no trace of feeling in his voice.

“Ha! He doesn’t like it!” cried Vanya, pointing at Khovrakh. “They socked him in the jaw, that’s all!” Khovrakh made a rush at Zaichenko, but Karabanov just laid his hand on Khovrakh’s shoulder, and Khovrakh’s shoulder and his whole town-clad form, sagged. Vanya, by the way, had not shown the slightest fear, only moving a little nearer to Misha Ovcharenko. Khovrakh looked over his shoulder at Semyon, made a frightful grimace, and tore himself loose. Semyon smiled kindly. Khovrakh’s unpleasant light eyes revolved in their sockets, and dwelled upon Vanya’s eyes, which were eager and gay, as always. Khovrakh was obviously baffled. Failure and isolation, the scarcely dried blood on his cheek, Misha’s recent utterance and Karabanov’s smile demanded a certain time for reflection and it was hard for him to ignore the hateful, if contemptible Vanya, and to tone down his habitual insolent, annihilating glare. But Vanya met this glare with an omnipotent air of sarcasm.

“Aren’t you terrible! I’m sure I shan’t be able to sleep tonight! I’m terrified, I am! I am!”

Both Gorkyites and Kuryazhites laughed loudly.

“You swine!” hissed Khovrakh, and drew back for the true hoodlums’ spring.

“Khovrakh!” I said.

“Well, what?” he asked, over his shoulder.

“Come here!”

He seemed in no hurry to obey my order, but kept fumbling as usual in his pockets, his eyes fixed on my boots. I let a steely note

creep into my voice.

“Come nearer, I tell you!”

All around was silence, the only sound a scared: “Wow!” from Petya Malikov.

Khovrakh, his underlip protruding, moved towards me, endeavouring to intimidate me with his steady gaze. When he got within two paces he halted, his leg swinging, as he had done yesterday.

“Attention!” I shouted.

“Attention – what does that mean?” muttered Khovrakh, but he straightened up, and took his hands out of his pockets, placing, however, the right one provocatively on his hip, the fingers extended.

Karabanov removed this hand from the hip.

“Listen, child, when you’re ordered to stand at attention, you don’t dance the hopak. Keep your head up!”

Khovrakh frowned, but I could see he was shaping right.

“You’re a Gorkyite now,” I told him. “You must learn to respect your comrades. You won’t bully the little ones any more, will you?”

Khovrakh blinked gravely, and indicated a smile with the merest flicker of his lower lip. There had been more threat than tenderness in my question, and I could see that Khovrakh had made a note of this fact. His reply was brief.

“All right!”

“Not all right, but ‘very good,’ confound you!” rang out Belukhin’s powerful tenor.

Without the slightest ceremony Matvei swung Khovrakh round by the shoulders, smote him simultaneously on each drooping hand, one of which he deftly lifted in a salute, at the same time dropping out, word by word:

“Very good – no bullying the little ones! Now *you* say it!”

Khovrakh’s mouth sagged.

“What are you jumping on me for, lads? What have I done, after all? I haven’t done anything special. It was him that socked me in the jaw – that it was! I didn’t do anything.”

The Kuryazhites moved nearer, fascinated. Karabanov put his arm round Khovrakh’s shoulders, and said warmly:

“Pal! You’re a clever chap, old man! Misha’s on duty, he’s protecting the common interest, not his own. Come with me to the copse, and I’ll explain.”

They set off for the copse accompanied by a swarm of amateurs of ethical problems.

Volokhov gave the order for dinner to be served. The cook, his face adorned with a long moustache, and his head crowned by a white cap, had long been bobbing up and down behind Misha; he now gave Volokhov a friendly nod, and disappeared. Vanya Zaichenko, plucking violently at the sleeves of his “bunch,” said in an urgent whisper:

“Look, he’s put on his white cap! What d’you suppose that means, Timka? What do you make of it?”

Timka, flushing, lowered his eyes, and said:

“It’s his own cap, I knew he had one.”

A general meeting was held at five o’clock. Whether owing to the propaganda of the *Rabfak* students, or to some other cause, the Kuryazhites gathered in fairly considerable numbers in the club. And when, Volokhov having posted Misha Ovcharenko in the doorway, Osadchy and Shelaputin began to take down the names of those present, thus embarking upon that indispensable pedagogical process, the listing of subjects, latecomers pushed their way in, inquiring anxiously:

“Will the ones not written down get supper?”

The body of the former church could scarcely contain this mass of raw humanity.

From the altar steps I looked waifdom in the face, struck by its volume and appalling blankness. In very few places interesting, animated faces were conspicuous among the crowd, only occasionally a human word, a child’s frank laugh, might be heard. The girls huddled together in terrified silence next to the stove at the back of the hall. Apathetic, primitive faces with gaping mouths, blurred eyes, flabby muscles, made round, lifeless patches in the dingy ocean of jackets, tousled heads and mouldy smells.

I gave them a brief account of the Gorky Colony, its life and work, describing the task we had set ourselves – cleanliness, work, study, a new life, new human happiness. They were living in a happy country, where there were no landowners and capitalists, where a human being could grow up in freedom, and develop in joyful labour. I soon grew tired, missing the support of an attentive and responsive audience. It was like addressing so many wardrobes, barrels, and boxes. I announced that the colonists would have to organize in detachments, twenty to a detachment, and asked my

audience to choose fourteen persons as commanders. They remained silent. I asked them to put questions, and still they remained silent. Kudlaty came to the altar step, and said:

“Look here, you ought to be ashamed of yourselves! You gobble up bread and potatoes and borshch, and who is bound to provide you with all that? Who is bound to? Supposing I don’t give you dinner tomorrow! What then?”

To this question also no answer was forthcoming.

Kudlaty grew angry.

“Then I propose that everyone is to work six hours from tomorrow. There’s sowing to be done, confound you! Do you mean to work?”

A single voice came from a far corner.

“We’ll work!”

The whole crowd turned leisurely heads in the direction of the voice, and again the dull countenances came into line.

I glanced at Zadorov, and in reply to my glance he laughed, putting his hand on my shoulder.

“Never mind, Anton Semyonovich, it’ll pass!”



Gorkyite Rabfak students. Left to right:
Golov, Zadorov, Georgievsky and Vershnev

“ALL’S WELL!”

Our endeavours to organize the Kuryazhites were carried late into the night. The *Rabfak* students went about the dormitories, taking down once again the names of the colonists, with a view to forming detachments. I, too, roved about the dormitories, taking Gorkovsky with me by way of a gauge. It was essential to try and pin down, if only roughly, any first signs of a collective, to discover traces of some sort of potential social adhesive. Gorkovsky would sniff about the dark dormitory, calling out:

“Come on, now! What bunch is in here?”

As often as not there was neither bunch nor any individual in the dormitories. Heaven knows where they had got to, these Kuryazhites! We inquired of bystanders as to the inhabitants of the dormitories, who palled up with whom, who were bad lots here, who were decent fellows, but the replies gave us little satisfaction. Most of the Kuryazhites did not know their neighbours, even by name; at the best they could only give us nicknames – Ear, Boot-sole, Chauffeur – or recollected outward characteristics:

“A pock-marked chap sleeps in this bed, and a boy from Valky in that one.”

We did find certain traces of social adhesive substance in some places, but what it had joined together was not what we were looking for.

By nightfall, however, I had achieved some idea of the nature of the Kuryazhites.

They were of course real waifs, but not exactly of the traditional sort. Somehow or other the waif has become identified in our literature, and in the minds of our intellectuals with the image of a kind of Byronic hero. The waif is supposed to be a philosopher and a wit, an anarchist and a destroyer, a hoodlum and the foe of all ethical systems whatsoever. Terrified and lachrymose pedagogues have added to this image an assortment of more or less garish feathers pulled out of the tails of sociology, reflexology, and the rest of our grand relatives. They firmly believed that the waifs were organized, that they had leaders and discipline, a regular strategy of thievish operations, and their own rules and regulations. They even honoured them with specific scientific terminology – “the spontaneously-arising collective,” and all that sort of thing.

This picturesque image of the waif was still further beautified in the pious works of the ignoramuses – both Russian and foreign. All waifs were dubbed thieves, drunkards, rakes, drug addicts, and syphilitics. Only to Peter the Great, in the whole history of the world, have so many mortal sins ever before been attributed. And no doubt all this made it easier for the slander-mongers of Western Europe to spread so many foolish and outrageous anecdotes about life in the Soviet Union.

In reality, the life of waifs and strays in the Soviet Union was not in the least like these anecdotes.

The theory of a permanent waif society, filling our streets with its ideology as well as with its appalling crimes and picturesque attire, must be resolutely discarded. The authors of the romantic stories about the Soviet anarchists of the gutter failed to note that, after the Civil War and famine, millions of children were kept alive in homes and colonies by the strenuous united efforts of the whole country. In the overwhelming majority of cases these children have long ago grown up and are working in Soviet factories and state institutions. How smoothly the pedagogical process worked in the bringing-up of these children is another matter.

It was largely owing to these same romantics that work in children's homes turned out so unsatisfactorily, resulting now and again in institutions of the Kuryazh type. And if boys (only boys are under consideration here) therefore frequently returned to the streets, it was by no means to live there permanently, or because they considered the streets their natural habitat. There never has been a specific "gutter ideology," and they only ran away in the hope of getting into some better colony or children's home. They haunted the thresholds of all manner of children's committees and commissions, but most of all they longed to get into places offering them a chance of taking part in our constructional work, while evading the blessings of pedagogical conditioning. But they did not often succeed in this. The pedagogical fraternity, stubborn and opinionated, was not going to let its prey slip so easily through its fingers, and could not, moreover, imagine a human life which had not gone through the grind of "social education." Truants were, therefore, usually forced to undergo all over again the pedagogical process in yet another colony, from which, of course, they could also run away. In the waiting period between one colony and another these youthful citizens of course spent their lives in the streets, and, having neither the leisure,

the skill, nor the office desks required for the consideration of ideological and ethical questions, they naturally enough solved such problems as nutrition without the aid of morals or principles. In other spheres also, the actions of the street-dwellers were none too closely correlated with formal principles of ethics – as a rule waifs are but little inclined to formalism. The waifs, not without certain conceptions of expediency, believed, in the depth of their hearts, that they were heading straight for the career of a metalworker or chauffeur, and that only two things were required for this – to keep alive as long as possible, even if this necessitated snatching ladies' handbags and gentlemen's brief-cases – and to get as near as they could to some garage or mechanized workshop.

Several efforts have been made in learned works to draw up a satisfactory system for the classification of human characteristics, and the greatest pains taken to allot an "amoral" and "defective" place for the waifs. Of all these classifications I consider the best was that drawn up for practical application by the Kharkov Dzerzhinsky Commune.

According to the working hypothesis of the commune, waifs were divided into three grades. One: those who took an active part in drawing up their own horoscopes, and shrank neither from trouble nor danger; those who, in the pursuit of a metalworker's career were ready to attach themselves to any part of a railway carriage, without, of course, laying any claims to the inside, being quite exceptional in their taste for the whirlwind of express trains, and in their immunity to the attractions of dining cars, sleeping accommodation, and service. Some people slandered these travellers by declaring that they haunted the railways in the pursuit of Crimean air, or the mineral waters of Sochi. This is not true. It was mainly the Dniepropetrovsk, Donetsk, and Zaporozhye giant factories, the Odessa and Nikolayev steamers, and the Kharkov and Moscow industrial works which fascinated them.

The second grade of waifs, while possessing many virtues, could not lay claim to such a combination of generous moral qualities as distinguished the first. These, too, were seekers, but, far from turning away in disgust from textile mills and leather works, they reconciled themselves to carpentry shops, or actually went in for paperboard making – and there were some who sank so low as to gather medicinal herbs.

The second grade also travelled, but preferably on the back

buffers of trams, and had no idea of the splendid station at Zhmerinka, or the strict regulations in Moscow.

The Dzerzhinsky communards always preferred getting citizens of the first grade into their commune. They therefore recruited their ranks chiefly by means of propaganda on express trains. The commune regarded the second grade as infinitely inferior.

But in Kuryazh it was not the first, nor even the second grade which predominated, but the third. Among street waifs, as among the learned, there were not many of the first grade, and only a few more of the second – the overwhelming majority belonged to the third grade. The members of this overwhelming majority neither ran away, nor sought anything, but in all simplicity submitted the tender petals of their childish souls to the organizing influence of “social education.”

In Kuryazh I struck a rich vein of the third grade. In their brief histories these children had been in two or three children’s homes or colonies, some in as many as eleven, but this was the result, not of their aspirations towards a better future, but of the creative aspirations of workers in the Department of Public Education, aspirations often so vague that even a trained eye would find it hard to define the borderlines dividing reorganization, amalgamation, parcellization, replenishment, curtailment, development, liquidation, reconstruction, expansion, typification, standardization, evacuation and re-evacuation.

And since I, too, had come to Kuryazh with reorganizing intentions, I was bound to be met with that indifference which is the sole protective attitude of every waif in the face of the pedagogical reshuffling of the cards practised by the Department of Public Education.

Stolid indifference, the inevitable product of a protracted educational process, to a certain extent demonstrated the vast might of pedagogics.

Most of the Kuryazhites were aged between thirteen and fifteen, but various signs of atavism seemed to be already imprinted upon their visages. The first thing that would strike a newcomer was the complete absence of the faintest social consciousness, despite the fact that they had grown up almost from birth under the banner of “social education.” A kind of primitive, vegetative spontaneity marked their every movement, but it was not the spontaneity of a child, responding artlessly to every phenomenon of life. They did not know what life was, their horizons being limited by lists of food

products, to which they were drawn by a drowsy, sullen reflex. The problem of their lives consisted in pushing their way through a crowd of wild beasts like themselves towards the soup cauldron. Sometimes it was solved with greater, sometimes with less success. The pendulum of their personal lives knew no other vacillations. The Kuryazhites only stole objects which they could lay their hands on without effort, or upon which the crowd fell instinctively. The will of these children had been crushed by the bullying and swearing of the senior boys, who had blossomed on the soil of "social education," "non-interference," and "self-discipline."

At the same time these children were by no means imbeciles, they were simply ordinary children placed by fate in the most absurd situation – deprived of the blessings of human development, and at the same time removed from the bracing influence of the mere struggle for existence by being given daily, if unpalatable nourishment.

Against this background were conspicuous certain groups of a different nature. The dormitory in which Khovrakh lived was evidently the headquarters of the seniors. My boys told me that there were fifteen of them, and that their ringleader was a certain Korotkov. I had not seen him as yet, for the Kuryazhites spent most of their time in town. Evgenyev, who had found old acquaintances among them, told me they were ordinary city thieves, and all they needed of the colony was a place to sleep. Vitya Gorkovsky did not agree with Evgenyev.

"Call them thieves? They're just hoodlums!"

Vitka said that Korotkov, Khovrakh, Perets, Churilo, Podnebesny and the rest, did most of their business in the colony itself. First they cleaned out the teachers' apartments, the workshops and the storerooms. There had even been something to steal from the other colonists, many of whom had had new boots issued to them for the First of May; and according to Gorkovsky these boots were the main object of plunder. In addition to this they stole in the village, and some of them even worked the highroad. The colony was situated on the Akhtyrka highroad.

Suddenly Vitka, narrowing his eyes, and laughing, said:

"And what d'you think they've been up to now, the swine? The younger ones are afraid of them, they simply tremble before them. And so they've become organizers, think of that! They call the little ones their 'pups.' Each of them has several 'pups.' In the morning

they say to them – ‘go where you like, but bring me this or that in the evening.’ Some of them steal – in trains or at the market, but most of them don’t know how to steal, they just beg. They stand in the street, at the bridge, and in Ryzhov. They say they get two or three rubles a day. Churilo’s ‘pups’ are the best – they bring in as much as five rubles. And they have their norms – three quarters to the boss, one quarter to the ‘pups.’ You mustn’t judge by there not being anything in the dormitories! They have suits, and money, but it’s all hidden away. There are any amount of dens in Podvorky where they can find fences. They spend all their evenings there.”

The second group contained boys like Zaichenko and Malikov. On a closer acquaintance with the colony it appeared that there were quite a few of them, about thirty. By some miracle they had managed to retain, despite the trials of life, their shining eyes, their delightful boyish aggressiveness, and the pristine analytical talents which enabled them to regard all manifestations of life with a true fighter’s zest. I am very fond of this section of humanity. I like it for its beauty and the nobility of its spiritual impulses, for its profound feeling of honour, I even like it for being composed exclusively of convinced bachelors and woman haters. At the approach of my advance detachment these lads raised their heads, inhaling the fresh streams of air with dilated nostrils, and rushed for the dormitories, the above-mentioned analytical talents coming into rapid action. They were still afraid of going over to my side openly, but their support was, for all that, a certainty.

Vitka and I stumbled accidentally upon the third group of social elements, and Vitka “pointed” like a setter scenting a hare. In a far corner of the yard there stood, propped against the wooden wall, a solitary annex with a carved wooden verandah. Vanya Zaichenko, pointing out this structure, said:

“The agronomists live there.”

“Agronomists? How many of them are there?”

“Fourteen.”

“Fourteen agronomists? Why so many?”

“They sowed rye, and now they live there.”

I remembered Khalabuda, and my misgivings were deepened.

“That’s just your name for them, I suppose!”

But Vanya looked very serious, and nodded still more emphatically towards the annex.

“No, they’re real agronomists, you see if they’re not! They

ploughed, and they sowed rye. And look – it's coming up! Look how tall it is!"

Vitka gazed at Zaichenko indignantly.

"Those chaps in blue shirts! Aren't they just colonists? Stop that nonsense."

"It isn't nonsense!" said Vanka shrilly. "It isn't! They're waiting for certificates. As soon as they get certificates they will go."

"All right, then, let's go and see your agronomists!"

There were two bedrooms in the annex. On the beds, which were covered with comparatively clean blankets, sat youths, in blue shirts, as Vanya had said, with well-groomed hair, and extremely virtuous expressions. Neatly stuck on to the walls were picture postcards, and pictures cut out of magazines, and there were little mirrors in wooden frames. From the window-sills waved the scalloped edges of clean paper.

The solemn youngsters responded somewhat coldly to my greetings, evincing not the slightest embarrassment at Vanya's spirited introduction:

"Look, they're all agronomists, like I told you! And that's the head one – Voskoboinikov."

Vitka Gorkovsky looked at me as if we had been invited to make the acquaintance not of agronomists, but of wood sprites or water elves, in the existence of which Vitka was quite unable to believe.

"No offence meant, boys," I said, "but do tell me why they call you agronomists!"

Voskoboinikov, a tall youth, whose face was remarkable for extreme pallor and an expression of self-importance, neither of which qualities sufficed to conceal its fixed obtuseness, rose from his bed, thrust his hands into his narrow trouser pockets with an effort, and said:

"We are agronomists. We'll soon get our certificates."

"Who'll give you certificates?"

"Who? The director will!"

"What director?"

"The old director."

Vitka burst out laughing.

"Perhaps he'll give *me* one!"

"There's nothing to sneer at," said Voskoboinikov. "Don't talk of things you know nothing about. What do you know about it?"

Vitka lost his temper.

"I know you're all oafs. Tell us in detail, who is it that's playing the fool here?"

"Perhaps it's you who are playing the fool," retorted Voskobonikov wittily, but Vitka could no longer endure this humbug.

"That'll do! Come on, tell us!"

We seated ourselves on beds. The agronomists, resentful and rude, interspersing their sparse narrative with wry, mistrustful grimaces, conquered their self-assurance and complacency sufficiently to reveal the secrets of Khalabuda's rye, and their own breath-taking careers. The previous autumn Khalabuda had sent a representative to Kuryazh on a special mission to sow rye. He had persuaded fifteen of the older boys to work for him, and paid them generously, housing them in a separate annex, buying them beds, linen, blankets, suits, coats, and giving them each fifty rubles, while promising to furnish them with agronomical certificates when the work was over. Inasmuch as all the conditions had been fulfilled, the beds and other comforts being incontestable realities, the boys had no reason to doubt the reality of the certificates, the more that they were all almost illiterate, none of them having gone further than the second class of an elementary school. The issue of diplomas had been postponed to the spring. This circumstance, however, did not trouble the boys much, for although Khalabuda's representative had vanished into the rarefied atmosphere of some Children's Aid Combine, the director of the colony had generously taken on the obligation. The day before he left he had told them that the diplomas were quite ready, and only had to be sent to Kuryazh, and solemnly bestowed upon the agronomists.

"Why, lads, you've simply been fooled!" I told them. "You'd have to study a lot, study several years, before you could be agronomists. There are colleges and technical schools, and to get into one of them you'd have to study in an ordinary school several years. And you – what's seven times eight?"

A dark, comely boy, at whom I had fired this question, replied somewhat diffidently:

"Forty-eight."

Vanya Zaichenko gasped, and opened his honest little eyes wide.

"Phew! Agronomists! Forty-eight! That's a good one! I *say*!"

"Who asked you to interfere? What's it to do with you?"

shouted Voskoboinikov at Vanya.

"But it's fifty-six!" Vanya fairly paled with the intensity of his conviction. "Fifty-six!"

"Well, what about it?" said a broad-shouldered, angular youth, whom everyone called Svatko. "We've been promised places in a sovkhos – and now how will it be?"

"That could be arranged," I said, "it's a good thing to work on a state farm, but you'd be workers, not agronomists."

The agronomists bounced on their beds in the violence of their indignation. Svatko turned pale with rage.

"D'you suppose we can't find justice? We understand! We understand everything! The director warned us, he did! You want the land ploughed and nobody wants to do it. That's why you're making all this fuss! And you've talked over Khalabuda! But you won't get your own way, and that's all!"

Voskoboinikov once more thrust his hands into his pockets, and stretched his great height almost to the ceiling.

"Have you come here to cheat us? We were told about it by people who know. We've sown a lot of land, and worked hard. And you want to exploit us. Nothing doing!"

"The fools!" uttered Vitka calmly.

"I'll give him one in the mug! Gorkyites! Coming here to use other peoples as catpaws!"

I rose from the bed. The agronomists turned their angry, dull faces upon us. I tried to take leave of them as calmly as possible.

"Just as you like, boys. If you want to be agronomists, that's fine. We don't need your work just now, we'll manage without you."

We turned to go. But Vitka could not contain himself, and spluttered out stubbornly on the very threshold:

"Anyhow you're idiots! Idiots!"

This remark evoked such indignation among the agronomists, that Vitka had to leave the porch at full speed.

In the Pioneers' Room, Zhorka Volkov was holding a review of the Kuryazhites who had, by fair means or foul, been appointed commanders. I had told Zhorka, beforehand, that nothing would come of it, that we did not want such commanders. But Zhorka had to prove the truth of this by experience.

The candidates were sitting on benches, rubbing their bare legs against one another like so many flies. Zhorka resembled a tiger just

now, his keen eyes scattering sparks. The candidates behaved as if they thought they had been brought there to take part in a new game, with intricate rules, and considered the old game much better. They attempted to smile politely in reply to Zhorka's passionate explanations, but this effect of his oratory gave Zhorka little pleasure.

"What are you grinning at? What are you grinning at? Do you understand? You have lived the lives of parasites long enough! Do you know what the Soviet government is?"

The commanders, sheepishly quelling the lingering smiles on their cheeks, fell stern.

"I'm explaining to you – since you're the commander, your orders must be carried out."

"And supposing they won't obey?" asked a fair heavy-browed lad, breaking out into an irrepressible smile. His name was Petrushko, and I could see at once that he was a shirker and a good-for-nothing.

Among those invited was Spiridon Khovrakh. His recent chat with Belukhin and Karabanov seemed to have softened him, but now he was disappointed – he was expected to get mixed up in disagreeable and unprofitable complications with his comrades.

That very evening, after Zhorka's passionate orations and the smiling indifference of the Kuryazhites, we nevertheless formed a Commanders' Council, wrote down the names of all the inhabitants of the colony, and even issued orders for the morrow's work. Volokhov and Kudlaty prepared the equipment for work in the fields the next day. Both Commanders' Council and equipment had a sorry appearance, and we went to bed conscious of fatigue and failure. Although Borovoy and his assistant had started on their work, and wood-shavings were already shining around intensely black heaps of earth, the general problem of Kuryazh was still obscure – there seemed to be nothing one could get hold of to make a proper start.

Early the next morning, the *Rabfak* students returned to Kharkov. As agreed upon in the Commanders' Council the reveille was sounded at six o'clock. Despite the fact that a new bell with a melodious tone was now hanging against the church wall, the signal produced not the slightest impression upon the Kuryazhites. The colony monitor, Ivan Denisovich Kirghizov, in a new red armband, peeped into some of the dormitories, but brought away nothing but low spirits. The colony was asleep. The only signs of life were in

the stable, where the members of our advance detachment were busying themselves over preparations for going into the fields. Twenty minutes later it set out with three two-horse ploughs and harrows. Kudlaty took the farm cart into town to get seed potatoes. He was met by pallid, dampish forms coming from the town. I had not the strength to stop, search them, and speak to them about the events of the past night. They crept unhampered into the dormitories, and in this way the number of sleepers was actually increased.

According to the order drawn up the evening before, and unanimously confirmed by the Commanders' Council, it was proposed to set everyone in the colony cleaning dormitories and the yard, clearing a space for hotbeds, digging vegetable plots around the monastery walls, and taking down the wall itself. In moments of optimism I began to experience a pleasing sense of power. Four hundred colonists! Archimedes would have been tickled to death to have four hundred colonists at his disposal! He might even have decided that the search for a fulcrum to overturn the world was now completed. Even the two hundred and eighty Kuryazhites represented for me an unusual concentration of energy after the hundred and twenty Gorkyites.

But this concentration of energy was sprawling in frowsy beds and seemed in no hurry to get up for breakfast. We already had plates and spoons, all of which had been laid in comparative order on the refectory tables. Shelaputin rang his bell for a whole hour before the first figures appeared in the refectory. Breakfast dragged on until ten o'clock. I made several speeches in the dining room, repeating for the tenth time who belonged to which detachment, who were the commanders in each detachment, and what was the work allotted to each. The colonists listened to my speeches without raising their heads from their plates. The little blackguards did not even seem to have noticed that an extremely rich and tasty soup had been made for them, and that a slab of butter had been placed on each piece of bread. They listlessly swallowed the soup and the butter, stuffed bits of bread into their pockets, and crawled out of the dining room, licking their grimy fingers and ignoring my glances, so full of Archimedean hope.

Nobody came near Misha Ovcharenko, who was standing on the church steps. Beside Misha on the church steps were laid out new spades, rakes and brooms – yesterday's purchases. In Misha's hands was a new writing pad, also purchased yesterday. On this pad

Misha was to have entered the numbers of implements issued to each detachment. He looked extremely foolish surrounded by his wares, for not a single person came to him. Even Vanya Zaichenko, commander of the tenth detachment, which was composed of his friends – Vanya Zaichenko, on whom I had laid special hopes! – did not come for his implements, and I had not noticed him at breakfast. Of the new commanders who were in the dining room, only Khovrakh came and stood beside me, insolently regarding the crowd passing by us. His detachment – the fourth – was to have started on the breaking up of the monastery wall, and Misha had got crowbars ready for him. But Khovrakh did not so much as hint at the work entrusted to him. Bland as ever, he spoke to me of things having nothing to do with the monastery wall.

“Is it true the girls in the Gorky Colony are pretty?”

I turned away from him, and went to the entrance, but he kept up with me, and continued, glancing into my face:

“They say some of your women teachers are hot stuff, too! Won’t it be fun when they come! There used to be some women here who weren’t bad, too. But what d’you think – they were terrified of my eye! I only had to look at them and they blushed. And why, I ask you, why are my looks so dangerous, you tell me!”

“Why hasn’t your detachment gone to work?”

“I’m damned if I know – what the hell is it to do with me? I didn’t go myself.”

“Why not?”

“Don’t feel inclined – ha-ha!”

He narrowed his eyes at the cross over the church.

“Here in Podvorky there’s some likely wenches, too. Ha-ha! I could introduce you if you like.”

Ever since the evening before I had been suppressing my rage by exercising almost superhuman efforts. And now something began to swell up insistently within me; but so far I could only hear a muffled creak from the region of my heart, as if the valves were warming themselves up. In my brain someone gave the command “Attention!” and feelings, thoughts, and the merest wisps of cerebration, hastened to straighten the slackening lines. That same “someone” ordered sternly:

“Leave Khovrakh alone! Find out immediately why Vanya Zaichenko’s detachment didn’t go to work, and why Vanya didn’t come to breakfast.”

And for these and other reasons I said to Khovrakh:

“Get the hell out of here! You...”

Profoundly astonished at my manner Khovrakh rapidly departed. I hastened to Zaichenko’s dormitory. Vanya was lying on a bare mattress, surrounded by his bunch. He had his hand under his head, and his pale, thin hand against the dirty pillow looked very clean.

“What’s happened?” I asked.

The bunch silently made way for me. Odaryuk made an effort to smile, and said almost inaudibly:

“They beat him up.”

“Who did?”

From the pillow Vanya’s voice was unexpectedly resonant.

“Somebody beat me up, you know! Just fancy! They came in the night, covered me with a blanket, and beat me within an inch of my life. I have a pain in my chest.”

Vanya Zaichenko’s ringing voice was in sharp contrast with his thin, pallid face.

I knew there was an annex at Kuryazh known as the hospital. There, among the dirty empty rooms, was one in which an old feldsher woman lived. I sent Malikov for her. Malikov knocked against Shelaputin in the doorway.

“Anton Semyonovich, they’ve come in a car, they’re looking for you!”

Standing by a big black Fiat were Bregel, Comrade Zoya, and Klyamer. Bregel smiled majestically.

“Well, have you taken over?”

“I have.”

“How’s everything?”

“All right.”

“Quite all right?”

“Well – fair to middling!”

Comrade Zoya looked at me distrustfully. Klyamer looked all round him. No doubt he was anxious to catch a glimpse of my hundred-ruble teachers. The feldsher hastened past us, with her stumbling old woman’s gait, to Vanya Zaichenko. From the stable came Volokhov’s indignant utterances:

“Swine! You’ve spoiled human beings, and you’ve spoiled horses! Not a single pair can work, you swine, you! These aren’t horses, they’re old harlots!”

Comrade Zoya blushed, gave a little jump, and shook her big, top-heavy head.

“That’s what I call social education!”

I burst out laughing.

“That’s not social education. It’s just a person who can’t find words to express his feelings!”

“Can’t he?” said Klyamer, smiling venomously. “I should say that’s just what he can do.”

“Why, yes! At first he couldn’t, and then he found them.”

Bregel seemed to be going to speak, gazed steadily at me, and said nothing.

5

IDYLL

The next day I sent Koval the following telegram: "Gorky Colony Koval speed up departure colony entire teaching staff to arrive Kuryazh by first train."

On the evening of the day after I received a reply "Delay owing to trucks teachers leaving today."

The only cart in Kuryazh brought Ekaterina Grigoryevna, Lydia Petrovna, Butsai, Zhurbin, and Gorovich, from the station of Ryzhov at two a.m. We found rooms for them among the innumerable bastions inhabited by the former staff, and put up beds of some sort – mattresses we had had to buy in the town.

The meeting was joyful. Shelaputin and Toska, despite their fifteen years, showed their delight by embracing and kissing like schoolgirls, squealing joyfully, and hanging on each other's necks, their feet dangling. The Gorkyites arrived fresh and cheery, and I could read the report on the state of affairs in the colony on their faces. Ekaterina Grigoryevna confirmed it briefly:

"Everything's ready there. Everything's packed. They're only waiting for trucks."

"How are the boys?"

"The boys are sleeping on crates, and dying of impatience. I consider our boys happy people. We're all happy people, aren't we? How's yourself?"

"I am also too happy for words," I replied soberly. "But I don't think there are any other happy folk in Kuryazh."

"Why, what's happened?" asked Lydochka anxiously.

"Nothing terrible," said Volokhov scornfully. "There aren't enough of us, that's all. And there's work in the fields to be done. We're the first mixed, and the second mixed, and anything else you like to name, now."

"And what about the Kuryazhites?"

The boys laughed.

"Wait till you see...."

Pyotr Ivanovich Gorovich compressed his lips, glanced towards the boys, the dark windows, and myself.

"The boys are urgently needed?"

"They are," I said. "Very urgently. The colony must come to the rescue as quick as it can. Otherwise we shall collapse."

Pyotr Ivanovich cleared his throat.

“What’s to be done? You’ll have to go to the colony, though it’ll be hard for us here. The railway people are asking a lot for trucks, they won’t give any discount, and altogether they’re being obstructive. You’ll have to go there for a day. Koval has quarrelled with the railway authorities.”

We fell silent. Volokhov moved his shoulders with a revolving motion, clearing his throat and hawking like an old man.

“That’ll be all right,” he said. “You go as soon as possible, we’ll manage somehow or other. It can’t be worse, anyhow – only tell our chaps not to dawdle.”

Ivan Denisovich, seated on the window-sill, grinned imperturbably and peered at the hands of his watch.

“There’ll be a train in two hours. What’s your last will and testament?”

“My will? What’s the good of a will? Of course you mustn’t resort to force. There are six of you now. If you manage to get two or three detachments over to our side, it’ll be fine. But try to get hold of them in detachments, not individually.”

“That means propaganda, I suppose,” said Gorovich dolefully.

“Propaganda, but don’t make it too obvious. Tell them what you can about the colony, about individual cases, about construction work. But I don’t have to teach you. Of course you won’t be able to open their eyes all at once, but you can give them something to sniff at.”

My brains were in a whirl. All sorts of ideas and images leaped, writhed, crawled, and even seemed to be swooning in my head, and if one of them happened to strike an optimistic note, I at once began to have my suspicions that it was a tippy one.

Pedagogics has its mechanics, its physics, its chemistry, its geometry, and there is even such a thing as pedagogical metaphysics. It might be asked how I could have left those six missionaries alone in Kuryazh, in the dark night. I had talked to them about propaganda, but what I really counted on was the sudden appearance in Kuryazh of six cultured, serious, well-meaning people. Surely this was like counting on a spoonful of honey in a barrel of tar! But was it really tar? My chemistry, of course, was far from brilliant. Any chemical reaction obtained could only be abjectly languid and inconclusive. If chemistry were needed here, then it must be of a different sort – the chemistry of dynamite, of nitroglycerine, some

sudden, terrifying, impressive explosion, to send church walls, frowsy jackets, “child psychology,” hoodlums, and “certified agronomists” sky-high.

I was secretly ready to pack myself and my advanced mixed detachment neatly into a barrel – we certainly had enough explosive force between us. I recalled the year 1920. We had begun violently enough, there had been no lack of explosions. I myself had floated among the clouds, like Gogol’s Vakula, and I had feared nothing then. But now my head was adorned with all sorts of ribbons, such as, it seems, are essential for the most sanctimonious of all hypocrites – pedagogics. “Granny dear, do let me have just one teeny little explosion!” “Certainly,” she replies, “only see you don’t hurt the boys’ feelings.”

No hope of explosions here!

“Volokhov – harness the horses! I’m off!”

An hour later I was standing at the open window of the railway carriage, looking at the stars. The train was a third-rate one, and there was nothing to sit on.

Had I not run away shamefully from Kuryazh, had I not recoiled in fear from my own dynamite reserves? I had to calm myself. Dynamite is a dangerous thing, why should I play with it, when I had in reserve my splendid Gorkyites? In four hours I should leave behind the stuffy, dirty, unfriendly railway carriage, and be among the “elect.”

I arrived at the colony in a horse cab, when the very sun seemed to be gasping for heat. Colonists came running up to me from every direction. Colonists, did I say? They were like emanations of radium! Even Galatenko, who had formerly refused to recognize running as a means of transport, looked out of the smithy, and suddenly began stumping along the path, making the earth tremble, like one of the elephants in the army of King Darius. He, too, contributed his note to the hubbub of greetings, astonishment, and impatient questions.

“How are things there, Anton Semyonovich – all right?”

Where did you get that brave, candid smile, Galatenko? Where did you get that fine muscle, wrinkling up your lower eyelid so graciously? What have you used on your eyes to make them shine so? Some magic lotion, or just pure spring water? And though the heavy tongue still moves with difficulty, it has found out how to express emotion. Yes – emotion!

"Why are you all so fine?" I asked. "Is there a ball on?"

"Ha!" replied Lapot. "A real ball! This is the first day we're not working, and in the evening we're giving *The Flea* – our farewell performance for the muzhiks. But tell us how things are over there."

The colonists, in new shorts, and new velvet skullcaps, specially bought to impress the Kuryazhites, fairly oozed holiday spirits. Members of the sixth (actors') detachment were rushing about the colony making preparations for the performance. Bedrooms, the school, the workshops, the club rooms, were crammed with nailed-down crates, bales sewed up in sacking, mattresses, bundles. The whole place had been swept and garnished as for a holiday. The eleventh detachment, under the leadership of Shura Zhevely, was ensconced in my room. My mother, too, was sitting amidst her trunks, but the boys had generously left her a collapsible bed, and Shura was very proud of this generosity.

"Granny can't do like we do. Have you seen? All the boys sleep on hay in the barn, now. It's even better than sleeping in beds. And the girls sleep in carts. And what d'you think – that Nesterenko only took over yesterday, and today he's after us! Look – we've given him a whole colony, and he grudges us a little hay! How d'you like the way we've packed Granny's things? You tell him, Granny!"

Granny smiled mildly at the boys, but there were points on which she took issue with them.

"You've packed up very nicely. But where's your director going to sleep?"

"He'll be all right!" cried Shura. "Our detachment – the eleventh – has the best hay of all. Eduard Nikolayevich even scolded us – he said it was a sin to sleep on such splendid hay. But we slept on it, and afterwards we gave it to Molodets, and he ate it up like anything! We'll find a place for Anton Semyonovich – don't you worry!"

Many of the colonists had moved into the teachers' rooms, forming themselves into regular packing and guarding organizations. Lydochka's room had become the headquarters of Koval and Lapot. Koval, sallow with rage and fatigue, was seated on the window-sill, brandishing his fists, and swearing at the railway authorities.

"Wretched bureaucrats! We tell them it's for children, and they don't believe us! 'What d'you want?' I ask them. 'Shall I get you their birth certificates? Don't you know our chaps have never had

any?’ What’s the good of talking to them, when they can’t understand a word? ‘One grownup can take one child without a ticket,’ they say. ‘But if it’s a child travelling without a grownup....’ ‘Children! Children – you blockheads! Don’t you understand it’s a labour colony? Besides, it’s freight cars we’re asking for!’ But you might as well try to reason with a block of wood! They just click, click on their abacus – ‘freight, demurrage, rates....’ Then they dig up a whole lot of rules and regulations – one rate for horses, another for household furniture, and another if it’s sowing campaign. ‘You and your household furniture!’ I said. ‘What d’you take us for – some bourgeois family moving house?’ They’re so insolent, you know – petty clerks, and so insolent! Sitting there and making difficulties! ‘We don’t care whether you’re bourgeois, or whether you’re peasants,’ they say. ‘We only recognize passengers and consigners.’ I give them the class angle, and they look me straight in the face and say: ‘Since there’s a tariff code, the class angle doesn’t matter to us’.”

Lapot, paying no attention either to Koval’s woeful tales of the railway authorities, or to my mournful stories about Kuryazh, kept turning the conversation to cheerful, familiar subjects, as if there were no such thing as Kuryazh, as if in a few days he himself were not destined to lead the Commanders’ Council in this demoralized land. His frivolity depressed me at first, but my depression was soon shattered into fragments by his sparkling wit, and forgetting all about Kuryazh I found myself laughing with the rest. Lapot’s original talent had developed and blossomed during the period of freedom from routine. He seemed to have magnetic powers. There were always people round him, people who had fallen in love with him, who trusted him, worshipped him – fools, cranks, madmen, and the downtrodden. Lapot knew how to sort them out, to put them away in separate compartments, to cherish them, and to enjoy them. In his hands they revealed delicate nuances of beauty, and appeared to be exceedingly interesting specimens of humanity.

To the pale, silently bewildered Gustoivan he was saying:

“Yes, there’s a church in the very middle of the yard. We shan’t need a deacon – you can be the deacon.”

Gustoivan’s pinkish lips twitched. He was known to say his prayers of an evening in a dark corner of the bedroom, and he accepted the mockery of the colonists in a spirit of martyrdom. Kozyr, the wheelwright, was not so meek.

“Why do you talk like that, Comrade Lapot – the Lord forgive you! How can Gustoivan be a deacon? He hasn’t had the apostolic blessing!”

Lapot threw back his head.

“A lot that matters – blessing!” he said. “We’ll put vestments on him, and, oh my! – what a deacon he’ll be!”

“There has to be the blessing!” insists Kozyr in his musical tenor. “The bishop has to lay his hands on him.”

Lapot squatted on his heels in front of Kozyr, blinking up at him from under his smooth, puffy lids.

“Hold on a minute, Gaffer!” he said. “Has the bishop power?”

“The bishop has power.”

“And the Commanders’ Council – don’t you think it has any power? If the Commanders’ Council were to lay their hands on him – that would be something, now!”

“The Commanders’ Council can’t do that, my boy. It hasn’t any blessing to give,” said Kozyr, his head on one side. The discussion enchanted him.

