GOVERNOR FRANK'S DARK HARVEST

by

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AUTHOR'S NOTE.

WHAT follows is a story of a far country, melancholy and unhappy : a story of Poland, a country which produced no quisling, which—in the fair words of President Roosevelt—was 'the inspiration of the world,' and which underwent cruel torments at the hands of the occupying German master-race.

This is not a book on German crimes, but on the life of an aspiring nation in those dark and tragic years which now belong to history. I have written mainly of what I saw myself in the course of two and a half years of servile existence.

Governor Frank's Dark Harvest relates to the period after Hitler's appointment, in 1939, of Hans Frank, one of the most eminent representatives of German culture, to be Governor General of Poland. Frank had received a first-class education, was a distinguished lawyer, and besides was a lover of the fine arts, of nature, and of children. In Poland he resided in the lovely old castle of the Polish kings at Cracow.

But—he was a German. When he came to Poland the bestial, bloodthirsty side of his nature was awakened. In the five years of his gloomy and sinister rule he transformed the beautiful, peaceful and sunny land which was my country into a region of cemeteries, crematoria and gas chambers. He once complained to his friends that his hand ached from signing so many death-warrants. He loved antiquarian remains, and caused them to be destroyed and carried off ; he was a connoisseur of architecture, and caused old cities to be razed and levelled with the ground ; he adored children, and had them starved and murdered ; he was a humanitarian, and put millions

of Poles to death; he was reputedly a great lawyer, and introduced into Poland the firing-squad and the scaffold.

That is why his name is incorporated in the title of this book.

When writing it, I strove to be as direct and straightforward as I could, and to avoid all literary artifice. Accordingly, I chose the form of letters to a friend.

By now, when it appears in English dress, far-reaching changes have taken place in Polish life. There is no longer a German occupation; the country is no longer governed by Hans Frank. Yet the fate of the Poles has not changed. They are still not masters of their own house; they are still not a free people. They expected freedom, and believed it would come striding boldly from the West. But they have only exchanged German fetters for Russian. The streets of Warsaw no longer hear the tramp of German patrols, but they do of Russian; in the towns and villages of Poland there are no longer Gestapo posts, but there are posts of the no less threatening NKWD.

The Poles, then, are still slaves.

The theme of my book was the life of the Poles enslaved in their own country. Despite all the changes in Poland, it may still claim to have a topical appeal.

W.S.

PART I

First Letter

THE RETURN TO WARSAW

Warsaw,
November, 1939.

My dear friend,

The last few days I was at Dubno I was constantly under the impression that I should catch sight of you among the thousands of refugees who had been unable to cross the Roumanian frontier and whom the Bolsheviks were driving back, day and night, through that little Volhynian town, so densely populated in that month of September. You would not believe what a dreadful appearance they presented. A flock of most miserable refugees, dead-tired and hungry, driven on in the heat of those September days by the Bolshevik soldiery.

This great return wave rolled through Dubno, where the Soviet political commissariat for the district commenced its activity at almost the very moment when the first tanks with red stars were rumbling through the streets. Disarmed Polish regiments moved in disorder; in the midst of the sea of plain uniforms the silver braid on the officers' caps was clearly to be seen; belts, sabres and rifles were loaded as booty on to lorries. But beside the military forces, masses of civilians were also being driven along. Melancholy columns including numbers of women and children never ceased to pass along the roads by day or night. Everyone knew that these thousands were merely passing through Dubno; where they were going to, nobody knew.

I doubted whether you would have been able to get across the frontier, since only a few hours after we parted at the bacon factory the Soviet tanks, covered with greenery and flowers, passed through Dubno. So when we got the news at Warsaw that you had safely reached Bucharest, a weight was lifted from my heart.

I spent not quite a fortnight under Soviet occupation. You don't know what it was like, so I will tell you in a few words.

At Dubno I saw the Bolsheviks for the first time in my life, and there for the first time I heard talks with genuine Red Army men. A Soviet soldier came in to the little Jewish cafe where we were sitting over a cup of tea. His face did not betray great intelligence, nor was his uniform imposing, but his readiness to talk was most striking. He was surrounded by a group of people. The local Jews in particular looked on him with great satisfaction and caught his words greedily, translating them aloud into Polish at once. The soldier declared, of course, that the Red Army was on the march to Germany. The most interesting part of his discourse was however his accounts of the Soviet regime and of life in Russia, which we found afterwards he must have learnt by heart, since they were word for word the same as those given by every new-comer from Russia, were he soldier or civilian. Russia, according to him, was a perfect paradise on earth, where everyone was prosperous and enjoyed great freedom.

'Comrade, what would I be able to do there ?' one of his hearers asked him.

'It depends on what you know, comrade, and whether you're a specialist.'

'I'm a shopkeeper.'

'Then in that case you'll at once become a commissar of a large co-operative, comrade.'

'And I ? I'm a workman in a bacon-factory,' another wanted to know.

'What is a bacon-factory ?'

'A meat-cannery.'

'Why, as you've been a workman, comrade, you can now be commissar of a factory, or a section-superintendent.'

At each answer given by the Red Army man the questioners rubbed their hands delightedly, as though they had already received their new appointments. And who knows whether for many of them his words were not prophetic ? For, after three days of 'Soviet rule' at Dubno, among the numerous

posters which were stuck up, beginning 'Comrades!' there was one signed, 'Communist Workers' Soviet of the District Hospital; Commissar Stanislawa Pozniak, former attendant.'

On the triumphal day of the entry into Dubno, despite the arches set up by the communists, the banners with inscriptions in praise of the Soviet Union, Stalin and the Red Army, and the flowers thrown on to the tanks by persons wearing red arm-bands and red cockades, a certain anxiety might be read in the Bolsheviks' faces. And in any case, listening to the greetings shouted from the tanks, one might have supposed that aid for Poland was coming from the East. No one yet realized the true aims of Moscow, and almost every Pole with whom one spoke at Dubno cherished a little hope and faith in its sincerity. On the next day, when the first wave of refugees from the Zalcszczyki sector had been driven through the town, and when we saw the first parties of disarmed Polish soldiers, disillusionment set in.

It was at Dubno, on the second day of the occupation, that I saw a very sad scene. Two young Jews, communist militiamen, brought out a couple of Polish officers, a colonel and a lieutenant, from a house. In the market-place, surrounded by a party of militiamen (of course all armed with rifles), stood a superior sort of commissar, a young fellow with a markedly Semitic cast of countenance. The officers were brought before him, whereupon he addressed a few words in Russian to the colonel—and slapped him hard in the face. The colonel took the blow in silence, with bowed head, as though he wished to look at the 'Virtuti Militari' Cross which was hanging on his breast. Presently the commissar ordered the two officers to put up their hands, while they were searched and their belts taken from them.

During the night of September 18—19 Dubno was shaken for at least eight hours by an unceasing discharge of rifle fire. I was staying at the rectory, where the old priest had put me up. Having a kind of foreboding of trouble, I had got out of bed and was lying on the floor. Not five minutes afterwards the window-panes were smashed and the quilt and pillow on

the bed were riddled by machine-gun bullets. How nice it would have been for me ! To this day I do not know what the Bolsheviks were after, or why they fired like that at that time. One thing is certain : they fired blindly at particular houses on the street, and killed a number of people.

Never shall I forget that morning, September 19, when one and another knocked at the rectory door, begging the priest to administer the Blessed Sacraments to the wounded. Nor shall I forget the grief-stricken face and tragic eyes of a girl of fifteen or sixteen who rushed into the rectory to bring the priest to her parents; they had been shot at dawn by two Bolsheviks who had burst into the house.

It was then, too, that for the first time in my life I put my hands up, and for the first time felt the cold steel of a pistol at my forehead. Early in the morning a whole band of soldiers came to the rectory, shouting wildly that it was we who had been firing in the night at the tanks standing before the church. The whole time they were there we all of us had to stand against the wall like condemned men, with our hands up, and a soldier before each of us with his revolver cocked. A young soldier with wild eyes and a Mongolian face pressed the barrel of his pistol against my forehead. In the end they took away three Polish soldiers who had been sleeping in the rectory, and the curate, assistant to the parish priest.

Even at the most tragic moments farcical situations sometimes occur. Imagine ! Just when we were expecting a melancholy end, certain that the soldiers were going to press their triggers, for they seemed to be taking aim,—a young couple appeared in the doorway. When the Bolshevik officer asked them what they had come for, it turned out that they wanted the priest, to marry them right away. And a quarter of an hour after the soldiers had gone, I was signing the register as a witness of the marriage.

When we were fleeing from the Germans towards the East, we spent one night in a Polish-Ukrainian village not far from Luck. There were many other refugees there beside myself. The Ukrainians did not everywhere receive the Poles

cordially, but in that village they were very hospitable. And the folk in whose cottage I spent the night were particularly cordial. I talked with them for hours, about the war, Poland, and the Ukrainians. They even invited me to stay with them for the duration. When I went on my way the next morning, they gave me a good breakfast and filled my pockets with fruit. And their parting words were not to be forgotten :

'Poland will not perish,' said the farmer, standing in the doorway of his cottage. 'We don't want the Germans here. Come back.'

Now, fleeing westward before the Bolsheviks, I came to the same village again and spent the night with the same folk. They were now crushed and filled with alarm by the turn things had taken. But they received me with even greater cordiality than before.

'Poland will return here,' the Ukrainian felt sure. 'Come as soon as possible,' he said, pressing my hand in farewell.

The return to Warsaw was a much more difficult undertaking than the flight before the Germans had been. But the people did not let themselves be discouraged by the difficulties ; they desired at all costs to return to their homes in the western half of Poland : anything rather than to remain among the Bolsheviks. The roads were congested with refugees, whom not even the Bolsheviks were able to scatter. Not knowing the Germans yet, they all imagined, as I did, that any evil which could befall them was preferable to a Bolshevik occupation. And meanwhile the Bolsheviks were constantly encouraging the crowds halted on the roads and gathered at rendezvous :

'Don't hurry. The Red Army has already crossed the Vistula. In a few days the whole of Poland will be under Soviet rule.'

In one village the local 'people's commissar' actually issued personal passes, authorizing the bearer to make his way without hindrance to Warsaw, Cracow, Poznan,—or Berlin. I was given a pass of this kind, on which it was indicated that it 'should be presented to the competent Soviet authority at Warsaw.'

One day when I was in the neighbourhood of Chelm under Lublin, I was arrested, and with me Romek Radwanski, whom I had met at Wlodzimierz in Volhynia. He was in good form, had his plans for returning to Warsaw, and was carrying at least ten love-poems to his Marylka in his pocket. Anyhow he made no secret of the fact that he wanted to go back only because of her. But unfortunately, though I got out of prison, he stayed behind. The Bolsheviks took us to Chelm and shut us up in a large building which had been hastily turned into a prison and in which about a thousand people were already confined.

Of course we at once set about devising means for changing our not too safe or pleasant residence. First Romek and I discussed the matter together, and then afterwards we shared our plans with the rest of our fellow-prisoners. After four days we organized a mass escape. It was hunger that decided us to try so soon. All we had to eat for the whole day was a small piece of bread. There were a dozen or more of us in one cell. We escaped in quite a dare-devil way: as we were confined on the third floor, under the roof, we arranged to climb out of the window, which was not secured in any way, on to the roof. From there we counted upon being able to get on to the roof of a neighbouring building, and if that should prove impossible, on making our way to the ground by the aid of a rain-water pipe. The night was dark, and thereby favourable to us. Soon we were on the roof. All around it was perfectly quiet. In some streets and in some windows lights were still to be seen. The roof was steep and covered with sheet iron. One had to take off one's boots; mine I hung by their laces round my neck. It turned out that there was only one house near ours, rather lower, and separated by a passage over three feet wide. Without hesitation we one after another sprang across, and found ourselves on the neighbouring roof. After that everything seemed designed to aid us. Pipes went down from the roof. We could not, indeed, make sure that they reached the ground, but no one hesitated because of that.

I and many others got away successfully, but Romek, although he went down before me, had bad luck. While we were running over the dark fields whistles were blown behind

us, and after a few moments rifles were fired. It had not been of much use climbing down from the neighbouring house. The Bolsheviks had raised the alarm. I don't know whether Romek was caught, or whether he was struck by a bullet. At any rate he did not come to the appointed place.

The following afternoon I crawled on my stomach through potato fields across the line of demarcation which then ran near Lublin. After that the rest of the journey to Warsaw was easy. I was challenged only a few times by German sentries.

When we left Warsaw, you remember, the sky was marvellously blue and the sunshine very bright. And the great war was in progress. And great Poland, too, was in existence. And we had great hopes.