Lapot, placing a hand on each of Kozyr’s knees, continued in a strain of friendly piety:

“It can, Kozyr, it can! The Commanders’ Council can give a blessing that would make your bishop simply bleat!”

Kozyr, old, kind, saintly, would listen attentively to Lapot’s words, letting them sink into his very heart. He was very nearly surrendering to their irresistible logic. What had the bishops and all the saints ever done for him? Nothing! But the Commanders’ Council had bestowed tangible blessings upon him – they had protected him from his wife, had given him a clean, light room, with a bed in it, they had put strong, well-fitting boots on his feet, boots made by Gud’s first detachment. Perhaps when old Kozyr dies and goes to heaven he may hope to obtain some compensation from the Lord God at last, but for his life on earth the Commanders’ Council was absolutely indispensable.

“Lapot – are you there?”

Galatenko’s grim face is peering through the window.

“Here I am! What’s up?” cries Lapot, tearing himself away from the discussion of blessings.

Galatenko clambered slowly on to the window-sill, exposing to Lapot’s view the brimful goblet of his wrath, from which arose in a slow spiral the fumes of human suffering. Great tears were forming

in Galatenko's large eyes.

"Tell him, Lapot! Tell him! I can't trust myself not to break his mug"

"Who?"

"Taranets!"

Galatenko, catching sight of me, smiles, and wipes away his tears.

"What's the matter, Galatenko?"

"What right has he? He thinks, just because he's the commander of the fourth detachment.... He's been told to make a loose box for Molodets, and he says – 'one for Molodets, and one for Galatenko'."

"Who did he say it to?"

"To his carpenters – the boys."

"Well?"

"It's a loose box for Molodets, so's he won't jump out of the truck, and they caught me and measured me, and Taranets told them – 'Molodets will be on the left, and Galatenko on the right'."

"What does he mean?"

"The loose box!"

Lapot scratched thoughtfully behind his ear, and Galatenko waited in fixed patience to see what Lapot would say about it.

"But you wouldn't jump out of the truck, would you?" On the other side of the window Galatenko shifted his feet, and looked down at them.

"Why should I? Where would I jump to? And he says: 'make a strong loose box, or he'll smash the truck to pieces'."

"Who will?"

"He means me!"

"But you wouldn't, would you?"

"As if I would do such a thing!"

"Taranets thinks you're awfully strong. Don't be offended."

"I'm strong all right. But what's the loose box for?"

Lapot jumped through the open window, and hustled off to the carpentry shop, Galatenko following him.

Lapot's collection includes Arkadi Uzhikov. Lapot considers Arkadi an extremely rare specimen, and talks about him with sincere enthusiasm.

"You'll only come across a fellow like Arkadi once in a lifetime. He never moves from my side, he's afraid of the boys. He

sleeps and eats beside me.”

“Is he so fond of you?”

“Isn’t he just! But I had some money – Koval gave it me to buy rope – and Arkadi pinched it.”

Lapot suddenly burst out into loud laughter, and turned to Arkadi, seated beside him on the box.

“Tell us, you funny guy, where did you hide it?”

Without changing his pose, and showing not the least embarrassment, Arkadi replied listlessly.

“I put it in the pocket of your old trousers.”

“And then what happened?”

“You found it.”

“I didn’t find it, you ass, I caught you in the act. Didn’t I?”

“Yes, you did.”

The dull eyes of Arkadi never moved from Lapot’s face, but these were not human eyes, they were some sort of inferior, lifeless, glassy accoutrements.

“He would steal from you, too, Anton Semyonovich, he really would! Would you?”

Uzhikov said nothing.

“He would!” cried Lapot joyfully, and Uzhikov followed his hero’s expressive gesture with his usual listlessness.

Nitsenko, too, was one of Lapot’s merryman. He had a long, skinny neck, with a protruding Adam’s apple, and a tiny head poised on his shoulders with the absurd arrogance of a camel. Of him Lapot said:

“You could make all sorts of things out of this blockhead – cart shafts, spoons, troughs, spades. And he thinks he’s a tough customer!”

I was glad this odd lot was drawn to Lapot. It helped me to isolate them from the general ranks of the Gorkytes. Lapot’s inexhaustible stream of witticisms seemed to act as a kind of disinfectant poured over them, intensifying my impressions of the business-like order and efficiency of the colony. And just now this impression was very vivid, and somehow quite new.

All the colonists asked me about Kuryazh, but I could see they only asked out of politeness, as people say: “How are you?” when they meet. The interest in Kuryazh had retreated to some remote corner of our collective, where it had dried up and evaporated. Other interests and experiences were predominant – the freight cars,

the loose boxes for Molodets and Galatenko, the teachers' rooms, crammed with belongings all cast upon the responsibility of the colonists, the nights in the hay, *The Flea*, Nesterenko's meanness, bundles, crates, carts, the new velvet skullcaps, the mournful faces of various Marusyas, Natalyas, and Tatyanas in Goncharovka – tender shoots of love doomed to frustration. The upper levels of the collective were diversified with funny stories and jokes, with peals of laughter, and with the play of artless raillery.

They were like the waves which sweep over the surface of a field of ripe wheat, so that from a distance the field seems to be carefree and playful. But in reality there is strength slumbering in every ear, and the ear swaying gently in the caressing breeze does not spill a single grain, or know a single moment of anxiety. And just as the ear doesn't have to worry about threshing time, the colonists had no need to worry about Kuryazh. The threshing would come in due time, and in due time there would be work to do in Kuryazh.

The bare feet of the colonists trod with a lingering grace over the warm paths, their belted figures swaying slightly as they moved. Their eyes smiled peacefully at me, and their lips barely moved in the cordial salute of a friend. In the park, in the garden, on the mournful, abandoned benches, on the grass, on the riverbank, everywhere were groups of figures. Experienced fellows were telling stories from their past – of their mothers, of machine guns, of steppe and forest bands. Over them were the still treetops, the flight of bees, the fragrance of "snow queens" and of white acacia blossom.

Somewhat embarrassed, I discovered that here was an idyll. It seemed an impossibility. Ironical images – shepherds, zephyrs, cupids – invaded my mind. But life sometimes jests, and its jests are sometimes almost insolent! Under a lilac bush sat a snub-nosed, wizened little chap, known as "Puggy," his face wrinkled up as he was blowing a rustic whistle. Surely that was no mere whistle he was playing on! It must be a flute, or even panpipe, for Puggy had the mischievous face of a faun. And in the meadow the girls were weaving wreaths. Natasha Petrenko in a wreath of cornflowers touched me to tears with her ethereal beauty. And suddenly, from behind the fluffy wall of an elder-bush, Pan himself emerges on to the path, his grey moustache trembling in a smile, his light-blue eyes narrowing.

"I've been looking for you everywhere! They said you'd gone to town. Well, have you got round those parasites? It's time for the

children to go, and they keep delaying us, the idiots!”

“Listen, Kalina Ivanovich,” I said, “while the boys are still here, you’d better go to your son in town. Once we’ve gone it’ll be harder for you to go.”

Kalina Ivanovich fumbled for his pipe in the deep pockets of his waistcoat.

“I was the first to come here, and I’ll be the last to leave. The muzhiks brought me here, let them take me away, the parasites! I’ve arranged with that Moussi fellow. There won’t be any difficulty about moving me. You’ve probably read in your books how long the world has existed. What a lot of old fools like me have been moved since then, and not one lost! They’ll move me, tee-hee!”

Kalina Ivanovich and I began strolling along the alley. Pulling at his pipe, he scrutinized the top of the bushes, the gleaming backwater of the Kolomak, the girls in their wreaths, Puggy and his flute.

“If I knew how to lie the way some parasites can, I’d say I’ll come and see Kuryazh one day. But I tell you straight out – I never will. A man’s a poor thing, you see, a tender plant, whether he’s done any work in his day or not, he’s just a nuisance – theoretically he’s a man, but practically he’s good for nothing but boiling down for glue. When people grow wiser they’ll make glue out of old men. Very good glue might be made from them.”

After my sleepless nights and my journeyings about the town, I was in a brittle sort of state – the universe seemed to be ringing softly, to be revolving in shining spirals. Kalina Ivanovich was recalling all sorts of past happenings, but I could only think of him in his old age of today, and I wanted to stick up for it.

“You haven’t had such a bad life, Kalina Ivanovich!”

“I’ll tell you what,” said Kalina Ivanovich, halting to knock out his pipe. “I’m nobody’s fool, I know what’s what. Life is a bungled affair, when you come to think of it! You eat, you digest your food, you sleep, then you eat again – bread, or maybe meat.”

“Wait a minute! And what about work?”

“And who wanted your work? See what a mechanism it is – those who need your work are the ones who don’t work themselves, the parasites; and the ones who don’t need it a bit, they must work like oxen.”

We fell silent.

“It’s a pity I lived such a short time under the Bolsheviks,” con-

tinued Kalina Ivanovich. "They do everything their own way, the devils, and they're rough fellows, and I don't like roughness, of course. But still life has become different under them. All they care about is whether you do your work – nothing else interests them. Did you ever hear the like? Now everyone needs your work. There are a few imbeciles like us who don't understand a thing, and would work and forget to eat, if their wives didn't get at them. Do you remember how I came to you once, and said: 'Have you had your dinner?' And it was the evening already. And you, tee-hee! – you began trying to remember if you had had dinner, or not. 'I think I have, but perhaps it was yesterday!' You forgot, tee-hee! Did you ever hear the like?"

Kalina Ivanovich and I strolled about the park till the approach of dark. When the daylight had been turned off at the celestial main, Kostya Sharovsky came running up, slapping his bare legs with a branch to keep off the mosquitoes, and exclaiming indignantly:

"They're making-up already, and you keep walking up and down, up and down! And the boys say you're to come. You should see how funny the tsar looks! Lapot's acting the tsar – what a nose he's put on!"

All our friends from the village and farmsteads had gathered in the theatre. The Lunacharsky Commune was there in full force. Nesterenko was seated behind the curtain on the throne, trying to beat off the boys, who were accusing him of meanness, ingratitude, and hard-heartedness. Olya Voronova, making herself up in front of the mirror as the tsar's daughter, was worrying.

"They'll tease the life out of my Nesterenko!"

It was not the first time *The Flea* had been given in the colony, but this performance was a very trying one, owing to the fact that the chief make-up men – Butsai and Gorkovsky – were in Kuryazh. The make-up was therefore excessively garish. But nobody minded this – the performance was a mere excuse for a farewell gathering. There was little need for formal farewells. The Pirogovka and Goncharovka girls were being hurled back to the prehistoric age, for in their minds history began with the arrival of the irresistible Gorkytes on the banks of the Kolomak. In the corners of the great mill shed, next to stoves which had not been lit since March, in the murky passages behind the stage, on any bench that came handy, on tree stumps, on all sorts of theatrical "properties," sat the girls, their flowered kerchiefs slipping on to their shoulders, exposing mourn-

fully-bowed auburn heads. Neither words, celestial melodies, nor sighs could any longer fill these maiden hearts with joy. Tender, melancholy fingers toyed with the fringe of the shawls on their knees, and this too was superfluous, a tardy demonstration of grace. The colonists stood next to the girls trying to look as if their hearts were burdened with grief. Every now and then Lapot peeped out of the actors' dressing room, wrinkling his nose in ironic sympathy with the pangs of love, and saying in a tender, grieving voice:

"Petya, old man! Marusya can sit and say nothing without you – do go and dress! Have you forgotten you're the horse?"

Petya adroitly converts his impudent sigh of relief into a regretful farewell breath, and abandons Marusya to solitude. Well for the Marusyas that their hearts are made up of detachable parts! In two months' time Marusya will unscrew the rusting image of Petya, and, polishing up her heart with spirits of hope, screw into the empty socket a shining new part – the image of Panas from Storozhevoye, who is at this moment taking a sad farewell of the Gorkytes in a group of colonists, while secretly adapting himself to the vacant place in Marusya's heart. Altogether, all's well with the world, and Petya is pleased with his role – that of a horse in Ataman Platov's troika.

The solemn farewell part of the programme began. After good, warm words, words of adjuration, of gratitude, of working solidarity, the curtain was drawn, exposing the silly, trifling tsar, surrounded by his decrepit generals, continually bleeding sawdust, which the slow-moving janitor was always sweeping up. From the back door of the mill shed the three-span of stallions – Galatenko, Koryto and Fedorenko – galloped onstage. Chewing the bit, tossing their heavy heads, breaking up the "property" furniture, straining at the taut reins in the hands of their driver, Taranets, they plunged with a clatter on to the stage, the ancient planks cracking beneath them. A rigid figure hangs on to Taranets's belt from the back. This is Ataman Platov, played by a rising star – Oleg Ognev. The audience ruthlessly extinguishes the last sparks of its grief, and plunges into the slough of theatrical make-believe and beauty. Kalina Ivanovich sits in the front row wiping away the tears with a wrinkled yellow finger, forgetting all in his amusement.

All of a sudden the image of Kuryazh came into my mind. Oh, no, people don't pray for mercy, now, and no one is going to take this cup from my lips! Suddenly I realized that I was exhausted,

thoroughly worn out.

It was bright and cosy in the actors' dressing room. Lapot, in his royal attire, his crown on the back of his head, was sitting in Ekaterina Grigoryevna's deep armchair and assuring Galatenko that he had performed the part of the horse brilliantly.

"I've never seen such a horse in my life, let alone in the theatre!"

"Get up, get up!" said Olya Voronova to Lapot. "Let Anton Semyonovich sit down."

And in this comfortable armchair I went to sleep without waiting for the end of the performance. Through my sleep I could hear the boys of the eleventh detachment arguing in deafening sopranos:

"Let's take him out! Let's take him out!"

But Silanti whispered, trying to dissuade them:

"Don't shout so! Let a man have his sleep out! And that's all about it. That's how it is, you see."

FIVE DAYS

The next day, after taking a tender farewell of Kalina Ivanovich, Olya, and Nesterenko, I left. Koval remained to fulfil with the utmost precision the plans for entraining our property, and to leave for Kharkov with the whole colony in five days' time.

I was vaguely apprehensive. The natural balance of my mind had been temporarily upset, and I was full of misgivings. And sure enough I was plunged into trouble the moment I entered the monastery gates, having arrived there from the Ryzhov station at about one p. m.

There was a regular investigatory body in session – Bregel, Klyamer, Yuryev and a public prosecutor – while for some reason or other the ex-director of Kuryazh was flitting about in their midst. Bregel addressed me severely:

“They’ve begun beating each other up already.”

“Who’s been beating up who?”

“Unfortunately we don’t know whose work it is, and who’s behind it all.”

The public prosecutor, a stout, spectacled individual, glanced furtively at Bregel, and said softly:

“I think the case is clear. There may not have been any incitement. Some old score or other, you know. As a matter of fact it’s not a very serious type of rough-housing. Still it would be of interest to know who did it. The director’s here, now. Perhaps he will be able to find out more about it, and let us know.”

Bregel was obviously dissatisfied with the public prosecutor’s behaviour. Without another word to me she got into the car. Yuryev smiled sheepishly at me. The commission took its departure.

The colonist Doroshko had been beaten up in the yard at the moment when, having collected half a dozen pairs of fairly new boots from the dormitories, he was going through the gate with them. All the circumstances of the nocturnal incident went to prove that the attack had been well organized, and Doroshko had been watched while he was stealing the boots. As he had approached the belfry, somebody had come from behind the acacia bushes beside an adjoining annex, thrown a blanket over him, flung him down, and beaten him up. Gorkovsky, who had just been coming out of the stable, had seen in the darkness a few smallish forms running in all

directions; they had left Doroshko where he was, but taken the blanket with them. An immediate search for the culprits in the dormitories had produced no results – everybody was asleep. Doroshko was covered with bruises, and had to be placed in the colony hospital; the doctor who was called found no serious damage. But Gorovich nevertheless had immediately reported the incident to Yuryev.

The investigatory commission headed by Bregel went energetically to work. Our Advance Mixed was called back from the field, and its members, one at a time, cross-examined. Klyamer in particular had been anxious to find proof that it was the Gorkytes who had been responsible for the beating up. Not a single teacher was questioned, indeed all contact with them was avoided, the commission contenting itself with sending for this or that individual. Of the Kuryazhites, only Perets and Khovrakh were summoned, and examined in a separate room, and this only, no doubt, because they had shouted outside the window:

“Ask *us*! What’s the good of asking them? Are they to beat us up, and we can’t complain to anyone?”

Doroshko, a wizened boy of sixteen, lay in the little hospital, and looked at me with his fixed, dry gaze, whispering:

“I’ve been wanting to tell you for ever so long – ”

“Who beat you up?”

“What did they come poking their noses in for? What does it matter who beat me up? It wasn’t your chaps who beat me up, I tell you, and they want to prove it was. If it hadn’t been for your chaps, they’d have killed me. That commander fellow came out, and they all ran away, the chaps....”

“Who was it?”

“I’m not going to tell you. I didn’t steal for myself. They told me in the morning that I was to do it.”

“Khovrakh?”

Silence.

“Khovrakh?”

Doroshko buried his face in the pillow and wept. I could hardly make out his words through his sobs.

“He’ll find out... I thought... it would be the last time... I thought....”

I waited for him to calm down, before asking him again:

“So you don’t know who beat you up?”

Suddenly he sat up in his bed, holding his head in his hands, and swaying from left to right in a paroxysm of grief. Then, still holding his head, his eyes still full of tears, he smiled:

"No, no, of course not! But it wasn't the Gorkyites! That's not the way they would have beaten me!"

"How would they have done it?"

"I don't know how, but they wouldn't have used a blanket. They'd never use a blanket."

"What makes you cry? Are you in pain?"

"No, I'm not in pain, it's only... I thought it would be the last time.... And you would never know....

"Never mind," I said. "You get better, and we'll forget all about it."

"Oh, Anton Semyonovich, do forget it!"

At last he calmed down.

I began investigations on my own. Gorovich and Kirghizov gesticulated wildly and began to lose their tempers. Ivan Denisovich even tried to look sulky and knit his brows, but his countenance had been overlaid with the armour-plate of good-humour for so long that these grimaces only made me laugh.

"What are you looking so cross about, Ivan Denisovich?"

"Me? I'm not! How am I to know what they want to kill one another for? Old scores, I suppose."

"I wonder if they were so very old!"

"Why shouldn't they be?"

"I think these are quite new scores. Oh, yes – are you quite certain it wasn't any of the Gorkyites?"

"Don't! For goodness' sake!" expostulated Ivan Denisovich. "Why the hell should any of ours have done it?"

Volokhov looked savagely at me.

"Who? Ours? A kid like that! Beat him up? Which of us would do such a thing? If it had been Khovrakh, or Churilo, or Korotkov – I'd beat them up *now*, if you'd only let me! What if the kid did steal the boots? They steal something every night. And how many boots are there left? There won't be anything left, anyhow, by the time our chaps get here. To hell with them – let them steal! We pay no attention to it. But they won't work – that's quite another matter!"

I found Ekaterina Grigoryevna and Lydochka in their empty room in a state of utter bewilderment. The arrival of the investigatory commission had upset them more than anything else. Lydochka

was seated at the window, staring fixedly out at the cluttered yard. Ekaterina Grigoryevna looked mournfully into my face.

"Are you satisfied?" she said.

"What with?"

"With everything – this hermitage, the boys, your chiefs?"

I thought a moment: was I satisfied? After all what special reasons had I for dissatisfaction? Everything had so far come more or less up to my expectations.

"Yes, I am," I said. "And anyhow you know I'm not one to whine."

"*I'm whining!*" said Ekaterina Grigoryevna, without a smile or the least sign of animation. "Yes, *I'm whining!* I don't understand why we have to be so lonely! Here we have a great misfortune, a real human tragedy, and some sort of aristocrats come to us, putting on airs and despising us! We shan't be able to hold out in such loneliness. I won't... I can't..."

Lydochka, tapping slowly with her fingers on the window-sill, did her best to soothe Ekaterina Grigoryevna, but it was obvious that she was with difficulty restraining her own sobs.

"I'm just a nobody!" she cried. "But I want to work, I'm longing to work – I might even be capable of something heroic. But I'm... I'm a human being, not a mere cipher."

She turned towards the window again, and I shut the door tight as I went out on to the high, shaky porch. Vanka Zaichenko and Kostya Vetkovsky were standing there. Kostya was laughing.

"Go on! Did they eat them all up?"

Vanya traced the line of the horizon with an aristocratic gesture.

"Every bit!" he said. "They made bonfires and baked them, and gobbled them up. That's all! See? And then they lay down for a sleep, and didn't they sleep just! Our detachment was working next to them, we were sowing melons. We laughed, and their commander, Petrushko, he laughed, too... that's all! And he said: 'We had a fine meal of baked potatoes!'"

"D'you mean to say they ate up *all* the potatoes? There were forty poods."

"All of them! They baked them and ate them up. They hid some of them in the woods or threw them about the field. And then they went to sleep. They didn't come to dinner, either. Petrushko said: 'What do we need dinner for, we've been planting potatoes!' Odaryuk said to him: 'You're a pig!' And they had a fight. And

your Misha was there at first, explaining how to plant the potatoes. But then he was called to the commission.”

Vanya no longer wore long, ragged trousers, but had on shorts – shorts with pockets, shorts such as were only made in the Gorky Colony. Shelaputin or Toska must have shared his wardrobe with Vanya. Vanya, while talking to Vetkovsky, waving his hands about, bouncing up and down on his slender legs, kept looking sideways at me, and every now and then warm flashes of charming, boyish irony lit up his eyes.

“You all right again, Ivan?” I asked.

“Ha!” cried Vanya, patting his chest. “I’m all right! I’m in 1-M Mixed. We’ve been planting melons. First Denis worked with us, and when he was called away we went on by ourselves. Wait and see what fine melons will come up! When are the Gorkytes coming? In five days? Won’t it be interesting to see what they’re like – all these Gorkytes! Won’t it just!”

“What do *you* think, Vanya – who beat up Doroshko?”

Vanya suddenly turned an earnest countenance upon me, fixing his eyes on my glasses. His cheeks twitched, relaxed, and twitched again, he shook his head, drew a finger downwards from the top of his ear, and smiled.

“I don’t know.”

And he started away from me with a purposeful air.

“Vanya! Wait a minute! You know – and you’ve got to tell me!”

Vanya halted at the wall of the church, looked at me from afar, seemed to feel a moment’s embarrassment, and then brought out, simply and coolly, like a grown man, emphasizing every word:

“I’ll tell you the truth. I was there, but who else was there I’m not going to tell you. He shouldn’t have stolen!”

We both fell silent. Kostya had already slipped away. We thought, and we thought, and at last I said to Vanya:

“You’re under arrest. *Go* to the Pioneers’ Room. Report to Volkhov that you’re under arrest till the last post.”

Vanya looked up, nodded without a word, and ran off to the Pioneers’ Room.

These five days stand out in my consciousness like one long blank – just a blank, and nothing more. I should have difficulty in recalling now any details of my activities during this time. Probably they were not so much activities as a sort of inward movement, or

perhaps just a suspension of well-drilled and unified forces. It seemed to me at the time that I was in a state of violent activity, that I was analyzing this, deciding that. But in reality I was simply waiting for the Gorkyites to come.

But we did achieve certain things, nonetheless.

I remember: our regular rising at five a. m., our regular, patient fury at the sight of the utter refusal of the Kuryazhites to follow our example. The Advance Mixed hardly ever slept during this time, for there was always something of the utmost urgency to be done. Sherre arrived the day after my return. For two hours he went about measuring fields, yards, outhouses, and terraces, looking somewhat aggrieved as he paced them with his field-marshal's stride, preserving complete silence and nibbling at all sorts of rubbish plucked from the vegetable kingdom. In the evening the Gorkyites, tanned, lean, and dust-covered, began to clear the ground on which our enormous herd of swine was to be housed.

Digging was begun on pits for forcing-beds and hothouses. Volkhov displayed enormous skill as a commander and organizer in those days. He would leave one person to look after two teams of horses in the field, using the rest for other work. Pyotr Ivanovich Gorovich went out in the morning, brandishing a particularly impressive spade, and calling to a group of inquisitive Kuryazhites: "Come and dig, ye valiant men!"

The valiant men would turn away and go about their own business. If, on their way, they encountered Butsai, dark as night, clad in shorts, they listened just as unresponsively to the invitation he delivered in deep bass tones: "You lazy bums! How long am I going to work for you?"

Some of the *Rabfak* students came in the evenings to wield a spade, but I sent them back to Kharkov as fast as possible. They had their spring examinations before them, and that was no joking matter. Our first batch of *Rabfak* students were to get into the VUZ, and this meant more to me than any Kuryazh.

I remember much work of all sorts accomplished in those five days, and much merely begun. Borovoy, rapidly putting the finishing touches to spacious, draught-proof toilets, had been reinforced by a veritable army of carpenters, working on underground cold-storage rooms, the school, the apartments, hotbeds, and a greenhouse. Three electricians were busy at the power plant. Another three were poking about among the entrails of the earth, for we had

learned from the inhabitants of Podvorky that there had been water laid on in Kuryazh in the days of the monastery, and sure enough a sturdy cistern was discovered on the upper floor of the belfry, and we soon hit upon pipes buried in the earth.

The yard at Kuryazh was littered with boards, chips and logs, and scored with trenches – the restoration period was in full swing.

We did very little at that time for the improvement of the sanitary condition of the Kuryazhites, and to tell the truth washed but seldom ourselves. Every morning, Shelaputin and Solovyov would set off early with pails to the “wonder-working” spring in the lower slope of the hill. But by the time they had climbed the steep slope back, stumbling, and spilling the precious water, we had hastened off to our various posts, the boys had gone to the fields, and the water stood uselessly warming itself in the bucket in the stuffy Pioneers’ Room. There were other spheres, closely bordering on the sanitary, in which things were little better. Vanya Zaichenko’s tenth detachment, which had come over so wholeheartedly to our side, suddenly, without the slightest warning, and without any order having been issued, moved into our room, where they slept on the floor on their own blankets. And while this detachment was composed of delightful boys, it brought into our room several generations of lice.

From the point of view of abstract pedagogics, this may not have been such a great misfortune, but Lydochka and Ekaterina Grigoryevna begged us not to come into their room unless absolutely necessary, and if we did, not to use the furniture, or go too near tables, beds, and other susceptible objects. I should be hard put to it to say how they protected themselves, and why they were so fastidious about us, for they were in the dormitories all day long, investigating any details they could discover about the Kuryazh hostel, according to a plan specially drawn up by our Komsomol organization.

I intended to make a thorough reorganization of all the colony’s premises. I destined the long rooms of the former hostel, which the Kuryazhites called the school, for dormitories, and intended to house all the four hundred colonists in this building alone. It did not take long to clear it of the remnants of school equipment, and fill it with plasterers, carpenters, painters, and glaziers. For the school I allotted the doorless building in which the “first collective” had lived, but of course there could be no question of repairing it so long as it was full of Kuryazhites.

Yes, there was plenty of activity, but it was not pedagogical activity. There was not a single corner in the colony in which there were not people at work. Everything was in course of repairing, oiling, painting, and washing. We even had our meals in the yard, while we embarked upon a determined painting out of the faces of male and female saints on the refectory walls. The dormitories alone were as yet untouched by the spirit of restoration.

Here, as before, the Kuryazhites slept, digested their food, harboured lice, snapped up unconsidered trifles from one another, and cherished secret thoughts about me and my activities. I gave up going there, generally speaking having ceased to interest myself in the internal life of the six Kuryazh "collectives." My relations with the Kuryazhites had become clearly and austere defined: the dining room opened at seven a. m., at twelve noon, and at six p. m., one of my boys tolled the bell, and the Kuryazhites straggled in to eat. It was not, by the way, to their advantage to be dilatory, and this not merely because the dining hall was closed at a definite hour, but also owing to the fact that those who came early had a way of devouring both their own portions and those of their comrades who came late. The latecomers would curse me, the kitchen staff, and the Soviet government, but hesitated to take more energetic measures, for the commandant of our food centre was Misha Ovcharenko.

I noted with secret malice how hard it had now become for the Kuryazhites to make their way to the dining room, and go about their business after having imbibed nourishment, their path encumbered by logs, ditches, two-handled saws, raised axes, puddles of semi-liquid clay, heaps of quicklime, and – their own consciences. All the signs showed me that real tragedies were going on in these souls – no mere melodramas, but real Shakespearean tragedies. "To be, or not to be" – that was their question.

They would stand about in small groups wherever work was going on, and then, glancing furtively over their shoulders at their comrades, shuffle off to the dormitories with guilty, meditative steps. But there was no longer anything exciting to do in the dormitories, there wasn't even anything left to steal. Once again they would wander out to get closer to the work going on, ashamed to lower their prestige in their comrades' eyes by raising the white flag and asking to be allowed at least to carry something from one place to another. The Gorkyites sped past them like flying boats, ready to avoid any and every obstacle by leaping into the air. The Kuryaz-

hites, overwhelmed by this purposefulness, would once again fall into the pose of a Hamlet or a Coriolanus. Their position was, perhaps, even more tragic, for nobody had ever called out to Hamlet in spirited tones: “Get out of the way! It’s two hours till dinner-time!”

With equally reprehensible malice I noted how the hearts of the Kuryazhites seemed to miss a beat when the Gorkyites were mentioned. The members of Advance Mixed occasionally gave vent to utterances which they would assuredly have refrained from had they graduated from a teachers’ college:

“Just you wait! Our lot will be here soon, and then you’ll find out what it means to live on others....”

Some of the older and more reckless of the Kuryazhites ventured to doubt the importance of coming events, inquiring not without irony:

“Well! And what’ll be so terrible about it?”

Denis Kudlaty would reply to such a question:

“You want to know? Ha! They’ll lick you into shape so your own mother won’t know you!”

Misha Ovcharenko, who was not fond of vagueness and obscurity, expressed himself still more lucidly:

“There’ll be as many black eyes as there are bums who won’t work – two hundred and eighty, are there? Oh what a sight your faces will be. It’ll be awful to look at them!”

Khovrakh, hearing such words, would spit out between his teeth:

“Black eyes! This isn’t the Gorky Colony! You’ll have Kharkov to deal with!”

Misha considered the point raised of such importance that he stopped working for a moment, and said with mock tenderness:

“My dear man! What’s that you say? Not the Gorky Colony, but Kharkov, and all that? Who d’you think’s going to keep you for nothing, old pal? Ask yourself – who’s going to bother about you?”

Still talking, Misha returned to his work, and regained his grip on his tool.

“What’s your name?” he continued.

Khovrakh started in amazement.

“What?”

“Your name, I said! Dormouse? Or maybe Hedgehog?”

Khovrakh reddened with annoyance and confusion.

“What the hell?”

“Tell me your name, can’t you?”

“My name’s Khovrakh.”

“A-a-h! Khovrakh, so it is! I’d almost forgotten! I could see there was something carroty always getting underfoot, and no use to anyone. Now, if you were to work, pal, what with one thing or another, every now and then one would have to say: ‘Khovrakh, give me that!’, ‘Aren’t you ready, Khovrakh?’, ‘Hold that, Khovrakh, old man!’ But as it is, of course, one keeps forgetting. Get along with you, out of the way! Can’t you see I’m busy? I’ve got to mend this barrel, you see; they bring soup, and tea, and washing-up water all in the same pot now, and you’ve got to be fed. If you’re not fed, you know, you’ll kick the bucket, and then you’ll stink, and that’s not nice, and a coffin will have to be made for you – more work...”

Khovrakh at last manages to tear himself from Misha. Misha calls after him tenderly:

“Go out and get a breath of air. It’ll do you good – it’ll do you a lot of good!”

Had Khovrakh begun to believe in the benefits of fresh air, and to inspire the whole of the Kuryazh aristocracy with this belief? However that may have been they had been trying to keep out of sight of late, but not before I had made myself familiar with the Kuryazh branch of blue blood. On the whole they weren’t such a bad lot. After all each had his own personality, and that’s a thing I always like. Perets was my favourite. He swaggered about the place, trained his forelock right down to his eyebrows, wore his cap over one eye, held his cigarette by his underlip alone, and was a dab at spitting. But I could see that his pock-marked face regarded me with curiosity – the curiosity of a bright, lively lad.

I joined their company one evening, when they were all seated on the stones intended for the building of the pigs’ solarium, smoking and chatting listlessly. I stopped in front of them, and began to roll myself a cigarette with newspaper preparatory to asking them for a light. Perets, looking at me in a cheerful, friendly way, said loudly:

“You work hard, Comrade Director, but you have to smoke shag. Surely the Soviet government might make cigarettes for you?”

I went up to Perets, bent over his hand, and lit my cigarette. Then I said to him, just as loudly and cheerfully, instilling into my voice an infinitesimal note of authority.

“Come on, now – off with your cap!”

The smile in Perets's eyes changed to astonishment, but his mouth went on smiling.

"What's up?"

"Take your cap off – you can hear me, can't you?"

"All right – I'll take it off."

I pushed back his forelock with my hand, looked steadily into his somewhat alarmed countenance, and said:

"Aha! All right, that'll do!"

Perets looked up at me with a steady gaze, but I, having got my cigarette alight, and emitted a few puffs, turned away and went to the carpentry shop.

At that time I was feeling the full impact of my pedagogical duty, in literally every movement I made, and in every detail of my appearance, down to the faint gleam of my belt: these boys must be made to like me. Their hearts must be touched by irresistible sympathy, and at the same time they must be made to feel in the very depths of their hearts that I did not give a fig for their sympathy – that they could be offended, could curse me, could grind their teeth, and it would all make no difference.

The carpenters were finishing work, and Borovoy was beginning an earnest discourse on the superiority of good linseed oil over bad linseed oil. This new problem interested me so profoundly that I did not even notice that someone was tugging at my sleeve from behind. There was another tug, and I looked round. Perets was looking at me.

"Well?"

"Listen – what did you look at me like that for? Eh?"

"Oh, for no particular reason. Look here, Borovoy – we shall have to get the proper oil, you know!"

Borovoy joyfully continued his discourse on the right sort of oil. I noticed the fury with which Perets looked at Borovoy, while waiting for him to finish talking. At last Borovoy lifted his box with a great clatter, and we moved towards the belfry. Perets walked beside us, plucking at his upper lip. Borovoy went downwards towards the village, and I, my hand behind my back, faced Perets.

"What d'you want?"

"Why did you look at me? Answer me!"

"Is your name Perets?"

"M'h'm!"

"And your first name – Stepan?"

“How d’you know that?”

“Aren’t you from Sverdlovsk?”

“Well, what of it? How d’you know I am?”

“I know everything. I know you steal and roughhouse, I only didn’t know whether you were a fool, or a clever chap.”

“Well?”

“That was a very silly question of yours, about cigarettes – very silly! As silly as it could be! Sorry if I’ve offended you!”

Even in the dusk I could see how red Perets had got, how the blood was hammering at his temples, how hot he was... he fell back a pace awkwardly, and glanced round.

“That’s all right, nothing to be sorry about! Of course! But what was so silly about it?”

“Isn’t it clear? You know I have a lot to do, and no time to go to town to buy cigarettes. You know that. And I have no time, because the Soviet government has set me the task of making your life better and happier – *your* life, d’you understand me? Perhaps you don’t! In that case, let’s go to bed.”

“I do,” said Perets huskily, digging at the earth with the toe of his boot.

“You do, do you?”

I looked him in the eyes scornfully, right into the very middle of the pupils. I could see how my thought and my will were forcing their way into those pupils. Perets drooped his head.

“You understand, you bum, and yet you carp at the Soviet government. You’re a fool, a real fool!”

I turned towards the Pioneers’ Room. Perets barred my way with an outflung arm.

“All right, all right, say I’m a fool! So what?”

“So I took a look at your face. I wanted to find out if you really were a fool, or not.”

“And did you?”

“I did.”

“Well?”

“Go and look at yourself in the glass.”

I went home without taking note of Perets’s further emotional reactions.

As I became more familiar with the Kuryazh faces I was enabled to discover certain changes of expressions on them. Many of them looked at me with frank sympathy, their faces lighting up with

that delightful smile, a mixture of candour and embarrassment, only to be seen on the faces of waifs. I already knew many of them by name, and could distinguish some of their voices.

The snub-nosed Volodya Zoren, with rosy cheeks and a delicate play of muscles around the eyes which not even the dirt of ages could obscure, frequently haunted my paths. He was thirteen years old, always kept his hands behind his back, spoke little, but smiled continually. He was a good-looking little chap, with dark, curving eyelashes. He would raise them slowly, allow a light from somewhere deep down to show in his dark eyes, throw his head back, say nothing, and smile.

“Say something, Zoren,” I would implore him. “I should love to know what your voice sounds like!”



Volodya Zoren and Vanya Zaichenko (1927)

He would blush and turn away, hurt, drawling out in a hoarse whisper:

“We-e-e-ll...”

Volodya had a friend, as rosy, round-faced and good-looking as himself – Mitka Nisinov, a good-natured, guileless soul. Under the old regime such souls were made into cobblers’ apprentices, and tavern boys. I used to look at him and think: “Mitka, Mitka, what shall we make of you? How shall we redesign your life against the Soviet background?”

Mitka would also blush and turn away; he did not indulge in hoarse whisperings, just knit his straight black brows and moved his lips. But I *did* know the sound of Mitka’s voice – it was a deep contralto, the voice of a woman – beautiful, well-groomed, and spoilt –

with a woman's singsong modulations and sudden nightingale notes.

I would listen to this voice with pleasure when Mitka talked to me about the inhabitants of Kuryazh.

"You see that one over there – running? Confound it, where is he running to? Volodya, look, look! It's Buryak! What? You don't know Buryak? He can drink thirty glasses of milk at a time. He's gone to the cowshed.... And that one – he's a rat – that one looking out of the window – oh, he's a rat! He's such a toady, you have no idea, as smooth as oil he is. I bet he sucks up to you, too!"

"It's Vanka Zaichenko," said Zoren, turning away with displeasure, and reddening all of a sudden.

Mitka is a clever imp. He is ashamed for Zoren with his jealous outburst, and his glance seems to apologize for his friend's tactlessness.

"Oh, no!" he says. "I don't mean Vanka! He has his own line."

"And what's his line?"

"Well, his line...."

Mitka began drawing something in the earth with his big toe.

"Tell me!"

"There's nothing to tell. The moment Vanka came to the colony he started getting together that bunch, didn't he, Volodya? Well, they beat them up, too, but still they had their own line...."

I perfectly understood Nisinov's profound philosophy, a philosophy undreamed of by our pundits.

There were plenty of rosy boys here, some good-looking, some not so good-looking, who did not have the fortune to possess their own "line." Among the sullen, wary faces, hostile as yet, I began to see more and more children whom life was dragging along lines laid down by someone else. In the old times it was a perfectly natural phenomenon, this so-called life of dependence.

Zoren and Nisinov, keen, shaggy Sobchenko, the sad and serious Vasya Gardinov, the dusky-faced gentle Sergei Khrabrenko, hung about me smiling mournfully, knitting their brows, but unable to come right over to my side. They envied Vanya Zaichenko and his bunch, following their bold flights along the lines of the new life, with wistful glances, while themselves they could only wait....

Everyone was waiting. This was so obvious and so easy to understand. They were waiting for the arrival of the Gorkytes, so mystically immaterial, so incomprehensible, so intangibly attractive.

Every hour brought nearer what might be disaster or might be joy. Even among the girls every day brought forth something new and joyful. Olga Lapova had already got together her detachment – the sixth detachment, boiling over with energy. The detachment swarmed busily in their dormitory, mending, washing, whitewashing, even singing of an evening. Gulyaeva, always bustling about, kept running in, trying to conceal from me her crumpled, bedraggled blouse. Kudlaty was a frequent guest there in the evenings, and took a frankly protective interest in them. But the sixth detachment did not go out into the fields, lest it be buried beneath the explosion of such an affront to Kuryazh traditions.

Korotkov, too, was waiting. He was the main pivot of Kuryazh tradition. He was a splendid diplomat. He never put himself in the wrong by word, deed, or manner. He was no more to blame than the rest – he just didn't go to work, that was all. But the advance detachment seethed with rage against him; they detested him, and were convinced beyond all manner of doubt, that Korotkov was our chief enemy in Kuryazh.

I learned later that Volokhov, Gorkovsky, and Zhorka Volkov had endeavoured to put an end to this situation by means of a little conference. They summoned Korotkov to an interview on the banks of the pond, and suggested to him that he should take himself out of the colony, and go where he liked. But Korotkov had rebutted this suggestion, saying:

“There's no need for me to go away just now. I shall stay where I am.”

And the conference had to leave it at that. Korotkov never spoke to me, and showed no kind of interest in my personality. Whenever our paths crossed, he would lift his smart, light-coloured cap politely, and greet me in a rich, cordial baritone:

“How d'you do, Comrade Director!”

His handsome face with the dark, delicately fringed eyes would be turned on me courteously, unmistakably signalling the unspoken words: “You see, we needn't be in one another's way, you stick to yours, and I'll keep to mine. My respects, Comrade Director!”

But the day after my evening conversation with Perets, Korotkov met me during breakfast at the kitchen window, turned away considerably while I gave an order of some sort, and then suddenly addressed me:

“Excuse me, Comrade Director, is there a lockup in the Gorky

Colony?"

"No, there is not," I replied with equal gravity.

Looking at me as if I were some sort of exhibit, he continued calmly:

"But they say you put boys under arrest."

"You need have no personal anxiety," I assured him drily. "I only arrest my friends."

And I turned away immediately displaying no more interest in the subtle play of his countenance.

On the fifteenth of May I received a telegram:

"All leaving tomorrow evening by train Lapot."

I announced the contents of the telegram at supper, adding:

"The day after tomorrow we shall meet our comrades. I am extremely anxious, extremely anxious, that they should be met as friends. You see, from now on we shall live – and work – together."

The girls fell suddenly silent, like birds before a storm. Various little boys cast oblique glances at the faces of their comrades; on some faces the oral orifice was considerably increased, and remained a whole second in this condition.

In the corner next to the window, where there were no benches, but chairs around the table, Korotkov and his friends suddenly became extraordinarily merry, laughing loudly, and apparently exchanging witticisms.

That night a discussion of details for the reception of the Gorkyites was held by the advanced detachment, and every point of the special declaration issued by the Komsomol nucleus was considered. Kudlaty's hand travelled even more frequently than usual to the back of his head.

"You know, it makes one quite ashamed to think of the boys coming here."

The door opened slowly, and Zhorka Volkov squeezed through the aperture with difficulty. Holding on to the table he let himself down on to a bench, and looked at us from one eye, and that a mere awkward slit in a mass of swollen bluish flesh.

"What's happened?"

"They beat me up," whispered Zhorka.

"Who did?"

"God knows! Some muzhiks. I was coming back from the station. They met me at the crossing, and beat me up."

"Wait a minute!" cried Volokhov. "Beat you up! Beat you up!

We can see that for ourselves! But what happened? Was there anything said, or how was it?"

"Not much was said," replied Zhorka with a doleful grimace. "One of them said: 'Ah – Komsomol!' And then he bashed me in the jaw."

"And what did you do?"

"I did the same to him, of course. But there were four of them."

"Did you get away from them?" asked Volokhov.

"No, I didn't," replied Zhorka.

"What did you do, then?"

"Can't you see? I'm still at the crossing!"

The lads burst out into Homeric laughter, but Volokhov glanced reproachfully at his friend's painful smile.

THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-THREE B.

At dawn on the seventeenth I went to meet the Gorkyites at the station of Lubotin, thirty kilometres from Kharkov. It was hot on the dingy platform, up and down which the figures of travel-worn peasants wandered languidly, while oil-stained freight handlers creaked about in heavy boots. Everything seemed to be conspiring to make the satin garments in which I had attired my soul appear inappropriate. But perhaps it wasn't satin, really – just “a cocked hat and a soldier's overcoat ” It was the day of the great battle. What if that unwieldy old fellow, the porter, pushing against me accidentally, not only failed to be horrified at his deed, but did not even notice me! What if the stationmaster showed insufficient respect, and was actually uncivil, in answer to my inquiries as to the present whereabouts of train three hundred and seventy-three B.! These wags pretended not to understand that three hundred and seventy-three B. represented my main forces, that they were the glorious legions of Marshal Koval and Marshal Lapot, that their station of Lubotin was today fated to be the rallying point for my attack upon Kuryazh! How could I explain to such people that the stake for today was, upon my honour, greater and more important than the stake at some Austerlitz or other? Napoleon's sun itself could not have eclipsed my glory today. And it had been much easier for Napoleon to wage war than for me. I should like to have seen what Napoleon would have done if he had been as bound as I was by the methods of “social education”!

Walking up and down, and glancing in the direction of Kuryazh, I called to mind that the enemy had shown certain signs of spiritual weakening today.

Early as I had risen, there had already been movement in the colony. For some reason or other there were a great many people crowding around the windows of the Pioneers' Room, while others, with a clatter of buckets, were going down the hill to the wonder-working spring. Zoren and Nisinov were standing at the belfry gate.

“When are the Gorkyites coming? This morning?” asked Mitka gravely.

“Yes. You're up early this morning.”

“M'h'm. Don't feel like sleeping, somehow. Are they coming from Ryzhov?”

"Yes. But you are going to meet them here."

"Will it be soon?"

"You'll have time to wash."

"Come on, Mitka!"

Zoren immediately went off to put my suggestion into practice.

I told Gorovich to range the Kuryazhites in the yard to meet the Gorkyites and salute the colours, but not to bring any special pressure to bear. "Just ask them."

At last a benevolent spirit in the person of the guard issued from the fastnesses of the station of Lubotin, and sounded a bell. When he had done, he revealed to me the secret of this symbolic act.

"Three hundred and seventy-three B. has signalled. It'll be here in twenty minutes."

But the plan laid down for the meeting was unexpectedly complicated and from that moment all was confusion and boyish rejoicing. Before the arrival of train three hundred and seventy-three B., a suburban train came in, and a refreshing Komsomol *Rabfak* stream rushed out of its carriages upon me. Belukhin was carrying a bunch of flowers in his hand.

"It's for meeting the fifth detachment – as if they were grand ladies. An old fellow like me can do that."

In the crowd I distinguished the ecstatic squeals of the golden-haired Oksana, and caught sight of the calm smile of Rakhil. Bratchenko was waving his arms as if he had a whip in them, and shouting to nobody in particular:

"Oho! I'm a free Cossack now! I shall ride Molodets today!"

Someone ran up, shouting:

"The train's been here for ages! It's on the tenth track."

"No – really!"

"It's on the tenth track, I tell you! It's been here for ages!"

Hardly had we recovered from the sobering shock of this information, when, from beneath a freight car on the third track the impish countenance of Lapot looked out, surveying our group ironically from beneath his puffy eyelids.

"Look!" cried Karabanov. "If that's not Lapot wriggling under the truck!"

The whole crowd rushed towards him, but he backed under the truck, declaring solemnly:

"Keep to your turns! And bear in mind – I'm only going to kiss

Oksana and Rakhil, a handshake will do for the others.”

Karabanov pulled Lapot out from under the car by the leg, so that his bare heels twinkled in the air.

“All right, then – you may kiss me!” said Lapot, dropping to the ground and offering his freckled cheek.

Oksana and Rakhil actually went through the ceremony of kissing, and the others rushed under the cars.

Lapot wrung my hand long, his face shining with a sincere, simple joy, not common with him.

“How was the journey?”

“Like going to the fair,” said Lapot. “Only Molodets was naughty. He stamped about the truck all night. There’s hardly anything left of it. How long are we going to stick here? I’ve told them all to be ready. If we’ll be stopping long, we might as well wash, and all that...”

“Go and find out!”

Lapot ran towards the station, and I hastened to the train. There were forty-five carriages in it. From their wide-open doors and upper vents bouquets of Gorkytes were looking at me, laughing, shouting, waving their caps. Gud clambered through a nearby vent as far as his waist, blinked with emotion, and rumbled out:

“Anton Semyonovich, dear Anton Semyonovich, is this right? It’s not right. Is this lawful? It’s unlawful.”

“Hullo, Gud, what are you grumbling at?”

“That devil, Lapot! He said, anybody getting out of the train before the signal’s given will have his head cut off. Hurry up, and take command, Lapot’s wearing us out! How can Lapot be in command? He can’t, can he?”

Lapot, who had come up behind me, glibly look up Gud’s refrain:

“Just you try to get out of the train before the signal! Just you try! D’you think it’s a pleasure for me to have to deal with Scaramouches like you? Go on, then, get out!”

“You think I’m dying to get out!” continued Gud pathetically. “I’m quite all right here! It’s a matter of principle.”

“That’s the way!” said Lapot. “Send Sinenky here!”

A minute later the pretty babyish face of Sinenky appeared behind Gud’s shoulder, blinking in drowsy-eyed astonishment, his flexible red mouth stretched wide.

“Anton Semyonovich!”

“Say ‘how d’you do!’, you little ass! Where’s your manners?” admonished Gud.

But Sinenky only looked at me, reddened, and mumbled embarrassedly:

“Anton Semyonovich? What’s this? Anton Semyonovich? No? Really?”

He rubbed his eyes with his fists, and suddenly broke out in real anger against Gud.

“You said you’d wake me! You said you would! You’re not a commander, you’re just a horrid old Gud! You got up, yourself! Have we come to Kuryazh? Have we? Is this Kuryazh?”

Lapot laughed.

“This isn’t Kuryazh. This is Lubotin. Wake up, and give the signal.”

Sinenky instantly became solemn, now thoroughly awake.

“The signal? Very good!”

Now wide awake, he smiled at me, saying affectionately:

“How d’you do, Anton Semyonovich!” and clambered on to the seat for the bugle.

Two seconds later he brought it out, bestowed upon me one more angelic smile, wiped his lips with his hand, and applied them with a graceful gesture to the mouthpiece of the bugle. The station echoed to our familiar reveille.

The colonists leaped out of the cars, and I was busy shaking hands all round. Lapot was already on the roof of the car, making indignant faces at us all.

“What have you come for today? To make love? And when are you going to wash, and clean up the carriages? Perhaps you think we’ll leave the carriages dirty, and to hell with them! Look sharp, now, or you’ll get it hot! And put on your new shorts. Where’s the commander on duty, eh?”

Taranets looked out from a neighbouring brake platform. He was attired in nothing but a pair of crumpled, faded shorts, with a new red band on his bare arm.

“Here I am!”

“Is this your idea of order?” roared Lapot. “Where’s the water? Do you know? How long shall we be here – do you know? When will breakfast be ready – do you know? Come on – tell me!”

Taranets got on to the roof beside Lapot, and said, checking off each reply on a bent finger, that the train would stay here forty min-

utes, they could wash next to that tower over there, Fedorenko had the breakfast ready, and they could begin whenever they liked.

“Did you hear that?” asked Lapot of the colonists. “And if you did why are you standing there star gazing?”

The colonists’ tanned legs twinkled all over the railway tracks of Lubotin, the floors of the carriages were scoured with besoms, and Fourth Mixed went in front of each carriage, collecting rubbish. Shershnev and Osadchy carried Koval, still asleep, out of the end carriage, and sat him carefully on a low railway signal post.

“We’re not awake yet,” said Lapot, squatting down in front of Koval.

Koval slipped off the post.

“Now we’re awake!” commented Lapot.

“I’m sick of you, Carrots!” said Koval gravely. “There’s no stopping this fellow,” he said, holding out his hand to me. “He’s been jumping about all night – now on to the roof of the carriage, now on to the engine, now in the pig’s truck – he took it into his head that something was wrong there. It’s Lapot’s fault I’ve been wearing myself out these last few days. Where do we wash?”

“We know!” said Osadchy. “Let’s take him, Kolka!”

They carried Koval to the tower on their arms, and Lapot said:

“And he’s not satisfied! D’you know what, Anton Semyonovich, I believe this is the first time Koval has slept for a week!”

By half an hour the carriages were cleaned up, and the colonists, in gleaming dark-blue shorts and white shirts, were sitting down to breakfast. I was dragged into the staff’s carriage, and made to partake of a slice of Maria Ivanovna, the sow.

From the tracks below someone said loudly:

“Lapot, the stationmaster says we shall be moving in about five minutes.”

I turned at the sound of the familiar voice. The great eyes of Mark Scheinhaus were regarding me gravely, dark waves of passion still coming and going in them.

“Mark – how d’you do! How is it I didn’t notice you before?”

“I was on duty at the banner,” said Mark austere. “How are you getting on, are you satisfied with your character now?”

I leaped on to the tracks. Mark caught up with me, taking the opportunity to whisper tensely:

“I’m not quite satisfied with my character yet, Anton Semyonovich. I’m not quite satisfied, I don’t want to deceive you.”

“Well?”

“You see – they sang songs all the way, and they’re quite happy. But I think and think, and I can’t sing with them. That’s not character, is it?”

“And what do you think about?”

“Why they’re not afraid, and I am.”

“Are you afraid for yourself?”

“Oh, no, I’ve got nothing to be afraid of. I’m not a bit afraid for myself, I’m afraid for you, and for everyone, I’m afraid in a general way. Life was so good for them, and it probably won’t be so good at Kuryazh, and who knows how it’ll all end.”

“Ah, but they’re going into the struggle. That’s a great joy, Mark, when one can take part in the struggle for a better life.”

“That’s what I keep saying. They’re happy people, and so they can sing songs. But why can’t I join in, why do I have to think all the time?”

Sinenky gave a deafening signal for a general meeting, right in my ear.

“The signal for the attack,” I thought to myself, and hurried into the carriage with the rest. Looking over my shoulder I noticed how easily, throwing up his bare heels, Mark was running up to his carriage, and thought: today this youth will know the meaning of victory, or defeat. Then he’ll be a Bolshevik.

The engine whistled. Lapot roared at some straggler. The train started.

Forty minutes later it steamed slowly into the Ryzhov station, and stopped on the third track. On the platform were Ekaterina Grigoryevna, Lydochka and Gulyaeva, expressions of joyous trepidation on their faces.

Koval came up to me.

“Why should we delay? Shall we start unloading?”

He ran up to the stationmaster. It appeared that the train would have to be shunted to the first track for unloading at the platform, but that there was no engine to take it. Our engine had gone back to Kharkov, and a special shunting engine had to be sent from somewhere. No such trains had ever come to Ryzhov before, and they had no shunting engine.

At first this information was taken quietly. But after half an hour had elapsed, and then an hour, we got sick of hanging about beside the train. And Molodets, who became more and more ob-

streperous as the sun rose in the sky, caused us anxiety. In the course of the night he had succeeded in smashing the sides of the truck into smithereens, and was now attacking the remnants. Various officials were walking up and down in front of his car, making calculations in greasy notebooks. The station-master was careering up and down the lines as if they were a racetrack, and demanding that the boys should not get out of the carriages, or walk about the tracks, over which passenger, suburban and freight trains were continually passing.

"But when is the engine coming?" Taranets kept asking him.

"I know no more than you do," said the stationmaster, suddenly losing his temper. "Tomorrow, perhaps."

"Tomorrow! In that case I know more than you do!"

"More? More what?"

"I know more than you do."

"What d'you mean by that?"

"I mean that if an engine isn't found, we'll shunt the train to the first track ourselves."

The stationmaster left Taranets with an impatient gesture. Then Taranets began to pester me.

"Let's shunt it, Anton Semyonovich, we can, you'll see! I know we can. Trucks can be moved very easily, even with freight. And there are three of us to a truck. Come and talk to the stationmaster about it."

"Stop that nonsense, Taranets!"

Karabanov, too, flung out his arms.

"Now he thinks he can shunt a train! It would have to be shunted right up to the signals, beyond all the points."

But Taranets insisted, and many of the boys supported him.

"Why argue?" asked Lapot. "Let's give the signal for work, and try – we don't stand to lose anything. If we shunt it – well and good, if we don't, we don't, we'll spend the night in the train."

"And what about the stationmaster?" asked Karabanov, whose eyes began to sparkle.

"The stationmaster!" replied Lapot. "The stationmaster has two hands and a tongue. Let him wave his hands and shout! It'll be all the jollier."

"No," I said. "We can't do that. We might get run over by some train. Then there'll be a mess!"

"We understand that all right. The signal will have to be

lowered.”

“None of that, lads!”

But the lads fairly swarmed round me. Those at the back clambered on to the brake platforms and the roofs of the carriages, and tried to persuade me in unison. They asked my permission to do only one thing – move the train two metres.

“Only two metres, and stop. No harm in that! We won’t touch anyone. Only two metres, and then you shall tell us yourself.”

At last I gave in. Sinenky again gave the signal – for work this time – and the colonists, who by now thoroughly understood what they had to do, ranged themselves along the uprights of the carriages. From somewhere in front the girls were squealing. Lapot jumped out onto the platform, and waved his cap.

“Wait a minute! Wait a minute!” cried Taranets. “I’ll get the stationmaster, he knows more than I do.”

The stationmaster rushed on to the platform, his arms raised over his head.

“What are you doing? What are you doing?” he cried.

“Only two metres!” said Taranets.

“Not for anything! Not for anything! How can you think of such a thing?”

“Only two metres, I tell you!” shouted Koval. “Can’t you understand?”

The stationmaster fixed his gaze blankly on Koval, and left his hands in the air. The boys were laughing beside the carriages. Lapot once more raised his hand with his cap in it, and all leaned their weight against the carriages, dug their bare feet into the sand, and, biting their lips, looked towards Lapot. He waved his cap, and, imitating his movement, the stationmaster shook his head, and opened his mouth. Someone at the back shouted: “Shove!”

For a second or two it seemed to me that nothing would come of it – the train stood motionless, but, glancing at the wheels I suddenly noticed that they were slowly revolving, and the next moment I could see the movement of the train, too. But Lapot shouted something and the boys stopped pushing. The stationmaster glanced at me, wiped the bare spot on his head, and gave a sweet, toothless old man’s smile.

“Move it, all right... only see you don’t run anyone over....”

He shook his head, and suddenly burst out laughing.

“Sons-of-bitches! Now what d’you say to that! All right, push

it!”

“What about the signal?”

“Don’t you worry about that.”

“Re-ead-y!” shouted Taranets, and once more Lapot raised his cap.

A minute later the train was rolling up to the signal, as if pushed by a powerful engine. It seemed as if the boys were just walking beside the carriages and holding on to the uprights. As by a miracle, there were boys on the brake platforms, to put the brakes on when necessary.

From the outgoing points the train had to be shunted to the second track at the other end of the station, in order, from there, to back it to the platform. Just as the train was moving past the platform, and I was imbibing deep breaths of the pungent atmosphere of emergency, somebody called to me from the platform:

“Comrade Makarenko!”

I looked round. There stood Bregel, Khalabuda, and Comrade Zoya. Bregel, towering over the platform in her loose grey coat, reminded me of a statue of Catherine the Great – so majestic did she look!

And she called to me with corresponding majesty from her pedestal:

“Comrade Makarenko – are these your pupils?”

I raised my eyes guiltily to Bregel, but at that moment her imperious accents smote my ear:

“You will be required to answer for every leg cut off!”

There was a steely strength in Bregel’s voice that an empress might have envied. To make the likeness still greater, she was pointing downwards with her index finger towards one of the wheels of our train.

I was preparing to reply to the effect that the boys were very careful, and that I hoped for a happy issue, when Comrade Zoya checked my honest impulse of humility by rushing towards the edge of the platform, spluttering rapidly, and nodding her huge head in time to her words:

“They keep on prating that Comrade Makarenko is so fond of his pupils. Everybody ought to be shown how he loves them!”

Something seemed to stir in my breast, and rise into my throat. Very likely that is what happens to a dog just before it gives a growl and flies at somebody’s throat. It is quite possible that I really did

growl, but at the time it seemed to me that I replied extremely quietly and politely:

"Oh, Comrade Zoya, you have been cruelly misinformed. I'm such a callous being that I prefer common sense to the most passionate love!"

Comrade Zoya's green eyes received my reply with a look of hatred, but she could not bring herself to submit.

"Oh, do you? Is your social education based upon common sense?" she inquired venomously.

"We do what we can, Comrade Zoya," I said with parental pride.

Comrade Zoya might have rushed at me from the height of the platform, and perhaps this epic of my anti-education activities would have ended here, if Khalabuda had not said quite simply, as a worker might:

"They're moving the train a treat, the rascals! Look, Bregel, look at that imp! The little monkey!"

Khalabuda was by now stepping along beside Vaska Alexeyev, the orphan of so many parents. He and Vaska exchanged a word or two, and before we had had time to exhaust our fury, Khalabuda had begun to press hard against something on the carriage. I sent a flying glance at the stony majesty of the statue of Catherine, plunged through the aura of gall surrounding Comrade Zoya, and hurried to the train myself.

Twenty minutes later Molodets was being led out of the half-demolished truck, and Anton Bratchenko was galloping off to Kuryazh, leaving far behind him a cloud of dust, and the shattered nerves of the dogs of Ryzhov.

Leaving on the platform a mixed detachment under the command of Osadchy, we rapidly drew up our ranks on the small station square. Bregel and her friends were getting into an automobile, and I once more had the pleasure of seeing their faces turn green at the sound of our bugles, and the thunder of our drum-salute to our banner, which, still in its silk cover, was carried smoothly past our solemn ranks to its place. I also took up my place. Koval gave the order, and, accompanied by a crowd of little boys from the station, the Gorky columns set off for Kuryazh. Bregel's car overtook us, and as she passed me, Bregel said: "Get in!"

I shrugged my shoulders in amazement, but pressed my hand against my heart.

It was still and warm. Our way lay through a meadow, and over a remote, narrow stream, crossed by a little bridge. We marched six abreast. In front went six buglers and eight drummers, after them the commander on duty, Taranets, and myself, and after us the glorious brigade. The banner was still in its cover, its gilt tassel floating from its gleaming summit, and soaring over Lapot's head. Behind Lapot shone the freshness of white shirts, and the ranks of the colonists, their bare legs swaying in youthful rhythm. The four rows of girls in their blue skirts marched in the middle.

Stepping out of the ranks for a moment I could see how the figures of the colonists had become suddenly sterner and more elastic. Although we were crossing uneven meadow ground, they kept strictly in rank, assiduously righting themselves if they ever fell out of step. The only sound was the thunder of the drums awaking a crisp echo which seemed to rebound from the far-off walls of Kuryazh. The tattoo of the drums did not steal away our sense of awareness today. On the contrary, the nearer we got to Kuryazh, the more energetic and exacting sounded the roll of the drums, imposing submission to its stern order not only upon the feet, but upon every impulse of the heart.

The columns entered Podvorky. The inhabitants stood behind their wicket gates and wattle fences, fierce dogs strained at their leashes, descendants of those which had at one time protected the monastery's wealth. In that village people as well as dogs had been nourished on the rich pastures of monastic history. They had all been born, bred and nourished on the copper coins for which were bartered the salvation of souls, the healing of ailments, the tears of the Holy Virgin, and feathers from the wings of the Archangel Gabriel.

All sorts of people had got stranded in Podvorky – ex-priests, monks, lay-brothers, grooms, monastery cooks, gardeners, and prostitutes.

And passing through this village I felt keenly the hostile glances and whispers exchanged among the groups behind the wattle fences, and could form a pretty accurate guess as to the thoughts, words, and wishes directed at us.

It was here, in the streets of Podvorky, that I suddenly realized the vast historical significance of our march, while thoroughly aware that it represented an infinitesimal phase of our epoch. My conception of the Gorky Colony was suddenly freed from outward

forms and pedagogical colouring. Gone were the bends of the Kolomak, the elaborate buildings of the old Trepke estate, the two hundred rosebushes, the hog-house of hollow concrete. The subtle problems of pedagogy had shrivelled up and been scattered somewhere along the road. Nothing was left but human beings, human beings with new experience, and a new place on the surface of the earth. And I suddenly realized that our colony was performing a task which, slight as it might be, was nonetheless acutely political, a veritably socialist task.

And so marching along the streets of Podvorky was like passing through enemy country, in which people, their interests, their spider-like adjustments, while still showing quivering signs of life, clung tenaciously to the past.

And within the monastery walls, just coming into sight, were stacked ideas and prejudices which were hateful to me; sentimental idealization of the intellectuals, prosaic, commonplace formalism, facile tears, and the fantastic ignorance of officialdom. I pictured to myself the vast area of this boundless rubbish heap – we had been traversing it several years, several thousand kilometres, and still it lay rotting before us, to right and to left of us, still it surrounded us on all sides. And it was all this which made the little Gorky Colony, now deprived of every material bond – cut off from its communications, base, and kin – seem so tiny. Trepke had been abandoned forever, Kuryazh was not yet conquered.

The ranks of the drummers had embarked upon the ascent of the slope. The monastery gate was in view. From out of it sped Vanya Zaichenko, in shorts, stood as if rooted to the spot for the space of a second, and then flew like an arrow downhill towards us. I was quite frightened, thinking something must have happened, but Vanya pulled up sharp in front of me, and begged, wiping the tears from his cheeks with one finger:

“Anton Semyonovich, let me go with you! I don’t want to stand there!”

“Come on, then!”

Vanya fell into step beside me, and threw up his head. Then he caught my steady gaze, dried away a tear, and gave a frank smile, breathing out relief and emotion.

The drums rumbled deafeningly in the tunnel-like belfry gate. The Kuryazh masses were drawn up in several rows, Gorovich standing motionless in front of them, his hand raised in the salute.

8

HOPAK

The Gorky columns and the Kuryazh crowd were drawn up opposite each other at a distance of seven or eight metres. The ranks of the Kuryazhites, hastily assembled by Pyotr Ivanovich, were, of course, a bit shaky. The moment our column came to a halt, these ranks broke up, stretching far beyond the church gates, curving at the ends, and threatening to outflank and even surround us.

Both Kuryazhites and Gorkyites maintained silence – the former out of sheer bewilderment, the latter owing to the discipline imposed by standing under the colours. Up to now the Kuryazhites had only seen our colonists in the advance detachment, always in working clothes, exhausted, dusty, and unwashed. Now they were confronted by the regular lines of grave, calm faces, gleaming belt buckles, and smart shorts above sunburned legs.

I endeavoured by almost superhuman concentration to seize and fix in my consciousness, in the fraction of a second the underlying significance of the expressions on the Kuryazh faces, but was unable to do this. It was no longer the drab, featureless crowd of my first day at Kuryazh. As my gaze wandered from group to group it kept encountering fresh expressions, some of them exceedingly unexpected. Very few adopted an indifferent, neutral pose. Most of the younger ones were openly enthusiastic, just as they would have been about a toy which they wanted to get into their hands, a toy too exquisite to excite envy or stimulate vanity. Nisinov and Zoren stood with their arms round one another, regarding the Gorkyites; resting their heads on one another's shoulders, they seemed to be dreaming, perhaps of the time when they, too, would take their places in these entrancing ranks, and be admiringly regarded by small outsiders like themselves. There were many faces marked by the grave concentration which is sometimes the unexpected effect of muscles in agitation, and eyes seeking a convenient place to rest on. These faces were the seat of violent emotions – in a split second they volunteered certain information, expressing approval, satisfaction, doubt, and envy in rapid succession. But the sarcastic countenances, got ready in advance, the sneering, scornful expressions – these were dissolving gradually. As soon as the owners of such countenances heard the distant rolling of our drums, they thrust their hands into the pockets, and fell into patronizing, slouching poses.

Many of them were conquered on the spot by the splendid chests and biceps of the first of the Gorkytes – Fedorenko, Koryto, Nechitailo – whose figures made their own shrink into insignificance. Others were troubled later, when it became all too obvious that the very least of these hundred and twenty champions could not be touched with impunity. And the smallest of all – Vanka Sinenky – stood in front, his bugle at his knee, his eyes radiating a fearless spirit that seemed to indicate, not yesterday's street arab, but some travelling princeling, behind whom stood, as if rooted to the spot, the generous escort with which his royal father had provided him.

This silent regard only lasted for a matter of seconds, I needed to destroy at a single blow the seven-metre distance between the two camps, and their mutual examination of one another.

"Comrades!" I cried. "From this moment all of us – four hundred persons – are one collective, the name of which is the Gorky Labour Colony. You must none of you ever forget that for a moment, each of you must consider himself a Gorkyte, and regard another Gorkyte as his closest comrade and best friend, whom he is bound to respect, defend, and help in every way, should he need help, and correct, should he err. Our discipline will be very strict. We need discipline, for our task is a hard one, and we have much to do. And we shan't be able to do it well without discipline."

I went on to tell them of the problems confronting us; I told them that we must get rich, that we must study, that we must clear a path for ourselves and for future Gorkytes, that we must learn to live like true proletarians, and leave the colony true Komsomols, in order, outside the colony, too, to build up and strengthen the proletarian state.

I was astonished by the unexpected attention paid to my words by the Kuryazhites. It was the Gorkytes who listened somewhat absent-mindedly, perhaps because my words had not revealed anything new to them, all this being firmly rooted in the very fibres of their beings.

But how was it that a fortnight ago these same Kuryazhites had turned a deaf ear to appeals from me which had been so much more passionate and convincing? What a difficult science this pedagogics is! Surely it was not just because I was supported by the Gorky legions, or because the banner in its satin cover rose motionless and stern over the right flank, that they now listened to me! Surely this could not be the reason – for such an explanation would have run

counter to all the axioms and theorems of pedagogics!

I ended up by announcing that there would be a general meeting of the Gorky Colony in half an hour, and that in the intervening half hour the colonists would have time to get acquainted with one another, shake hands, and come together to the meeting. And now we would, in our usual way, carry our banner into the building.

“Break ranks!”

My expectations that the Gorkytes would approach the Kuryazhites, and shake hands all around, were not fulfilled. They flew out of the ranks like buckshot, and rushed headlong for the dormitories, clubs and workshops. The Kuryazhites, not taking offence at this lack of attention, rushed after them. Korotkov alone stood among his adherents, and seemed to be discussing something with them. Bregel and Comrade Zoya were sitting on tombstones beside the wall of the church. I went up to them.

“Your boys are regular dandies,” said Bregel.

“But are the dormitories ready for them?” asked Comrade Zoya.

“We’ll manage without dormitories,” I replied, and hastily turned my attention to a new phenomenon.

Escorted by the members of Stupitsyn’s detachment, our herd of pigs was just entering the monastery gate with a slow, ponderous step. It was in three groups: the sows came first, then the youngsters, and the heavy fathers brought up the rear. Smiling from ear to ear, Volokhov went out to meet them with his lieutenants, while Denis Kudlaty was already affectionately scratching behind the ear of our general favourite, the five-months-old Chamberlain, named in facetious commemoration of the famous ultimatum presented by that statesman.

The herd was driven to sheds specially prepared for them, just as Stupitsyn, Sherre and Khalabuda, absorbed in the most engrossing conversation, entered the gates. Khalabuda was gesticulating with one arm, and with the other pressing to his bosom the smallest and pinkest of the piglings.

“And look at their pigs!” cried Khalabuda, coming up to our group. “If their people are half as good as their pigs, they’ll do, let me tell you!”

Bregel rose from the tombstone, and said severely:

“I presume Comrade Makarenko thinks first of people.”

“I doubt it,” said Comrade Zoya, “for I see there is a place got ready for the pigs, and as for the children – ‘they can manage’.”

Bregel seemed suddenly struck by such an unusual state of affairs.

"Zoya's remark is very apt," she said. "It would be worth hearing what Comrade Makarenko has to say about it – Makarenko the pedagogue, not Makarenko the pig breeder, of course."

While amazed at the unconcealed hostility of this utterance, I was unwilling to spoil a day like this by answering with equal rudeness.

"Permit me to reply collectively, so to speak, to these two authorities?" I asked Khalabuda.

"With pleasure!"

"The colonists, you see, are the masters here, and the pigs are their charges."

"And which are you?" asked Bregel, not looking at me.

"I suppose I'm nearer to the masters."

"But there's a bedroom for you, I suppose."

"I'll manage without a bedroom, too."

Bregel twitched her shoulders in irritation.

"Let's put an end to this conversation," she said coldly, turning to Comrade Zoya. "Comrade Makarenko likes carrying things to extremes."

Khalabuda laughed loudly.

"What's wrong with that? He's quite right – why shouldn't things be carried to extremes?"

I smiled involuntarily, causing Zoya to fall upon me once again. "I don't know whether you call it witty for pig breeding to be held up as a model for educating human beings," she said.

Comrade Zoya started the engines of her wrath, and her bulging eyes seemed to pierce my very being at the rate of twenty thousand revolutions per second. I was quite alarmed. But just then Sinenky, rosy-faced and excited, came running up with his bugle, chirping at much the same velocity:

"Lapot says... but Koval, he says: 'Wait!' And Lapot's cross, and says: 'Do as you're told, that's all!'... and then he said: 'If you drag this thing out...' and the boys, too, they... and oh, what dormitories, oh, oh! And the boys say we're not going to put up with it, and Koval says he'll ask you."

"I understand what the boys say, and what Koval says, but I can't understand what you want me to do."

Sinenky was abashed.

"I don't want you to do anything, but Lapot says...."

“Well?”

“And Koval says – we must talk it over.”

“Now what is it exactly that Lapot said? That’s extremely important, Comrade Sinenky.”

Sinenky was so delighted with the way I addressed him, that he failed to catch my meaning.

“Eh?”

“What did Lapot say?”

“Oh, yes! He said: ‘Give the signal for a meeting’.”

“That’s what you should have told me in the first place.”

“But I did!”

Comrade Zoya took Sinenky’s rosy cheeks between her finger and thumb, so that his lips formed a pink rosette.

“What a sweet child!”

Sinenky tore himself away in displeasure from Zoya’s caressing hands, wiped his mouth on his sleeve, and squinted sulkily at Zoya.

“Child! I like that! Supposing I was to do that to you! I’m not a child, I’m not! I’m a colonist, I am!”

Khalabuda picked up Sinenky and his bugle without an effort.

“Well done, well done, upon my word! Still, you’re just a piggy, you know!”

Sinenky accepted complacently the role conferred upon him – he had no objection to being called a piggy. This, too, did not escape Zoya.

“It appears pig is the most honourable title here.”

“That’ll do!” said Khalabuda shortly, and set Sinenky down.

A heated argument appeared to be imminent; it was only averted by the approach of Koval, with Lapot following on his heels.

Koval, who had a rustic awe of authorities, winked at me from behind Bregel’s shoulder, hoping to induce me to step aside and have a talk. But Lapot stood in no awe of authorities.

“Koval, here, thought he’d find a feather bed provided for him. But I consider there’s no point in putting things off. We’ll have the meeting at once, and read them our declaration.”

Koval flushed at being forced to speak in front of the authorities, and women authorities at that, whom, in his heart he considered a very second-rate sort, but he insisted on stating his position.

“What do I want with your feather beds? And stop your nonsense! What I want to know is – can we force them to obey our dec-

laration? And if so, how are we to set about it? How are we to get hold of them – by their collars? By the front of their shirts?”

Koval glanced nervously at Bregel, but it was from the other side that the danger threatened.

“The fronts of their shirts?” repeated Comrade Zoya in alarm.

“Oh, that’s just my way of speaking,” said Koval, reddening still more. “What do I care about their shirts, confound them? I’ll go tomorrow to the Town Committee – let them send me back to the country!”

“You said just now: ‘We’ll force them.’ How d’you mean to force them?”

In his vexation, Koval suddenly lost his awe of authority, and went to the other extreme, emitting a stream of half-inarticulate invectives, in the course of which “women’s chatter” was sent to the devil. He then turned aside and strode towards the club, grinding the last remnants of the monastery’s brick walks into the soil with his dusty boot.

Lapot turned to Zoya, flinging out his arms helplessly:

“I’ll tell you what forcing them means. It means – it means – well, it just means forcing them....”

“You see! You see!” cried Comrade Zoya, leaping to her feet, and confronting Bregel. “Now what have you to say?”

“Sinenky, give the signal for a meeting,” I said.

Sinenky snatched his bugle from the hands of Khalabuda, pointed it towards the crosses on the dome of the church, and shattered the silence with a precise, terrifying staccato. Comrade Zoya clapped her hands to her ears.

“Oh, Lord! These bugles! Commanders! Barracks!”

“Never mind!” said Lapot. “The point is you understood what it meant!”

“A bell would be much nicer,” protested Bregel gently.

“Oh, no! Not a bell! A bell’s just a stupid – it always says the same thing. But that was a sensible signal – it means ‘general meeting.’ And there’s one for commanders’ meeting, and another for ‘last post.’ And then there’s the alarm! Oho! If Vanya here was to sound the alarm it would be enough to raise the dead – you’d come running!”

Groups of colonists converged upon the club from behind annexes, sheds, and church walls. The younger ones kept breaking into a run, but were continually being held up by all sorts of chance

impressions. Gorkyites and Kuryazhites were already mingling, and here and there conversations of an obviously instructive nature were being carried on, but the majority of the Kuryazhites still held themselves aloof.

Everyone crowded into the cool, empty club-room, but the white shirts of the Gorkyites were conspicuous in the vicinity of the altar-dais, and I realized that this had been done on the instructions of Taranets, who was evidently determined to have his forces concentrated in case of necessity.

The numerical weakness of the Gorky side was mercilessly revealed, for the second, third, and tenth detachments were busy settling the livestock into their new quarters, and there were still twenty-five persons, not counting the whole *Rabfak* contingent, with Osadchy at the Ryzhov station. This left only about fifty Gorkyites among the four hundred present at the meeting, not counting our girls, who had been received by the Kuryazh girls with touching affection, kisses and words of welcome, and assigned places in the latter's dormitory, set in order by Olga Lapova with the most loving care.

Before declaring the meeting open, Zhorka Volkov asked me in a whisper:

"Shall we go straight ahead?"

"Go straight ahead!"

Zhorka ascended the altar-dais and prepared to read what we jokingly called our "declaration." This was a resolution passed by our Komsomol organization, a resolution to the making of which Zhorka, Volokhov, Kudlaty, Zhevely, and Gorkovsky had contributed an endless fund of initiative and wit, combining the broad Russian outlook and calculations worthy of a Yankee with a generous pinch of our own Gorkyite pepper, comradely love, and affectionate, comradely cruelty, thrown in for good measure.

The "declaration" had so far been considered a "secret document," although any number of people had taken part in the discussion of it – it had been discussed again and again at meetings of the Bureau in Kuryazh, and checked and gone over again with Koval and our Komsomol during my return to the colony.

Zhorka said a few introductory words:

"Comrade Colonists! We won't waste time beating about the bush! Only I don't know where to begin, confound it! I'd better just read you the resolution of the Komsomol organization, and you'll

see for yourselves where we have to begin, and how everything will go. You don't work, now, and you're not Komsomols, or Pioneers. Confound you, you just wallow in dirt, and I'd like to know what it is you are! What light are we to regard you in? Simply in the light of a food-centre for bugs, lice, cockroaches, fleas, and vermin of all sorts!"

"Is that our fault?" shouted someone.

Zhorka took up the challenge with alacrity.

"Of course it is! It's your fault – your very own fault! What right have you to grow up into drones and whiners and rotters? No earthly right! You have no right, and that's all about it! And look at the dirt! Who has the right to live in such filth? We wash our pigs every week with soap, you ought to see us! D'you think there's a single pig that doesn't want to be washed, or that says: 'Get the hell out of here with your soap!?' Nothing of the sort! They bow, and say 'thank you!' And you – you haven't had a bit of soap for months!"

"Nobody gave us any!" cried someone from the crowd, obviously stung to the quick.

Zhorka's round face, still bearing the blue marks inflicted during his nocturnal encounter with the class foe, seemed to darken and lengthen.

"And whose business is it to give you soap? *You're* the masters, here! *You* ought to decide what you need yourselves!"

"And who's your master – Makarenko?" asked somebody, who immediately hid himself in the crowd.

Heads were turned in the direction of the voice, but in the place where it had come from there was nothing to be seen but the circles made by the turning heads, while a few countenances in the middle of the hall registered satisfied sneers.

Zhorka smiled broadly.

"Aren't you a set of silly asses? We trust Anton Semyonovich, because he's one of us, and we all work together. Whichever of you put that question is a silly ass! But never mind, we'll teach even silly asses like him. A chap like that can do nothing but look round and bleat: 'Where's my master?' "

The hall echoed to an outburst of laughter. Zhorka's imitation of a blank-faced ragamuffin looking everywhere for his master was irresistibly funny.

Zhorka continued:

"In the Soviet land the proletarian and the worker are the masters, but you – you've been living on state-provided food, and all you could do was to mess up the ground under you. You have about as much political consciousness as an owl!"

I was beginning to feel uneasy – was not Zhorka being too hard on the Kuryazhites? Would it not have been better to handle them a little more gently? And just then the same elusive voice cried:

"Let's see what sort of a mess *you*'ll make!"

A wave of subdued, malicious laughter swept over the hall, accompanied by comprehending, satisfied smiles.

"You can do that, if you like," said Zhorka with grave cordiality. "I can put an armchair next to the toilet, and you can sit there and look. It'll be very good for you, you don't even know how to use the toilet. It's no great art, but everyone has to acquire it."

The Kuryazhites reddened, but they could not help laughing, holding on to one another, and rocking with pleasure. The girls squealed, and turned their backs to the platform, to show the orator that he had offended their susceptibilities. The Gorkyites alone, gazing at Zhorka with modest pride, repressed their smiles out of delicacy.

Having laughed their fill, the Kuryazhites directed at Zhorka glances which were a great deal warmer and more hospitable than before, as if what they had just heard from him was really quite an acceptable and useful programme.

A programme is of vital importance in the life of a human being. The veriest nitwit, when confronted, not by vague tracts of land, varied only by hillocks, ravines, swamps and tussocks, but by the merest indication of a route to be followed will begin to look ahead more cheerfully. Be this route just a path, or a road complete with turnings, bridges, wayside plantations, and signposts, it will stimulate him to plan definite stages for his own activities. Nature herself begins to make more sense in his eyes, for now there is a left side, and a right side, a longer and a shorter way.

We had deliberately weighed the importance of any outlook whatsoever, even one containing not a pinch of spice or an ounce of sweetness, and it was in this spirit that the declaration of the Kom-somol organization, which Zhorka at last began to read to the meeting, had been drawn up.