When I returned home three or four weeks later, after traversing two or three hundred miles, mainly on foot, the sky was as marvellous as it had been on September 7. And the sunshine likewise. Only there was no war; no free Poland; and no hope. The roads, whose edges were marked by masses of fresh graves, were thronged with troops—at first Soviet, and then German; and the bonnets of German and Soviet cars were decorated with trophies in the shape of steel helmets with the Polish eagle. Where but yesterday had been villages and small towns, there were now forests of brick chimneys sticking up amid ruins, where tongues of flame still occasionally leapt up from dying embers. Everywhere hungry, masterless dogs were howling; everywhere wild, masterless, hungry horses were straying; everywhere groups of wild, masterless, hungry and homeless people were moaning, and lost, parentless children were crying. In the fields and among the embers lay still the bodies of men and horses, with only dogs and flocks of black, cawing crows to give them funeral.

Believe me, I felt as though I were going home through a huge, unending Polish cemetery. I was on my way to Warsaw, but everyone told me:

'It's no good going there. There's no more Warsaw. Only ruins, and Germans.'

All this was so recently, and yet it seems as if whole centuries had passed.

I came at length to Warsaw. A Warsaw I did not recognize. Even at Grochow I forgot all about my home, my family, and my kin. Tears filled my eyes. Warsaw ! Poor Warsaw !

The streets at Grochow were blocked by rubble from destroyed houses, by overturned tram-cable posts and lamp-posts. My feet were constantly catching in telegraph and telephone wires and electric cables. Saska Kepa was one great battlefield. Amid the ruins of houses and the carcasses of horses lay smashed and overturned guns, tanks and cars. The Poniatowski Bridge had its roadway pierced with bombs, and its balustrades broken, while its whole length was littered with lamp-posts, cars and lorries, all tangled up with wire ; the bent ends of tramlines stuck up, and lumps of rubble from the bombed buildings of the viaduct were scattered everywhere. Near the left bank of the Vistula the masts of sunken ships projected from the water.

The centre of the city was nothing but a mass of ruins. In Nowy Swiat and the Krakowskie Przedmiescie one had to pick one's way along narrow tracks between or over the rubble. In various directions the remains of walls and ceilings of ruined flats kept collapsing with a loud noise. All around were guns, lorries with their wheels in the air, and damaged tanks. Across the streets lay tramcars on their sides, mostly smashed by shells or bombs and riddled with bullet and splinter holes. Everywhere there was still biting smoke and dust, and the last flickering flames of burnt houses, streets, and quarters. In all the open squares and grass-plots, and on the foot-walks, from which the square stone flags had been removed, were cemeteries, small and large. Everywhere the sweetish, nauseating smell of decaying corpses met the nose.

From underneath some ruined houses came the cries of imprisoned human beings. Polish labourers carried on their rescue work in haste, under the orders of German sappers, who themselves remained at a safe distance from the ruins. Carcasses of horses were mixed with rubble from the remains

of barricades. Hungry dogs scratched greedily, after the example of men, who cut steaks for themselves from dead horses.

Warsaw was one great battlefield—one great burial-ground.

Without exaggeration it may be said that Warsaw in the early days of October presented an uncanny, nightmarish panorama. The people were no longer the same as they had been even during the September evacuation. Seen against the background of the terrible devastation, the street cemeteries, and the odour of corpses, they appeared to the onlooker like vampires. This impression was deepened by the vacant eyes, full of tears and despair, and the shrieks of women over the graves; there were dreadful scenes of lunatics escaped from asylums; and everywhere were Germans, Germans, moving about in herds, with self-satisfied faces, drunk with victory, and photographing one another against the 'picturesque' ruins. Over the City Garrison building in Pilsudski Place fluttered the victorious swastika flag.

I pressed on through it all to find my home and family.

Where our house had been was a heap of rubble, over which stood up a single wall, riddled by bullets and blackened by fire. I felt sure that the rubble must be the grave of my dearest. I ran madly through the city. Wherever I went, to look for my family or acquaintance, I found ruined houses or empty flats. At last, after two hours' search, I found my wife and child in a perfectly strange house, with quite strange people, at Zoliborz. I must tell you too that I found your family. Your house was saved, and all but a few are alive.

Our life at Warsaw is hopelessly sad. I have no inclination even to give you any methodical description of it. I know I am unable with my pen to do justice to the city's superabundance of misery and suffering. Warsaw, heroic Warsaw, lies today like a mortally wounded lion, bathed in its own blood, panting with fatigue and exhaustion.

The end of the war brought the end also of freedom, and banged the door on the splendid life of yesterday. A new life has begun: a life of hunger, suffering and slavery. Strictly speaking, this life is not existent as yet. It is only beginning

to be organized. We are only beginning to plan it out—as slaves.

Consider only, that at the end of October there were still at Warsaw no trams, no electricity, no water. It was only about the beginning of November, that the trams began running again, and then only for very short distances ; the first electric lights began to twinkle here and there, and the water-supply was restored. Food prices went up enormously. The worst thing, however, was the raging epidemics, accompanied by a shortage of medicines and drugs. Now at least a few places are open where one can get a plate of soup and a piece of bread ; while in the dearer ones there is even meat. But in October there was not even this. By the way, the first eating-house to be opened at Warsaw after the occupation began was Lourse's, the confectioner's in the Krakowskie Przedmiescie. There one could get—after waiting in a long queue, of course—a glass of tea without sugar and two thin pieces of bread and jam, for a zloty. Its opening was soon followed by that of Blickle's in Nowy Swiat, which was the first in Warsaw to put up a notice of 'No admittance for Jews.'

It is not so long since we were carrying on a campaign for the abolition of horse-cabs in the centre of the city. What a good thing that in Poland even in such things no one takes any account of what journalists think ! Now these cabs are enjoying a splendid revival. They have become almost the only means of locomotion in the city. Wiech, who best understood the cabman's calling, and devoted the majority of his works to cabmen, was right in believing in the future of the horse-cab.

You will naturally be interested to hear what our friends and colleagues are doing. With few exceptions we are all unemployed. Three fellows from our house have got jobs under the City Council : digging among the ruins and exhuming corpses. They are Antos Tatarkiewicz, Jurek Buzek and old Klobudzki. The remainder are living in hope that any day the situation may change and that we may again take up our work in the editorial office. Of this 'remainder' many are perforce taking up the glazier's trade. You know there's hardly a house in

Warsaw with whole panes of glass. Thousands of people have taken it up, among them poets, painters and journalists. By 'glazing' we mean stopping holes in windows : it doesn't matter what with ; mostly with ply-wood, since there's no glass—though in the last few days some real glass has made its appearance. Leszek Majewski and Tadzio Piotrowicz have already made themselves experts, possessing even diamonds of their own for cutting the stuff, and regarding themselves as capable of quite important undertakings. Leszek is the most at home ; before the war he used to cut out paper figures with scissors ; now he cuts glass with a diamond. Czarecki, the popular writer of detective stories, is at present making a great success of his little putty manufactory, employing a dozen or more workers, including one of the editors of the old *Kurier Warszawski*. The worst fate has befallen only the best of us, those who stuck to their posts at the press throughout the war, the siege of Warsaw, and even the early days of the occupation. They are all now in Pawiak gaol.

I used the term 'old' in relation to the *Kurier Warszawski* since at present there is only one paper circulating in Warsaw, which was introduced from Lodz and calls itself the *Nowy Kurier Warszawski* (New Warsaw Courier). I don't know who edits it, but anyway it's a miserable sheet published by the Germans, insulting not only the Polish people, but also the Polish language. The proprietors and editors of the real *Kurier Warszawski* are exceedingly indignant. In my opinion they need not be, for the *New* Warsaw Courier can never be mistaken for the old one, which has been in existence for over a century.

Indeed they ought to be rather pleased than angry. I think I am not mistaken in saying that the *Kurier Warszawski* is one of the three publishing-houses in Warsaw whose offices have not been destroyed. The press at Warsaw unfortunately has had no luck. The offices of the *Kurier Poranny* (Morning Courier), the *Robotnik* (Worker), and the *Gazeta Polska* (Polish Gazette), as well as the presses where so many other periodicals, artistic and literary, were produced, are now only heaps of rubble. Our colleagues of the *Poranny* and the *Robotnik* formed a com-

mittee to dig out the rotaries and sell them as old iron ; but in all Warsaw they could not find a purchaser.

I have said the press has had no luck. But it is not only the press. The Royal Castle is now a ruin, comparable to the historic remains of Czersk and Checiny Castles. All that is left of the splendid building of the Inspectorate General of Armed Forces is the pediment wall with its inscription, *Honor i Ojczyzna* (Honour and Country). The Ministry of Agriculture building is represented only by the columns in front, as are the Opera House and the Treasury. The Staszica Palace looks like a haunted house, the plaster falling off, no windows, the interior devastated. Numerous portions of Nowy Swiat street, and particularly of the squares near the Ministry of Internal Affairs, with variously-shaped pieces of wall lying on the ground, the whole of Swietokrzyska Street, a considerable length of the Krakowskie Przedmiescie, and Miodowa Street, recall engravings of Greek and Roman remains. Don't you find a kind of symbol of Poland's tragedy in the three ruins : the Royal Castle, the Inspectorate General of Armed Forces, and the building which used to house the government *Gazeta Polska* at the corner of Szpitalna and Zgoda Streets ?

For the last few days I have been strolling about Warsaw, aimlessly enough.

As a matter of fact, had I not known what had happened here recently and had I not been visiting Warsaw as a tourist, I should have come to the conclusion that the city was built over a cemetery. A great cemetery, extending without interruption under all the streets, squares, public gardens and parks. I went through it looking for the graves of people I had known. And how many I found ! In Marszalkowska Street, almost opposite our building, lies Urszulka Grabowiczowna, without whom, somehow, I never could think of our editorial staff. In Hoover Square lie side by side four actors from the 'Summer' and 'Polish' Theatres. However, why should I count particular *my* or *our* acquaintances ? They are all, without exception, very near and dear to us. There are fewer military than civilian graves, but very many, all the same. Mostly they are marked by steel

helmets. Special care is taken of the grave of the Unknown Soldier of the Defence of Warsaw, on the footpath at the corner of Jerozolimska and Marszalkowska Streets. Beside the helmet there hangs on one arm of the primitive cross, constructed of two pieces of wood, the Virtuti Militari decoration. The grave is covered with flowers, and round it candles burn unceasingly. At Wola, Mokotow, Grochow and Saska Kepa the helmets on the graves are intermingled: among many Polish ones a few German, and again among many German ones a few Polish.

A few days ago was All Souls'. For Warsaw this was the first All Souls' Day for ages that it had not been necessary to visit distant cemeteries in order to find the dead. It was a very sad commemoration. Had the Germans not interfered I am sure that in the evening of the 2nd of November the light of the candles burning on all the graves of Warsaw would have lit up the sky at least as brightly as the burning of Warsaw during the siege. But of course the Germans did not allow any such demonstration.

From the arrangements they have made so far it may be concluded that the Germans have no intention of showing themselves mild or tolerant. This is also the opinion of Starzynski, who joins us nearly every day at our journalists' table at Blickle's. Indeed he expects many changes for the worse as the administration is taken over by the German civil authorities. Now that I have mentioned him I must say that he is a really imposing figure. Imposing above all by virtue of his calmness (real or assumed) and serenity of mind. A completely different impression is made on the other hand by Niedzialkowski, who also is a constant visitor to our coffee-house. It is evident that he is broken by the result of the war, and has lost his self-control. Yet there is no one in Warsaw who would not respect both of these men to a very high degree. The voice of Starzynski still rings in men's ears, speaking splendidly over the wireless, as he alone could do; while the simple words of Niedzialkowski are engraved on the memory for ever—and will be, perhaps, for all future generations of Poles: 'The working class will not surrender; the working class continues the fight.'

The rumour of Niedzialkowski's proposed departure for Paris is heard with increasing frequency. One of the *Robotnik* staff says that Niedzialkowski is determined to get away from Poland, and indeed all his friends earnestly advise him to do so. It would be fine if he succeeded. There is no doubt that the man really ought to take a direct share in the work of the government. And besides, if he stays longer in Poland the end may be tragic. They say he has quite made up his mind to go, and is only waiting for a formal invitation of some kind, which is to be expected very shortly.

Starzynski on the other hand is determined not to leave Warsaw. In answer to the arguments of one of his friends, the mayor is reported to have said:

'Yes, after the war I will go to Paris for a rest. In the meantime, as long as I am allowed to work, I will defend the interests of Warsaw and of its population. Escape from the country in my case would be equivalent to desertion. It is easiest to take easy decisions. But remember that if Warsaw were left without a Polish mayor, its whole population would suffer. No, I shall yield only to the pressure of force.'