"Resolution passed by the L.Y.C.L. Nucleus of the Gorky La-

bour Colony, 15th May, 1926:

“1. To consider all detachments of original Gorkyites, as also those at Kuryazh, as disbanded, and to organize immediately twenty new detachments, having the following membership.”

(Here Zhorka read out a list of the colonists in each detachment, giving the names of commanders separately.)

“5. Comrade Lapot to remain Secretary of the Commanders’ Council; Denis Kudlaty to be supply manager, and Alexei Volkov – storekeeper.

“3. The Commanders’ Council is required to see that all points of the present resolution are carried out, and to hand over the colony in perfect order to the representatives of the People’s Commissariat for Education, and the District Executive Committee, on the Day of the First Sheaf, to be duly celebrated.

“4. All clothing, underwear, bed linen, blankets, mattresses, towels, etc., personal as well as state property, to be taken from members of the former Kuryazh Colony immediately, disinfected the same day, and later put into repair.

“5. To issue to all colonists shorts and sport shirts made by the girls of the original Gorky Colony, second sets to be issued in a week’s time, when the first are sent to the wash.

“6. All colonists, with the exception of girl members, to have their hair cropped close, immediately after which they will receive velvet skullcaps.

“7. All colonists to bathe today, wherever they can, the laundry to be left at the disposal of the girls.

“8. All detachments to sleep out-of-doors, under bushes, or wherever they like, subject to the approval of commanders, pending completion of repairs and equipment of new dormitories in the old school.

“9. Detachments to sleep on mattresses, blankets, and pillows brought from original Gorky Colony, these to be shared by members of detachments without any argument, or grumbling as to their insufficiency.

“10. No complaints or grumbling to be made that there is nowhere to sleep, but reasonable solutions of the problem to be reached.

“11. Colonists to dine by detachments in two shifts, and no moving from one detachment to another to be permitted.

“12. The utmost attention to be paid to cleanliness.

“13. No work to be done in workshops other than the tailoring shop until August 1st, and all work to be done on the following assignments:

“The breaking up of the wall round the monastery, and the building of a hog-house for three hundred pigs from the bricks.

“The painting of all window frames, doors, railings, and bedsteads.

“Work in fields and truck garden.

“The repairing of furniture.

“The cleaning up of the yard and all slopes of the hill, the laying of paths, digging of flower beds, and making of a hothouse.

“The making of a good suit of clothes for each colonist, and the purchase of boots for the winter, till such time all colonists to go barefoot.

“The cleaning of the pond so as to make it possible to bathe in it.

“The making of a new garden on the southern slope of the hill.

“The preparation of lathes, materials, and tools for use in the workshops from August 1st.”

For all its apparent simplicity, the declaration produced an enormous impression on everybody. It even amazed us, its authors, by its austere precision, and exacting tone. Moreover, and this was particularly noted by the Kuryazhites, it immediately made it apparent to all that our passive behaviour previous to the arrival of the Gorkyites had been a mask for firm intentions and secret preparations, with due consideration of all available data.

The new detachments had been brilliantly picked by the Kom-somols. The combined genius of Zhorka, Gorkovsky, and Zhevely, had enabled them to distribute the Kuryazhites in the various detachments with the utmost precision, taking into consideration the ties of friendship, the abysses of enmity, individual dispositions, tendencies, aspirations and idiosyncrasies. It was not for nothing that Advance Mixed had spent a fortnight going round the dormitories.

The original Gorkyites were distributed with equal conscientiousness – the strong and the weak, the energetic and the languid, the austere and the gay, real human beings, and approximates to that category – all found their places in accordance with sundry considerations.

The energetic clauses of the declaration came as a surprise even

to many of the original Gorkyites, and the Kuryazhites were completely bowled over by Zhorka's recital. During the reading of the declaration some of the listeners asked their neighbours to repeat a word that had escaped them, while others, standing on tiptoe, glanced behind them in astonishment, and, at a particularly strong passage, an amazed "oho!" was heard. When Zhorka came to an end there was silence in the hall, but it was a silence throbbing with unvoiced questions: What are we to do? Shall we submit, protest, riot? Applaud, laugh, or curse?

Zhorka modestly folded up the sheet of paper. Lapot's eyes, beneath the puffy lids, swept with ironic attention over the crowd, his mouth widening in a caustic grin.

"I don't like that! I'm an old Gorkyite! I'm used to my own bed and bedding, my own blanket! And now I've got to sleep under a bush! And where is it – that bush? Kudlaty, you're my commander – tell me where that bush is!"

"I've had my eye on one for you for ever so long!"

"Does anything grow on that bush? Perhaps it's a cherry tree, or an apple tree! I hope there'll be nightingales.... Are there any nightingales, Kudlaty?"

"There aren't any nightingales yet, but there are sparrows."

"Sparrows? Personally I'm not very fond of sparrows. Their singing's rotten, and they're so careless, you know. You might at least throw in a goldfinch, or something."

"All right, you shall have a goldfinch," said Kudlaty, laughing.

"And then – " Lapot looked round as if for commiseration. "Our detachment's the third, isn't it? Let's have a look at the list! M-m-m-m.... The third... there are one, two, three... eight old Gorkyites in it. So there'll be eight blankets, eight pillows, and eight mattresses, and there are twenty-two chaps in the detachment. I don't like that much! Whom have we here? Well, now – Stegny! Where's Stegny? Raise your hand! Come on over here with you! Come on, come on, don't be afraid!"

On to the altar-dais there clambered a lad who looked as if he had neither washed nor had his hair cut since the Stone Age. He had sun-bleached hair, and his natural complexion, sunburn, and dirt had become blended on his cheeks in a complex layer already beginning to show cracks. Stegny, obviously embarrassed, stepped on to the dais with dirt-encrusted feet, grinning awkwardly, and confronting the crowd with a slow gaze and teeth of dazzling whiteness.

“So you’re the one I’m to share a blanket with! I hope you don’t kick too violently!”

Bubbles of saliva formed on Stegny’s lips. Ashamed of his black fist, he checked the impulse to wipe them away with his hand, and rubbed his mouth on the hem of his incredibly long and ragged shirt.

“I d-d-on’t...”

“That’s a good thing! But tell me, Comrade Stegny, what shall we do if it rains?”

“Run away, hee-hee!”

“But where shall we run to?”

After a moment’s thought, Stegny brought out the words:

“How do I know?”

Lapot cast an anxious glance at Denis.

“Denis, where are we to go if it rains?”

Denis stepped forward, narrowing his eyes with an air of Ukrainian cunning as he looked at his audience.

“I don’t know what the other commanders intend doing in this case,” he said, “and to tell the truth it seems to have been overlooked in the declaration, but I can tell you this – if it should rain, or anything, the third detachment has nothing to fear. The river’s quite near, and I shall just lead the detachment to the river. Once you’re in the river the rain can’t hurt you, and if you choose to dive you won’t feel a drop. It’s quite safe, and extremely hygienic.”

Denis looked innocently at Lapot, and turned aside. Lapot, as if suddenly beside himself with rage, shouted at Stegny, who seemed to be lost in contemplation of so many extraordinary events.

“D’you hear – you?”

“I hear,” said Semyon blithely.

“Look out then! We’ll sleep together on my blanket, confound you! But first I’m going to give you a good scrubbing in the river there, and clip your wool for you. D’you understand?”

“I understand,” smiled Stegny.

Lapot threw off the simpleton’s mask he had assumed, and moved nearer to the edge of the dais.

“Everything quite clear?”

“Quite clear!” came the reply from several places.

“Very well, then, since everything’s clear, we’ll speak out. This resolution, of course, is not exactly a pleasant one. But our general meeting has got to pass it – there’s no other way out.”

He made a despairing gesture, and said in a tear-strangled voice:

“Take the vote, Zhorka!”

The meeting rocked with laughter. Zhorka raised his hand.

“I’m going to take the vote. All in favour of our resolution, raise your hands!”

A forest of hands was raised. I sent an intent gaze up and down the ranks of the vast forces under my charge. All voted, even the Korotkov group around the door. The girls raised their palms with tender solemnity, smiling, their heads on one side. I was amazed – what had made the Korotkov bunch vote for the resolution? Korotkov himself stood leaning against the wall, patiently holding up his hand, his fine eyes turned calmly upon our people on the platform.

The solemnity of this moment was somewhat marred by the sudden appearance of Borovoy, who came stumbling over the threshold in the highest of spirits, causing the huge accordion in his hands to emit a deafening roar.

“Aha!” he shouted. “The masters have come! Wait a minute, now... I’ll play you a welcome – I know one!”

Korotkov brought his hand down on Borovoy’s shoulder, signalling something to him with a significant glance. Borovoy threw back his head and fell silent, but still held his accordion ready for action – at any moment the music could be expected to break out.

Zhorka declared the result of the voting.

“In favour of the resolution of the Komsomol organization – three hundred and fifty-four votes. Against – none. So we may consider that it has been passed unanimously.”

The Gorkyites clapped, exchanging smiling glances, and the Kuryazhites seized with rapture upon a form of expression so novel to them, and, perhaps for the first time since the founding of the monastery, the domed roof echoed to the blithe sound of a human collective applauding. The younger ones clapped long, with extended fingers, now raising their hands above their heads, now holding them close to one ear, and went on clapping till at last Zadorov stepped on to the dais.

I had not noticed his arrival. He had apparently brought something from Ryzhov, for his face and clothes were adorned with patches of white. As ever, he conveyed to me the suggestion of immaculate cleanliness, and frank, simple joy. And here, too, before addressing the meeting, he bestowed upon it his enchanting smile.

"I want to say a few words, friends. So here goes! I'm the very first Gorkyite, the oldest of them all, and at one time the worst of them all. Anton Semyonovich probably remembers that very well. And now I'm a student of the Technological Institute. So you listen to me – you've just passed a fine resolution, a grand one, I tell you, but believe me it's a hard one – oh, it's a hard one!"

He shook his head as if oppressed by the hardness of the resolution. Affectionate laughter resounded through the hall.

"But hard or not, you've passed it. And since you've passed it, that's that! You must remember that. Perhaps somebody is thinking now – we can pass it, and we'll see about carrying it out when the time comes. Anybody who thinks that, isn't a human being, he's a rat! By our law there's only one way out for anyone who doesn't obey a resolution of the general meeting, and that's out of the door – he can go!"

Zadorov closed his whitened lips tightly, and raised his clenched fist above his head.

"Out with him!" he said harshly, and let his fist fall. The crowd fell silent, awaiting fresh terrors, but Karabanov was pushing his way through it, he, too, smeared all over, but this time with something black. In the astonished silence ensuing Karabanov asked:

"Who's got to be turned out? I'll do it in a jiffy!"

"He meant it in general," said Lapot blandly.

"I can do it in general and in any way you like," said Karabanov. "But why are you all sticking around here looking as dismal as village priests at a fair?"

"We're all right!" cried a voice.

"Oh, you are, are you? Why those drooping heads then? Where's the music?"

"Here it is, here's the music!" cried Borovoy delightedly, and he made his accordion give a short bark.

"Oh, so there *is* music! Come on, now, form a circle! Come on, you girls, stop warming your sides by the stove! Who can dance the hopak? Nataalka, my love! Look, what a lass our Nataalka is, lads!"

The boys gazed with alacrity at the clear roguish eyes of Nataasha Petrenko, at her long braids, and the slanting tooth revealed by her glowing smile.

"So it's a hopak you want, comrades, is it?" inquired Borovoy, with the subtle smile of a virtuoso, and once more his accordion emitted a loud bark.

"And what do you want?"

"I can play a waltz, or a step dance, or a Spanish dance – I can play anything!"

"We'll have the step dance afterwards, Pa – now give us a hopak!"

Smiling indulgently at the simplicity of Karabanov's choreographical tastes, Borovoy, his head on one side, thought for a moment, and, elongating his instrument with an abrupt gesture, struck up a skittish, staccato dance tune, with a character all its own. Karabanov flung out his arms, dropping simultaneously into the squatting position for the Ukrainian dance, and began shooting his legs backwards and forwards in delirious abandon. Natasha's eyelashes fluttered for a moment over her blushing cheeks and rested there. With never a glance at anyone, she glided over the floor like a boat escaping from its moorings, setting into motion ever so slightly the pressed folds of her full skirt. Semyon struck a groan from the boards with his heel, and plunged all round Natasha with an arrogant smile, his swiftly-tapping heels resounding through the room, his eloquent legs whirling with such bewildering rapidity that there seemed to be dozens of legs shooting back and forwards, and not just one pair. Natasha raised her lashes, and shot that glance at her partner which girls reserve specially for the hopak, and which, being interpreted, means: "You're a good-looking lad, and you know how to dance – but look out, beware!"

Borovoy gingered up his music, Semyon finally warmed up, Natasha gave rein to her pleasure, her skirt no longer swaying slightly, but spinning around her legs in eddying folds. The Kuryazhites widened their circle, hastily wiped their noses on their sleeves, and set up an excited twittering. The throbbing notes of the accordion, the dynamic motion of the hopak spread in widening circles throughout the room, forcing the heady rhythm of the music up to the vaulted ceiling.

And suddenly a pair of hands stretched out from the very heart of the crowd, carelessly cleaving the unresisting flood, and Perets, arms akimbo, insinuated himself into the whirlpool of the dance, shooting out his feet, and winking at Natasha. Natasha, serenely kind, swept a glance from half-closed eyes over Perets's face, twitched a snowy embroidered sleeve under his very nose, and suddenly broke out into a smile of simple friendliness, the smile of a wise and comprehending friend, of a Komsomol, extending to

Perets a helping hand.

Perets could not stand out against such a glance. For the space of one endless moment he glanced round uneasily, then, as if lowering all his internal defences he suddenly leapt wildly into the air, flung his ancient cap on to the floor, and threw himself into the whirlpool. Semyon grinned broadly, Natasha seemed to sweep past the faces of the Kuryazhites still more rapidly. Perets performed some steps of his own invention – humorous, mocking, with a hint of the underworld and its ways.

Then it was that my glance sought – and found – Korotkov. He was narrowing his wary eyes, scarcely perceptible shadows flitting from his white forehead to his quivering lips. He cleared his throat, looked round, encountered my steady gaze, and suddenly began to make his way towards me. While still separated from me by one of the onlookers, he extended a hand, saying huskily:

“Anton Semyonovich, I haven’t said how d’you do to you today.”

“How d’you do!” I rejoined, smiling and watching his eyes.

He turned his face towards the dance, forced himself to look at me again, gave a jerk of the head, and said, in a voice which he intended to make cheerful, but which remained obstinately husky:

“Can’t they dance, just – the sons-of-bitches!”



Carpenter Borovoy (second from right) with
a group of former Kuryazhites (summer of 1926)

CONVERSION

The process of conversion began immediately after the general meeting, and took three hours – a record figure for any sort of conversion.

As soon as Zhorka waved his hand as a sign that the meeting was closed, a hubbub arose in the club. Standing on tiptoe, commanders yelled at the top of their voices, summoning the members of their detachments. A score of eddying streams began to be formed in the room, and for a few moments these streams, now meeting, now crossing each other, rushed wildly about within the walls of the ancient church. The various detachments met in separate corners, beside the stoves, in niches in the wall, and right out on the floor, each consisting of a dingy grey crowd of ragamuffins, in the midst of which the white shoulders of the Gorkyites moved about without haste.

Then the colonists poured out of the club into the yard, and made for the dormitories. Five minutes later silence reigned both in the club and the yard, only broken every now and then by some Mercury on a special errand from his detachment, flying by with fluttering heels.

I could enjoy a breathing-space.

I went up to the group of women on the church steps, in order to watch the development of events from this altitude. I wanted nothing but respite from speech and thought. Ekaterina Grigoryevna and Lydochka, happy and relieved, were languidly and ineffectually beating off the questions of Comrade Zoya. Bregel was leaning against the dusty railing of the steps, and saying to Gulyaeva:

“I see that all this display is creating an impression of order. But what of it? It’s purely superficial.”

Gulyaeva glanced round at me.

“Anton Semyonovich, *you* answer! I don’t understand such matters.”

“I’m not much of a dab at theory myself,” I replied reluctantly.

No one spoke, and this enabled me to snatch at an infinitesimal moment of rest, to look around me and observe that marvellous thing we call the world. It was about two o’clock. On the other side of the pond the thatched roofs of the village lay basking in the sunshine. Calm white cloudlets lay motionless over Kuryazh, looking

as if they had been put there by special order – cloud-reserves to be drawn upon in case of necessity.

I knew what was going on in the colony at the moment. The boys were folding up the beds in the dormitories, beating straw out of mattresses and pillows, and tying everything up in bundles. Blankets, sheets, boots old and new – all went into the bundles. In the cartshed Alyosha Volkov was receiving all this rubbish, registering it, and sending it to the disinfecting chamber. The disinfecting chamber had been sent from town. It was on wheels. It was working on the threshing floor, where Denis Kudlaty was in command. On the steps on the other side of the church Dmitri Zhevely, list of names in his hand, was issuing new clothing and soap to detachment commanders, or their deputies.

Suddenly Sinenky, weighed down with responsibility, came fluttering round the corner of the church wall.

“Taranets says I’m to give the signal for a commanders’ meeting in the dining room,” he said hurriedly, gesturing with his bugle.

“Go ahead, then.”

Sinenky rustled invisible wings, and fluttered off to the door of the dining room. Standing on the threshold, he repeated several times a brief signal, composed of three notes.

Bregel, who had been regarding Sinenky with interest, turned to me, saying:

“Why does that boy keep asking for your permission to give those – er – signals? It’s such a trifle, after all!”

“It’s our rule – I must be informed of any signal not in the schedule. I have to know.”

“Of course that’s all quite, what shall I say? – impressive. But it’s all just display. Don’t you agree?”

I began to get angry. Why must they all pester me on such a day? Besides, what were they getting at? Could it be that they regretted the old Kuryazh Colony?

“All your banners and drums and salutes – they only organize the young superficially.”

I was longing to say: “Shut up!”, but contented myself with a rather more courteous reply.

“You seem to regard the young, or shall we say, the child, as a kind of box. There’s the outside of it, the packing material, I suppose, and the inside – the entrails. You seem to think we should pay attention to nothing but the entrails, and yet, if it’s not properly

packed all those precious entrails will be lost.”

Bregel followed with angry eyes the figure of Vetkovsky, running towards the dining room.

“Whatever you say, it’s all very like a military training school.”

“Look here, Varvara Victorovna,” I said, as politely as I could, “let’s put an end to this discussion. It’s no good us talking without ”

“Without what?”

“Without an interpreter.”

The massive grey form of Bregel detached itself heavily from the railing and bore down upon me. I clenched my fists behind my back, but she merely fished up a forced smile from somewhere about the region of her collar, fixing it on to her face with the leisurely movement of a short-sighted person putting on his glasses.

“Interpreters will be found, Comrade Makarenko!”

“Then let’s wait till they are!”

The first detachment was approaching us from the gate, and Gud, its commander, casting a rapid glance at the church steps, asked loudly:

“You say this door is never used, Ustimenko?”

Ustimenko, a dark-skinned lad of about fifteen, pointed to the door.

“No, no, they never use this door, I tell you! It’s always locked. They use that one, and that one, but this one they never use. You can believe me!”

“They have cupboards in the middle there. Candles and such-like...” said a voice from behind.

Gud ran up the steps, balanced himself on the top one, and laughed.

“What could be better? Oho! It’ll be splendid here! They don’t need such a fine porch here. And there’s a roof, if it rains. It’s rather hard for lying on, though. Perhaps not so very hard, eh?”

Karpinsky, an old Gorkyte, and veteran shoemaker from Gud’s detachment, looked gaily at the stone paving of the porch.

“It’s not a bit hard. We have six mattresses, and six blankets. And perhaps we could get some more.”

“We might,” said Gud.

He turned towards the pond, and then made the following announcement:

“Be it known to all! This porch has been taken by the first detachment. And that’s that! Anton Semyonovich, you’ll bear witness

to it.”

“All right!”

“So we can make a start. Let’s see who’s here! Wait a minute!”

Gud drew a list out of his pocket.

“Sliva and Khlebchenko – let’s have a look at you!”

Khlebchenko turned out to be small, lean, and pale. His straight black hair stuck out horizontally over his forehead, and his nose was covered with black specks. His filthy shirt reached to his knees, and, in places where the hem was torn, still lower. He smiled awkwardly, looking over his shoulder. Gud regarded him with a critical eye, which he then turned upon Sliva. Sliva was just as thin, pale and ragged as Khlebchenko, but he was a very tall boy. His narrow head was balanced on the thinnest of necks, and his lips were remarkable for their thickness and redness. Sliva stood smiling patiently, his gaze fixed on the steps.

“God knows what they’ve been feeding you on, here,” said Gud. “Why are you all so skinny?... You’re as lean as stray dogs. The detachment will have to be fed up, Anton Semyonovich. D’you call that a detachment? We can’t have a first detachment looking like that. We simply can’t! There’s enough food, isn’t there? Very well, then. I suppose you know how to put the grub away!”

There was laughter in the detachment. Gud once again glanced dubiously at the faces of Sliva and Khlebchenko, saying caressingly:

“Listen, duckies, Sliva and Khlebchenko! This porch must be washed clean – this moment! D’you know what washing is done with? With water! And water must be poured into a pail. Karpinsky – on your toes! Ask Mitka for our floorcloth and bucket. And a besom!”

He turned to Sliva and Khlebchenko.

“D’you know how to wash a floor?”

Sliva and Khlebchenko nodded. Gud turned towards us, pulled off his cap, and made a sweeping gesture with his arm.

“We must apologize, dear comrades, but this territory has been occupied by the first detachment, and it can’t be helped. In view of the fact that there’s going to be a grand clean-up here, I will show you a nice place, where there are benches for you to sit on. But this place belongs to the first detachment.”

The first detachment followed this chivalrous procedure with intense admiration. I thanked Gud for the nice place with benches,

but declined to make use of it.

Karpinsky ran up with clattering buckets. Gud issued final instructions, and waved his hand cheerfully.

“And now for the haircutting!”

Descending the church steps Bregel followed the movement of her own feet with silent attention. I was longing for my guests to take their departure as speedily as possible.

In front of the very porch on which Zhevely had opened his “shop,” representatives from detachments and their assistants were now lining up, and “porters” were heaving on to their shoulders blue stacks of shorts and white stacks of shirts, lifting clattering buckets, and holding brown boxes of soap beneath their armpits. Here also was drawn up the Fiat car of the District Executive Committee, from which the bored, drowsy chauffeur glanced wistfully at Bregel.

We walked down to the gate in silence. I had no idea where to go. If I had been alone I would have flung myself down on the grass beside the church wall, and continued to contemplate the world in all its seductive detail. The present operations would take about two hours, and then there would be plenty for me to do. In a word I thoroughly sympathized with the melancholy chauffeur.

But a lively, laughing, chattering group was just passing out of the gate and my heart grew light again. It was the eighth detachment, I knew, for in front of it I could make out the splendidly modelled figure of Fedorenko, and in its midst were Koryto, Nechitailo, Oleg Ognev. My glance rested with perplexity on certain unfamiliar figures, clad, as it seemed to me, unnaturally, in the Gorky costume. At last it dawned upon me that these were all former Kuryazhites, and that this was the conversion for which we had laboured a whole fortnight. Clean, washed faces, velvet skullcaps, still bearing the marks of their original folds, on newly-cropped boyish heads. And, most important and gratifying of all – the freshly-minted, gay, trustful glances, the newly-acquired grace of people in clean clothes, and free from vermin – many, perhaps, for the first time in their lives.

Fedorenko, with the slow dignity characteristic of him, stepped aside, saying, in his slightly ponderous baritone:

“Anton Semyonovich, you can accept Fedorenko’s eighth detachment in due, complete order.”

Beside him was Oleg Ognev, his long sensitive lips expanding, as he gave me a slight bow.

"The baptizing of these peoples had been accomplished not without my modest participation. In case some of my future actions are less worthy, you might jot this down in your notebook."

I squeezed Oleg's shoulders heartily, and this I did in response to an almost irresistible desire to embrace and kiss him and Fedorenko and all the rest of my splendid, my wonderful kids. I would have found it hard at that moment to make a note of anything in my heart, not to mention writing anything in a notebook. My heart was suddenly invaded by a rush of all sorts of ideas, considerations, images, solemn oratorios, and impatient dance rhythms. And scarcely had I caught hold of one of these, when it wriggled away from me in the crowd, and something new cried out to me, saucily calling attention to itself. "Baptism and conversion," I said to myself as I walked on, "these are religious expressions." But the smiling countenance of Korotkov instantaneously erased this brilliant generalization. Why, yes, I myself had insisted on the inclusion of Korotkov in the eighth detachment. That genius Fedorenko, seeing at a glance that my thoughts were on Korotkov, put his arm round Korotkov's shoulders, and said, his grey eyes quivering ever so slightly:

"You've given us a splendid colonist for the detachment, Anton Semyonovich. I've had a talk with him. He'll make a good commander one day."

Looking gravely into my eyes, Korotkov said genially:

"I should like to have a talk with you later on – may I?"

"You're a funny chap!" said Fedorenko, looking into Korotkov's face not without a certain gay irony. "What can there be to talk about? Talking's no use! Why do people have to talk?"

Korotkov returned the wily Fedorenko's look with interest.

"I have something special to say, you see."

"No, you haven't! Nonsense!"

"I want to be allowed to be put under arrest, too!"

Fedorenko burst out laughing.

"So *that's* what he wants! You're in a hurry, brother! You must win the title of colonist first – see this badge? You can't be arrested yet. If you were told: 'Put yourself under arrest!' you'd answer back. You'd say: 'What for? I haven't done anything!'"

"And if I really hadn't done anything?"

"You see! You don't understand! You think it's awfully important if you're wrongfully accused! But when you're a colonist, you'll look at things differently. How can I explain? You see, the

great thing is discipline, and whether you've done anything, or haven't – that's not so awfully important. Is that right, Anton Semyonovich?"

I nodded to Fedorenko. Bregel gazed at us as if we were specimens in brine, and her cheeks assumed the character of dewlaps. I hastened to distract her attention from unpleasant matters by turning to Fedorenko.

"And what's that lot, over there? Who's that?"

"That's *that* little fellow," said Fedorenko. "A game little chap! They say he was badly beaten up."

"That's right," I said, "it's Zaichenko's detachment."

"Who beat him up?" asked Bregel.

"He was beaten up one night. People from here, of course."

"What for? Why did you not inform us? When did it happen?"

"Varvara Victorovna," I said severely. "Children have been maltreated here in Kuryazh for years and years. Since you took so little interest in this, I had grounds for supposing that this incident also was beneath your attention, especially as I myself took the deepest personal interest in it.

Bregel took my severe speech as an invitation to depart.

"Good-bye," she said coldly, and bent her steps towards the car out of which the head of Comrade Zoya was looking.

I drew a breath of relief, and went to meet Vanya Zaichenko and his eighteenth detachment.

Vanya led forth his detachment triumphantly. We had purposely put only Kuryazhites into the eighteenth detachment, so as to give both detachment and its commander an aura of special significance. And Vanya appreciated this. Fedorenko burst out into loud laughter.

"You little imps, you!"

The eighteenth detachment flaunted up in fine martial style. The twenty youngsters marched four abreast, keeping well in step, and even swinging their arms like real soldiers. How could that little Zaichenko have achieved such military perfection in so short a time? By way of bolstering up the military spirit of the eighteenth detachment, I raised my hand to the peak of my cap, with a smart:

"Greetings, comrades!"

But the eighteenth detachment was not prepared for such ways. The lads answered pell-mell, and Vanka waved his hand in disgust.

"They're still just muzhiks!"

Fedorenko, enraptured, smote his knees.

“He’s already learned! Just fancy!”

In order to relax the tensiity a little, I cried:

“Eighteenth detachment, at ease! Tell us how you liked your wash!”

Pyotr Malikov smiled brightly.

“Our wash? It was fine! Wasn’t it, Timka?”

Odaryuk, turning his head, said in subdued tones, muffled by somebody’s shoulder:

“With soap.”

Zaichenko looked at me with pride.

“We’re going to wash with soap every day now! Our supply manager is Odaryuk. Look!”

He pointed to the brown box in the hands of Odaryuk.

“We used up two bars today – two whole bars! But that was the first time. We shan’t use so much now. And we want to ask you something. Of course we’re not going to whine....”

Vanka turned to his followers.

“We’re not going to whine, are we?” he repeated.

“You blessed little devils!” cried Fedorenko in ecstasy.

“We’re not going to whine! We’re not going to whine!” yelled the little fellows.

Vanya turned round several times in all directions.

“But still there’s something we want to ask you, you know.”

“All right! I understand. You’re not whining, you’re just asking me something.”

Vanya drew himself up.

“That’s right! We have something to ask you – there are old Gorkyites in all other detachments – three or four, anyhow. And we have none. Not one!”

As Vanya uttered the words “Not one!” his voice rose to a scream, and he flung an extended finger outwards from his right ear. Then he suddenly burst out laughing.

“Not one blanket! Not one! And not one mattress! Not one! Not one!”

Vanya laughed still more merrily, and the members of the eighteenth detachment laughed with him.

I gave the commander of the eighteenth detachment a note to Alyoshka Volkov: “Issue immediately six blankets and six mattresses.”

There was a great stir and movement on the path to the river. The detachments of colonists moved along it as if taking part in manoeuvres.

Amidst the weeds behind the stables were stationed four hair-dressers, who had arrived from the town that morning. The Kuryazh crust was scaling in lumps from the persons of the Kuryazhites, corroborating the opinion I had always maintained that the Kuryazhites would turn out to be just ordinary boys, a lively, garrulous, and altogether "joyous folk."

I saw the frank pleasure with which the lads regarded their new costumes, the unexpected foppishness with which they settled the folds of shirts, and turned the caps round and round in their hands. The ingenious Alyoshka Volkov, rummaging in the vast pile of articles of all sort dumped around the church, dragged to the surface our one and only looking glass, a full-length one, which was immediately set up on the altar-dais by two of the younger boys. And around this looking glass there formed a crowd of individuals eager to see what sort of a figure they cut in the world, and to admire their own reflections. There were a number of good-looking boys among the Kuryazhites, and for that matter the rest were destined to improve in appearance in a very short time, for beauty is but a by-product of work and feeding.

Things were particularly joyful with the girls. The Gorky girls had brought for the Kuryazh girls gay attire specially made for them: a skirt of navy-blue sateen, with one wide pleat, a blouse of good white material, light-blue socks, and what they called ballet shoes. Kudlaty allowed the girls' detachment to take the sewing machines into their dormitory, and the usual female orgy began: alterations, tryings on, fittings. We had given the Kuryazh laundry over to the girls for the day. Meeting Perets I had told him severely:

"Get into working clothes, and heat the boiler in the laundry for the girls. And no dawdling! Off with you – quick march!"

Perets stuck out his scratched countenance, smote his chest, and asked:

"You mean *I'm* to heat water for the girls?"

"Yes, I do!"

Perets stuck out his stomach, puffed out his cheeks, and saluting just like a soldier, bawled out in a voice that could be heard all over the monastery grounds:

"Heat water for the girls – very good!"

He was certainly energetic, even if he *was* a bit awkward about it. But after this grandiose display he suddenly turned melancholy.

"Where am I to find working clothes? The ninth detachment hasn't had any issued yet."

"Listen, my child," I said to Perets. "Do you want me to take you by the hand, and show you how to change? Now then, how much longer do you intend to stand here chattering?"

The boys around us burst out laughing. Perets wagged his head and cried out without the slightest formality: "I'll do it! I'll do it! Don't you worry!"

And off he ran.

Lapot again gave a signal for a Commanders' Council, this time at the church porch where Gud's detachment had set up their sleeping quarters.

Standing on the church steps, Lapot made the following speech:

"Commanders! We won't sit down, it's only for a minute or two! Kindly teach your lads to wipe their noses. They can't go about the way they do, dribbling all over the yard. And another thing: about the toilet – Zhorka told you at the meeting. And one more thing – Alyoshka's set up boxes for rubbish but the boys scatter it all over the place."

"Don't you be in such a hurry," cried Vetkovsky, smiling. "First let's clear up all the filth, never mind the boxes."

"None of that, Kostya! Clearing up is one thing, and keeping order's another. And you a traveller! And don't forget – everybody's got to be told our rule, or else they'll say afterwards: 'We didn't know! How were we to know?' "

"What rule?"

"Our rule about spitting. Say it all together."

Lapot conducted with his hand, and the laughing commanders recited in unison:

"Spit once –

Wash floors thrice!"

A few idlers, who regarded the Commanders' Council with the awed trepidation of the freshly-initiated, stared open-mouthed. Lapot dismissed the Council, and the boys bore the new slogan to the temporary camps of the detachments. They bore it right up to Khalabuda, who, to my astonishment, was seen emerging from the cowshed, covered with straw, dust, and scraps of fodder.

"Those damned women!" he exclaimed in his deep bass. "They

left me behind, and now I shall have to walk to the station. Yes, yes. ‘Spit once, wash floors thrice!’ Splendid! Vitya – take pity on an old fellow! You’re the boss in the stable – harness some hack or other and take me to the station!”

Vitka glanced towards the veteran Anton Bratchenko, and Anton, who was also the proud possessor of a bass voice, growled out:

“Why a hack? Harness Molodets to the carriage, and take the old chap! He groomed Dawn today, himself.” Here Bratchenko turned to Khalabuda. “Now let’s clean *you* up!”

Just then I was approached by Taranets, wearing a monitor’s armlet, and obviously upset about something.

“There’s some agronomists or something living there. They won’t leave their bedroom, and they say ‘we don’t want your detachments!’ ”

“It’s quite clean there, isn’t it?”

“I’ve just been there. I examined the beds and that – they’ve got a lot of stuff hanging up. Heaps of lice. And bedbugs.”

“Let’s go and see!”

The agronomists’ room was in a state of the utmost confusion. It was obvious that it had not been turned out for a long time. Voskoboinikov, who had been appointed commander in the cowshed detachment, and two others from his detachment, had obeyed the instructions to hand in their things for disinfection, and gone away leaving gaping holes in the agronomical nest and such odds and ends as are the inevitable accompaniment of moving house. There were, however, several boys left in the room, and these gave me a distinctly glum reception. But I knew, and they knew, on which side the victory was, and that it was only a question of the form their capitulation was to take.

“So you don’t wish to submit to the resolution of the general meeting?” I asked.

Silence.

“Were you at the meeting?”

Silence. Taranets replied for them.

“They weren’t.”

“I gave you plenty of time for making up your minds. What do you consider yourselves – colonists or lodgers?”

Silence.

“If you are lodgers I can only allow you to stay in this room for not more than ten days. And I’m not going to feed you.”

"And who will feed us?" asked Svatko.

Taranets smiled:

"Funny guys!"

"I don't know," I said. "*I'm* not going to."

"And won't you give us dinner today?"

"No."

"Have you the right not to?"

"I have."

"And if we work?"

"Only colonists will work here."

"We'll be colonists, but we'll live in this room."

"No!"

"What are we to do, then?"

I took out my watch.

"I'll give you five minutes for reflection. Let the monitor know what you decide."

"Very good!" said Taranets.

Half an hour later I passed the agronomists' annex again. Alyo-sha Volkov was locking the door, Taranets standing by in his official capacity.

"Have they cleared out?"

"And *how!*" laughed Taranets.



Reporting for Work Duty. Left to right: Vanya Shelaputin, bugler; I.D. Khirgizov, teacher; Olya Lanova, hygiene inspector; and Perets, commander on duty

“Are they all in different detachments?”

“Yes. In different detachments – one to a detachment.”

In an hour and a half a grand dinner took place in the dining hall, at festive tables spread with white cloths. The dining hall was changed out of recognition. The advance detachment had been up at dawn, washing and scrubbing, and adorning the walls with branches and marguerites. The moment the Gorkyites arrived from the station, Alyosha Volkov, according to instructions previously agreed upon, had hung up portraits of Lenin, Voroshilov and Gorky, and Shelaputin and Toska had hung slogans and greetings from the ceiling, among which, somewhat surprisingly, the legend “No Whining!” fluttered over the heads of the spectators.

The Kuryazhites, subdued and utterly vanquished, cropped, washed, all in new white shirts, were set in a narrow elegant framework of Gorkyites, from which they could not possibly escape. They sat quietly in their places, their hands folded on their knees, regarding with profound respect the mountains of bread on the dishes, and the crystal-clear carafes.

Some of the girls in white aprons, Zhevely, Shelaputin and Belukhin in white coats, moved about noiselessly, exchanging whispered words, straightening the last rows of knives and forks, adding something here, making a place for somebody there. The Kuryazhites submitted to them apathetically, like patients in a sanatorium, and Belukhin tended them solicitously, as if they really were patients.

I took up my position in an unencumbered space beside the portraits, whence I could see right to the end of this oasis which had sprung up as by a miracle in the befouled desert of the monastery. A silence which could almost be felt hung over the room, a silence which seemed to be transformed on flushed cheeks, shining eyes, and bashful grace, into a sense of rightness, and of the mystery of a new birth.

Noiselessly, almost unobserved, the buglers and drummers entered one by one, flushed and anxious, and ranged themselves carefully along the wall. It was only now that everybody noticed them; but after this – dinner forgotten – all eyes were glued upon them.

Taranets appeared in the doorway.

“Rise for the colours!”

The Gorkyites sprang to attention with the ease of habit. The Kuryazh contingent, taken by surprise, scarcely had time to place

their hands on the edge of the tables, preparatory to rising, when they were once more taken by surprise – this time by the thunder of our orchestra.

Taranets brought in our banner, now out of its cover, its gay folds of crimson silk streaming boldly. The banner was brought to a standstill beneath the portraits, by its very presence lending our dining room a festive, patriotic aspect.

“Sit down!”

I delivered a short speech to the colonists, in which I referred neither to work nor discipline, and refrained from placing any demands on them, and expressed no doubts of any sort. I merely congratulated them on their new life, and expressed my conviction that this life would be as splendid as human life could be.

“We’re going to live a fine, joyous, rational life,” I told them, “because we are human beings, because we have heads on our shoulders, and because that’s what we want. And who’s to prevent us? The people don’t exist who could deprive us of our work and our earning. There aren’t any such people in our Union. And just look what people we have around us! Just look – we’ve had an old worker and guerilla fighter with us all day – Comrade Khalabuda. He helped you to shunt the train, to unload the trucks, to clean down the horses. We should never get to the end if we tried to count the fine people, the great people, our leaders, our Bolsheviks, who are thinking of us, and who want to help us. I’m going to read you two letters. You’ll see that you are not alone, you’ll see that you are loved, that you are looked after. Here’s a letter from Maxim Gorky to the chairman of the Kharkov Executive Committee.

“I want to thank you from my heart for your aid and attention to the Gorky Colony.

“I only know the colony through correspondence with the boys and girls and their director, but it seems to me that the colony deserves serious attention and active help.

“Crime is continually increasing among street waifs, and diseased elements are growing up among the healthy shoots. It is to be hoped that the work of such colonies as that to which you are lending your support will open the way to a struggle against the diseased elements, and, as it has done before, will make something good of something bad.

“I remain, Comrade, wishing you the best of health and spirits,

and success in your difficult work,

“Yours,

“M. Gorky.”

Reply of the chairman of the Kharkov Executive Committee to Maxim Gorky:

“Dear Comrade,

“The Presidium of the Kharkov District Executive Committee asks you to accept profound gratitude for the attention shown by you to the children’s colony bearing your name.

“The problems concerning the struggle against homelessness among children, and juvenile delinquency are receiving our special attention, and impel us to take the most serious measures for the education and adaptation of waifs to a life of healthy work.

“This is, of course, a task of the utmost difficulty, the fulfilling of which is bound to take some time, but we are already at grips with it.

“The Presidium of the Executive Committee is convinced that the work of the colony, under its new conditions, will be crowned with success, that this work will be extended in the near future, and that by combined efforts it will be brought to a height worthy of a colony bearing your name.

“Allow me, dear Comrade, to express our sincere wishes for your health and strength, further useful activities, and future literary work.”

While reading these letters I kept glancing over the top of the paper at the colonists. They listened to me, and their souls seemed, without the slightest reservation, to rush into their amazed and joyful eyes. At the same time they were incapable of embracing all the mystery and scope of this new world. Many of them half rose in their places, and, leaning on their elbows, craned their necks in my direction. The *Rabfak* students, standing against the wall, were smiling dreamily, the girls were dabbing at their eyes, and the courageous juniors were glancing at them furtively. At a table to my right sat Korotkov, knitting his fine brows in thought. Khovrakh, his cheeks squeezed painfully between his fists, sat looking out of the window.

As soon as I stopped reading, a wave of movement and speech

surged out from behind the tables, but Karabanov raised his hand:

“Well, now! What are we to say? We must... confound it!... We must sing, not talk! Let’s start, only properly, you know – the *Internationale*.”

The boys yelled their satisfaction, but I noticed that many of the Kuryazhites looked embarrassed and fell silent, and I guessed that they did not know the words of the *Internationale*.

Lapot jumped onto a bench.

“Come on! Girls, you begin – sing up!”

He waved his hand, and we sang.