We are all stunned. We have not yet regained consciousness after all the experiences, impressions and dreadful results of this so short war. But we are beginning to feel the weight of the occupation every day more painfully.

You once urged me to publish my journalistic notes from Germany, Slovakia and the Protectorate in book form. And the book, as you know, was printed at the very beginning of the war. Now I want to tell you that one of the small and insignificant effects of the occupation, so far as it concerns myself, is the melancholy end of this whole undertaking. One day I called on the managing director of the publishing house with the idea of getting a small sum of money from him on account. Yes, he was glad to see me, and immediately suggested that perhaps I might be ready to help him to burn the whole edition of my book, which was there in his storeroom. I felt that there was a kind of obligation on the author to fall in with such a proposal, and that same evening I began

to work really hard on the actual 'finishing' of my book. Three of us pushed the fresh copies into three stoves. What a job it was ! If ever in the future you write a book, remember that it is far easier to write even a very good book than to burn the whole edition of even a very bad one.

However, the managing director treated me more than well. When I left him he gave me a hundred zlotys—not, you are to think, as fee for the book we had burnt, but as an advance on a new one.

'Collect all the material you can for a biggish book on the occupation of Warsaw,' he said to me. 'In the spring, in May at the latest, we shall be the first in Poland to publish such revelations. I will try and provide suitable illustrations, and if you only present your material well, the book will have an enormous success.'

I have no doubt that such a book will have a good sale, and perhaps be translated into several languages. Only I am a little doubtful whether I can write it well enough. And there isn't really very much time for such a thing.

In the spring . . .

Like the director of the publishing-house I do not doubt for a moment that the dreadful black night enveloping Poland will be over by the spring. Anyhow, there's no need for *me* to tell *you* as much. We all believe most solemnly that our tragedy will last only until the spring. We are stunned, we are alarmed, but we have not lost the feeling for reality. Assuredly in early spring the powerful French army will begin to move, magnificently trained and equipped, and led by distinguished generals. The Germans defeated us pretty easily, for we were weak, but the French will defeat them with still greater ease. And besides, the French armies will be supported by the British and American. And it is not impossible that there may be already an understanding between the Western powers and Russia, and that the latter may move with all its forces from the East. Warsaw is in ruins, but—we all believe—Berlin will be turned into a heap of ruins in the spring. How can it help being, if it is going to be bombarded by thousands of planes, French, British, American, and perhaps Soviet too ?

Our situation at Warsaw may be summed up in the words, hunger and complete uncertainty as regards the nearest future. The most fantastic rumours circulate in this connexion, proceeding for the most part, of course, from Blickle's coffee-house. We don't know what the Germans intend to do with us, and that is exceedingly disquieting to us. For the time being the city is a recent battlefield, and what will rise out of it nobody knows, except of course the Germans, who so far have not disclosed their plans.

The first month of the occupation is scarcely over, and some folk are already beginning to adapt themselves to the situation. I have in mind a visit which I recently paid to our former linotypist, Piotrus Palus. You will remember him well: a lad who at times made himself unbearable with his constant repetition of the words 'brotherhood of peoples', 'world revolution', 'emancipation of the proletariat', and 'the final victory of socialism'. He looked me up and dragged me off to his rooms.

I had always respected his strength of character, his obstinacy in support of righteous causes, and his idealism. Although he had hardly any education, his innate intelligence and the characteristics I have noted made him superior not only to the compositors, but to more than one of our journalist idiots, dandies and boasters.

I went with him to his lodging, an attic in a small house at Praga. The room was dirty and littered with papers, and the only piece of furniture beside the table was a dreadfully tired-looking, archaic sofa, over which looked out from a small frame the sweet smiling face of a young girl.

'First we'll listen to the radio and hear what France has to say.'

He said this in a half-whisper, winking waggishly, and then drew out from under the sofa a fine superhet receiving set. This, I may say, caused him to rise considerably in my opinion. The date for handing in wireless sets was already long past, and we all knew about the arrests, and the death-penalty which according to the notices threatened those who

'sabotaged the regulations'—and this lad entertained me with his radio as calmly as if it were a cigarette or a cup of tea.

'I will show you something interesting,' he said after we had listened to France for a quarter of an hour. 'I'm curious to know what you will think of it.'

He handed me a sheet of paper roneoed on both sides. The anonymous author, signing himself 'Wojtek from the Vistula', appealed to all Poles to preserve their national dignity, to despise the company of Germans, to found secret organizations of four or five members, and to keep stocks of arms and ammunition.

'What do I think? Why, I think it's very sensible and necessary.'

Piotrus got up from the sofa and, leaning over me with his hands in his pockets, held forth as follows:

'The idea is very good, but the execution is fatal. How many copies could they print, and how many people could they reach with that? Anyhow a paper like that is no good for anything. Everyone knows more or less how to behave and what to do now. In my opinion something else is needed at the present time. They've taken away our wireless sets, suppressed our newspapers, and cut us off from what is happening in the world at large.' 'So you see,' he went on, 'the idea must be extended and better executed than it is in this scrap of paper. Folk have long since become sick of mere phrases and pathos. What is now wanted is something concrete: news, news from the world at large; that's the only thing in which I see any sense.'

I listened to the words of Piotrus and compared them with the discussions of the hyper-intelligentsia at Blickle's. What a world of difference there was between the constructive thought of this young and enthusiastic lad who had been a linotypist and the barren talk of the coffee-house politicians and coffee-house revolutionaries!

'I will tell you my great secret,' he went on, sitting down again beside me. 'I am thinking of publishing a secret newspaper. For some days the idea has given me no rest. And

so I went to look for you and have brought you here to listen to what you think of it.'

You will guess my answer. Ever since that meeting Piotrus and I have been firm friends and have seen each other two or three times a day. He is really an extraordinarily capable lad. When you return to Warsaw in the spring you will assuredly make friends with him as I have done.

SECOND LETTER

'UNDERGROUND' AND 'SURFACE' LIFE

WARSAW,
February, 1940.

My dear friend,

Almost everyone who went through the siege of Warsaw tells me that in September last year the calm before the capitulation was more terrible than the hellish fire of the big guns and the unceasing hail of bombs.

'We preferred,' my wife told me, 'the sky darkened with clouds of hostile aircraft, spreading frightful destruction, fires, and death every hour, to the calm and the awful news of the armistice.'

This choice as between victory and death was doubtless due to an instinctive realization of all that was meant by defeat and enslavement. This feeling on the part of the defenders of Warsaw—by which I mean the whole of the population—was not mistaken. We are enslaved ; cruelly, most cruelly enslaved.