Perhaps it was because every line of the *Internationale* had now become so close to our everyday life that we sang our anthem so gaily and smilingly. The boys squinted towards Lapot, involuntarily imitating his animated, ardent expression, through which Lapot seemed capable of reflecting every conceivable human idea. And when we sang:

The Internationale
Unites the human race...

he pointed expressively to our buglers, contributing to our chorus the silvery voice of their instruments.

We finished singing. Matvei Belukhin waved a white handkerchief, and shouted in the direction of the window looking into the kitchen:

“Bring in the goose, the mead, the beer, the vodka, all the other good things, and a full plate of ice cream for everybody!”

The boys laughed loudly, fixing their excited gaze on Matvei, and Belukhin met it with a friendly grin, enunciating in his level tenor:

“They haven’t brought the vodka and various other delicacies, dear comrades, but there *will* be ice cream, word of honour, there will! And now eat up your borshch!”

Good, friendly smiles travelled over the dining room. Following their passage, my gaze unexpectedly lighted upon the wide-open eyes of Dzhurinskaya. She was standing in the doorway, and behind her could be seen the smiling countenance of Yuryev. I hastened up to them.

Dzhurinskaya shook hands with me with an absent-minded air, unable to tear herself away from the lines of cropped heads, white-clad shoulders, and friendly smiles.

“What’s all this, Anton Semyonovich? Wait a minute! Can it be?” her lips trembled. “Are these all yours? And where are... those? Do tell me what’s been going on here?”

“Going on? God knows what’s been going on here! I think it’s what you call conversion. But they’re all ours, you know!”

10

AT THE FOOT OF OLYMPUS

May and June in Kuryazh were months of almost intolerable toil. It is not at this moment my intention to speak of this work in the language of enthusiasm.

If work is approached in a sober spirit it has to be admitted that much of it is onerous, disagreeable, uninteresting, demanding enormous patience, and the habit of overcoming pain and disgust. And there is much work which is only possible because man has learned to suffer and endure.

People have long learned to reconcile themselves to the burden of toil, and to its physical repulsiveness, but the explanations advanced for this reconciliation are not always satisfactory to our minds. Recognizing the weakness of human nature, we still tolerate certain motives of personal satisfaction and self-interest, while persistently endeavouring to substitute for them the broader incentive of collective interests. But many of the problems arising in this connection are of an extremely confused nature, and we had to solve them in Kuryazh with hardly any outside aid.

One day, true pedagogics will work out these problems, analyze the mechanics of human effort, point out the proportion of will, pride, shame, suggestibility, imitation, fear, competition involved, and the extent to which all this is combined with the phenomena of pure consciousness, conviction, and reason. My own experience, by the way, definitely confirms the theory that the distance between the elements of pure consciousness and muscular expenditure is quite considerable, and that the more primitive and material elements are absolutely essential as connecting links.

The problem of consciousness was very successfully solved on the day of the arrival at Kuryazh of the Gorkyites. In the course of a single day the Kuryazh crowd was imbued with the conviction that the newly-arrived detachments had brought them a better life, that persons of experience had come to help them, that they would have to march forward with these persons. The decisive factor here was not even considerations of advantage, but, of course, collective suggestion – not calculations, but eyes, ears, voices and laughter. And yet, as a result of this first day, the Kuryazhites were unreservedly anxious to become members of the Gorky collective, just because it *was* a collective, and, as such, one of the hitherto untried sweets of

life for them.

But so far I had only won consciousness over to my side, and this was terribly inadequate. The very next day this inadequacy displayed itself in all its complexity. The evening before, mixed detachments had been organized for the various assignments mentioned in the declaration. Either teachers or Gorkyites had been appointed to each detachment, the spirit of the Kuryazhites had been excellent from the early morning, and yet by dinner-time it was found that they had done very poor work. After dinner many of them did not even go out to work, but hid themselves here and there, while some, from habit, were drawn to the town, and to Ryzhov.

I personally inspected all the mixed detachments – everywhere the picture was the same. Everywhere there was a very slight sprinkling of Gorkyites, and a striking predominance of Kuryazhites, and there was a danger that the style of work of the latter might prevail, especially since there were many new ones among the original Gorkyites, while some of our veterans might also succumb to the levelling influence of Kuryazh, and simply disappear as an active force.

It would have been dangerous to employ external disciplinary measures, such as act so harmoniously and effectively in a mature collective. There were too many offenders, and to deal with them would have been both difficult and ineffective, besides demanding much time, since a retributive measure is only of use when it removes the individual from the ranks, and is supported by the firm sentence of public opinion. Besides, external measures are at their least effective in the sphere of the organization of physical efforts.

One less experienced might have consoled himself with the following considerations: the lads are not yet used to labour discipline, they haven't yet acquired the hang of things, they don't know how to work, they're not accustomed to keeping in step with the work of their comrades, they lack that pride in work which invariably distinguishes the member of a collective; and all this cannot be acquired in a single day – such things take time. Unfortunately, I was unable to grasp at this consolation. I was fully aware of the relentless law: there can be no simple dependency in pedagogical phenomena, here the syllogistic formula, the rapid deductive leap, are untenable.

Things being what they were in Kuryazh, in the month of May, the slow, leisurely development of joint effort threatened to affect

the general style of work in its average, if not minimum forms, and to act as a brake on the springly, rapid, precise tempo of the original Gorkytes.

Style and tone have always been ignored in pedagogical theory, but in reality these qualities come under one of the most important headings in collective education. Style is a delicate and perishable substance. It needs constant care, daily attention, and requires as much tending as a bed of flowers. It cannot be rapidly built up, since it is unthinkable without the accumulation of traditions, that is to say, of conceptions and habits accepted not by the consciousness alone, but by conscious respect for the experience of older generations, for the vast authority of a given collective. The failure of many children's institutions may be attributed to the fact that they have created neither a style, nor habits and traditions, or – where they have begun to do this – the constantly changing educational inspectors have systematically undermined them, moved thereto, of course, by the most laudable considerations. Thanks to this the “child” of social education has always lived without traditions of any sort – whether of an age or a year.

The fact that the consciousness of the Kuryazhites had been won over enabled me to get into closer and more confidential relations with the children themselves. But that was not enough. A true victory required absolute mastery of pedagogical technique. I was just as solitary in the sphere of this technique as I had been in 1920, although I was no longer so comically ignorant. My loneliness was of a specific nature. I already had a solid phalanx of supporters, both among the teachers and the children of the collective, and with such forces at my disposal I was able to embark upon the most complicated operations. But all this was on the lower levels.

In the upper regions, and the spheres immediately beneath them, on the heights of the pedagogical Olympus, any pedagogical technique of one's own was considered a heresy.

“Up above,” the “child” was regarded as a creature filled with some special gaseous substance for which no one had as yet found a name. In reality it was the same old-fashioned soul on which the apostles of old had practised their skill. It was assumed (the working hypothesis) that this substance was capable of self-development, if only it was let alone. Hosts of books had been written on the subject, but all of them, in their essence, merely repeated the dictums of Rousseau:

“Childhood should be regarded with awe....”

“Beware of tampering with nature!”

The principal dogma of this creed consisted in the statement that, given the aforementioned awe and respect for nature, the substance will inevitably develop into a communist personality. In reality the only things that grew under such purely natural conditions were what always does grow when nature is left to herself – just ordinary weeds: but this did not seem to trouble anyone – abstract ideas and principles were what the Olympians held dear.

When I pointed out the disparity between these weeds and our ideal of the communist personality, I was accused of pragmatism, and if it was desired to disclose my true nature, someone would add:

“Of course, Makarenko is good at his job, but he’s a poor theoretician.”

Discipline, too, came under discussion. By way of a theoretical basis for the problem two words were used which are frequently met with in the works of Lenin: “conscious discipline.” Anyone endowed with common sense will take these words as expressing the simple, comprehensible, and wholly practical idea, that the necessity, usefulness, obligatory character, and class significance of a given disciplinary measure must be made absolutely clear. But pedagogical “theory” interpreted these words in quite another sense: according to it, discipline should develop not from collective experience, not as a result of the friendly pressure of a collective, but from pure consciousness, from purely intellectual conviction, from the emanations of the soul, from ideas. The propounders of this theory went even further, deciding that “conscious discipline” is no good when it is the result of adult influence. This, they maintained, is not conscious discipline, but mere drill, the coercion of the soul’s delicate emanations. Moreover, it is not conscious discipline, but “self-discipline” that is required. In the same way they reasoned that any form of organization for children is unnecessary and harmful, excepting “self-organization,” which is essential.

Back again in my godforsaken abode, I began to think. We all know perfectly well, I reasoned, what sort of human being we should aim at turning out. Every class-conscious worker of any education knows this too. Every Party member knows it well. The problem, therefore, is not *what* is to be done, but *how* it is to be done. And this is a matter of pedagogical technique.

Technique must always be derived from experience. The laws

for metalwork could not have been established if no one in the history of mankind had ever worked on metal before. Only when technical experience has been accumulated are inventions, improvement, selection, and discarding possible.

Our pedagogical "industry" had never been based upon the logic of technology, but invariably upon that of "moral persuasion." This is particularly noticeable in the sphere of education in the broad sense of the word, rather less so in that of classroom work.

Therefore it is that we lack all the essential branches of industry: the technological process, operational planning, constructional work, the use of conductors and appliances, the fixing of norms, controls, tolerance, discards.

When I timidly uttered words to this effect at the foot of "Olympus," the gods threw brickbats at me, and shouted that this was a mechanistic theory. But the longer I thought about it, the more analogies I discovered between educational processes and ordinary industrial processes, and I cannot say that there was anything alarmingly mechanistic in drawing such analogies. I still adhered to my conception of the human personality in all its complexity, wealth and beauty, but it seemed to me that precisely because of this we were bound to approach it with the most exact gauges, the deepest sense of responsibility – that science, and not a farrago of old wives' tales was required here. The profound analogy between industrial and educational processes, far from degrading the conception of human personality in my eyes, on the contrary, increases respect for it, for one cannot help respecting an efficient and intricate machine.

At any rate it was clear to me that many details of human personality, any behaviour could be made from dies, simply stamped out *en masse*, although of course the dies themselves had to be of the finest description, demanding scrupulous care and precision. There are, however, details which demand individual handling by a skilled master, one possessing dexterous hands and keen sight, and others which require special and elaborate adjustments, demanding, in their turn, infinite ingenuity and a touch of genius. And a special science is needed for all the details and all the work of the educator. How is it that the resistance of materials is studied in all higher technical institutes, while in the pedagogical institutes no study is made of resistance of personalities to educational measures? After all, it is no secret that such resistance does exist! And why, oh why,

have we no organ capable of saying to our pedagogical bunglers:

“Ninety per cent of your output is spoils! You’re turning out not communist individuals, but rotters, drunkards, shirkers, and self-seekers. Kindly make good the deficit out of your salaries!”

Why have we no science of raw materials? Why does nobody really know whether a matchbox or an airplane can be made from a given material?

No details or separate stage of work were visible from the Olympian offices, From those heights nothing could be seen but the boundless ocean of childhood in the abstract, and in the offices themselves was the model of an abstract child, built of the most fragile materials – ideas, printed matter, utopian dreams. When the Olympians came down to me in the colony, their eyes were not opened, the living collective of the children seemed nothing new to them, they saw no need for the technological approach. But I, while conducting them over the colony, on the rack of theoretical controversy, found myself quite unable to shake off some trifling technological detail.

The floor in the dormitory of the fourth detachment has not been washed today, because the pail has disappeared. I am concerned both about the material value of the pail, and the technique of its disappearance. Pails are issued to detachments at the responsibility of the commander’s deputy, who establishes shifts for cleaning, and, consequently, individual responsibility for equipment. And it is a mere trifle like this – the responsibility for cleaning, and for the pail and the floor-cloth, which represents to me the technological principle.

This trifle is like some worn-out, ancient turner’s lathe in a factory, innocent of manufacturer’s name and date of production. Such lathes are invariably huddled away in some remote grease-stained corner of the shop, and referred to as “goats.” They are kept for grinding all sorts of details of secondary importance – washers, props, gaskets, screws of every description. And yet, when one of these “goats” starts baulking, a faint ripple of uneasiness sweeps over the factory, in the assembly shop they begin to produce “token output”; and the shelves of the depot soon groan beneath a disagreeable load of details marked “unfinished.”

The responsibility for the pail and the floor-cloth is for me just such a lathe; it may be the very last in the row, but the parts required for the tightening up of the most important of human attrib-

utes, the sense of responsibility, are ground on it. Without this attribute there can be no communist personality – nothing but an “unfinished product.”

The Olympians despised technique. Thanks to their sway, pedagogical-technical thought, particularly in the sphere of educational practice, had long become a dead letter in our pedagogical institutes. Education was technically poorer than any other sphere of Soviet life and so education was a mere craft, and of all crafts, the most backward. Even the production of cider was on a higher technical level. And for this very reason the complaint of Luka Lukich Khlopov, in Gogol’s *Inspector-General* still held good.

“There can be nothing worse than to work in a learned department – everyone interferes, everyone wants to show that he, too, is a clever fellow.”

And this is no joke, no humorous exaggeration, but a sober truth. “Show me the man too dull-witted” to solve any and every educational problem? In those days a man no sooner achieved a seat at a desk than he began to weigh results, to link up causes, to dissolve ties. What book could we put into his hands to sober him down? And what need had he for a book? He had a child himself, hadn’t he? But here is a professor of pedagogics, a specialist on educational questions, writing as follows to the GPU, or NKVD:

“My son has several times robbed me, spends the nights away from home.... I therefore appeal to you with the earnest request....”

Why, one would ask, should our Cheka-men be expected to be more skilled educational mechanics than the professors of pedagogics themselves?

I could not immediately find an answer to this absorbing question, and at that time, in the year 1926, I was, technically speaking, no better off than Galileo with his telescope. I had my choice of alternatives – either catastrophe at Kuryazh, or catastrophe on Olympus, and subsequent expulsion from paradise. I chose the second. Paradise, shimmering with the rainbow colours of theory, blazed over my head, but I went up to the Kuryazh mixed detachment, and said to the lads:

“Well, my boys, your work’s rotten! I mean to deal with you at today’s meeting. To hell with you and your work!”

The boys reddened, and one of them, taller than the others, pointed towards me with his spade, and growled out resentfully:

“The spades are blunt – just look at them!”

“That’s a lie!” Toska Solovyov told him. “That’s a lie, and you know it!”

“What are they, then – sharp?”

“And you didn’t sit on the sand-heap a whole hour? You didn’t?”

“Listen to me!” I said to the mixed detachment. “You’ve got to finish this assignment by suppertime. If you don’t, we shall work after supper. I’ll work with you myself.”

“We’ll finish,” the owner of the blunt spade would hasten to answer me. “It’s not such a lot to finish.”

Toska laughed.

“Ain’t he sly?”

There were no grounds for distress here. When people who dawdle over their work try to find good reasons for their dawdling, it should be regarded as a manifestation of initiative and creative spirit, properties which are highly valued on the Olympian market. All that was required of my technique was to quench this creative flame, nothing more, and I was happy to observe that there were hardly any demonstrative refusals to work. Some quietly hid, slipping away somewhere, but these troubled me least of all, for the boys themselves had a technique for dealing with such individuals. Wherever the truant escaped to, he had to take his dinner at the table of his detachment, whether he liked it or not. The Kuryazhites would meet him without betraying much indignation, sometimes merely asking him in guileless accents:

“We thought you had run away!”

The Gorkyites’ tongues (and their hands, too!) were a great deal more expressive. The truant would saunter up to the table trying to look as if he were just an ordinary individual, unworthy of special attention, but it is the commander’s business to see that everyone gets his due.

“Kolka!” the commander would call out severely. “Look alive! Don’t you see? Krivoruchko’s come! Clear a space for him, quick! Give him a clean plate! What’s that spoon you’re giving him? Get a better one!”

The spoon disappears through the kitchen window.

“Pour him out a plate of the richest soup! The very richest! Petka, run to the cook and get him a proper spoon! Quick! Stepka, cut him some bread.... Watch how you cut it – it’s only muzhiks who eat such enormous chunks of bread, he likes his thin.... Where

on earth can Petka be with the spoon? Hurry up, Petka! Vanka, go and call Petka with the spoon!”

Krivoruchko is seated before a plateful of really rich borshch, his flushed countenance bent over its surface. From a nearby table someone asks sedately:

“Hey, thirteen! Have you a guest there?”

“Yes, his worship has come – he’s come, he intends to have dinner.... Come on, Petka, give us the spoon, there’s no time to lose!”

Petka comes bustling into the room with an air of haste and solicitude, solemnly holding out in both hands, as if it were some precious offering, a spoon of the ordinary colony type. This seems to enrage the commander:

“D’you call that a spoon? Didn’t you hear what I said? Bring the biggest one you can find!”

Petkya makes a show of officious haste, rushing about the dining room like a madman, blundering into windows as if mistaking them for doors. An elaborate drama is enacted, in which even the kitchen staff takes part. A few among the audience look on with bated breath, for it is a mere chance that they have not been made object of this eager hospitality themselves. Petka once more plunges into the dining room, a greasy colander, or a soup-ladle in his hands. The dining room resounds with laughter. At this juncture, Lapot slowly extricates himself from his detachment’s table, and approaches the scene of action. His gaze sweeps in silence over the faces of all the participants in the drama, and rests sternly on the commander. Then his severe face could be seen by all to melt into an expression of tender pity and commiseration, the very emotions which everyone knew were perfectly alien to Lapot. The diners would hold their breath in anticipation of a particularly fine bit of acting. Lapot, laying his hand on Krivoruchko’s head, and modulating his voice to the tenderest falsetto, would say:

“Eat up, little one, don’t be afraid! Why are you all so down on the lad? Eh? Eat up, little one! What? You haven’t got a spoon? What a shame – give him a spoon! This one will do.”

But the “little one” cannot eat. Sobbing loudly he struggles out of his place, leaving the plate of lovely rich borshch untasted. Lapot gazes at the sufferer, his face showing the depths of feeling he is capable of.

“What’s this?” he asks, almost in tears. “You won’t have your

dinner? Look what a chap can be brought to!”

Lapot glances at the other boys, laughing noiselessly. Then, his arms round the heaving shoulders of Krivoruchko, he leads him tenderly out of the dining room. The audience is rocking with laughter. But there is another act of the drama, which the audience does not see. Lapot has taken the “guest” to the kitchen, seated him at a large kitchen table, and ordered the cook to feed “this person” up, “because, you see, he’s been badly treated.” And just as Krivoruchko, still sobbing, has finished his borshch, and is able to spare a little energy to see to his nose and tears, Lapot – out-Judas Judas – delivers his most subtle thrust:

“Why are they all so down on you? You probably didn’t go to work – is that it?”

Krivoruchko nods, hiccoughs, sighs, expressing himself with these signals in default of words.

“Well, they *are* funny guys! Only think of it! You meant it to be the last time, didn’t you? The last time – and they jump on a fellow! It might happen to anyone! I remember when I first came to the colony, I didn’t go to work for a whole week.... And you only missed two days. Let me have a look at your biceps. I say! With such biceps a chap ought to work.... Oughtn’t he?”

Krivoruchko again nods, and starts upon his mush. Lapot moves towards the dining room, throwing Krivoruchko an unexpected compliment:

“As soon as I saw you, I knew you were the right sort of lad!”

A few such performances, and running away from a detachment during working hours became an impossibility. Indeed, the habit was soon eradicated altogether. It was harder with malingerers like Khovrakh, who, after two days of work, would get sunstroke, and, creeping under a bush with loud groans, would settle down for a rest. But Taranets was a brilliant hand at dealing with such cases. Getting from Anton Bratchenko a farm cart, with Molodets between the shafts, he would go out into the field with a bevy of medical orderlies, the whole turnout adorned with flags and red crosses. His greatest standby was Kuzma Leshy, armed with a pair of real smithy bellows. Khovrakh would just be beginning to enjoy himself in his leafy grove, when the “first-aid brigade” would be down on him. Leshy would set up his bellows immediately in front of the patient, and eager hands would work it with unfeigned zeal. They would fan Khovrakh wherever the sunstroke could be supposed to

be nestling and then bear him off to the “ambulance.” But Khovrakh would have recovered by now, and the ambulance would rattle quietly back to the colony. Hard as it had been for Khovrakh to submit himself to this medical procedure, it was still harder for him to return to the mixed detachment, and swallow in silence fresh doses of medicine in the form of the most innocent inquiries.

“Did it help, Khovrakh? It’s a splendid remedy, isn’t it?”

These were, of course, the methods of guerilla warfare, but they sprang from the prevailing atmosphere and the common aspirations of the collective to get the work going. And atmosphere and aspirations were the real objects of my technological endeavours.

The detachment, of course, remained the basic technological feature. On “Olympus” they never did discover what the detachment really stood for, despite my earnest endeavours to explain its significance, and definitive role in the pedagogical process, to the Olympians. But we spoke different languages, and it was no use trying to explain. I will quote here almost verbatim a conversation between myself and a professor of pedagogics, who visited the colony – a well-dressed, spectacled individual wearing a lounge suit, obviously a thoughtful and virtuous man. He seemed extremely anxious to know why the tables in the dining room were allotted to the detachments by the commander on duty, and not by a teacher.

“No, but seriously, Comrade! You must be joking! Treat me seriously, please! How can a boy monitor organize everything in the dining room, while you stand calmly by. Are you sure he’ll do everything properly, that he won’t be unfair to anyone? After all, he might simply make mistakes!”

“It’s not so very difficult to organize a dining room,” I replied to the professor. “Besides, we have an old and excellent rule here.”

“Have you? A rule?”

“Yes, a rule. It’s this: all work, pleasant or unpleasant, easy or difficult, is performed by the detachments in shifts, according to numerical order.”

“What? How d’you mean? I don’t quite understand....”

“It’s quite simple. The first detachment now occupies the best place in the dining room, a month later the second detachment will get it, and so on.”

“I see. And what do you call unpleasant work?”

“There’s often a great deal of what we call unpleasant work. For instance, if any urgent additional work has to be done just now,

the first detachment will be called upon to do it, and the next time any turns up – the second. When cleaning allotments are given out, the first detachment will have first of all to clean out the toilets. Of course this only applies to routine work.”

“And was this appalling rule your idea?”

“Not at all! It was the boys’ idea. It’s more convenient for them this way. You see it’s very hard to distribute this sort of thing, somebody’s sure to be dissatisfied. And now it goes quite mechanically. A shift lasts a month.”

“So your twentieth detachment will only clean out the toilets in twenty months’ time?”

“Of course, but they won’t get the best place in the dining room for twenty months, either.”

“Appalling! But in twenty months’ time there will be new people in the twentieth detachment. What about that?”

“No! The composition of the detachments scarcely varies. We believe in lasting collectives. Of course, someone may leave, and there may be a couple of new ones. But even supposing the detachment were mainly made up of new ones, it wouldn’t matter. The detachment is a collective, with its own traditions, history, merits, and reputation. True, just now the detachments have been changed about quite a lot, but the nucleus remains the same in each.”

“I don’t understand. It seems like tricks to me. It isn’t serious. What significance can the detachment and its reputation have, if there are new people in it? It’s like nothing on earth!”

“It’s like the Chapayev Division,” I said, smiling.

“Oh, there you go again with your militarization! But, after all, what’s it got to do with Chapayev?”

“There are no longer the same people in the division as there were before. And there is no more Chapayev. New people – but they carry on the reputation and honour of Chapayev and his regiments, don’t you see that? They are answerable for Chapayev’s reputation. And if they disgrace it, during the next five to ten years fresh people will be answerable for their disgrace.”

“I can’t understand what you need all this for!”

And he never did understand, this professor. What more could I have done?

A great work was accomplished in the Kuryazh detachments during the first few days. A teacher had long been assigned to every two or three detachments. The function of these teachers was to

stimulate within detachments the conception of collective honour, and the desire to occupy the best and most looked-up-to position in the colony. Of course, the new and lofty idea of collective interests was not born in a single day, but it developed fairly rapidly, much more rapidly than if we had merely tried to deal with individuals.

A second and extremely important step was the creation of fresh stimuli. There are, as is well known, two ways of doing this, and, consequently, two ways of heightening endeavour. The first consists in providing stimuli for the individual, with a certain emphasis upon his material interests. This method was, however, strictly prohibited by the pedagogical thinkers of that time. At the hint of the most trifling sum being earmarked for payment or rewards to the children, a hubbub would arise on "Olympus." The pedagogical thinkers were convinced that money was of the devil, had they not heard Mephistopheles sing:

Men will perish for gold. ..

Their attitude to wages and to money was so hysterical that it was impossible even to broach the subject to them. Nothing but sprinkling with holy water would have done any good, and I hadn't any.

And yet wages play a very important role. Wages help the novice to learn to coordinate personal and social interests, he at once plunges into the complex network of the Soviet Industrial-Financial Plan, of economic calculations and evaluations, has an opportunity of studying the whole system of Soviet factory economics, and finds himself, at least theoretically, on a par with all other workers. Last but not least, he learns to value earnings, and does not leave the children's home like a young lady from boarding school who has learned nothing about life and has acquired nothing but "ideals."

But nothing could be done in this respect – the taboo was too strict.

Only the second method was left to me – that of raising the tone of the collective, and organizing an elaborate system of collective perspectives. This method seemed less diabolical, and the Olympians were tolerant as to its application, though giving vent to an occasional suspicious growl.

Man must have something joyful ahead of him to live for. The true stimulus in human life is the morrow's joy. In pedagogical technique this not too distant joy is one of the most important ob-

jects to be worked for. In the first place the joy itself has to be organized, brought to life, and converted into a possibility. Next, primitive sources of satisfaction must be steadily converted into more complex and humanly significant joys. A most interesting line can be traced here – from the simple satisfaction derived from eating a sweet biscuit, to the satisfaction based upon a sense of duty.

Strength and beauty are the two human qualities which are usually found most appealing. And both depend entirely on the individual's attitude to future prospects. That person whose behaviour is ruled by the most immediate gratification – today's dinner (*today's*, be it understood) – is the weakest of men. If, however, he contents himself with a narrowly selfish prospect, even a distant one, he may appear strong, but he will never evoke in others the sense of the beauty and true value of personality. The more comprehensive the collective with whose future prospects the individual is able to identify his own, the more beautiful and noble that individual appears.

To educate a man is to furnish him with a stimulus leading to the morrow's joy. A whole book could be written about this most important work. It consists in the creation of fresh stimuli, in the full use of existing ones, in the gradual building-up of worthier ones. A beginning can be made with a good dinner, a visit to the circus, or cleaning the pond, but the prospects affecting the whole collective must be created and gradually widened, and brought to the point where they become those of the Soviet Union itself.

After the conquest of Kuryazh, the Day of the First Sheaf became the nearest collective prospect.

I must, however, mention one memorable evening, which became, for some reason, a turning point for the labour efforts of the Kuryazhites, although I had never counted on this result, merely desiring to do what had to be done, without the slightest utilitarian aim.

The new colonists did not know who Gorky was, so as soon as possible after our arrival, we got up a Gorky evening. It was all very modest, as I did not wish to give it the nature of a concert or a literary evening. We did not invite anyone from outside. Over the simply decorated platform was hung a portrait of Alexei Maximovich.

I told the children about the life and work of Gorky, going into a good deal of detail. Some of the older boys recited passages from *Childhood*.

The new colonists listened with wide-open eyes. They had

never imagined that such a life was possible. They put no questions, and showed no emotion, till the moment when Lapot produced a bundle of letters from Gorky.

“Did he write that? Himself? He wrote to the colonists? Come on – show us!”

Lapot passed the unfolded letters carefully along the rows of colonists. Every now and then someone would seize Lapot’s hand in the endeavour to penetrate more deeply into what was happening.

“You see, you see! ‘**My** dear Comrades!’ Those very words!”

All the letters were read out at the meeting. After this I asked:

“Has anyone anything he would like to say?”

For a minute or so nobody seemed to be going to respond. And then, blushing, Korotkov made his way up to the platform, and said:

“I want to speak to the new Gorkyites... like me.... But I’m no good at talking. Well, here goes! Fellows! We’ve been living here, and we’ve got eyes, but we never saw a thing... we were just like the blind, upon my word we were! It’s a shame, the years that have been wasted! And just now we’ve been shown – Gorky. And I feel all stirred up, upon my word, I do! I don’t know about all of you....”

Korotkov took a step towards the edge of the platform, narrowing his fine, grave eyes ever so slightly.

“We’ve got to work, lads! We’ve got to work quite differently. D’you understand?”

“We do, we do!” shouted the boys lustily, and Korotkov descended from the platform to the accompaniment of loud clapping.

The next day I did not know them. Puffing, blowing, and tossing their heads, they made the most conscientious and stupendous efforts to overcome that sloth which is man’s oldest heritage. They had caught a glimpse of the most joyful perspective of all – the value of human personality.

11

THE FIRST SHEAF

The last days of May brought a succession of new offerings – clean-swept areas in the yard, new doors and windows, new fragrance out-of-doors, a new spirit everywhere. The last remnants of sloth were being cast lightly aside. The festival of our victory gleamed ever more brightly in the distance. From the entrails of the monastery hill, from out of the innumerable cells, the last foul emanations of the past floated upwards, to be immediately seized by the assiduous summer breeze, and borne far, far away, to some dump for the trash of history. The work of the wind was easier now, for the ancient, massive walls had been demolished by the mixed detachments in a fortnight of arduous work. Falcon, Mary and the convalescent Kuryazh steeds, who had been given the decent names of Cornflower, Monk and Eaglet by the Commanders' Council, had borne away the fragments of brick debris where it would be of most use – the best and biggest fragments for building a hog-house, the smaller bits for laying paths, and for emptying into various pits and hollows. Other mixed detachments, armed with spades, wheelbarrows and handbarrows, widened, cleared and levelled terraces on our slope, dug descents to the valley below, and made stairways, while Borovoy's brigade repaired a score or so of benches for use on various terraces, and at appropriate corners. It was getting light and spacious in our yard, more sky was visible, and the greenness of shrubs and blue distances of the horizon surrounded us like a huge frame.

The yard and the slopes around had been thoroughly cleaned up, and our gardener Mizyak, a gloomy, taciturn individual, such as are often met among the plain husbands of beautiful women, was trimming the sides of the yard and the pathways, piling the worn bricks of the monastery pavements in neat heaps.

On the north side of the yard the foundations of our hog-house had been laid. The hog-house promised to be a fine one, with splendid sties. Sherre no longer looked as if he had been burnt out of house and home. He, too, shared the Archimedean rapture, for over thirty mixed detachments went to work daily, and we were conscious of an enormous force in our hands. Then it was that I realized the terrible dimensions of Sherre's appetite for work. He grew still leaner from this avidity – work and workers sufficed, the only thing

that had not grown proportionately was the organizer himself. Eduard Nikolayevich cut down on his sleep, increased his stride, cancelled from his daily schedule certain unnecessary items such as breakfast, dinner, and supper – and even then had not time for everything he wanted to do.

Sherre aspired to accomplish in six weeks on our hundred hectares as much work as it had taken six years to do in the old place. He would send big detachments to weed the fields, to pluck up almost unnoticeable blades of grass, ploughed under without a tremor crops which failed to come up to his standards, planting in their stead late crops of a special sort. Absolutely straight strips of earth, freed from weeds, and enriched with the droppings of the “King of Andalusia” and all sorts of porcine princesses, radiated into the fields. In the central plot, next to the road across the fields, Sherre made a melon bed, to satisfy my demand for pedagogical stimuli. The Commanders’ Council regarded this as an extremely useful measure, and Lapot immediately began to draw up a list of deserving veterans, with a view to forming a special melon-bed detachment from these elements.

Despite the enormous burden of work on Sherre’s shoulders, it was found possible to form a mixed detachment to clean the pond. Karabanov was made commander of the detachment. Forty naked lads, with whatever apologies for shorts Denis Kudlaty could find them, began draining off the water. Many interesting objects were found on the bottom – rifles, sawn off guns, revolvers.

It was not hard to remove the firearms from the mud, but to remove the mud itself proved no easy matter. The pond was quite a big one, and there seemed no end to removing mud in pails and on stretchers. It was only after four horses had been roped into the work, and harnessed to a wooden paddle specially invented for the purpose, that the mud began to show appreciable signs of abatement.

Karabanov’s “special second mixed detachment” at work was a spectacle of rare beauty. The lads, smeared with mud from head to foot, strongly resembled blackamoors; it was hard to tell them apart, and, massed together, they looked as if they had come from some unknown, distant land. By the third day of their labours we were privileged to behold a sight which must have been unique in our latitudes – the boys went out to work, their loins draped in modish skirts made from the leaves of acacia, the oak, and other exotic

growths. Necks, hands, and feet were further adorned with wire ornaments, strips of sheet iron and tin. Many even managed to make themselves nose-rings of crossed twigs, and earrings from nuts, bolts and small nails.

The blackamoors, of course, knew neither the Russian nor the Ukrainian language, and could only communicate with one another in some native dialect unknown to the rest of us, distinguished by shrillness and the prevalence of guttural sounds quite unfamiliar to a European son. To our astonishment, not only did the members of the special second mixed understand one another, but they were extremely garrulous, and all day the vast hollow of the pond was filled with an intolerable hubbub. The blackamoors, up to their waists in mud and screaming at the top of their voices, would back Dragonfly or Hawk up to the clumsy paddle in the very middle of the ooze.



A corner of the agricultural exhibition at the colony

Karabanov, black and shining like all the rest, his shock of hair plastered into a hideous forelock, the enormous whites of his eyes rolling, would yell, showing his terrible teeth:

“Car-am-ba!”

Dozens of equally savage whites of eyes were fixed on the place to which Karabanov’s exotically braceleted hand pointed, their owners nodding and standing by.

“Heave-ho!” yelled Karabanov.

The savages would fling themselves violently on the paddle in a wild, dense crowd, urging Dragonfly on with cries and efforts as he dragged a whole ton of thick, heavy ooze to the shore.

This ethnographical excitement reached its peak towards the evening, when the whole colony rested on the slopes of our hill, and the barelegged lads awaited in ecstasy the delicious moment when Karabanov would roar out: “Cut their throats!” and the blackamoors, with ferocious countenances, threw themselves bloodthirstily upon the “Whites.” The latter would make for the yard in their horror, terrified faces looking out through doors and cracks. But the blacks never caught up with the “Whites,” and there was no cannibalism after all, for, though the savages might know no Russian they nevertheless thoroughly understood that home arrest would be the consequence of bringing dirt into the house.

Once, and once only, the savages had the luck to make a real impression on the white population in the environs of Kharkov, the capital of the Ukraine.

One evening, after a warm, rainless day, a thunder cloud appeared on the horizon from the west. This cloud, unfurling a menacing grey mane, rapidly spread across the sky, uttered a roar, and proceeded to attack our hill. The special second mixed received it with rapture, the bottom of the pond resounded with triumphant shouts. The cloud thundered upon Kuryazh with its whole ponderous battery of explosions, and suddenly, no longer able to support itself on the heavenly seesaw, emptied itself upon us in a smoking whirlwind of violent rage, rain, thunder and lightning. The special second mixed responded to this with ear-splitting shrieks, performing a frenzied dance in the very heart of chaos.

But just at this agreeable moment the stern, anxious Sinenky, outlined on the slope in a net of rain, sounded the strident notes of the alarm. The savages stopped their dancing, and suddenly remembered their Russian.

“What are you puffing away for? Eh? Where? Here?”

Sinenky pointed with his bugle towards Podvorky, whither colonists were already pouring out of the yard, and making for the other side of the pond. About a hundred metres from the shore a hut was blazing like a bonfire, and a sort of procession was solemnly crawling around it. The forty blackamoors, led by their chieftain, rushed to the burning hut. About a score of terrified women and old men were trying to stave off the colonists already on the spot, with a hastily raised barrier of icons, and a bearded old fellow was crying:

“What business is it of yours? The Lord set fire to it, the Lord will put it out.”

But looking round, the owner of the beard, together with the rest of the faithful, could not but realize that, not only had the Lord not the slightest intention of acting as fireman, but the decisive role had been given over, with the Lord’s connivance, to the powers of evil. The crowd of blackamoors, the rags on their shaggy loins fluttering wildly, and their metal ornaments jingling, rushed up with savage cries. Their grimy faces, distorted with the sticks fastened to their noses, and crowned with the hideous forelocks, left not the slightest loophole for doubt – these beings could, of course, have no other intention but to fall upon the procession and drag it off to the infernal regions. The old men and women, uttering piercing shrieks, rushed into the streets in all directions, pressing the icons beneath their armpits. The boys threw themselves upon stables and cowshed, but it was too late – the beasts had perished. Semyon, infuriated, battered a window in with the first log he could lay hold of, and clambered into the hut. A minute later a grey head and bearded countenance appeared in the window, and Semyon cried from within the hut:

“Take the old man out....”

The boys took the old man out, and Semyon, fleeing from the flames, jumped out through another window on to the damp, green yard. One of the blackamoors rushed to the colony for a cart. The cloud had already travelled to the east, trailing a broad black streamer across the sky. Anton Bratchenko galloped up from the colony on Molodets.

“The cart’ll be here in a minute. Where are the muzhiks? Why is there nobody here but the boys?”

We put the old man into the cart when it arrived, and trudged after it to the colony. From behind gates and wattle fences we were

regarded by faces rigid with horror, anathemizing us with their looks alone.

The village was on the whole cool to us, though we sometimes caught rumours to the effect that the establishment of discipline in the colony was meeting with approval there.

On Saturdays and Sundays our yard would be thronged with the faithful. It was mostly only the old people who went into the church itself, the younger ones usually preferring to stroll round its walls. Our mixed patrol detachment soon put a stop to this form of communion – was it with the gods or with us, anyhow? Patrols wearing blue armlets were formed for the duration of divine service, and these presented the faithful with the alternative:

“Either go into the church, or get out of the yard. This isn’t a promenade.”

The majority chose to leave the yard. We did not go in for an antireligious campaign. On the contrary, there were even certain contacts between the representatives of the idealist outlook and those of the materialist one.

The church council sometimes came to me for the solution of petty problems affecting our common frontier. And once I could not refrain from expressing some of my feelings to its members.

“Look here, gaffers! Why shouldn’t you use the church beside that – er – wonder-working well, eh? It’s all cleaned up there now, you’d be all right there!”

“Citizen Director!” said the elder. “How can we use it, seeing that it’s not a church, but just a chapel? There’s no altar there.... Are we in your way here?”

“I need the yard. We haven’t got room to turn round. And just look! We’ve got everything painted and whitewashed, and put into order, and that broken-down dirty church of yours is an eyesore. If you gave it up I’d have it pulled down in a jiffy, and in a fortnight there’d be flower beds in its place.”

The bearded elders smiled – was it that they liked my plan?

“Pulling things down is easy,” they said. “It’s building that’s hard. Hee-hee! It was built three hundred years ago, plenty of hard-earned kopeks have been spent on it, and you say: ‘I’ll pull it down!’ That means you think faith is dying out. Just you wait, you’ll see it’s not faith that’s dying... the people know....”

The church elder settled himself comfortably on the apostolic chair, his voice actually ringing as if the early days of Christianity

had returned, but another old man checked his eloquence.

"Don't talk like that, Ivan Akimovich. The citizen director is only looking after his own business. But down there, where you want us to go, that's only a chapel. Yes, only a chapel. Besides, the place has been defiled, I tell you."

"You can sprinkle it with holy water," suggested Lapot.

The old man was taken aback.

"Holy water doesn't always work, Son," he said, scratching at his beard.

"You don't say so! Why not?"

"Not just anywhere, Son! It wouldn't be any good sprinkling you, would it now?"

"I don't suppose it would," admitted Lapot.

"There you are then! It wouldn't be any good! You've got to know where you can use holy water."

"And do the priests know?"

"Of course they do! They know, Son!"

"They know what's good for them," said Lapot, "which is more than you do! Yesterday there was a fire. But for the boys, an old man would have been burned to death. He'd have burned to a cinder."

"It would have been the Lord's will. Perhaps the Lord intended an old man like him to be burned."

"And the lads interfered..."

The old man cleared his throat.

"You're too young to argue about such things, Son."

"Am I?"

"And that at the foot of the hill – that's a chapel, only it has no altar."

The old men took leave of us with Christian humility, and departed, but the next day they hung ropes and loops from the church walls, and workers with pails balanced themselves on them. Whether because they had been shamed by my remarks as to the disreputable state of the church walls, or because they wanted to show the vitality of faith, the church council had assigned four hundred rubles for the whitewashing of the church. Here were contacts!

The colonists were full of curiosity about the church, the younger ones giving me no peace till I allowed them to "go and see what they were doing in the church."

"But mind – no hooliganism!" Zhorka warned them. "We must

act on their minds by persuasion and the reconstruction of life, and not by hooliganism.”

The lads were offended.

“We’re not hooligans, are we?”

“And you mustn’t hurt anyone’s feelings, you know. You must be very tactful. You know... like this.”

Although Zhorka’s admonitions were chiefly communicated by means of facial expression and by gesture, the lads knew what he meant.

“We understand.... It’ll be all right.”

But a week later the wrinkled old priest came to me, and whispered in my ear:

“A word to you, Citizen Director! I can’t complain, of course, your boys don’t do anything, but, you know... they corrupt the congregation, it’s awkward, somehow. I know they try, God forbid that I should accuse them of anything, but still it would be better if you told them not to go into the church.”