Nowadays I look back on the days before the war and at the beginning of September as on a great and long-past, care-free epoch. Particularly those early days of September.

Do you remember ?

Sometimes at night, listening to the slow footsteps of the iron-shod German gendarmes outside in the street, I close my eyes and recall memories of days which now belong to the far past.

The sirens sound. We go down from our glass-windowed rooms to shelter. There we sit on enormous bales of paper and smoke cigarettes, taking no notice of the warning, 'Smoking forbidden' (few things were forbidden in those days), and spend long periods, often hours, patiently waiting for the 'raiders passed'. After a few days we got accustomed to this and finished our articles in the shelter. In this connexion I remember a few colleagues, mostly senior in age and position ; I remember

their naive pronouncements on modern war; and I remember their restless movements among the bales of paper, when the bigger explosions caused the concrete floor to quiver, the lamps to swing, and plaster to fall from the ceiling. We used to work then without pause, leaving the office for an hour, or at most two hours, for dinner. We slept on piles of newspaper.

Sometimes I lose myself in the recollection of particular incidents, forgetting all that happened later. It seems as if it were still *then*, and as though I were still *there*.

The chief editors tell us that we are now going through a fiery trial of character, and remind us that we are working, not for the publishers, but for the Cause.

'We will not cease to publish the paper,' said one of them, 'until the last of us has fallen at his post.'

Next morning, the third day of the war, we gathered in the shelter during a raid. We were all there– except for the chiefs.

'They've gone somewhere by car.'

'Mobilized, perhaps ?'

'Maybe. But one of them has taken his family with him.'

'Yesterday there were telephone calls to the Roumanian embassy about visas.'

'That's strange. It was only yesterday that they were talking about working for the Cause and falling at one's post.'

Our long and often wearisome periods of sitting in the shelter were relieved by conversation, not always on pleasant subjects. The mysterious departure of the chief editors, after they had written flaming articles and manifestos proclaiming devotion to the last breath, the last drop of blood, took us by surprise and depressed us.

This thread of memories by night is often interrupted, sometimes by a piercing shriek from the street, or a man-hunt, or the sound of shots.

But as I have begun these recollections, I cannot omit this one :

On September 7 we were working for the last time. A considerable number of the editorial and technical staff had let themselves be carried away by the wave which was bearing

hundreds of thousands to the East. Anyhow they were only obeying the instructions of the Government, whose representatives had broadcast on the preceding evening that all who were capable of fighting against the enemy should leave Warsaw at once. Our managing director took leave of us in the hall on the ground floor. He was troubled, thinking that our departure was quite unnecessary.

'I'll give you only a few zlotys in hand,' he said. 'That ought to be enough for a few days. Collect information, make notes of the general attitude,' he advised us, 'for after two or three days all this will be past, and next Saturday, the 16th, we'll publish our special issue, so get plenty of material, and above all interesting reports. What a splendid number we will publish !' And he extended his right hand with clenched fist, which you know is taken in Warsaw as a symbol of strength.

'Our director always has sound intuition,' said Romek Radwanski when we were already on our way, a company of a dozen or more, past the new barricades and the freshly destroyed houses, amid an ant-like procession moving towards the Poniatowski Bridge and Grochow.

'I suppose we really shall return in a few days,' added someone.

In the crowded, melancholy streets, so different from usual, newspaper boys were shouting the headlines of the war communiques and the most recent news : which we had put out that same morning. The depressing and tragic notes of the sirens announced a fresh raid. Amid the hellish noise of falling bombs and anti-aircraft guns we left our editorial offices behind.

But this time the director's intuition failed him. We did not return in a few days, we did not write any reports, and we did not publish our special edition on Saturday the 16th. Nor on any succeeding Saturday.

I tell you, although you know it all as well as I do. But today this reminiscence of the past, this escape from the present, gives me relief. Recollection such as this is an expression of longing for what was, and the further off is the past, the greater is the longing. Yet how strange for a young man to be longing for the past !

But how can one fail to long—at least to long—when the present reality is so terrible !

The other day was the Anniversary of Polish Independence. The first since we were again enslaved. For some days before November 11 the Germans had been making 'solemn' preparations. They had done everything they could, they had forgotten nothing, to remind us and impress upon all of us, that our independence was over, and that we were only slaves. Already on November 10 one could see that they were preparing to 'honour' our national festival. It was forbidden to hang out any national flags and to make any demonstration of patriotic feeling, and sharp measures were taken to enforce the prohibition. Early in the morning of the anniversary day tanks and cars full of soldiers began to patrol the streets, which were likewise guarded by infantrymen with tommy-guns. Apart from that, perfect quiet reigned in the city. The festival day passed like any other. Perhaps the streets were emptier than usual. Hardly any of the passers-by took notice of the detachments of troops marching in goose-step with songs and standards, nor of the noisy columns of tanks. No one looked at the impudent faces, each of which seemed to say: 'Here we are, the conquerors. We'll stage you a show and a march past, that you may be sure that any attempt of yours to resist us will be ruthlessly crushed.'

That day I witnessed scenes extremely wounding to our national pride. In the Aleje Jerozolimskie, at the corner of Bracka Street, stood three smartly dressed officers with decorations on their breasts. They all looked like well-bred Europeans of the twentieth century. They stood there, looked about them, and exchanged a few words. Then they began their 'activity'. They let all the men pass freely, but stopped all the women without exception, striking them with their fists and canes, and kicking them as they rolled bleeding on the ground. Why was it that they attacked only the women ? They knew very well. They knew that it would hurt the men more than if they had been beaten themselves. The Poles may be denied many virtues, but chivalry is not one of them. And the Germans know this full well.

On the night of November 11—12 more numerous patrols than usual paraded the streets, fearing that the Poles might undertake some imprudent action. Are Polish slaves always guided by prudence?

That night remains fixed in my memory. For it so happened that, after a fortnight or so of various endeavours and preparations, a few of us had gathered that November night at the rooms of Antek Tatarkiewicz to 'release' the first number of the secret newspaper, which has now become a very serious publication, issued at regular intervals.

The proceedings began with our drawing down the blinds very carefully and making sure that no light leaked out into the street. Beside Antek and myself there were present Stefek Kucharski, Piotrus Palus and Lolek Gorecki. We set to work with beating hearts, feeling, perhaps, rather stupid. For we were still but children at our task. We were troubled by the least noise on the stairs and the least sound of footsteps, however distant, in the street. The typewriter we put on the bed, to deaden its clicking, and on the table Piotrus put our chief treasure, a perfectly new duplicator, which we knew how to use about as much as we knew how to find our way by the stars. But Piotrus, after spoiling the first matrix and fifty or sixty sheets of paper and covering himself with copying-ink, found out all the secrets of the—after all not very complicated—machine. We wrote out articles and broadcast news from France on the wax mould, and then argued over the title the paper was to have. Finally we agreed on *Warszawianka* (La Varsovienne), and began 'printing'. You would not believe what satisfaction we found in the fresh sheets of the new paper as they came out of the duplicator.

The memory of that first number is bound up for us with the memory of a comic incident of its production. We had worked till 2 in the morning. Suddenly the bell rang in the vestibule. Great Scot! Someone was ringing at our door. In a moment we threw everything into odd corners, put out the light, and lay down wherever we could, pretending to be fast asleep. Stefek, finding nowhere else, stowed himself

under the bed. After a few moments' quiet the bell rang again.

'What to do ?' Antek whispered.

What was there to do ? Antek did not wait for a third ring. He went to the door, rattled the chain, and ground the key in the lock. We expected something most unpleasant. But from the vestibule we heard someone saying :

'Excuse me, sir, but would you be so good as not to make such a noise at night ? You're walking up and down and moving the furniture, and I have a child sick, with a high temperature. Excuse me, but please don't make such a noise.'

It was the tenant of the flat below. We relit the lamp and had a hearty laugh, although we ought really to have been ashamed of our fright. And—Heavens ! what fine conspirators we were !—there on the table, plain for any in-comer to see, was our new duplicator.

We took off our boots and went on with our work. About 5 in the morning everything was ready. No one disturbed us any more. Only we had involuntarily stopped our work each time we heard the tramp of the gendarme's boots in the street below, every half hour or so.

But from November 11 till today is a good long time. Much has changed in our *Warszawianka* ; much in our situation in Warsaw ; and much in Poland in general.

It seems as though all the forces of evil had conspired against us. For example, in addition to all our other mistortunes, this has been an exceptionally hard winter. Frost of Siberian intensity, and nothing to eat, nothing to smoke, and—for thousands of people—nothing to wear. Our life of enslavement goes on, with the ruins for a background—though they have been more or less tidied up in the centre of the city. In the course of these few months Warsaw has become one enormous mart for second-hand stuff. Everyone seems to be selling off whatever he possesses. In almost every street people stand, in tens and hundreds, offering the passer-by (who himself is most probably thinking of selling something on his own account) clothes, dresses, linen, fur coats, table utensils, pillows, boots,

jewellery, books, or footstuffs : anything one could want. Everything can be bought cheap, for there is mad competition to sell, and buyers are few.

Apart from this, trade has become the main occupation and livelihood of a considerable portion of the population of Warsaw. The war has thrown enormous numbers of officials, teachers, schoolboys and girls, and workers out of employment. In such case there are but three possibilities : vegetating on one's pre-war resources, begging, or trade. For my own part, I chose the third alternative. Not on my own, however, but in partnership with Piotrus Palus and Romek Radwanski, who turned up in Warsaw not long since, after his imprisonment by the Bolsheviks. We have started an undertaking in support of 'culture and enlightenment' on two wheels : or in other words street trading in books. Quite a pleasant occupation, as interesting as journalism and providing us with tolerable maintenance. The market for books is immense, though no one has succeeded in discovering where folk get the money from to buy them, and why they choose just books. It is curious, too, that the most sought-after works are what may be called serious literature. History books go like bread-and-butter, and some will fetch their weight in gold. The highest price for a work of this kind (80 zlotys) was paid for the three little volumes of Bobrzynski's 'History of Poland'. Memoirs go very well, too, and perhaps even better revolutionary works. Folk, and particularly young men and women, throw themselves hungrily on any reminiscences or descriptions of 1905, of the history of the Polish Socialist Party, or of the national insurrections. French Self-Taught is likewise in great demand—far more than German. Special prices are paid for two books which were banned by the Germans in the very first weeks of the occupation : namely Kisielewski's *Ziemia gromadzi prochy* (The Earth gathers Dust) and Wankowicz's *Na tropach Smetka* (On Smetek's Trail) ; about 50 zlotys each.

If it were not for the biting cold, which is particularly trying for us who have to stand a considerable part of the day in the street, the occupation might be quite agreeable. All day long people pass before one's eyes as in a kaleidoscope,

tell us stories of various happenings, of major or minor importance, exchange sad or cheerful news with us street traders, are sometimes insistent and unbearable, and at other times merely comic.

For example, there comes a young lady, who purchases the first book she sees, goes away, and soon comes back again and asks :

'Have you by any chance a handbook—you know, an acquaintance of mine asked me—something about how to avoid pregnancy ?'

The young lady keeps her eyes cast down, blushes appear on her cheeks, she stuffs the book for her acquaintance in her bag, and goes away quickly.

Or another lady. With a very common face, it is true, but with a very handsome fur coat. She spends at least half an hour looking at a story called 'I'm not coming to Supper'. At last she says :

'I would buy this book, but what I should really like is something in the way of a trilogy with recipes for dinner and dessert.'

'Unfortunately,' I tell her, 'all I have at present is this handbook concerning suppers.'

Or another client. A gentleman in a smart fur coat. with a monocle in his eye. (By the way, Wiech has given up his monocle. He wears ordinary spectacles and is an assistant in a small shop at Praga.) The gentleman looks over our books for a moment and then says :

'I'm looking for a good detective story. I don't care who it is by ; as long as it is really a good book, with at least one murder and one body on every page.'

We have also another amusing 'business friend', who often comes to see what we have got that is new, and to express his opinions on political questions of the day. But so far he hasn't bought even the cheapest book. He is a typical retired official, bald as a coot, wearing a clean, high collar two or three sizes too large for him, and an old-fashioned moustache. He is always clean-shaven, has bloodshot eyes, wrinkles on his cheeks, and a threadbare summer overcoat, and his name is Mr. Dolski. While he is talking he makes sweeping gestures,

and when his interlocutor says something with which he agrees, he immediately ascribes to himself the authorship of the idea or remark, saying :

'Why, I've been saying that for forty years, but no one would listen to me. That's just what I've always said.'

Mr. Dolski does not take at all an optimistic view of our near future.