“So they do behave badly!”

“No, no! God forbid! They don’t behave badly, oh no! But you know, they come in shorts, in those caps of theirs... and some of them cross themselves, but they use their left hands, you know, and they don’t do it properly. And they look round them, they don’t know where to look, and they turn round, you know, sometimes sideways to the altar, sometimes with their back to it. It’s interesting for them, of course, but still, it’s a house of prayer, you know, and the boys, they don’t know the meaning of prayer, and glory, and fear of God. They approach the altar modestly, of course, but they look at everything, and touch the icons, and keep looking at the throne, and one of them even stood in the holy gates, and looked at the people praying. It’s awkward, you know.”

I soothed the Little Father, promised that we would not get in his way any more, and announced at the colonists’ meeting:

“Don’t go into the church, lads, the priest has been complaining.”

The boys were indignant.

“Why shouldn’t we? We never did anything! Whenever anybody did go in they just looked round, and went away. He’s a liar!”

“Why did you cross yourselves? What did you have to cross yourselves for? You don’t believe in God, do you?”

“We were told not to give any offence. And how is one to know

how to behave? They keep standing, standing there, and suddenly flop down on to their knees, and cross themselves. And so our kids thought they must do the same, so as not to give offence."

"Very well, then, don't go any more."

"All right, we won't... but how funnily they talk there! And standing up all the time – what's that for? And in that recess ... that what d'you call it, altar... it's so clean, with carpets, and such a nice smell, and oh, how the priest carries on there... throwing his hands up.... You should see him!"

"Have you been right inside the altar gates?"

"I was going up to them just when he threw up his hands, and said something. I just stood there, I didn't do anything, and he said: 'Go away, go away, boy, get out of my way!' Well, so I went away, what did I care?"

By the middle of June the colony had been brought into perfect order. On the 10th the power station began to work, and the oil lamps were relegated to the lumber room. A little later, water began to flow in our pipes.

By this time the colonists had gone back to the dormitories. The bedsteads had been almost new-made in our smithy, and the new mattresses and pillows were ready, but we still could not afford blankets, and were loath to use the old rags. A supply of blankets would have cost almost ten thousand rubles. The Commanders' Council came back to this question again and again, never getting beyond the formula voiced by Lapot:

"If we buy blankets, we shan't be able to finish the hog-house. Pigs are more important than blankets!"

During the summer, blankets were only required for the sake of appearance, but everyone was filled with the desire to have the bedrooms looking nice for the Feast of the First Sheaf. The lack of blankets was the one blot on our perfect scheme of life.

And then we had a stroke of luck.

Khalabuda often came to the colony, inspecting dormitories and repair work, conversing in his deep voice with the boys, and profoundly flattered to learn that his rye was to be solemnly harvested. Khalabuda had grown exceedingly fond of the colonists.

"Our women are chattering away there," he would say. "*This* is wrong, and *that's* not how it should be! I wish someone would explain to me what it is they want! The lads work, they do their best, they're good lads, Komsomols. I suppose it's you who upset the

women.”

But, while warmly responsive on all current questions, Khalabuda would always cool down when the subject of blankets was mooted. Lapot tried to approach Sidor Karpovich from all sorts of standpoints.

“Oh, dear!” Lapot would sigh. “Everybody has blankets except us. A good thing Sidor Karpovich’s on our side. You see, he’ll give us some!”

Khalabuda would turn away and mutter in dissatisfied tones:

“You’re sharp guys, with your ‘Sidor Karpovich’ll give us...’ ”

Another time Lapot would tune his plain to a minor key.

“So even Sidor Karpovich can’t help us! Poor Gorkyites! ”

But the minor key did not help, either, though it obviously made Sidor Karpovich uncomfortable.

One evening he arrived in good spirits, praising the fields, the horizon, the hog-house, the pigs. In the dormitory he was pleased with the neatly-made beds, the crystal clearness of the newly-washed windows, the freshness of the floors, and the downy cosiness of the puffed-up pillows. The beds, it is true, were an eyesore with the dazzling nakedness of their sheets, but I was tired of worrying the old chap about blankets. Khalabuda himself was mournful, on leaving the dormitories.

“Confound it! They do need blankets! But how to get them?”

As Khalabuda and I went out into the yard almost all the four hundred colonists were drawn up. It was the hour of setting-up exercises. Pyotr Ivanovich Gorovich, in accordance with the drill regulations of the colony, gave the command:

“Comrade Colonists! Attention! Salute!”

Hundreds of hands flashed into movement, and remained motionless over the rows of grave faces turned towards us. The drummers’ squad hurled a brittle four-bar greeting at the horizon. Gorovich approached with his report, drawing himself up stiffly in front of Khalabuda.

“Comrade Chairman of the Children’s Aid Committee! Three hundred and eighty-nine members of the Gorky Colony are in formation for setting-up exercises. Eleven missing – three on duty, six in the mixed patrol detachment, two on the sick list.”

A veteran cavalryman, Pyotr Ivanovich stepped aside, revealing to the eyes of Sidor Karpovich the delightful spectacle of the Gorkyite ranks, spaced as for gymnastics, motionless in the salute.

Sidor Karpovich, fingering his moustache in his emotion, grew unusually serious – more so than was his wont, struck the ground with his knotted stick, and said loudly, in his bass voice:

“Good evening, lads!”

He blinked energetically when three hundred and eighty gay, youthful voices responded in ringing unison: “Evening, Comrade!”

Khalabuda, unable to restrain himself any longer, smiled, glanced aside, and half embarrassed, growled out:

“The little blighters! They’ve learned their stuff! I – I should like to say a word to them!”

“At ease!”

The colonists shifted their right feet, flung both arms behind their backs, swayed slightly, and smiled at Sidor Karpovich.

Once again Sidor Karpovich rapped with his stick on the ground, once again he fingered his moustache.

“I’m not fond of making speeches, you know, boys. Still, I’m going to speak to you now. You’re fine fellows, I tell you straight, you’re fine fellows! And you do everything our way, the workers’ way, it all turns out splendidly, I tell you straight – if I had a son, I’d wish for him to be like you. And don’t you take any notice of what the women say! I tell you straight – you stick to your line – I’m an old Bolshevik, and I’m an old worker, too, and I know! All this is done our way. If anyone says it isn’t, just take no notice, and go straight ahead! Ahead – you understand? So there! And to show you I mean it, I tell you straight – I’ll give you blankets, you shall have blankets to cover yourselves!”

The lads shattered the crystal of their ranks, and rushed towards us. Lapot leaped forward, waved his arms without waiting to straighten up, and cried:

“Hurrah for Sidor Karpovich!”

Gorovich and I hardly managed to step aside. Khalabuda was lifted by many hands, tossed into the air several times, and carried towards the club, his knotted stick towering over the heads of the crowd.

At the door of the club they set him down. Dishevelled, pale, excited, he began awkwardly setting his coat to rights, and had just clapped his hand in amazement on one of his pockets, when Taranets came up saying modestly:

“Here’s your watch, and your purse, and here’s your keys.”

“Did they all fall out?” asked Khalabuda in astonishment.

"They didn't fall out," said Taranets. "I took charge of them, in case they fell out, and got lost... it does happen, you know...."

Khalabuda took his valuables from Taranets's hand, and Taranets disappeared among the crowd.

"What chaps! Upon my word!"

Suddenly he burst out laughing.

"You little devils! What d'you think of that, now! Where is he – the one who 'took charge of them'?"

Thoroughly moved, he took his departure, and set off for town. After all this, I was utterly confounded when, the next day, that very Sidor Karpovich received me with cold aloofness in his own grandly-furnished office, and, scarcely addressing me, rummaged in the drawers of his desk, shuffled the leaves of his notebook, and blew his nose.

"We haven't got any blankets," he said. "We haven't got any."

"Give us the money, we'll buy them."

"And there isn't any money... there isn't any money. Besides, it isn't on your estimates."

"And what about yesterday?"

"Well, and what about it? That was just talk. How can I help it if there isn't anything?"

I recollected the environment in which Khalabuda moved, remembered Darwin, touched the peak of my cap with my fingers, and turned on my heels.

The news of Sidor Karpovich's defection was received with resentment in the colony. Even Galatenko was indignant.

"What a funny chap! Well, he can't come to the colony any more. And he said: 'I'll come when the melons are ripe, I'll help guard them'."

The next day I handed in a complaint to the Arbitration Commission against the chairman of the Children's Aid Committee, taking my stand not on the legal, but on the political aspect of the question: it could not be suffered that a Bolshevik should not keep his word.

To our astonishment Lapot and I were summoned before the Arbitration Commission in two days. There we found Khalabuda standing before the judge's table with its red cloth, and trying to prove something. At his back, the representatives of the "environment," with their glasses and their creased necks, and their neat moustaches, huddled whispering among themselves. The chairman,

who had hazel eyes and an imposing brow, and was dressed in a black peasant blouse, placed his hand with the fingers outstretched on a paper before him on the table.

"Wait a minute, Sidor!" he said. "Tell me frankly – did you promise them blankets?"

Khalabuda reddened, and flung out his arms.

"Well – there was some talk about it! What if I did?"

"In front of the colonists in formation?"

"That's true. The boys were drawn up in formation."

"Did they toss you?"

"They're just kids! They tossed me up. How's one to help that?"

"Pay up!"

"What?"

"Pay up, I say! Blankets must be given as resolved."

The judges smiled. Khalabuda turned towards his "environment," muttering something threatening.

We waited a few days, and then Zadorov went to Khalabuda to get blankets or money. Sidor Karpovich would not let Zadorov into his office, and his supply manager explained:

"I can't understand what possessed you to take us to law! Is that your way of doing things? Well, here you are, and here's the resolution of the Arbitration Commission. Here it lies – see it?"

"Well?"

"Well, and that's all! And don't come here any more, please! Perhaps we will decide to appeal. At the most we might put it into next year's budget. You think we can just go to the market and buy four hundred blankets! This is a reputable department...."

Zadorov left the town extremely upset. The whole evening was spent in heated, agitated discussion in the Commanders' Council, and at last it was decided to appeal in writing to the head of the Ukrainian Government. But the next day a way out was found which was at once so simple and natural, so amusing and unexpected, that the whole colony laughed and danced with joy, and could hardly wait for the delightful moment when Khalabuda should arrive at the colony, and the colonists would talk to him themselves. This way out consisted in having a distraint placed at the bank on the current account of the Children's Aid Committee. Two days went by. Again I was summoned to the high-ceilinged office, where, seated in a roomy armchair was the same clean-

shaven comrade who had once wanted to know why I didn't like forty-ruble teachers. There was a pleasurable glow on his cheeks as he watched Khalabuda, whose cheeks were also flushed, but not with pleasure, pacing the floor of the office.

I remained silent in the doorway, and the clean-shaven comrade, with difficulty restraining his laughter, beckoned me closer.

"Come here! What's this? How could you do it, Brother? This won't do! The restraint must be removed, or... look at him, they won't allow him to put his hand in his own pocket! He's come here to complain of you. He says: 'I don't want to work – the director of the Gorky Colony has treated me badly!'"

I said nothing, waiting to see what the clean-shaven comrade was leading up to.

"The restraint must be removed," he said seriously, "I never heard of such a restraint before!"

Then he suddenly lost control of himself, and rolled in his chair in paroxysms of laughter. Khalabuda thrust his hands into his pockets, and looked out of the window.

"Are you going to order the removal of the restraint?" I asked.

"It's like this, you see – I have no right to order it. D'you hear that, Sidor Karpovich, I have no right! I can tell him to remove the restraint, and he can say: 'I won't!' I see you have a cheque book in your pocket. Write out a cheque for the amount required – ten thousand, isn't it? And there you are...."

Khalabuda came away from the window, took his hands out of his pockets, fingered his ginger moustache, and smiled:

"But aren't they sons-of-bitches!" he exclaimed. "Aren't they?" He came up to me, clapped me on the shoulder, and said:

"Good man! That's the way to treat us! We're just a pack of bureaucrats! It serves us right!"

The clean-shaven comrade once more burst out laughing, and was even forced to take out his handkerchief and wipe his eyes. Khalabuda, smiling, took out his cheque book, and made out a cheque.

The Feast of the First Sheaf was celebrated on the 5th of July. It was one of our oldest holidays – a red-letter day in our calendar – and the procedure to be observed had long been established. This time, however, it was dominated by the idea of exhibiting the colony, now that all "military" operations were over. This idea had taken possession of all the colonists, from first to last, so that the

preparations for the day required no orders, but proceeded in a wave of ardour and firm resolve: everything must be first-rate. There were hardly any loose ends now – the beds were adorned with new red blankets, the pond shone with a mirror-like surface, and there were seven new terraces for the future orchard on the slopes of the hill. Everything had been seen to. Silanti was slaughtering hogs, Butsai's mixed detachment was hanging up garlands and slogans. Kostya Vetkovsky had carefully painted on the white background of the arch over the gateway:

“AND RAISE THE RED BANNER OF LABOUR
OVER THE LANDS OF THE WORLD”

while on the other side of the gate was a terse:

“VERY GOOD!”

On the second of the month the thirteenth mixed detachment, all in their best, set off under the command of Zhevely to distribute invitations in the town.

On the great day, the half-hectare of rye to be reaped was marked out with rows of red flags, the road leading to it decorated with flags and garlands. A small table was placed in the gateway for the use of the reception committee. Tables for six hundred were set out on the top of the steep overhanging bank of the pond, and an obliging breeze set in motion the corners of the white tablecloths, the flowers in their vases, and the white coats of the dining-room commission.

Sinenky and Zaichenko, in red shorts and white shirts and broad-brimmed Caucasian hats, kept guard on Molodets and Mary on the road below, outside the gate. From the shoulders of each floated a white cape trimmed with real rabbit fur. Vanya Zaichenko had learned in one week all our nineteen signals, and Gorkovsky, commander of the bugler's brigade, had declared him worthy of the honour of being bugler on duty during the festivities. The lads wore their bugles slung across one shoulder by a satin ribbon.

At ten o'clock the first guests appeared on foot from the station of Ryzhov. These were representatives of the Kharkov Komsomol organization. The horsemen raised their bugles, letting the satin ribbons hang over their shoulders, settled themselves firmly in their stirrups, and sounded a welcome three times.

The holiday had begun. The guests were met at the gate by the

reception committee in blue armlets, who pinned on to the visitors' breasts three ears of rye tied up in red ribbon, at the same time giving each a ticket on which was written in the most courteous terms the number of the detachment and the signature of the commander at whose table the guests were invited to dine.

The guests were conducted over the colony, while from the road below the signal of greeting was again sounded by our splendid horsemen.

The yard and premises of the colony began to fill with guests. Representatives of Kharkov factories, workers of the District Executive Committee and the Department of Public Education, people from neighbouring Village Soviets, newspaper correspondents, arrived on foot, while motorcars brought to our gate Dzhurinskaya, Yuryev, Klyamer, Bregel, Comrade Zoya, members of Party organizations, and our clean-shaven friend. Khalabuda too came in his Ford. He was met by the Commanders' Council, specially assembled for that purpose, immediately dragged out of his car, and tossed into the air. The clean-shaven one stood smiling from the other side of the car. When Khalabuda had been set on his feet, the clean-shaven one asked:

"What have they pumped out of you this time?"

Khalabuda resented this.

"Did you think they wouldn't pump anything out of me? They always do!"

"You don't say! What was it?"

"They got a tractor.... I'm giving them a tractor – a Fordson. Go on then, toss away, you won't get anything else!"

Once more Khalabuda had to be tossed in the air, and then the boys took him off with them somewhere or other. The colony yard was soon as crowded as the main street of a country town. The colonists, with flowers in their buttonholes, strolled about the paths several abreast with the new arrivals, smiling at them with their crimson lips, bestowing upon them glances now shy, now radiant, pointing out this and that, leading them here and there.

At twelve o'clock Sinenky and Zaichenko rode into the yard, and, bending down from their saddles, held a whispered conference with Natasha Petrenko, after which, Sinenky, forcing his way among the groups of laughing guests and colonists, galloped toward the farmyard. A moment later the triumphant signal for a general meeting, a signal always played an octave higher than all others,

resounded from the farmyard, and was at once picked up by Vanya Zaichenko. The colonists, abandoning their guests, rushed to the central square, and before the last notes of the bugle had reached Ryzhov, they were already drawn up in a single line, while Mitya Nisinov, flinging up his heels, and winning all hearts, sped to the left flank, a green flag in his hand. I began to feel my triumph in every nerve. The joyous, youthful line springing up suddenly in a blue and white ribbon next to the line of the flower bed challenged the imagination and commanded the respect of the assembled company, through their eyes, their tastes, and their habits. The faces of the visitors, up till now smilingly condescending, with the indulgence towards children which grown-ups consider so nice of them, suddenly became serious and attentive. Yuryev, who was standing behind me, said aloud:

“Fine, Anton Semyonovich! That’s the way!”

The colonists straightened their ranks conscientiously, every now and then glancing towards me. Confident that everything was ready at all points I did not delay the next order:

“To the colours! Attention!”

From round the corner of the wall, strictly co-ordinating her steps to the rhythm of the salute, came Natasha, leading the banner brigade to the right flank.

I said a word or two to the colonists, giving them holiday greetings, and congratulating them on their victory.

“And now we will salute our best workers, the eighth mixed detachment of the first sheaf, under the command of Burun.”

Once more the bugles sounded their greetings. The eighth mixed detachment entered the distant, wide-open gate of the farmyard. Oh, dear guests! I understand your emotion, I understand your fixed fascinated glances, because I myself, and by no means for the first time, am struck with admiration for the lofty, triumphant beauty of Eighth Mixed! It may be that I have had greater opportunities than you to see and to feel.

The detachment was led by Burun, Burun, the tried veteran, not for the first time leading the colony’s working detachments onward. A gleaming, keen-bladed, combined scythe and rake, decorated with dog daisies, is held high above his herculean shoulders. Burun has a majestic beauty today, that I alone am capable of appreciating to the full, for I alone know that this is not merely a prominent figure in a tableau, not just a colonist who is good to look at, but first and

foremost, an active commander, one who knows whom he is leading, and where he is leading them. In the stern, calm visage of Burun I can read his thoughts about the task before him: today, in the space of half an hour, he must reap and stack half a hectare of rye. The visitors do not see this, and there is something else that the visitors do not see: today's commander of the reapers is a medical student, and it is in this combination that the line of our Soviet style showed itself so clearly. Oh, yes, there's a whole lot the visitors don't see, a whole lot they *can't* see, if only from the fact that they only looked at Burun. Four abreast behind Burun march the sixteen reapers in shirts just as white, bearing scythes just as flower-decked. Sixteen reapers! How easy to count them! And how many glorious names among them – Karabanov, Zadorov, Belukhin, Schneider, Georgievsky! Only the last row was composed of new Gorkyites: Voskoboinikov, Svatko, Perets, and Korotkov.

The reapers were followed by sixteen girls. The head of each is crowned with a wreath of flowers, and in the heart of each is a wreath woven of our beautiful Soviet days. These are the binders.

Just as the eighth mixed detachment was approaching us, two reaping machines rattled through the gate, drawn at a smart trot by two pairs of horses. The manes of the horses, the harness, and the blades of the reapers, are decked with flowers. There is a rider on the back of each horse on the offside. Anton Bratchenko himself is in the seat of the first machine, Gorkovsky in that of the second. After the reapers come the horse*drawn rakes, and after these the water barrel, driven by Galatenko, the laziest individual in the colony, whom the Commanders' Council, without turning a hair, had nevertheless awarded a place in Eighth Mixed. And now it can be seen how industriously, without a particle of laziness, Galatenko has decorated his barrel with flowers. It is no barrel, but a fragrant flower bed. Look – the very spokes of the wheels have been decked with flowers! And after Galatenko the rear is brought up by the red-cross ambulance cart, in which is seated Elena Mikhailovna, the old feldsher, with Smena – one has to be prepared for all emergencies during work!

Eighth Mixed came to a halt opposite the line of colonists. Lapot stepped out of the ranks, and addressed them.

"Eighth Mixed detachment! Because you have proved yourselves good Komsomols, good colonists, and good comrades, the colony has bestowed upon you the great reward of reaping the first

sheaves. Do this properly, once more show all our younger colonists how to work, and how to live. The Commanders' Council congratulates you, and asks your commander, Comrade Burun, to take command over us all."

Like all the speeches delivered on this day, nobody knew who had composed it. Such speeches were made year after year in the same words, drawn up once for all in the Commanders' Council. And for this very reason they are heard with special emotion, and all the colonists hold their breath when Burun comes up to me, presses my hand, and in his turn repeats the necessary and traditional words:

"Comrade Director, allow me to lead the Eighth Mixed detachment to work, and take these other boys with me to help us."

To this I give the answer expected of me:

"Comrade Burun, lead the Eighth Mixed detachment to work, and take these boys to help you."

From that moment Burun becomes the commander of the colony. He gives a few orders as to certain changes in formation, and in another minute the colony is on the march.

The reapers and harvesting machines took the lead behind the drummers and banner, and after them came the whole colony, followed by the visitors. These latter submitted to the general discipline, formed themselves into rows, and kept in step. Khalabuda marched beside me, and I heard him say to the clean-shaven comrade:

"Confound it! If it hadn't been for those beastly blankets I should be marching with them myself, with a scythe over my shoulder!"

I nodded to Silanti, who immediately flew to the farmyard. When we got to the half-hectare agreed upon, Burun stopped the colony, and, making a bold break with tradition, said to the colonists:

"A proposal has been received to appoint Sidor Karpovich Khalabuda fifth reaper in Zadorov's brigade, Eighth Mixed detachment. Any objections?"

The colonists laughed and applauded. Burun took the decorated scythe from Silanti, and handed it to Khalabuda. Sidor Karpovich, removing his jacket with brisk youthful movements, and flinging it on to the strip of grass bordering the field, brandished the scythe.

"Thank you!"

Khalabuda took his place as fifth reaper in Zadorov's brigade. Zadorov shook his finger at him:

"Mind you don't stick your scythe into the ground. It would be a disgrace to our brigade!"

"None of that!" said Khalabuda. "I'll show you the way to do it!"

The ranks of the colonists are lined up on one side of the field. The banner soars over the rye in the place where the first sheaf is to be bound. Burun and Natasha approach the banner, while Zoren, our youngest colonist, holds himself in readiness.

"Attention!"

Burun begins reaping. With a few strokes of the scythe he lays at the feet of Natasha a heap of long-stemmed rye. Out of the first reapings Natasha has made herself a thong. She binds a sheaf with a few deft movements, two girls hang a coloured garland on it, and Natasha, pink from her exertions and success, passes the sheaf to Burun. Burun raises the sheaf on his shoulder and says to the serious snub-nosed Zoren, who threw back his head to catch Burun's every word:

"Take this sheaf from my hands, work and study, in order that when you grow up you may become a Komsomol, and win the honour which I have won – the reaping of the first sheaf."

It was Zoren's moment of glory. He answered Burun in a ringing voice, like the song of a lark in the willows:

"Thank you, Grisha! I will study, and I will work. And when I grow up and become a Komsomol, I will try and win that honour – the honour of reaping the first sheaf, and giving it to the youngest colonist."

Zoren took the sheaf, and almost disappeared beneath it. But other little boys had already hastened up to him with flower-decked handbarrows, and Zoren laid his rich gift on the flowery bed.

To the thunder of the salute, the banner and the first sheaf were carried to the right flank.

Burun gave the command:

"Reapers and binders – to your places!"

The colonists ran to the places assigned for them beforehand, occupying all four sides of the field. Rising in his stirrups, Sinenky gave the signal for work. At this signal the seventeen reapers walked round the field, cutting a wide swathe for the reaping machines to follow.

I looked at my watch. Five minutes passed, and the reapers raised their scythes aloft. The binders bound up the last sheaves, and set them on one side. Then came the most critical moment of the whole process. Anton and Vitka, and the well-fed, well-rested horses were ready for it.

“Forward – trot!”

The reapers are brought up to the swathes cleared for them. In another second or two they are clicking their way through the rye, in a zigzag line. Burun followed their progress anxiously with ears and eyes. During the last few days there had been much discussion with Anton and Sherre, and much tinkering with the machines, which they had twice tried in the field. It would be a terrible disgrace if the horses wouldn’t trot, if they had to be urged, if the reaper jammed and came to a standstill.

But Burun’s face gradually cleared. The reapers advanced with a steady, mechanical sound, the horses fell of themselves into a free trot, not even slackening down at the turning, the boys sat motionless in their saddles. One round, and another. Entering upon the third round the reapers flew past us as gracefully as ever, and the grave Anton called out to Burun:

“All well, Comrade Commander!”

Burun turned to the ranks of the colonists, and raised his scythe: “Attention!”

The colonists dropped their hands, but everything within them was straining ahead, their muscles could hardly hold back their impetus.

“To the field – run!”

Burun lowered his scythe. Three hundred and fifty boys rushed into the field. Their hands and feet twinkled over the rows of fallen ears. Laughing and pushing by one another, leaping aside like rubber balls, they bound up the fallen rye, and ran after the reapers, flinging themselves in groups of three and four upon each heap of rye, claiming each heap for their own detachment.

“This one for the fifteenth detachment! This one for the ninth....”

The visitors laughed till they cried, and Khalabuda, who had returned to us, looked sternly at Bregel.

“And you say.... Just look!”

Bregel smiled.

“All right, I’m looking. They’re working splendidly, and gaily.

But it's only work, after all!"

Khalabuda emitted an inarticulate sound, but said nothing more to Bregel. Instead he looked fiercely at the clean-shaven one, and said:

"What's the good of talking to her?"

Yuryev, happy and excited, pressed my hand and remarked to Dzhurinskaya:

"But really! Just think! You know it moves me, and I don't know why. Of course, it's a holiday today, of course it is, it's not a workday. But you know what it is – it's the mystery of toil. D'you know what I mean!"

The clean-shaven comrade looked attentively at Yuryev:

"The mystery of toil? Humph! Maybe! But why complicate things? I'll tell you what I like about it – they're happy, they're organized, and they know how to work. That's quite enough for a beginning, it is, really! What do you say, Comrade Bregel?"

Bregel had no time to think, for just then Sinenky, reining in Molodets in front of us, squeaked out:

"Burun's sent... they're gathering up the stacks. Everybody to the stacks!"

Standing round the banner beside the stacks, we sang the "Internationale." Then there were speeches, some good, some bad, but all equally sincere, and made by people who were sensitive and fine, citizens of the land of toilers, their hearts touched by the festival, the boys, the nearness of the sky, the chirping of the grasshoppers in the field.

Returning from the field everyone sat down to dinner together, with no thought of who was older, or who was more important. Today even Comrade Zoya joked and laughed.

The festivities were kept up for a long time. There were games of rounders, tag and touchlast. Khalabuda's eyes were bound, a length of braided cord put in his hand, after which he made unsuccessful efforts to catch a little fellow carrying a bell. And then the visitors were taken to bathe in the pond, after which the boys gave a brief entertainment in the central square. This began with a concerted declamation, voicing in halting rhythms what they wanted the next five years to bring them: a Town Soviet of their own; a new workshop in their yard; a new orchard to blossom all over the hill; and... if possible – electrically-worked swing boats.

The "poem" ended with the expression of the hope that:

*Our muscles in five years' time will acquire
The strength of steel, not of a rubber tire.*

After a display of fireworks on the banks of the pond, we saw our guests to the station at Ryzhov. The motorcars had left earlier, and the clean-shaven comrade said to me, while taking leave:

“Well, Comrade Makarenko! Keep it up!”

“Very good – keep it up!” I saluted.

12

LIFE GOES ON

And again followed, in inexorable but joyous succession, days filled with anxieties, with those little triumphs, and little disasters which so often prevent us from noticing the great steps and great discoveries marking our life for a long time in advance. And, as before, during these days filled with toil, and still more in the quiet evenings, thoughts crystallized; the thoughts that flitted through our minds in the day were carefully summed up, and the elusive, fragile outlines of the future became tangible.

But the future became the present, and showed itself to be by no means so fragile – it could stand quite rough handling. Wasting no more time in mourning for lost opportunities, and profiting by our failures, we continued a life enriched by experience, making yet more mistakes and recovering from them again.

As before, a critical eye was kept on us, we were continually censured, informed that we ought not to make mistakes, that we ought to behave properly, that we ought to know theory, that we ought to do this, and not do that....

A regular industry had sprung up in the colony. By hook or by crook we had organized a woodworking shop with excellent equipment – planing machines, joining lathes, mechanical saws – and we ourselves designed and constructed a lathe for more delicate operations. We entered into agreements, received advance payments, and actually had the nerve to open a current account with the bank.

We even went in for making beehives. Far from being a simple matter they demanded the utmost precision, but we got the hang of this, too, and were soon turning out beehives by the hundred. We made furniture, ammunition boxes, and various other articles. We opened a metalworking shop, too, but came to grief before anything could be done.

The months passed. Beating off attacks from all sides, adapting ourselves, sometimes feigning submission, sometimes roaring and showing our teeth, sometimes threatening venomous stings, often snapping at anyone who happened to get in our way, we went on living and prospering.

We got richer in friends, too. Within the People's Commissariat for Education itself there were many who, like Dzhurinskaya and Yuryev, were endowed with realistic minds, an instinct for fair play,

and a true desire to ponder over the details of our onerous task. But we had still greater numbers of friends among society at large – in Party and district organs, in the press, among the workers themselves. These were the friends who provided us with an atmosphere that we could breathe.

Cultural work struck deep roots among us. There were six classes in our school. Vassili Nikolayevich Persky, a remarkable person, arrived at the colony. This was a Don Quixote, embellished by centuries of technical inventions, literature and art. He was lean enough, and tall enough, to have been created by Cervantes himself, and this was a great help to him in “gingering up” and organizing club work. He was an indefatigable inventor and a dreamer, and I would not swear that the world as he conceived it was not populated with good and evil spirits. I would recommend all who are desirous of organizing club work to invite no one but Don Quixotes. Theirs is the capacity to see the future in everything, to create marvels from cardboard and paint; under their guidance boys begin to put out wall newspapers forty metres long, to distinguish a bomb carrier from a scout plane in a cardboard model, and to uphold the superiority of metal over wood with the last drop of blood in their veins. These Don Quixotes provide club work with such essential factors as enthusiasm, restless talent, and the stuff of which creative artists are made. I will not dwell here upon all the feats performed by Persky, but will merely mention that he breathed new life into our evenings, filling them with shavings, glue, spirit lamps, the squealing of saws, the hum of propellers, group recitation and pantomime.

We began to spend a lot of money on books. The altar dais no longer sufficed for our book shelves, nor the reading room for our readers.

And there were other things.

First of these was – the band! Our colony was the first in the Ukraine, perhaps in the whole Union, to organize this excellent undertaking. It confirmed Comrade Zoya in her original conviction that I was an ex-colonel, but the Commanders’ Council was pleased. True, the organization of a band in a colony is a great trial for the nerves, since, for four whole months it becomes impossible to find a spot on which performers on trombones, clarinets and cornets are not seated on chairs, tables and window-sills, rending the souls of all around with the most indescribably revolting sounds. But on the First of May we marched into town behind our own

band. Oh, the keen emotions, the happy tears and astonished rapture among the Kharkov intellectuals, the old women, the newspaper workers, the street boys!

The next achievement was the cinema. This enabled us to come to grips with the shrine ensconced in the middle of our yard. The members of the church council might wring their hands, and hurl threats at us, but we timed our movie shows to coincide exactly with the chime for the evening service. This ancient summons had never before gathered such congregations. And how rapid was its action! Scarcely had the bell-ringer descended from the belfry and the Father entered the gate, when there were two to three hundred persons queuing up at the club door. While the Father was donning his vestments, the cinema mechanic adjusted the film in his apparatus, and just as the Father was chanting "Blessed is the Kingdom..." the mechanic started his show. Complete contact!

These contacts ended mournfully for Vera Berezovskaya. Vera belonged to those of my charges whose cost price was very high in our industry, she didn't fit into any of our estimates!

For some time after her "kidney trouble" Vera kept quiet, and seemed to have forgotten herself in work. But the moment she became the least bit rosier and plumper Vera began to show off, with her tints, her shoulders, her eyes, her gait, and the tones of her voice. I was always catching her in dark corners beside a vague form. I noted how restless and shifty the silvery gleam in her eyes was becoming, the unpleasant insincerity of her voice when she defended herself against my imputations.

"What's the matter with you, Anton Semyonovich: Can't a person talk to anybody?"

In the matter of re-education no one gives more difficulty than a girl who has had "experience." However long a boy may have hung about the streets, however complex and illicit the adventures in which he may have taken part, however hard he may resist pedagogical interference, in a healthy collective he is sure – given the slightest spark of intellect – to turn out a real human being. The reason for this is that such a boy is in reality simply backward, and the extent to which he falls short of the norm can always be probed and made good. But a girl whose sexual life has begun early, almost from childhood, is not merely physically and spiritually backward, she is the victim of shock, profound, complex, and extremely painful. She becomes the target of knowing glances, timidly obscene,

insolent, sympathetic, or lachrymose. All these glances are fraught with the imputation of crime. They prevent the girl from forgetting her grief, keeping alive in her the perpetual idea of her own inferiority. And side by side with this sense of inferiority exists a doltish, primitive pride. Other girls are green in comparison with herself, just kids, while she is a woman, she has already experienced that which is a mystery for the others, she has already enjoyed a special power over men, a power become familiar and easy. A will of steel would be required, in this intricate network of pain and pride, poverty and riches, tears in the night, and flirting in the day, to find one's line and stick to it, to build up fresh experience, new habits, new forms of caution and tact.

I was faced with all these difficulties in the person of Vera Berezovskaya. She caused me much grief after our move to Kuryazh, and I suspected that she was even then adding many a knot and twist to the thread of her own life. The utmost tact had to be expended in conversation with her. Touchy and capricious, she was always trying to run away from me to the hayloft or somewhere, to have a good cry. At the same time one kept stumbling upon her with constantly changing partners. The breakup of such partnerships presented no problem, owing to the deadly fear the male participators had of standing before the Commanders' Council, and replying to Lapot's invitation to:

"Stand at attention, and tell us all about it."

At last Vera realized that the colonists were not what she wanted, and sought a firmer base for her love affairs. The youthful telegraphist from Ryzhov, a pimply and morose individual, profoundly convinced that the yellow piping on his jacket was the highest expression to which civilization had as yet attained, had begun to show her attention. At first Vera used to meet him in the copse. The boys would come across them there, and protest, but we were sick of running after Vera. Lapot did the only thing there was to be done. He got Silvestrov the telegraphist in a lonely spot, and said:

"You're keeping Vera from going straight. Look out – we'll make you marry her!"

Turning his flabby, pimply face aside, the telegraphist muttered:

"Why should I?"

"Listen, Silvestrov, if you don't marry her, we'll bash your mug

in for you – you know us! You won't hide from us behind your apparatus, and we'll find you even if you go to another town!"

Vera, scornfully ignoring all conventions, would fly to the trysting place at her first free moment. If she happened to meet me on the way she would blush, do something to her hair, and run away.

But at last she too was overtaken by fate. Late one evening she came into my office, flung herself familiarly on a chair, crossed her knees, blushed a fiery red, lowered her lids, but, her head held high, said loudly and defiantly:

"I have something to tell you."

"Go on!" I said, echoing her stiff tones.

"I've got to have an abortion."

"Have you?"

"Yes, I have. Be so kind as to give me a note for the hospital."

I looked at her in silence. She let her head droop.

"That's... all!" she said.

I maintained silence a moment longer. Vera tried to look at me from beneath her half-closed lids, and these glances told me that she was now quite shameless – the glances, the colour in her cheeks, her way of talking – all corroborated this.

"This time you're going to have your baby," I said coldly.

Vera looked at me obliquely, coquettishly, and tossed her head.

"No, I'm not!"



The first brass band (1927)

I made no reply, locked up the drawer of my desk, and put on my cap. She got up, and looked at me with the same awkward coyness.

"Come on! Time to go to bed!" I said.

"But... the note. I can't wait. You ought to understand."

We went through the dark room of the Commanders' Council, where we came to a stop.

"I tell you quite seriously, and I shan't alter my decision – no more operations! You shall have the baby."

"Oh!" cried Vera, and ran out, banging the door after her.

Three days later she met me at the gate, when I was returning late one evening from the village, and walked beside me, beginning to speak in a conciliatory kittenish voice:

"Anton Semyonovich, you keep joking, but it's no joking matter for me."

"What d'you want?"

"As if you didn't know! I want a note – why d'you pretend not to understand?"

I took her arm, and led her along the field path.

"Let's have a talk."

"There's nothing to talk about! What's the good of talking? Just give me the note!"

"Listen, Vera," I said. "I'm not pretending, and I'm not joking. Life's a serious thing, and it's wrong and dangerous to play at living. A very serious thing has happened in your life – you're fallen in love. Very well, then, marry the man."

"What the hell do I want with your 'man'! *Me* get married! I like that! And then you want me to be nursing babies! Just you give me a note! And who says I've fallen in love?"

"You haven't? So you were just fooling round?"

"What if I was? You can say anything you like, of course."

"And here's what I say: I'm not going to allow you to fool about. You've started living with a man, and now you're going to be a mother."

"Give me a note, I tell you!" shrieked Vera, now almost in tears. "Why are you mocking at me?"

"I'm not going to give you a note. If you go on asking, I'll place the matter before the Commanders' Council."

"Oh, Lord!" she shouted and, sinking on to the grassy edge of the field, fell to weeping, her shoulders heaving, and her breath

coming in great gasps.

I stood over her in silence. Galatenko approached us from the melon bed, gazed long at Vera lying on the grassy edge, and asked in leisurely tones:

"I wondered what was squealing here. It's Vera crying! She generally laughs. And now she's crying."

Vera fell silent, rose from the grass, shook out her dress carefully, gave one last businesslike gulp, and turned towards the colony, swinging her arms and gazing up at the stars.

"Come in to the hut, Anton Semyonovich," said Galatenko. "I'll give you such a melon! It's a king-melon! Some of the boys are there."

Two months went by. Our life rolled on like a well-tended railway train – sometimes full steam ahead, more slowly when crossing a shaky bridge, brakes on going downhill, puffing and snorting when ascending. And together with our life that of Vera Bere-zovskaya's also rolled onwards; but she was a stowaway on our train.

It had become impossible to conceal from the colonists that she was pregnant – no doubt Vera had confided her secret in her girl friends, and everyone knows how womenfolk can keep a secret. I had an opportunity – not that I needed one – for appreciating the generosity of the colonists. Vera was neither teased nor persecuted. In the eyes of our lads, to be pregnant, or to bear a child, was neither a disgrace nor a misfortune. Not a single colonist ever said an insulting word to Vera, or flung her as much as a scornful glance. But their attitude to Silvestrov the telegraphist was another matter. It was obvious that all aspects of the question had been thoroughly discussed in the dormitories, wherever the mixed detachments happened to be working, in the clubrooms, threshing floor, workshops, and other gathering places, for Lapot told me about it as if it were quite a settled thing:

"We're going to speak to Silvestrov in the Council today. You don't object?"

"I don't object, but perhaps Silvestrov will."

"He'll be brought. We'll see what kind of Komsomol he is."

That evening Silvestrov was brought in by Zhorka and Volokhov, and despite the tragedy of the situation, I could not restrain a smile when, the boys having placed him in the middle of the floor, Lapot gave a twist to the last screw.

“Atten-tion!”

Silvestrov went in mortal fear of the Commanders’ Council. Not only did he go into the middle of the room, not only did he stand at attention, he would have been ready, like the hero of a fairy tale, to undertake any feat, solve any riddle, if only thus he might hope to escape with a whole skin from this terrible institution. Things however turned out unexpectedly, in a fashion which set the Council itself trying to guess the solution of the riddle, for Silvestrov murmured from his central position:

“Comrade Colonists, what makes you think I’m such a bad lot, such a hooligan? You say – marry her! I’m quite ready to, but what can I do if she doesn’t want to?”

“She doesn’t want to?” cried Lapot, leaping to his feet. “Who told you so?”

“She told me so herself. Vera did!”

“Come on, then, let’s have her up before the Council. Zoren!”

“Very good!”

Zoren flew out of the door in a twinkling, and two minutes later reappeared in the office, nodded towards Lapot, and cocked his head in the direction of some distant sphere, at present inhabited by Vera.

“She won’t! I told her, you know. But she only said: ‘Get out!’ ”

Lapot swept his glance over the Council till it rested upon Fedorenko. Fedorenko rose ponderously from his place, saluted with careless familiarity, uttered a low, rich “Very good!” and moved towards the door. Zoren ducked under his arm in the doorway, and tumbled down the steps with a terrific racket. Silvestrov turned pale, frozen into immobility in there, in the middle of the floor, as he watched the colonists flay the fallen angel of love.

Hurrying after Fedorenko, I stopped him in the yard.

“Go back to the Council, I’ll fetch Vera.”

Fedorenko silently let me pass.

Vera, sitting on her bed, patiently awaiting torture and execution, was turning some big white buttons round and round in her hand. Zoren was standing in front of her like a pointer in sight of its prey, barking shrilly:

“Go! Vera! Go! Or Fedorenko.... Go! You’d better go!” his voice dropped to a whisper. “If you don’t Fedorenko will carry you there in his arms.”

Catching sight of me, Zoren disappeared, leaving nothing but a blue eddy of air in the place where he had been.

I sat down on Vera's bed, dismissing with a nod two or three girls who were hanging about.

"Don't you want to marry Silvestrov?"

"No."

"Then don't. You're quite right."

Still turning the buttons in her hands, Vera said, to the buttons, not to me:

"Everyone wants to make me get married. But what if I don't want to! You get me a permit for an operation!"

"No!"

"Get me one, I tell you! I know the law – if I want one you have no right to prevent me."

"It's too late now."

"Never mind if it is."

"It's too late. Not a single doctor would agree to do it."

"They would! I know! Only they call it a caesarean operation."

"D'you know what that is?"

"Of course! They'll cut me up, that's all."

"It's extremely dangerous. You might die."

"So what! I'd rather die than have a baby. I won't!"

I placed my hand over the buttons. She transferred her gaze to the pillow.

"Look here, Vera! The doctors have to obey the law, too. A caesarean operation can only be performed if a mother can't give birth to the baby."

"Well, I can't either!"

"Oh, yes you can! And you'll have your baby!"

She threw off my hand and rose from the bed, flinging the buttons violently on to the coverlet.

"I can't! I won't have a baby! You may as well know! I'll hang myself, or I'll drown myself, but I'm not going to have a baby!"

She flung herself on to the bed and fell to crying. Zoren flew into the dormitory.

"Anton Semyonovich, Lapot wants to know whether they're to expect Vera or not. And what about Silvestrov?"

"Tell him Vera won't marry him."

"And Silvestrov?"

"Chuck him out!"

Zoren wagged an invisible tail, and flew out of the door like greased lightning.

What was I to do? How many thousands of years have people been inhabiting the earth, and still all this disorder in their love affairs! Romeo and Juliet, Othello and Desdemona, Onegin and Tatyana, Vera and Silvestrov. When will it be over? When will there be manometers, amperemeters, voltmeters and automatic rapid fire extinguishers to attach to the hearts of lovers? When will it cease to be necessary to stand over them and wonder: will he (or she) hang him-, herself, or will he (or she) not?

I went away in a fit of anger. The Council had already turned out the swain. I asked the girl commanders to stay behind so as to have a talk with them about Vera. Plump, rosy-cheeked Olya Lanova heard me out with grave friendliness.

"It's quite right," she said. "If we let her do that, she'll be quite lost."

Natasha Petrenko, watching Olya with calm wise eyes, said nothing.

"What's your opinion, Natasha?"

"Anton Semyonovich," she said. "If a person means to hang himself, you can't help it. There's no way of stopping it. The girls say, 'We'll watch her.' We will, of course, but she'll manage to slip through our fingers...."

We parted. The girls went to bed, and I to brood and wait for a tap on the window.

I spent several nights in this useful occupation. Sometimes a night would begin with a visit from Vera, who would arrive dishevelled, red-eyed, overcome with grief, and sit opposite me uttering a torrent of the most outrageous rubbish about her ruined life, my cruelty, and various cases of successful caesarean operations.

I availed myself of the opportunity of instructing Vera in certain elements of an essential philosophy of life, which she lacked to an incredible extent.

"You are suffering," I told her, "because you have been so greedy. You must have joy, entertainment, pleasure, amusements. You think life is one long holiday, with nothing to pay. A person just comes to the feast, gets treated, has a dance, and all for his own pleasure."

"And do you think people ought to be continually suffering?"

"I think life is not an eternal holiday. Holidays occur very sel-

dom, the greater part of life consists in work, all sorts of human cares, and duties – that's the way all the workers live. And there is more joy and significance in such a life than in your holiday. There used to be people who didn't work but only enjoyed themselves and revelled in all sorts of pleasures. You know what we did to them – we just chucked them out."

"Yes," sobbed Vera. "If a person's a worker you think he must suffer all the time!"

"Why should he suffer? Work and a life of toil can also be a joy. Look – you'll have a son, you'll learn to love him, and you'll have a family and your son to look after. You'll be like everyone else, work, and sometimes rest, that's what life is. And when your son grows up, you'll often remember me with gratitude for not allowing you to destroy him."

Vera began very, very slowly to hearken to my words, and survey her own future without terror and disgust. I mobilized all the feminine forces in the colony, and they surrounded Vera with special care, and expounded to her a still more special analysis of life. The Commanders' Council assigned Vera a separate room. Kudlaty headed a commission of three who carried to this room furniture, dishes, and all sorts of feminine trifles. Even the younger boys began to display an interest in all this, but of course they were incapable of shaking off their invariable frivolity, their far from serious outlook on life. This can be the only explanation for my catching Sinenky one day in a newly-made baby's cap.

"What's this? Why have you put that on?"

Sinenky tore the cap from his head, and heaved a sigh.

"Where did you get it?"

"It's... Vera's baby's... cap... the girls made it...."

"A baby's cap? What d'you want it for?"

"I was passing by...."

"Well?"

"I was passing by, and it lay there."

"You were passing by the tailors' shop?"

Sinenky, understanding that no more words were needed, nodded silently, looking aside.

"The girls made it for a purpose, and you, you would tear it, soil it, throw it away! What d'you mean by it?"

But this accusation was too much for Sinenky's feeble strength.

"No, Anton Semyonovich, it was like this: I took it, and Nata-

sha said: 'What'll you do next, I wonder?', and I said: 'I'll take it to Vera.' And she said: 'All right, take it!' I went to Vera's room, but she had gone to the dispensary. And you say I'd tear it...."

Another month passed, during which Vera made it up with us, and threw herself into maternal cares with as much passion as she had expended in demanding a caesarean operation. Once again Silvestrov appeared in the colony, and even the keen-witted Galatenko threw up his hands in astonishment.

"It beats me! Now they want to get married!"

Life went on and on. Our train became still livelier, and sped on, enveloping in its joyous fragrant smoke the wide fields of our cheerful Soviet days. Soviet-minded people regarded our life, and rejoiced. Visitors would come to us on Sundays – students, workers' excursions, pedagogues, journalists. The newspapers and magazines printed simple, friendly accounts of our life, illustrated by portraits of the boys and snapshots of the hog-house and the woodworking shop. Our guests would leave us, not unmoved by our modest lustre, pressing the hands of their new friends, replying to our invitations to come again, with salutes, and the words "very good!"

Foreigners were being brought to see us more and more frequently. Well-dressed gentlemen narrowed their eyes politely at our primitive prosperity, the ancient monastery domes, the boys' thin cotton overalls. Nor could we impress them with our cowsheds. But the lively boyish faces, the restrained business-like hum, the almost imperceptible irony of the glances directed at speckled hose and short jackets, at smoothly-groomed countenances and diminutive notebooks – these did seem to make an impression on our visitors.

They bombarded their interpreters with insidious questions – for some reason unable to believe that we had broken up the monastery wall, though there was obviously no wall any more. They asked permission to speak to the boys, and I gave it, only strictly stipulating that there should be no questions about the boys' pasts. This put them on their guard, and started them arguing. The interpreter, a trifle embarrassed, told me:

"They want to know why you conceal the past of your charges. If it was bad – all the more credit to you!"

But it was with entire satisfaction that the interpreter transmitted my reply:

"We don't want any credit. I only ask for the most ordinary

delicacy. We don't pry into the past of our visitors."

The visitors blossomed out into smiles and nodded cordially.

"Yes, yes!"

Then they departed in their expensive motorcars, and our life went on as before.

In the autumn another group of colonists left for the *Rabfak*. In the winter we once more began patiently building up, brick by brick, in our classrooms, the austere edifice of educational culture.

And once more spring came round! And such an early spring! Everything was over in three days. The dry, speckled crust of ice still lies on the neat, firm paths. Someone is driving along the road, empty pails clattering merrily on his cart. The sky is blue, lofty, gay. The crimson flag flutters with loud claps in the warm spring breeze. The front door of the club is wide open, the vestibule with the strips of drugget so carefully laid over the washed floor seems cleaner than ever in the unaccustomed chill.

In the forcing-frames work had long been in full swing. The straw mats are folded and put away in the daytime, the glass roofs obliquely propped on supports. On the edges of the forcing frames boys and girls armed with pointed sticks for pricking off the seedlings, sat and chattered interminably. Zhenya Zhurbina who first saw the light in 1924, and is now for the first time roving at will over the earth's surface, peers into the vast depths of the forcing frames, glances fearfully towards the stable, where lives Molodets, and also prattles on the questions which interest her:

"And who will plough? The boys? And will Molodets plough? With the boys? And how do people plough?"

After Easter we caught rumours of a new house being built by the GPU on the other side of Kharkov, a house for a children's colony, not under the Department of Public Education, but under the GPU. The boys received this information as the symbol of a new era.

"Fancy building a new house! Quite a new one!"

In the middle of the summer a motorcar rolled up to the colony, and a man with crimson tabs said to me:

"If you have time, be so good as to come with me! We're just finishing a house for the Dzerzhinsky Commune. We should like you to look at it... from the pedagogical point of view."

We went.

I was amazed. Was this for street waifs? A spacious, sunny pal-

ace! Parquet floors and painted ceilings!

Not in vain had I been dreaming for seven years! Not in vain had I imagined the future palaces of pedagogy! With sensations of envy I expounded the “pedagogical point of view” to the Chekaman, who confidently accepted it as the fruit of my pedagogical experience, and duly thanked me.

I returned home, devoured with envy. What fortunate man was destined to work in this colony? It’s easy enough to build a palace, but there is something which is harder. I did not grieve long, however. Was not my collective better than any palace?

In September Vera gave birth to a son. Comrade Zoya came to the colony, closed the door of my office after her, and opened the vials of her wrath upon me.

“So your girls are having babies?”

“Why the plural? And why do you find it so alarming?”

“Alarming? Girls giving birth to babies!”

“Naturally to babies. What else could they give birth to?”

“Don’t joke about it, Comrade!”

“I’m not joking.”

“A statement will have to be drawn up immediately.”

“The Registry Office has done all that is necessary.”

“The Registry Office is one thing, and we’re quite another....”

“No one has empowered you to draw up a birth certificate.”

“It’s not the birth... it’s something worse!”

“Worse than a birth? I thought there was nothing worse. Schopenhauer or someone says....”

“Comrade, drop that tone, please!”

“I don’t intend to.”

“You won’t drop it? What does that mean?”

“Do you wish me to be serious? It means that I’m sick of everything – sick of everything, I tell you! Go away, you shan’t draw up any statements!”

“Very well!”

“Your servant!”

She departed, but nothing came of her “very well.” Vera displayed unusual maternal gifts, and became a careful, affectionate, and rational parent. What more did I want? She was given work in our bookkeeper’s office, and whenever we met she showed me the most demonstrative affection.

The fields had long been harvested, the threshing was over, eve-

rything that had to be stored in the earth for the winter was stored, the workshops supplied with raw material, new colonists taken in.

The first snow came very early. The day before it had been warm, and in the night the snowflakes began noiselessly and cautiously circling above Kuryazh. Zhenya Zhurbina came out onto the porch the next morning, blinking at the white rectangle of the yard.

“Who’s been salting the ground?” she asked, astonished.
“Mama! It was the boys, I’m sure!”

“HELP THE POOR LITTLE BOY!”

The building of the Dzerzhinsky Commune was already completed. A handsome grey house had sprung up on the outskirts of a forest of young oaks, its twinkling facade looking towards Kharkov. In the house were lofty light dormitories, elegant halls, wide staircases, draperies, and portraits. Everything in the commune had been done with taste and foresight, not at all in the style of the pedagogical pundits.

Two halls were given up to workshops, and in the corner of one of them I saw, to my great astonishment, a cobblers' shop!

There were excellent lathes in the commune's woodworking shop. But here it could be felt that the organizers were not quite sure of themselves. The builders of the commune asked me and the Gorky Colony to get the new institution ready for the opening day. I assigned a brigade under Kirghizov for this work, and they threw themselves hammer and tongs into the new responsibility.

The Dzerzhinsky Commune was intended for not more than a hundred children, but it was to be a memorial to Felix Dzerzhinsky, and the Ukrainian Cheka-men had invested in this matter not merely their own money, but all their leisure hours, all the forces of their hearts and minds. There was only one thing they were not in a position to give the new commune, and this was pedagogical theory, in which they were not well versed. But this by no means frightened them off pedagogical practice.

I felt the greatest curiosity to see how the Cheka comrades would cope with this difficult situation. They might, of course, have ignored theory, but would theory be ready to ignore them? In a matter so new and fundamental, would it not be as well to apply the latest discoveries of pedagogical science – self-government, for instance? Would the Cheka-men be ready to sacrifice their painted ceilings and beautiful furniture in the interests of pedagogical science? It very soon became evident that they were not willing to make any such sacrifices. The Cheka-man seated me in a deep armchair in his office, and said:

“This is what I want to ask you – we can't have all this spoilt and broken up. Of course there must be a commune, and communes will be necessary for a long time to come. We know you have a disciplined collective. Give us fifty of your boys for a start, and then

we'll fill up with street boys. They'll have their own executive body, and their own order, ready-made. D'you understand me?"

I understood him very well. I perfectly understood that this intelligent person had not the slightest conception of the science of pedagogics. To tell the truth at that moment I committed a crime. I concealed from Comrade B. that there was such a thing as a science of pedagogics, and let not a word slip as to "underlying self-government." I said: "Very good!", and tiptoed quietly away, glancing around me, smiling in my sleeve.

I was pleased that the Gorkyites had been entrusted with the building up of the new collective, but there were tragic overtones to the matter. How was I to give up the best I had? Did not the Gorky collective need every one of its best members?

The work of Kirghizov's brigade was coming to an end. Furniture for the commune was being made in our workshops, and they had begun to make clothes for the future "communards" in the tailors' shop. In order that these should fit, the fifty "Dzerzhinskyites" had to be chosen at once.

The matter was taken up with extreme seriousness in the Commanders' Council.

"Good lads must be sent to the commune," said Lapot, "but not from the older ones. Let the older ones remain Gorkyites to the end. Anyhow they'll soon be having to go out into the world."

The commanders agreed with Lapot, but when we began going through the lists, loud arguments ensued. Everybody wanted members of someone else's detachment to be communards. We sat up till far into the night, at last fixing on a list of forty boys and ten girls. This list included both the Zhevelys, Gorkovsky, Vanya Zaichenko, Malikov, Odaryuk, Zoren, Nisinov, Sinenky, Sharovsky, Gardinov, Olya Lanova, Smena, Vaska Alexeyev, Mark Scheinhaus. Misha Ovcharenko was thrown in for the sole purpose of making the list more imposing. I went through it once more, and felt satisfied with it – good, steady lads, even if they were young.

The colonists assigned to the commune began to get themselves ready for the transfer. They had never seen their new home, and this made the parting with their comrades all the sadder. Some were even heard to say:

"Who knows how things will be there! The house may be all right, but everything depends on the people."

By the end of November everything was ready for the move. I

began collecting a staff for the new commune. I sent them Kirghizov by way of heaven.

All this proceeded in an atmosphere of almost complete rupture with the "thinking pedagogical circles" in the then People's Commissariat for Education of the Ukraine. The attitude of these circles towards me had for some time been hostile, not to say contemptuous. The circles themselves were narrow enough, and the people in them easy enough to understand, and yet, for some reason, it would seem there was no hope for me.

At that time I possessed endless stores of patience, and was able, for months on end, to throw off any unpleasant impression which might have got in the way of my work. But there was a limit even to my patience. I actually acquired "nerves."

Not a day passed without somebody pointing out to me – in connection with matters trivial and important – how low I had fallen. I began to form suspicions of myself.

The nicest and pleasantest incidents suddenly became grounds for conflict. Could it be, after all, that I was entirely in the wrong?

A conference of "Friends of Children" was to be held at Kharkov, and the colony was to go and greet it. It was arranged that we were to be at the place of the conference at three sharp.

We had to march ten kilometres. We went at our leisure, I timing our progress by my watch, and stopping the column to let the boys rest, have a drink of water, and a look at the town. The colonists are fond of a march like this. People notice us in the streets, gather round us when we halt, ask us questions, make friends. The gay, smart colonists joke, rest, feel the beauty of their collective. This time, too, everything went off splendidly, and it was only the ultimate aim of our march that gave us any anxiety. The hands of my watch showed three sharp, as our column, with music and unfurled banner approached the place where the conference was to be held. But a group of infuriated intellectuals flew to meet us, yapping out:

"Why are you so early? Now the children will have to wait in the street."

I pointed to my watch.

"That's nothing!" I was told. "There are preparations to be made."

"Three o'clock was arranged upon."

"Oh, you always have some fad or other, Comrade!"

The colonists could not understand wherein their sin lay, why they should be regarded with scorn.

“And why did you bring the little ones?”

“The whole colony is here.”

“How could any one drag little ones ten kilometres – it’s unpardonable! You have no right to be so cruel just because you want to shine!”

“The little ones enjoyed the excursion. And after the exchange of greetings we’re going to the circus. How could I have left them behind?”

“The circus! And when will you get home from the circus?”

“Very late!”

“Comrade – send the little ones back immediately!”

“The little ones” – Zaichenko, Malikov, Zoren, Sinenky – turned pale in their places, looking towards me with eyes of desperate appeal.

“Let’s ask them,” I proposed.

“There’s nothing to ask – everything’s quite clear. Send them home immediately!”

“Excuse me, but I have no intention of obeying your order.”

“In that case I shall give the order myself.”

“Do!” I said, scarcely able to conceal a smile.

The speaker went right up to our left flank.

“Children! You little ones, over there – go straight home! You must be tired!”

No one was taken in by her kindly tones. Someone called out:

“Go home, indeed! Not a bit of it!”

“And you’re not to go to the circus. It’ll be too late.”

The “little ones” laughed. Zoren’s eyes danced mischievously.

“Look at her – isn’t she a sly one? Anton Semyonovich, just look – isn’t she sly?”

Vanya Zaichenko solemnly extended his hand towards the banner in a gesture all his own.

“That’s not the way to talk! You can’t talk to us like that when we’re in marching formation. Look – we’re standing under our colours – can’t you see?”

The lady looked commiseratingly at these hopelessly militarized children, and took her departure.

Such conflicts had, of course, no melancholy result for the matter in hand, but they created around me an intolerable sense of isola-

tion, to which, however, one can accustom oneself. I gradually learned to meet each fresh case with morose readiness to bear it, to get over it somehow or other. I tried to keep out of arguments, and if I did occasionally growl back, it was from sheer politeness, upon my word it was! One must say something to one's chiefs!

In October we had trouble in connection with Arkadi Uzhikov, leading to the creation of the ultimate, impassable gulf between myself and "them."

The *Rabfak* students came to us for the weekend. We gave them one of the classrooms to sleep in, and spent the day in an excursion to the woods. While everybody was amusing themselves in the woods, Uzhikov got into the room, and stole the brief-case in which the students had put the stipends they had just received.

"Forty thousand brothers" could not have loved the *Rabfak* students more than the colonists did. We were all overwhelmed with shame. For a short time the thief remained unidentified, and it was this which was the most important aspect of the case for me. A theft in a close-knit collective is appalling, not because property is lost, and somebody suffers thereby, and not even because the offender continues along the crooked path, but because it lowers the atmosphere of general well-being, destroys the mutual confidence between comrades, arouses the worst instincts – suspiciousness, anxiety about personal property, cautious, furtive egoism. If the perpetrator of a theft is not discovered, the collective begins to give at all its seams: whispers go about the dormitories, suspects are named in secret conversation, individuals are subjected to unnecessary ordeals – often those very individuals one would like to shield, because their characters are only beginning to develop in the right direction. Even if the thief is found in a few days, even after he has had his due reward, the mischief has been done, for this will not heal the wounds, annihilate the sense of injury, or restore peace to the collective. A single theft may contain the germs of endless enmity, bitterness, loneliness, and real misanthropy. Theft belongs to the innumerable phenomena in a collective not coming under any particular sphere of influence, and resulting rather from chemical reactions than from malice aforethought. Theft is only innocuous where there is no collective, and, therefore, no public opinion, so that no one but the robber and the robbed are involved. But theft in a collective exposes thoughts better concealed, destroying the essential delicacy and tolerance of the collective, and this is particularly

ruinous in a society of “delinquents.”

Uzhikov's guilt was discovered three days later. I immediately placed him in the office, with a sentry at the door to prevent unauthorized reprisals. The Commanders' Council ruled that the matter be tried before a Comrades' Court. We very seldom had recourse to trial, for the boys usually trusted the decisions of the Council implicitly. Trial by his comrades boded little good for Uzhikov. The judges were elected at a general meeting, which agreed unanimously to five names – Kudlaty, Gorkovsky, Zaichenko, Stupitsyn, and Perets. Perets was chosen out of courtesy to the Kuryazhites, Stupitsyn was renowned for his justice, and the first three were an assurance that there would be no sentimentality or indulgence.

The trial opened in the evening, in a crowded hall. Bregel and Dzhurinskaya, who had come to the colony for the purpose, were present. Uzhikov sat on a bench by himself. All the last few days his behaviour had been marked by insolence, he had answered me and the colonists rudely, smirked and sniggered, provoking genuine disgust.

Arkadi had been over a year in the colony, during which time he had, beyond all manner of doubt, developed his worst propensities. True, he had become neater in appearance, held himself better, his nose no longer seemed to predominate over all his other features, and he had even learned to smile. But for all that, he was the old Arkadi Uzhikov, an individual without the faintest respect for anyone in the world, let alone for a collective, an individual living for nothing but the lusts of the hour.

Before he had come to us, Uzhikov had feared his father and the militia. In the colony nothing threatened him but the Commanders' Council, or the general meeting, and the significance of these institutions was entirely lost upon him. His sense of responsibility became still more blunted, and this was the explanation of his newly-acquired smile and insolent expression.

But now Uzhikov was pale. Evidently the Comrades' Court had made an impression on him.

The commander on duty called upon all present to rise for the entry of the judges. Kudlaty began cross-examining witnesses and plaintiffs. Their evidence was given in a spirit of stern disapprobation, tinged with sarcasm. Misha Ovcharenko spoke:

“Our boys, you know, are saying that Arkadi has brought disgrace on the colony. But I tell you, my friends, that this cannot be,

he couldn't bring disgrace on the colony. He's no colonist – how could he be? – you don't call him a human being, do you? Judge for yourselves – is that a human being? A dog or a cat would be better, upon my word, it would! But what's to be done with him? We can't just chuck him out, that wouldn't do him any good. I propose making a kennel for him, and teaching him to bark. Just don't feed him for three days – he'd learn! But he can't be allowed in the house."

This was an offensive and annihilating speech. Vanya Zaichenko, from the judge's bench, laughed heartily. Arkadi turned his eyes gravely upon Misha, blushed, and looked away.

Bregel asked permission to speak.

"Hadh't you better wait till the boys have had their say?"

But Bregel insisted, and Kudlaty submitted. Bregel stepped on to the platform, and delivered an impassioned speech. I still remember some parts of it:

"You are trying this boy for stealing. Everyone present says he's guilty, that he must be severely punished, some even demand expulsion. Of course he is guilty, but the rest of the colonists are still more guilty."

The colonists in the hall fell silent, craning their necks to look at the person who had asserted that they were to blame for Uzhi-kov's theft.

"He has been living over a year with you, and still he steals. This means that you have brought him up badly, that you have failed to find the proper approach to him, the comradely approach, that you have not taught him the right way to live. It has been said here that he is a bad worker, that he has stolen from his comrades before. All this only goes to prove that you have not given Arkadi the attention he required."

The keen eyes of the younger boys at last spied out the danger, and sent uneasy glances over the faces of their comrades. And it must be admitted that their anxiety was not unfounded, for at that moment the collective was faced with a grave menace. But Bregel did not notice the alarm of the meeting. She wound up with true pathos:

"To punish Arkadi would mean to take revenge on him, and you should not stoop to revenge. You ought to understand that Arkadi needs your help at this moment – he is in a critical position, you have all ranged yourselves against him, just now somebody compared him with an animal. Some good lads must be charged to

take Arkadi under their protection, and help him.”

When Bregel descended from the platform, there was much movement in the hall, the boys talking eagerly and smiling at one another. Someone asked in grave, ringing tones:

“What was she talking about – eh?”

And another voice replied in perfectly restrained tones, but in words which were caustic enough:

“Children – why don’t you help Uzhikov?”

There was laughter in the hall. Judge Vanya Zaichenko threw himself back in his chair, and banged with his feet against a drawer in the desk. Kudlaty reproved him sternly:

“What sort of a judge do you call yourself, Vanya?”

Uzhikov, who was sitting doubled up over his knees, suddenly emitted a spurt of laughter, but immediately recollected himself, and let his head sink still lower. Kudlaty seemed to be about to say something to him, but thought better of it, and, shaking his head, merely darted a piercing glance at Uzhikov.

Bregel appeared not to have noticed these petty incidents, she and Dzhurinskaya being engaged in animated conversation.

Kudlaty declared that the judges would retire for discussion. We knew that they would not take less than an hour over their legal bickerings and the composing of the sentence. I invited my visitors to the office.

Dzhurinskaya snuggled into the corner of the sofa, hiding behind Gulyaeva’s shoulder, looking earnestly from one to another in her search for truth. Bregel was convinced that she had today showed us an example of “real educational work.” I experienced a sensation of strange obduracy, not the obduracy springing from a sense of being in the right, not the obduracy of triumph, but the obduracy of vexation, born of a vague feeling of the hopelessness of my work.

“You don’t agree with me, of course,” said Bregel.

“Will you have some tea?” I answered.

These people were suffering from syllogistic hypertrophy: this remedy is good, that one is bad, hence the first must always be applied. When would they learn dialectical logic? How were they to be shown that work like mine consists in an unbroken chain of operations, some taking a longer, some a shorter time, sometimes spread over years, and always bearing the stamp of *collision*, a collision in which the interests of the collective and those of individual

members were all but inextricably entangled. How were they to be shown that during the seven years of my work in the colony I had never met with a single case that resembled another? How could it be explained to them that the collective should not be made to feel the strain of an unresolved situation, to experience society's helplessness, that in today's trial the object of educational work was not Uzhikov or the four hundred colonists as individuals, but the collective itself?

The monitor summoned us to the hall.

The colonists heard the sentence standing, in profound silence.

“SENTENCE

“Uzhikov, as an enemy of the toilers, and a thief, should be ignominiously expelled from the colony, but, taking into consideration the intervention on his behalf of the People's Commissariat for Education, the Comrades' Court resolves:

“1. To leave Uzhikov in the colony.

“2. To consider him a non-member of the colony for the duration of a month, to expel him from his detachment, not to assign him to any mixed detachment, to forbid all colonists to speak to him, help him, sit beside him at table, sleep in the same dormitory with him, play with him, or sit or walk with him.

“3. To consider him as under the orders of his former commander Dmitri Zhevely, and allow him to speak to his commander only about work, or, in case of sickness, to the doctor.

“4. Uzhikov to sleep in the dormitory passage, to eat at a separate table assigned by the Commanders' Council, and to work, should he desire to, by himself, according to the assignment of the commander.

“5. Anyone infringing this resolution to be immediately expelled from the colony, by order of the Commanders' Council.

“6. The sentence to come into force immediately after its confirmation by the Director of the colony.”

The sentence was received by the meeting with applause.

“That's fine!” cried Kuzma Leshy, turning to us. “That's really helping! And you say – ‘help the poor little boy!’ Won't you make him some master keys?”

He said all this in front of Bregel herself, without the slightest idea that he was being rude. Bregel looked at the shaggy Leshy disapprovingly, and said to me in official tones:

"Of course you're not going to confirm this resolution!"

"It must be confirmed," I answered.

In the empty room of the Commanders' Council Dzhurinskaya took me aside:

"I want to speak to you. What's this resolution? What do you think of it?"

"It's a good resolution," I said. "The boycott is, of course, a dangerous weapon, and cannot be recommended in general, but in this case it will be of use."

"You're quite certain?"

"Quite. You see, this Uzhikov is exceedingly unpopular in the colony – they despise him. The boycott will, first and foremost, create a new, legitimate form of relations for a whole month. If Uzhikov can stand it, they'll learn to respect him. And for Uzhikov it will be a worthy task."

"And if he can't stand it?"

"The boys will get rid of him."

"And you'll support them?"

"I will."

"But... it's impossible!"

"Anything else would be impossible. A collective is entitled to protect itself, isn't it?"

"At the expense of Uzhikov?"

"Uzhikov will find himself other society. And that'll be good for him, too."

Dzhurinskaya smiled mournfully.

"What sort of pedagogy is this?"

I did not answer her. Suddenly she found a definition for herself.

"Perhaps it's the pedagogy of conflict?"

"Perhaps."

In the office Bregel was preparing to go. Lapot came in with the sentence.

"Shall we confirm it, Anton Semyonovich?"

"Certainly. It's an excellent resolution."

"You'll drive the boy to suicide!" said Bregel.

"Who? Uzhikov?" Lapot was genuinely amazed. "To suicide? Oh! It wouldn't be a bad idea if he *were* to hang himself. But he won't – not *he*!"

"Horrors!" hissed the departing Bregel.

These women did not know Uzhikov, or the colony. Both the colony and Uzhikov himself embarked upon the boycott with enthusiasm. The colonists really did break off all communication with Arkadi, but there was not a trace of anger, offence or contempt left in their attitude to this wretched specimen of humanity. It was as if the sentence of the court had taken all this on its own shoulders. The colonists regarded Uzhikov from afar with great interest, and were continually discussing among themselves the whole proceeding, and Uzhikov's probable future. Many declared that the punishment imposed by the court was no good at all. This was also the opinion of Kostya Vetkovsky:

"D'you call that a punishment? Uzhikov goes about like a hero! Fancy – the whole colony is looking at him! He isn't worth it!"

Uzhikov really did go about like a hero. An expression of obvious vanity and pride showed itself on his face. He moved about amongst the colonists like a king, whom no one dares to question, or to address. In the dining room he sat at a small, separate table, as if he were seated on a throne.

But the fascinating sense of heroism soon wore off. In a few days Arkadi began to feel the prick of the crown of thorns placed on his head by the Comrades' Court. The colonists soon got used to the exceptional nature of his situation, but the isolation remained. Arkadi went through weary days of utter loneliness, and these days succeeded one another monotonously, endless hours unadorned by the slightest warmth of human contacts. And at the same time, all around Uzhikov, the collective went on with its spirited life, laughter rang out, jokes were cracked, individual traits displayed themselves, the fires of friendship and sympathy sparkled now and then. Poor as Uzhikov may have been, still these had been accustomed joys for him.

A week later, Zhevely, his commander, said to me:

"Uzhikov has asked permission to speak to you."

"No," I said. "I will speak to him when he has honourably withstood his test. Tell him that."

And soon I noted joyfully that Arkadi's eyebrows, motionless till now, acquired a habit of forming a hardly appreciable, but nevertheless expressive, fold on his forehead. He began to gaze steadily at the others, he seemed to be thinking, and to be dreaming of something. Everyone could see the striking change in his attitude to work. For the most part Zhevely set him to cleaning the yard.

Arkadi went to work with irreproachable punctuality, emptying dustbins and straightening the borders of flower beds. He often came out with his hoe in the evenings, too, picking up stray scraps of paper and cigarette butts, and tidying up the flower beds. One whole evening he sat in the classroom over a huge sheet of paper, which he stuck up in a prominent place the next morning. On it was written:

“Colonist! Respect your comrade’s labour, do not throw paper about!”

“Just look,” said Gorkovsky. “He considers himself our comrade!”

In the middle of Uzhikov’s ordeal Comrade Zoya arrived at the colony. It was just dinner time. Zoya went straight to Uzhikov’s table, and asked him in a troubled voice, in the midst of the silence which had immediately fallen upon the dining room:

“Are you Uzhikov? Tell me, how do you feel?”

Uzhikov stood up, looked gravely into Zoya’s eyes, and said, quite courteously:

“I can’t speak to you – the permission of the commander is needed.”

Comrade Zoya rushed away to look for Mitka. Mitka appeared, lively, brisk, black-eyed.

“What’s the matter?”

“Allow me to speak to Uzhikov.”

“No,” said Zhevely.

“What d’you mean by ‘no’?”

“I won’t allow you, and that’s all.”

Comrade Zoya came up to the office, and gave vent to a torrent of nonsense.

“This won’t do!” she cried. “And if he has any complaints? Supposing he’s on the edge of an abyss! This is torture!”

“There’s nothing I can do, Comrade Zoya.”

The next day Natasha Petrenko took the floor at the general meeting of the colonists.

“Boys! Let’s forgive Arkadi! He is working well, and bearing his punishment honourably, as a colonist should. I propose an amnesty.”

The general meeting emitted sounds of sympathy.

“Why not?”

“Uzhikov has pulled himself together splendidly.”

“He has!”

“It’s time! It’s time!”

“Let’s help the little boy!”

The commander’s report was demanded.

“I tell you straight,” said Zhevely. “He’s become another person. Yesterday when that – you know who – that – ”

“We know!”

“Well, when she came to him, and said: ‘boy, boy!’ what a brick he was! – he didn’t budge! I myself used to think nothing would come of Uzhikov, but now I tell you – he’s got, he’s got – there’s something in him... he’s one of us....”

Lapot grinned.

“All right, then – we’ll amnesty him!”

“Vote!” shouted the colonists.

And there was Uzhikov, huddled behind the stove with his head hanging. Lapot surveyed the raised hands, and said cheerfully:

“Well, it seems to be unanimous. Arkadi – hi, there! Congrats! You’re free!”

Uzhikov went to the platform, looked at the meeting, opened his mouth... and wept. There was much emotion in the hall. A voice cried:

“He’ll tell us tomorrow!”

But Uzhikov wiped his eyes on his shirtsleeve, and, looking at him, I could see he was suffering. At last he brought out:

“Thank you, chaps! And girls... and Natasha... I... I understand it all, don’t think I... please....”

“Forget it!” said Lapot sternly.

Uzhikov bent his head submissively. Lapot brought the meeting to a close, and the boys rushed to Uzhikov on the platform. The sympathy they had today shown had been returned to them with interest.

I drew a breath of relief, like a doctor after a successful trepanning.

In December the Dzerzhinsky Commune was opened, an event which was celebrated with solemnity and warmth.

Not long before this day, which was marked by a fall of soft snowflakes, the first fifty members assigned to the commune, in new suits and fluffy overcoats, had said farewell to their comrades, and trudged through the town to their new home. Gathered in a group they seemed very small to us, rather like nice black chickens.

They arrived at the commune covered with snowflakes, jolly and rosy. They ran about the commune as gaily as chickens, pecking desultorily at various organizational questions. In less than a quarter of an hour they had organized a Commanders' Council, and Third Mixed began putting up beds.

The Gorkyites marched under their colours, headed by the band, to the opening of the commune. Now they were the guests of their own comrades, who from this day were to bear the strange and solemn name of communards. The group of Cheka-men, all of them busy, important, distinguished, and honoured workers, did not seem a bit like a group of philanthropists amongst the four hundred ex-waifs gathered together. Warm friendly relations were immediately established between both groups, although the difference between the generations, and our particular respect, the respect in which Soviet children hold their elders, made itself vividly felt; at the same time these youngsters were no mere "wards," they had their own organization, their own rules, their own sphere of activities, all imbued with dignity, and the sense of responsibility and duty.

It came about quite naturally that the management of the commune should be entrusted to me, although nothing had been arranged or announced in this regard.

In comparison with the commune, the Gorky Colony appeared an extremely complicated and difficult undertaking. Having lost fifty of their comrades, the Gorkyites received fifty new members, townsfolk, who knew what was what. As before, though the newcomers rapidly assimilated the discipline of the colony, and its traditions, the real collective culture and a true collective physiognomy came into existence much more slowly. But we were used to all this.

Splendid vistas stretched ahead of us – we began to dream of our own *Rabfak*, of a new machine-shop building, of new openings in life. And one day we read in the papers that our own Gorky was coming to the Soviet Union.

14

REWARDS

That period – from December to July – was a wonderful time. In those days my barque tossed violently in the storm, but I had two collectives aboard, each in its own way splendid.

The Dzerzhinskyites rapidly brought their numbers up to almost a hundred and fifty. The new forces arrived in three groups of thirty – all street waifs of the first water, all picked specimens. The life of the communards was a clean, civilized life, and from the outside it seemed as if they were only to be envied. Plenty of people *did* feel envy, but these were by no means street waifs.

The Dzerzhinskyites made their public appearances in good, cloth suits, adorned with broad white shirt collars. Their brass band possessed instruments of the finest metal, and the trademark of a famous factory in Prague was stamped on their bugles. The communards were welcome guests at workers' and Cheka clubs, where they arrived rosy, friendly, and soberly elegant. Their collective always looked so cultured, that certain individuals, not overburdened with brains, were actually indignant:

"They've got together a nice set of children, dressed them up, and now they're showing them off. You try taking street waifs!"

But I had no time to worry about all this. I could hardly get the most necessary things done in the twenty-four hours. I would dash from one collective to another behind two horses, and the hour spent on the way presented itself to me as an unwelcome breach in the budget of my time. And although the ranks of our charges showed no signs of weakening, and we never departed from the shores of prosperity, the teaching staff was worked to death. It was then that I arrived at the theory which I am still propounding, paradoxical as it may seem: normal children, or children brought to a state of normality, are the most difficult to educate. Their natures are more subtle, their demands more complex, their culture is profounder, their relationships more varied. They demand of us not the wide sweep of our will, and not striking emotions, but the most intricate tactics.

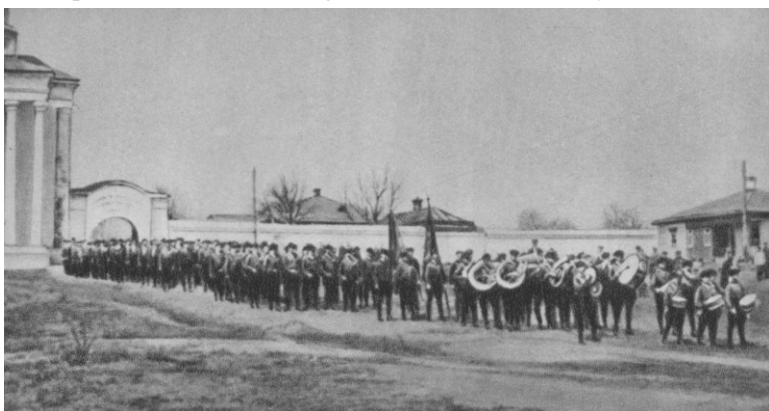
Both colonists and communards had long ceased to be detached groups of individuals isolated from society. Each collective had formed complex social ties with other organizations – Komsomol, Pioneer, sport, military, and club. Innumerable roads and paths had

been trodden between the colony and the town, along which travelled thoughts, ideas, and influences, as well as human beings.

Thanks to all this, our pedagogical work became tinged with new colouring. Discipline and the order of everyday life had long ceased to be my care alone. They had become the traditions of the collective, which could deal with them better than I could, and which watched over them not merely when cases of their infringement arose, not just because there was a row, or a fit of hysterics, but all the time, guided by what I would call the collective instinct.

Hard as things were for me, and vague as was the future, my life at that time was a happy one. There is indescribable happiness for an adult in a juvenile society which has grown up under his eyes and advances with him in implicit confidence. In such society even failure cannot grieve, even vexation and pain seem to have their own lofty values.

The Gorky collective was closer to me than that of the communards. The ties of friendship were stronger and deeper there, the human beings in it had cost more to shape, the struggle had been more intense. And the Gorkytes needed me more, too. It had been the good fortune of the Dzerzhinskyites, from the very beginning, to have Cheka-men for their patrons, while the Gorkytes, with the exception of myself and our small group of teachers, had no one who was near to them. And so it never entered into my head that the day would come when I should leave the Gorkytes. I was altogether incapable of imagining such a contingency, it could only have presented itself as the greatest misfortune of my life.



The Gorky Colony sets out on a march (1928)

Going back to the colony was like going home, and I even found rest in the general meetings of the colonists, in the Commanders' Council, and in the most complex collisions and difficult decisions. It was then that I formed one of my most enduring habits, and lost the ability to work in the midst of silence. I now only really felt comfortable when close beside me, right at my desk, I could hear the ring of youthful chatter; only then my thought took wings, and my imagination worked. For this in particular I am indebted to the Gorkytes.

But the Dzerzhinsky Commune placed more and more demands on my time and attention. And the cares were quite new ones, as were also the pedagogical prospects.

Particularly new and unexpected for me was the society of the Cheka-men. They were essentially a collective, which is more than can be said of the workers of the Department of Public Education at that time. And the more closely I observed this collective, the nearer to them my work brought me, the more vividly I became aware that here was something new. How it came about I do not know, but the Cheka collective was rich in those very qualities which I had been trying for eight years to instil into the collective of the colony. It was indeed! I suddenly found myself confronted with an image which I had up to now believed to exist in my mind alone, an image I had formed, with the aid of logic and literature, out of all the events and the whole philosophy of the Revolution, but which I had never found anywhere else and had lost hope of ever finding.

My discovery was so precious and significant to me that the one thing I feared was disillusion. So I kept it a profound secret, not wishing that my relations with these people should become in the slightest degree artificial.

This discovery became the point of departure for my new pedagogical philosophy. What particularly delighted me was that the qualities of the Cheka collective explained very easily and simply much that had been obscure and indefinite in the abstract image that had so far guided me in my work. I now had opportunities of gaining insight into many once mysterious regions. Among the Cheka people high intellectual standards combined with education and culture had not assumed the outward expression which I had found so hateful among the former Russian intellectuals. I had known that it was bound to be so, but had been unable to imagine how these qualities would manifest themselves in the acts of living individu-

als. And now I had opportunities to study the speech, the mental processes, the new forms of intellectual emotion, the new disposition of tastes, the new nerve structures, and – above all – the new use to which ideals were being put. The pseudo-intellectual notoriously regards an ideal as an impertinent lodger, one who occupies the room of others, never pays, plays the informer, and worries everyone to death; everyone complains of the lodger, and tries to get as far away as is possible from the “ideal.” Now I saw something different: the ideal is no lodger, but a brilliant administrator, it respects its neighbour’s work, it sees to repairs and to heating, and everyone finds it a convenient and agreeable taskmaster. Moreover, I was interested in their attitude to principle. The Cheka people are devoted to principle, but with them principle is not, as it was with certain of my “friends,” a bandage over the eyes. The Cheka-men regard a principle as a gauge, which they use just as people use their watches, that is to say, without either the procrastinations of red tape, or undue impulsiveness. I saw, at last, the normal life of principle, and was finally confirmed in my conviction that my detestation of the rigidity on matters of principle shown by the pseudo-intellectuals had been well founded. For it is no secret that when a certain type of intellectual does anything from principle, half an hour later he himself, and all around him, will be taking heart-drops.

I noted a great many other new features: all-pervading good humour, terseness of speech, a dislike of readymade formulae, the inability to lounge on sofas or sprawl over a table, and, finally, a gay, but unlimited capacity for work, without martyred looks or hypocrisy, without a hint of the nauseating “blessed martyr” pose. At last I saw and felt for myself that precious substance for which I could find no better name than “social adhesive” – that feeling of common perspectives, that awareness of each other at any stage of the work, of all members of the collective, the perpetual consciousness of one high common goal, a consciousness which never degenerates into mere pedantry and garrulity. And this “social adhesive” was not a thing to be hastily purchased for five kopeks over the counter, just before a conference or assembly, it was not merely a form of polite smiling intercourse with the person next to one, it was real unity, the coordination of movement and work, of responsibility and help, it was the unity of tradition.

As the object of the special care of the Cheka-men, the Dzerzhinskyites were placed from the start in fortunate conditions – all

they had to do was to accept what was done for them. I, too, no longer had to beat my head against a stone wall, in vain efforts to convince the authorities of the necessity and usefulness of pocket handkerchiefs and other essential trifles.

My satisfaction was of the highest order. I formulated it thus: now that I had become intimately acquainted with real Bolsheviks, I was finally convinced that my pedagogical scheme is the true Bolshevik scheme, that the type of human being which I had held up to myself as an ideal was no mere beautiful invention of my own, no dream, but a real, living fact, a fact I could appreciate to the full, since it had become part of my work.

And my work in the commune, no longer impeded by hysterical interference, was, though hard enough, work that the human mind could cope with.

The life of the communards turned out to be nothing like so prosperous and carefree as outsiders believed. The Cheka-men contributed a certain percentage of their salaries for the maintenance of the communards, but this suited neither ourselves nor them.

Three months had scarcely passed before the commune began to feel the pinch of real necessity. We delayed paying salaries, and even found difficulty in meeting the expenses of feeding our charges. The workshops showed but small returns, since they were, of course, training shops. True, the boys and I dragged the equipment of the cobblers' shop into a dark corner on one of our first days at the commune, and quietly smothered it with pillows, a murder which the Cheka-men tactfully ignored. But we could not hit upon anything to assure us an income in the other workshops either.

One day our chief sent for me, and, frowning and hesitating, placed a cheque on the table with the words:

"That's all."

I understood.

"How much have you given me?"

"Ten thousand. It's the last. It's been collected for a year in advance. There won't be any more – d'you understand? Make use of that – er – fellow – he's very energetic."

A few days later an individual who was not exactly the pedagogical type, was running about the commune. His name was Solomon Borisovich Kogan. Solomon Borisovich was no longer young, being nearly sixty, he had a weak heart, shortness of breath, "nerves", and chest spasms, and he suffered from obesity. But there

was a demon of activity in this man, and he could do nothing to quiet it. Solomon Borisovich brought with him neither capital, nor materials, nor inventiveness, but forces not made use of under the old regime bubbled up indefatigably in his seedy old frame: ingenuity, optimism, doggedness, knowledge of men, and just a pinch of pardonable unscrupulousness, dwelt quaintly side-by-side with a feeling heart and devotion to an idea. Very likely all this was kept together, like the spokes of a wheel, by a rim of pride, for Solomon Borisovich was fond of saying:

“You don’t know Kogan yet! When you know Kogan, then you can talk!”

He was right. We got to know Kogan, and we said – here is a remarkable man! We sorely needed his experience of life. True, this experience sometimes manifested itself in such forms that our blood ran cold, and we could hardly believe our eyes.

Solomon Borisovich brought a load of logs from town today.

“What’s it for?”

“What for? And what about a ware house? I’ve accepted an order for furniture for the Building Institute, and it’ll have to be stored somewhere.”

“Why should it be stored? We’ll make the furniture, and send it to the Building Institute.”

“Hee-hee! D’you really think that’s an institute? It’s not an institute, it’s pure make-believe. If it was really an institute I wouldn’t have anything to do with it.”

“And isn’t it?”

“What’s an institute? Let them call themselves what they like! The great thing is, they have money. And since they have money, of course they would like to have some furniture. And furniture requires a roof over its head. You know that yourself. And they can’t make a roof, because the walls aren’t up.”

“We’re not going to build any ware houses whatever you say!”

“That’s what I told them. They think the Dzerzhinsky Commune is no great shakes. But it’s a model institution. Is it going to spend time over some wretched ware houses? Is that what our time is for?”

“And what did they say?”

“They just say: ‘Go ahead, build!’ Well, since they seemed so anxious about it, I told them: ‘it’ll cost you twenty thousand.’ But if you don’t want to build, have it your own way! Why should we

build ware houses, when it's an assembly shop that we need."

Two weeks later, Solomon Borisovich started the building of an assembly shop. Props were sunk, and the carpenters began putting up the walls.

"Solomon Borisovich, where did you get the money for the assembly shop?"

"Where? Didn't I tell you? They've transferred twenty thousand to our account!"

"Who has?"

"That institute I told you about."

"What for?"

"What *for*?" They want to have ware houses! Very well, then! Do I grudge them their ware houses?"

"But look here, Solomon Borisovich, you're building an assembly shop, not ware houses!"

Solomon Borisovich began to lose patience with me.

"I like that! And who said we didn't need ware houses? It was you, wasn't it?"

"We must return the money."

Solomon Borisovich wrinkled his brows fastidiously. "Now don't be so impractical! Have you ever heard of anyone returning cash? You've got strong nerves, perhaps you can afford it, but I'm a sick man, I can't play with my nerves like that. Return cash!"

"But they'll find out!"

"Anton Semyonovich! You're an intelligent man, aren't you? What is there for them to find out? Let them come tomorrow, if they like! They'll see people at work! And who's to say it's an assembly shop they're building?"

"And when the shop starts working?"

"Who's to prevent me from working? Can the Building Institute prevent me from working? And who's to say whether I'm to work in a ware house, or in the open air? Is there a law about it? There is no such law."

There were no limits to the logic of Solomon Borisovich. It was a battering-ram of immense force, overcoming all obstacles. Up to a point we ceased resisting, for all attempts at resistance were quashed at birth.

In the spring, as soon as our two horses began spending the night in the meadow, Vitya Gorkovsky asked me:

"What's Solomon Borisovich having built in the stables?"

“Built?”

“He’s already begun. He’s had a kind of boiler installed, and is making a chimney.”

“Call him to me!”

Up comes Solomon Borisovich, as ever, grease-stained, perspiring, panting.

“What’s that you’re having made?”

“That? You know very well it’s a foundry!”

“A foundry? But we decided to build a foundry behind the bathhouse.”

“Why behind the bathhouse, when there’s a building for it all ready?”

“Solomon Borisovich!”

“That’s my name – what’s the matter?”

“And the horses?” asked Gorkovsky.

“The horses can live out-of-doors, in the fresh air. You think it’s only you who need fresh air, and horses can breathe any beastliness. Fine masters!”

We were, it must be owned, driven from our positions. But Vitka forged ahead again:

“And when winter comes?”

But Solomon Borisovich crushed him to smithereens.

“You seem very certain that there’ll be winter!”

“Solomon Borisovich!” cried Vitka, aghast.

Solomon Borisovich retreated ever so little.

“And even if winter does come, what about it? Can’t a stable be built in October? What does it matter to you? Or are you so anxious to spend two thousand rubles just now?”

We sighed mournfully, and submitted. Out of sheer compassion for us, Solomon Borisovich entered upon an explanation, the heads of which he checked off on his bent fingers:

“May, June, July, what d’you call it – August, September....”

Here he came to a momentary halt, only to proceed with still greater conviction:

“October.... Just think – six months! In six months’ time two thousand rubles will have brought in another two thousand. And you want the stables to stand empty six months! We can’t have frozen capital lying about!”

Solomon Borisovich had an aversion to frozen capital in its most innocent forms.

"I can't sleep," he said. "How can one sleep, when there's so much work to be done all the time? Every minute is equivalent to a financial operation. Who decided that people have to sleep such a lot!"

We marvelled: a short time ago we were so poor, and now Solomon Borisovich is overwhelmed with timber, metal, lathes. Our working day is punctuated with the words: letter of advice, cheque, advance payment, invoice, ten thousand, twenty thousand. Solomon Borisovich listened with drowsy scorn to the speeches of the boys in the Commanders' Council on the subject of such pitiful sums as three hundred rubles for trousers.

"How can there be any question about it? The boys need trousers, and not trousers for three hundred – they're no good – they need a thousand rubles for them."

"And where's the money to come from?" asked the boys.

"You have hands and heads. Ask yourselves what your heads are for? For putting caps on? Nothing of the sort! Just spend another quarter of an hour in the shops, and I'll get you thousand rubles immediately, perhaps more, according to what you earn."

Solomon Borisovich filled his rickety workshops, which were suspiciously like ware houses, with old, cheap lathes and all manner of trash, bound together with string and incantations, and the communards plunged delightedly into this heap of rubbish. All sorts of things were made – club furniture, bedstead parts, oil cans, shorts, sport shirts, desks, chairs, plungers for fire extinguishers – and all in vast quantities, for in Solomon Borisovich's industry the division of labour reached its acme.

"You're not going to be a carpenter, are you? I know you're not – you're going to be a doctor. So you just turn out legs – why should you make a whole chair? I pay a kopek for two legs, you can earn fifty kopeks a day. You haven't got a wife, you haven't got children..."

The communards laughed in the Commanders' Council, and scolded Solomon Borisovich for advocating hack work, but we already had our industrial-financial plan – and that was a matter of supreme importance.

Wages for the communards were introduced as light-heartedly as if there had never been any such thing as pedagogics, and as if the devil and all his works simply did not exist. When the teachers endeavoured to draw Solomon Borisovich's attention to the peda-

gological aspect of wages, Solomon Borisovich replied:

“It’s our business to bring up wise people, I hope. And how can a man be wise if he works for nothing?”

“But do you think ideas are nothing, Solomon Borisovich?”

“When a man gets wages, so many ideas come to him that he doesn’t know what to do with them. And when he hasn’t got any money, he’ll only have one idea – whom can he borrow from. That’s a fact.”

Solomon Borisovich was an extremely useful leaven in our labour collective. We knew his logic was alien and absurd, but he dealt mortal blows so blithely and impetuously at a host of prejudices, that he evoked, if only out of sheer resistance, the demand for a different industrial style.

The Dzerzhinsky Commune became fully self-supporting with the utmost simplicity, and almost without an effort, so that we ourselves hardly realized what a victory it was. Not for nothing did Solomon Borisovich say:

“What? A hundred and fifty communards can’t earn their dinner? Of course they can! They don’t require champagne, do they? Or have they perhaps wives, who are fond of finery?”

The communards fulfilled their quarterly industrial-financial plans, one after another, with a broad combined effort. The Chekamen were with us every day. Together with the communards, they entered into every trifle, every slightest shortcoming, Solomon Borisovich’s mercantile tendencies, the low quality of output, the number of spoils. The industrial experience of the communards, becoming daily more complex, enabled them to cultivate a critical attitude towards Solomon Borisovich, who would exclaim indignantly:

“What’s this? They know everything now! They want to teach me how things are done in the Kharkov Engine Works! What do they know about the Kharkov Engine Works?”

A slogan acknowledged by all began to shine ahead: “We must have a real factory!”

The factory began to be discussed more and more frequently. As one thousand after another was added to our current account, the general aspirations for our own factory were enriched by details which became ever more practicable. But all this belongs to a somewhat later period. The Dzerzhinskyites frequently met with the Gorkyites. On their free days they visited one another in detach-

ments, played football, volleyball, *gorodki*,* bathed together, skated, went for walks, and to the theatre.

The colony and the commune often joined forces for various purposes – Komsomol and Pioneer manoeuvres, sightseeing, celebrations, excursions. I was extremely fond of these days, they were the days of my real triumph. And well I knew that this triumph would be my last.

For such days general orders were issued for the colony and the commune, covering everything, from the clothes to be worn to the time and place of meeting. The Gorkyites and the communards had the same uniform – riding-breeches, gaiters, broad white collars, and skullcaps. I usually spent the night before such occasions at the colony, leaving the commune in the hands of Kirghizov. We would leave Kuryazh, allowing three hours for the journey, and entering the town from the slopes of Kholodnaya hill. Our meeting place was always the broad expanse of asphalt of the Tevelev Square, just in front of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee.

As always, the Gorky Colony looked splendid in the streets of the town. Our wide rows, six abreast, occupied almost the whole street, even overflowing on to the tram lines. As many as ten trams would line up behind us, their drivers scolding and ringing their bells without pause, but the youngsters of the left flank were well aware of their duties, and marched solemnly on, ever so slightly slowing down, sometimes casting sly glances at the pavements, but quietly ignoring the trams, their drivers, and their bells. Last of all came Pyotr Kravchenko, bearing a triangular flag. The people in the street looked at him with particular curiosity and warmth, the boys swarming around him so eagerly that the embarrassed Pyotr lowered his eyelids. His flag would flutter under the very nose of a tram driver, and Pyotr seemed to be floating in a dense atmosphere filled with the deafening clamour of tram bells.

At Rosa Luxemburg Square the columns at last abandoned the tram lines. The trams overtook us one by one, the passengers looking out of the windows, laughing and shaking their fingers at the boys, who neither losing their equilibrium nor falling out of step, would give their mischievous boyish smiles. Why shouldn't they smile? Can't one have a joke with the townsfolk, can't one play harmless tricks on them? They're our own folk, nice people – aris-

* A kind of skittles, played with small logs, instead of balls. – *Tr.*

tocrats and courtiers don't walk about our streets any more, pomaded officers no longer go by with ladies on their arms, shopkeepers no longer dart censorious looks at us. And we go about the town like its masters, not "asylum boys," but colonists, Gorkyites. Not for nothing does our red banner stream in the air in front of us, not for nothing do our bugles play the "Budyonny March."

Turning into Tevelev Square, we have scarcely begun the ascent of the slope, when the top of the Dzerzhinsky banner comes in sight. And there are the long rows of white collars, the grave, familiar faces, the swinging arms and music – Kirghizov's brigade. The Dzerzhinskyites greet us with the banner salute. Another moment, and our band, breaking off its march music, thunders out an answering greeting.

We stand in strict silence opposite each other for the brief time in which Kirghizov makes his report. And then, breaking ranks, the boys rush to their friends, shaking hands, laughing and joking. I remembered Faust. The wily Teuton might well envy me! He was out of luck, that doctor, he chose a bad epoch for himself, an unsuitable social structure!

If we met on the eve of a rest day, it would often happen that Mitka Zhevely would come to me, and suggest:

"Let's go to the Gorkyites! They're showing *Battleship Potemkin* this evening. And there's food enough."

On such occasions we waked Podvorky with the music of our combined bands, and the noise went on till late at night, in dining room, dormitories, and club, the older ones recalling the vicissitudes of earlier years, the younger ones listening enviously.

From the beginning of April the chief subject of our conversation was the coming of Gorky. Alexei Maximovich had written to us that he would come specially to Kharkov in July, to stay three days in the colony. Our correspondence with Alexei Maximovich had long become regular. Though they had never set eyes on him, the colonists could feel his personality in their ranks, and rejoiced in it as children rejoice in the image of a mother. Only one who has been deprived of family life in childhood, who has had to go all through life without the slightest reserves of warmth to draw upon, is capable of understanding how cold the world can sometimes seem, only such a one can realize the value of care and affection from a great man, from a man with a rich, generous heart.

The Gorkyites did not know how to express tender emotions,

for tenderness bore too high a value for them. I lived with them eight years, many of my charges grew very much attached to me, but not one of them during all this time was ever tender to me in the accepted sense of the word. I had to measure their feelings for me by tokens known to myself alone – the depth of a glance, the sudden colour mantling their cheeks, the attention following me from remote corners, a slight huskiness, joyous leaps after a chance encounter. And this enabled me to note the ineffable tenderness with which the lads spoke of Gorky, the unutterable joy which the brief intimation of his coming had given rise to.

The visit of Gorky to the colony was a high reward. It was not, in our own eyes, entirely merited, really it was not! And this high reward was to be ours at a time when the whole Soviet Union was raising its banners to welcome the great writer, when our tiny community could easily have been lost in the wave of broad public emotion.

But it was not lost, and this touched us, and imparted a high value to our life.

Our preparations for welcoming Gorky began the very day after his letter was received. Gorky had sent in advance a munificent gift, enabling us to heal the last of the gaping wounds from the old days of Kuryazh.

It was just then that I was called to account for my activities. I was required to tell all sorts of pedagogical pundits what my pedagogical faith consisted in, and what principles I professed. There were grounds and to spare for such an account.

I prepared for it cheerfully, though I expected neither mercy nor indulgence.

At last, in the high, spacious hall, I found myself faced by what seemed like a convocation of prophets and apostles. It was a regular conclave. Here, opinions were expressed courteously, wrapped in polite periods, redolent of cerebral convolutions, ancient tomes, and well-worn armchairs. But these prophets and apostles had neither white beards, venerable names, nor great discoveries to their credit. What right had they to wear haloes, and to bear the sacred scrolls in their hands? After all, they were but slippery customers, who had been behind the door when the good things of Soviet life were being distributed.

None of them was more active than Professor Chaikin, that very Professor Chaikin who had brought to my mind a few years ago a

certain Chekhov story.

Concluding his speech, Chaikin left me with scarcely a rag of credit.

"Comrade Makarenko would like the process of education to be based upon the idea of duty. True, he adds to it the word 'proletarian,' but this cannot conceal from us, comrades, the inner essence of his idea. We would advise Comrade Makarenko to make a thorough study of the historical sources of the idea of duty. It is an idea underlying bourgeois relations, an idea of a profoundly mercantile nature. Soviet pedagogics aims at cultivating the free manifestation of creative forces, inclinations, and initiative, but by no means the bourgeois idea of duty.

"It is with profound grief and astonishment that we have heard today from the respected director of two model institutions an appeal for the cultivation of the sense of honour. We cannot but declare our protest against this appeal. Soviet public opinion which joins its voice to that of science, is also unable to reconcile itself to a return to a conception so vividly reminiscent of officers' privileges, uniforms, epaulettes.

"We cannot enter here into a discussion of all the speaker's statements regarding industry. It may be, from the point of view of material well-being, that this is a useful stimulus, but the science of pedagogics cannot include industry among the factors of pedagogical influence, still less approve the speaker's statements to the effect that 'the industrial-financial plan is the best educator.' Such theories are nothing but a vulgarization of the idea of labour education."

Many other spoke, and many maintained a critical silence. At last I lost my temper, and, in a moment of recklessness, poured oil on the flames.

"Perhaps you are right, and we shall never come to an understanding. I don't understand you! For example, you consider initiative a sort of inspiration, coming from God knows where, out of pure, empty idleness. I tell you for the third time that initiative comes when there is a task to be performed, responsibility for its fulfilment, responsibility for wasted time, and the demand of the collective. But you cannot understand me, and keep referring to some sterile initiative, quite isolated from work. According to you, initiative will come if you only stare long enough at your own navel."

Oh, how offended they were, how they yelled at me, how those apostles spluttered and blessed themselves!

And then, seeing that the fire was blazing merrily, that all Rubicons had been left far behind, that there was nothing to lose, since all was already lost, I said:

“You are not fit to judge of education or initiative, you don’t know a thing about them!”

“And do you know what Lenin said about initiative?”

“I do.”

“No, you don’t!”

I drew out my notebook, and read out, very distinctly: “ ‘Initiative consists in retreating in good order, and maintaining strict discipline,’ said Lenin at the Eleventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party, on the 27th of March, 1922.”

The apostles were checked, but only for a moment, and then they cried:

“What has retreat to do with it?”

“I wanted to draw your attention to the relations between discipline and initiative. Moreover, I must retreat in good order myself.”

The apostles blinked, then they turned to one another, whispering and rustling their papers. The conclave passed the unanimous resolution:

“The proposed system of educational process is a non-Soviet system.”

There were many of my friends present, but they maintained silence. There was a group of Cheka-men. They followed the debate attentively, jotting down notes on writing-pads, and went away without awaiting the sentence.

We returned to the colony late at night. With me were the teachers, and several members of the Komsomol Bureau. Zhorka Volkov spluttered all the way home:

“How can they say such things! What do they think – there’s no such thing as honour, there’s no such thing as the honour of our colony? According to them there’s no such thing!”

“Take no notice, Anton Semyonovich,” said Lapot. “They’re a pack of bores, that’s what they are!”

“I’m not taking any notice,” I consoled the boys.

But the question had already been decided.

Without a tremor, and never for a moment allowing the general tone to be lowered, I began winding up the collective. It was essential to get my friends out of it as quickly as possible. This was necessary both in order to save them from the ordeal of having to live

under a new order, and to leave no centres of protest within the colony.

I gave in my resignation to Yuryev the very next day. After a thoughtful silence he extended his hand to me without a word. But just as I was going out of the room he seemed to recollect himself.

“Wait a minute! But Gorky’s coming!”

“Surely you don’t think I would allow anybody but myself to receive Gorky!”

“That’s just it!”

He began pacing up and down the office, muttering: “To hell! To hell with it all!”

“What’s the matter?”

“I’m going to get the hell out of here!”

I left him in these good intentions. He overtook me in the corridor.

“Anton Semyonovich, old man, it’s hard for you, isn’t it?”

“There you go!” I laughed. “What’s eating you? Oh, you intellectuals! All right, then, I will leave the colony on the day of Gorky’s departure, I will hand over the reins to Zhurbin, and you can do as you like....”

“Well....”

I told nobody in the colony of my resignation, and Yuryev promised to say nothing about it.



Maxim Gorky and Anton Makarenko with a group of colony members (Kuryazh (1928))

I rushed about to factories, patrons, and Cheka-men. Since the question of the older colonists leaving the colony had long been under discussion, no one in the colony was surprised. With the help of friends I had very little difficulty in getting places in the Kharkov factories, and rooms in town for the Gorkyites. Ekaterina Grigoryevna and Gulyaeva saw to their modest wardrobe, a matter in which they were by now experienced. There were two months till Gorky's visit, there was plenty of time.

Our seniors went out into the world, one after another. They parted with us in tears, but not in grief – we knew we were to meet again. We saw them off with guards of honour and music, under the unfurled Gorky banner. In this way Taranets, Volokhov, Gud, Leshy, Galatenko, Fedorenko, Koryto, the Volkov brothers, Lapot, Kudlaty, Stupitsyn, Soroka, and many others, left us.

Some, by agreement with Koval, we left in the colony on a salary, so as not to leave the colony leaderless. All who were preparing for the *Rabfak* I transferred to the Dzerzhinsky Commune till the autumn. The teaching staff was to remain in the colony for some time, to prevent anything in the nature of panic. Only Koval did not remain, but went back to the country without waiting for the end.

Among all the rewards showered upon me at this period, one was quite unexpected: the discovery that a living collective of four hundred persons is not easily destroyed. New members stepped instantly into the places of those who had left us – boys just as lively, witty and optimistic as their predecessors. The ranks of the colonists closed up, like the ranks of soldiers during battle. Not only did not the collective wish to die, it had not the slightest intention even to think of dying. It lived a full life, rolling rapidly ahead over its smooth rails, preparing solemnly and tenderly for the reception of Alexei Maximovich.

And now the days were splendid, happy days. Our weekdays were adorned as with flowers, by labour and smiles, by our clear prospects, by warm, friendly words. Our cares hung over us like rainbows, our dreams, like searchlights, thrust themselves skywards.

And, as joyously confiding as ever, we advanced towards our holiday, the greatest holiday in our history.

At last this day arrived.

From the early morning there was a kind of encampment around the colony – townsfolk, motorcars, authorities, a veritable battalion of pressmen, photographers, movie-men. The buildings

were adorned with flags and garlands, boys were drawn up at wide intervals, horsemen sent out on the Akhtyr highway, a guard of honour placed in the yard.

The tall Gorky stepped out of the car, cast a look around him, passed trembling fingers over his generous, working man's moustache, and smiled. He was obviously moved – this man with the face of a sage and the eyes of a friend.

“How d’you do! Are these your lads? Yes? Come on, then!”

The salute to the colours, the swish of the boys’ hands, their glowing eyes, their open hearts – all these were laid at the feet of our guest like a carpet for his feet.

Gorky moved along the ranks....

15

EPILOGUE

Seven years have passed. All this belongs to history now.

I still remember, to the very last detail, the day when the train carrying Gorky away had left. Our thoughts and emotions were still following the train, the eyes of the lads were still sparkling with the warmth of farewell, and now a simple little operation awaited me. The Gorkyites and Dzerzhinskyites were stretched all along the platform, the bugles of the two bands, and the tops of the banners were gleaming. The suburban train to Ryzhov was getting ready to leave from the opposite platform. Zhurbin came up to me:

“Can the Gorkyites get into the train?”

“Yes.”

The colonists ran by me to the train, the brass instruments were carried past me, and there was our old silk banner, embroidered in silk. In another minute bright groups of boys and girls appeared at every window in the train. They narrowed their eyes towards me, shouting:

“Anton Semyonovich, come into our carriage!”

“Aren’t you coming? Are you going with the communards?”

“And tomorrow to us?”

I was strong in those days, and I smiled at the little chaps, and when Zhurbin came up to me I gave him an order in which it was said that, owing to my departure “on leave” the direction of the colony would be in his hands.

Zhurbin looked at the order blankly.

“Does it mean this is the end?”

“Yes,” I said.

“But... how...?” began Zhurbin, but the guard blew a deafening blast on his whistle, and Zhurbin, unable to finish his sentence, gave a helpless gesture, and walked away, his head averted from the carriage windows.

The suburban train started. The posies of boys floated past me, as on a holiday. They shouted “Good-bye!”, jokingly raising their caps with two fingers. At the last window stood Korotkov. He saluted in smiling silence.

I went out into the station square. The Dzerzhinskyites were drawn up, waiting for me. I gave the command, and we crossed the town to the commune.

I never went to Kuryazh again.

* * *

Seven Soviet years have passed since then, and this is much longer than, say, seven tsarist years. During this period our country had traversed the glorious path of the First Five-Year Plan and almost finished the Second; during this time the world had learned to respect the eastern plains of Europe more than in three hundred years under the Romanovs. During this period our people developed new muscles, and our own intellectuals grew up.

My Gorkyites also grew up, and were scattered all over the Soviet Union, so that now I should find difficulty in gathering them together, even in my imagination. There's no getting hold of engineer Zadorov, who has become absorbed by some vast Turkmenistan construction work; and neither Vershnev, Medical Officer to the Special Far Eastern Army, nor Burun, a doctor in Yaroslavl, can be called for an interview. Even Nisinov and Zoren, those kids, even they have flown away from me, rustling their wings, but these wings are no longer the tender sprouts of my pedagogical sympathy, they are the steel wings of Soviet airplanes. Shelaputin, too, made no mistake when he vowed he would become a pilot. And Shurka Zhevely, not wishing to follow in the footsteps of his older brother, now an Arctic navigator, has also become a pilot.

Sometimes I would be asked by comrades paying a flying visit to the colony:

"They say there are many gifted individuals, you know, creatively inclined, among the street waifs. Tell me, have you any writers or artists?"

Of course there were writers among us, and artists, too, without such people no collective could exist – but for them, there would be no wall newspapers. But here I must sorrowfully admit that no writers or artists came from the Gorkyites, and this, not because they did not have enough talent, but for other reasons – life and its practical daily problems engulfed them.

Karabanov never became an agronomist. He graduated from an agronomical *Rabfak*, but did not go into an institute, saying earnestly to me:

"Never mind the corn growing! I can't live without the little chaps! What a lot of fine chaps there are still roaming about the world – oh, what a lot! If you've taken up this matter, Anton Se-

myonovich, I suppose I can, too.”

And so Semyon Karabanov took the path of social-educational martyrdom, and has not deserted it to this day, although the lot which fell to Semyon was as painful as ever fell to martyr. He married his Chernigov girl, and they had a three-year-old son, black-eyed like his mother, passionate like his papa. And one fine day this son was butchered by one of Semyon’s own charges, sent to the home for “difficult children,” an abnormal boy who had performed more than one such deed. Even after this Semyon never wavered nor abandoned our front: he neither murmured nor cursed anyone, only writing me a brief note in which there was more astonishment than grief.

Matvei Belukhin did not go in for higher education, and one day I got a letter from him:

“I did it purposely, Anton Semyonovich, without saying a word to you, forgive me, please, but what sort of an engineer should I make when at heart I’m a military man? I’ve got into a cavalry school. Of course I’ve behaved like a swine, you might say – leaving the *Rabfak*. It was wrong, I know. But please do write me a letter, because, you know, I do feel bad about it!”

There’ll always be hope when people like Belukhin “feel bad.” And we may hope to live long while the Soviet squadrons have commanders like Belukhin. I believed in this still more firmly when Matvei came to me with his new tab, tall, strong, a mature man, a “finished product.”

Others, as well as Matvei, came, and it was always a shock to me to see that they were grown men: Osadchy, a technologist, Misha Ovcharenko, a chauffeur, Oleg Ognev, an irrigation worker beyond the Caspian Sea, Marusya Levchenko, a teacher, Soroka, a tram driver, Volokhov, an electrician, Koryto, a locksmith, Fedorenko, foreman at a machine and tractor station, Alyosha Volkov, Denis Kudlaty, and Zhorka Volkov, all Party workers; Mark Scheinhaus came too – still sensitive, but now equipped with a true Bolshevik character – and many, many others.

But during the seven years I lost sight of many. Anton has disappeared somewhere in a world of horses, from which he gives no sign of life, the vivacious, stormy-souled Lapot disappeared, as also did the good shoemaker Gud, and Taranets, the great constructor. I do not grieve about this, or reproach these lads with forgetfulness.

Our life is too full, and one can't expect everyone to remember the whims of parents and pedagogues. Anyhow, it would be "technically" impossible to get them all back. How many girls and boys have passed through the Gorky Colony alone, not named in these pages, but just as lively, just as familiar, just as dear as the others. Seven years have passed since the winding-up of the Gorky collective, all years filled with the incessant filling up of the youthful ranks, with their struggle, their defeats, with their victories, and with the brilliance of familiar eyes, the play of familiar smiles.

The Dzerzhinsky collective is still living a full life, about which ten thousand "epics" could be written.

Books will be written about the collective in the land of the Soviets, because it is first and foremost a land of collectives. And these books will be wiser than the ones written by my friends, the Olympians, with their quaint definition of "The Collective":

"The collective is a group of mutually interacting individuals, jointly reacting to this or that irritant."

Only fifty Gorky lads arrived one snowy winter day at the beautiful rooms of the Dzerzhinsky Commune, but they brought with them a complex of discoveries, traditions and inventions, a veritable assortment of collective technique, the budding technique of man freed from masters. And on this healthy soil, surrounded by the care of the Cheka-men, supported daily by their energy, culture, and talent, the commune developed into a collective of shining beauty, of veritable labour prosperity, high socialist culture, with hardly a trace of the absurd problem of the "reformation of a human being?"

The seven years of life in the Dzerzhinsky Commune were also seven years of struggle, seven years of intense strain.

Solomon Borisovich's plywood workshops have long been forgotten, broken up, used for firewood. And Solomon Borisovich himself has been replaced by a score of engineers, many of whom deserve that their names should be recorded among the most honourable names in the Soviet Union.

By 1931 the communards had built their first factory – an electrical-instrument plant. In the light, lofty hall, adorned with portraits and flowers, stood rows of the most cunning lathes. It is no longer shorts or bedstead details which emerge from the hands of the communards, but elaborate, graceful instruments, made up of a hundred parts, and "breathing higher mathematics."

And commune society was just as excited and stirred by higher

mathematics, as long ago we had been stirred by beets, Simmenthal cows, the pig Vassili Vassilyevich, the horse Molodets.

When the great "Dzerzhinsky drill" came out of the assembly shop, and was placed on the testing table, Vaska Alexeyev, long grown up, turned on the current, and a score of heads, belonging to engineers, communards, and workers, bent anxiously to listen to its hum.

"It's sparking!" cried out the chief engineer Gorbunov in vexation.

"Sparking, damn it!" said Vaska.

Smiling to conceal their vexation, they bore the drill back to the shop, took it to pieces, checked it, applied to it all the rules of higher mathematics, rustling their blueprints over it for three whole days. The legs of compasses strode over the blueprints, sensitive "Kellenberger" grinding machines shaved the last superfluous hundredth of an inch from the parts, the sensitive fingers of the boys assembled the most delicate details, their sensitive souls awaiting with trepidation the next test.

Three days later the "Dzerzhinsky drill" was once more placed on the testing table, once again a score of heads bent over it, and once again chief engineer Gorbunov exclaimed mournfully:

"It's sparking!"

"Sparking, the beast!" echoed Vaska Alexeyev.

"The 'American' didn't spark," remembered Gorbunov enviously.

"It didn't spark," remembered Vaska, too.

"No, it didn't spark," confirmed yet another engineer.

"Of course it didn't spark!" cried all the boys, not knowing whom to be angry with: themselves, the lathes, the doubtful steel of Number Four, the girls who had worked on the armature, or engineer Gorbunov.

But, standing on tiptoe among the crowd of boys, and displaying to all his freckled countenance, Timka Odaryuk, blushing and looking down, volunteered:

"The American drill sparked just the same."

"How d'you know?"

"I remember how it sparked when it started. It's bound to spark, because of our ventilator."

No one believed Timka, and again the drill was carried back to the shop, again brains, lathes and nerves were set to work on it. The

temperature of the collective rose appreciably, anxiety spread through dormitories, clubs, and classrooms.

A party of supporters sprang up round Odaryuk.

"Of course our chaps are nervous, because it's the first one. But the 'American' sparked still worse."

"It didn't!"

"It did!"

"It didn't!"

At last our nerves gave way. We sent to Moscow, and humbled ourselves before our elders and betters.

"Send us a 'Black and Decker'!"

They sent a used one.

The "American" was brought to the commune, and placed on the testing table. Many more than a score of heads now bent over the table, and the anxiety of three hundred communards was over all. Vaska, quite pale, turned on the current, the engineers held their breath. And amidst the humming of the machine Odaryuk said loudly:

"You see, I told you...."



Semyon Kalabalin (Semyon Karabanov) and his wife Galina (Chernigovka) with a group of Moscow Young Pioneers. Semyon Kalabalin is a veteran of the Great Patriotic War, with several decorations for valour. He and his wife are now working in a children's home.

A sigh of relief arose from the commune, and escaped to the heavens, and anxious looks gave way to triumphant smiles.

“Timka was right!”

We have long forgotten that stirring day, for it is long since we have been turning out fifty machines a day, and they have long ceased to spark; for although Timka had spoken the truth, there was another truth, too, and that was chief engineer Gorbunov’s resolution, combined with higher mathematics.

“It mustn’t spark!”

All this has been forgotten, because new cares and new matters came crowding up.

In 1932 it was said in the commune:

“We’re going to make Leicas.”

It was a Cheka-man who said it, a revolutionary and a worker, not an engineer, an optical mechanic, or a photo constructor. And other Cheka-men, revolutionaries and Bolsheviks, said:

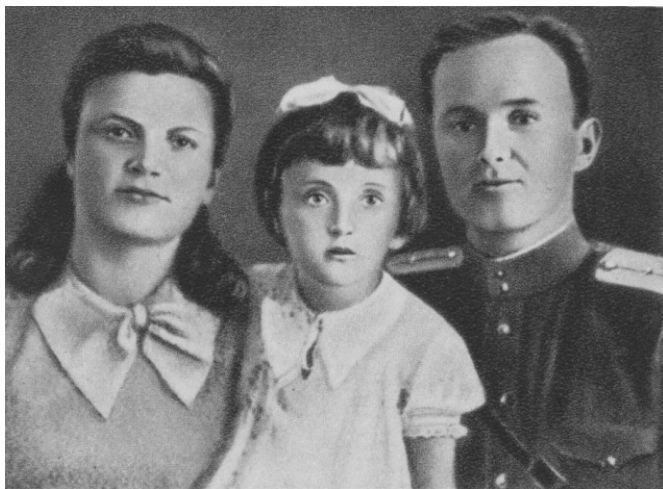
“Let the communards make Leicas!”

This time the communards were perfectly calm.

“Leicas? Of course we’ll make Leicas!”

But there were others, hundreds of them – engineers, optical mechanics, constructors – who replied:

“Leicas? Are you mad? Ha-ha!”



Vladimir Zoren and his family (1944). Zoren, a navigator in the air force, was killed in action during the Great Patriotic War.

And a new struggle began, one of those highly complex Soviet operations of which there were so many at this time in our native land. This struggle involved all sorts of emotions, flights of fancy, flights on Soviet airplanes, blueprints, experiments and solemn rites performed in perfect silence in the laboratories; it involved also brick dust, and repeated attacks, and still more attacks, desperately determined strokes in the workshops from the ranks of the communards, who took all failures as a challenge. And all around sighs of doubt were again emitted, again eyes narrowed incredulously behind glasses:

“Leicas? The boys? Lens to hair-breadth precision! Ha-ha!”

But five hundred boys and girls had already plunged in the world of microns, into the fine-spun web of precision lathes, into the most delicate world of tolerance, spherical aberrations, and optical curves. Smiling, these boys and girls looked round at the Cheka-men.

“Never mind, kids! Don’t you worry!” said the Cheka-men.

The fine gleaming FED* works rose up in the commune, surrounded by flowers, asphalt, fountains. And the other day the communards placed on the desk of the People’s Commissar the ten thousandth FED camera, an immaculate, elegant apparatus.

Much has occurred, and much has been forgotten. The primitive bravado, the thieves’ lingo, and other survivals of the past have long been forgotten. Every spring the communard *Rabfak* sends scores of students to the higher education institutes, and they will soon graduate from these institutes as engineers, doctors, historians, geologists, airmen, shipbuilders, radio-operators, pedagogues, musicians, actors, singers. Every summer these new intellectuals come to visit their worker brothers – the turners, workers at capstan lathes, milling-machine operators, moulders – and then there is a grand march. The annual summer march has become a tradition. The communards have covered many thousands of kilometres, six abreast as before, the banner in front with the band. They have marched through the Volga district, the Crimea, the Caucasus, they have been to Moscow, to Odessa, and to the shores of the sea of Azov.

And every now and then in the commune, during the summer reunion, on days when life “sparked,” and days when the routine of the communards rolled peacefully on, a bullet-headed, clear-eyed

* Dzerzhinsky Optical-Instrument Plan. – *Tr.*

lad would dart into a porchway, slant his bugle skywards, and give the brief signal for a Commanders' Council. And, just as they did of old, the commanders range themselves along the walls, with interested onlookers filling the doorways, and the little ones sitting on the floor. And as gravely and caustically as ever the chairman of the Commanders' Council tells the culprit of the day:

"Get out into the middle of the floor! Stand at attention, and tell us all about it!"

And just as of old, various incidents occur, temperaments clash, and the collective, buzzing like a hive of bees, throws itself into the place of danger. And the science of pedagogics remains as difficult and intricate as before.

And yet things *are* easier now! Long distant is my first Gorky day of ignominy and impotence, and I see it like a tiny picture glimpsed through the narrow lens of a stereoscope. Yes, things are easier now. In many spots of the Soviet Union there are solid centres of serious pedagogical work, and the Communist Party is dealing its final blow at the last breeding places of unfortunate, demoralized childhood.

And perhaps, very soon, people will stop writing "epics of education," and write a simple businesslike book, called: *Methods of Communist Education*.

Kharkov, 1925-1935