'This war,' he said one day, with his foot on a spoke of one of our handcart wheels, 'will last in its first phase for seven years, and in the following phase it will be a forty years' war. You see, France will be swept aside like Poland. I was never in France, and I'm glad it never came into my head to go there. Three things have been the ruin of France : wine, jewellers' shops, and Blum. Rich people there think of display, and poor folk of communism. Such a country cannot win a war. You will see : a fortnight after the beginning of the offensive Hitler will take the salute from his troops marching past in Paris and will sleep in the Tuileries, or whatever they call the place. The war in Europe will be won by Russia ; there's no help for it. Not till forty years have past will Russia collapse, and then there will be peace for twenty-five years. Dolski tells you this, and so it will be ; there's no help for it.'

As you see, we have various kinds of clients.

The choice of books is very wide, and I must say that good books have found their way into these street stalls. This has been for the simple reason that the possessors of fine libraries are getting rid of their books, often at rock-bottom prices. Among my stock I have book-plates with the names of eminent politicians, scholars and writers. They are all selling their books, and the wholesale buyers are people like us, who trade in them.

I have mentioned Romek Radwanski. Imagine, late on New Year's Eve, a strange figure making its appearance in my lodging : extraordinarily thin and miserable looking, with uncut hair and beard, hollow eyes with dark pouches under them, and wearing the rags of a summer overcoat. I recognized him only when he spoke. Of the old, pre-war Romek little more

than the voice and figure was left. He spoke, but listen to what he said.

'I've come to say goodbye to you,' were his first words of greeting. 'Nobody needs me any more.'

Romek's fate was that of many in Poland; of many of our friends. The short story of those few months, from September to December, is both commonplace and tragic. He left Warsaw with the rest of us, in accordance with the Government order. He got into a Bolshevik prison. He tried to escape, without success. They transferred him to Kiev. He was confined in prison there. While doing some kind of compulsory labour he made a second attempt to escape, and this time succeeded. He moved only by night, and had but one thought: to reach Warsaw and Marylka. On a bright night in a blizzard he crossed the frozen Bug. Someone pursued him and fired at him. But he got across and reached Warsaw safely. There he began to look for Marylka. After two days he found her—in the Lazienki Park. Among hundreds of fresh graves was one with an inscription: 'Maria Darowska, aged 20, Polish Red Cross sister.' The same day before midnight he came to me. The same night, instead of going to sleep in the comfortable bed I provided for him, he wrote a marvellous poem, short but really beautiful: a poem addressed to God, who must have felt deeply injured by it, even if He were full of gentleness and comprehension.

But his collapse, his complete collapse, lasted only a few days. He joined us in our work, and behaved as though his whole world and whole life were concentrated in our meetings and in our work. I must admit that it was only with the arrival of Romek that our *Warszawianka* made her real debut. Nowadays we are not merely a secret newspaper, but also a political group, which is beginning to play a certain distinct part in the general, ever-increasing underground movement. Moreover, the paper has long since dismissed its duplicator and is printed in the ordinary way. We even—just think what progress it means!—we even reproduced a photograph of Sikorski in the double number we issued on the anniversary of the January insurrection (of 1863).

For you, cut off as you are from Poland and living in the free world, with the possibility of continuing to fight *openly* for the liberty of our Country, these things are quite strange and unfamiliar; for the world in which we here are living has no resemblance to the normal world, in which there are normal days and nights, normal people, and a normal life.

Some day, after the war (let us say in May or June this year), such a thing, for example, as a secret printing-press will be a fascinating subject to recall and discuss. But today it is the actual work which is fascinating for those who operate the press. How original, how unlike the normal, pre-war procedure is the publishing of a Polish newspaper today!

The *Warszawianka* is one of the now numerous Warsaw papers. It grew—like all the rest—out of the instinctive feeling for the necessity of giving the community a word in Polish. (Forgive me this high-flown phrase; sometimes I am in an exalted mood.) And so far it has appeared regularly once a week. During the course of not quite four months it has passed through three phases of progress. First of all we had a manual duplicator, which we called a 'flat machine'; then we had a Gestetner 'rotary'; and finally we have now got an ordinary pedal-driven machine, on which before the war, in some little workshop were printed probably visiting-cards, business letter-heads, and at best small advertisement leaflets. I must say that Piotrus is really clever at this work. From the very beginning he did well, but now that he has procured this pedal machine—he will not say from where—his results are splendid. He is a partner also in our little book-trading concern, but in this field he gives us no help. He is seldom to be separated from his pedal press. He is always improving it and, repairing it, and besides he sets up almost the whole paper himself.

The technique of printing our *Warszawianka* must be the same as that employed by Pilsudski for his *Robotnik*, at Lodz or at Lipniszki in the Wilno district. That socialist 'Boston' press of his must have been the model, or perhaps even the brother, of our pedal machine. Pilsudski set up his paper by hand, from ordinary minute type and single letters, and we have

the same kind. Sometimes, when I am helping Piotrus at his work and take the hardened, much-used corner-piece in my hand, I think that perhaps the same compositor's tool has served before to set secret Polish papers, before the last war.

Our press is of course so located that it is impossible to imagine anyone discovering it. We have no daylight, no electric light, and no water, but we have hundred per cent security ; no one can hear our talk, or the clatter of our machine, nor can anyone guess what sort of a place we are entering or leaving. When you come back to Warsaw next June, after the war, and I show you our printing office, you will see how a secret press can be arranged in Warsaw now. You will go in by . . . But no matter how and where you'll go in.

Let us light the oil lamp hanging on the wall, and take a look at the *Warszawianka* printing-office. The mould and types, the pedal machine and an oil stove make up the whole of the furniture. Further you will see two hand-grenades and two large pistols : the former for anyone who might try to make his way in here by force, and the latter for ourselves, so as not to be taken alive. If you came in today, you would see also a large stock of newsprint. Romek, as thin as a lath and worn, is cutting the binding-paper with a knife. Piotrus, wearing a cyclist's cap pushed down over his brow, is kneeling on some rags before the mould and continually complaining that someone has taken the last set-up apart carelessly, and so there will now be much to correct. You will see me too, working away quite successfully at the pedal-machine.

In our work the printing-shop is undoubtedly the most important thing, but it is not everything. I mention this so that you may realize that the publication of a secret newspaper is quite a complicated business. The least trouble is with the editorial stuff, which is stowed for the most part in our pockets. But the basis of everything is information, and that has to be got from the wireless. Here Piotrus's superhet does invaluable service, which has to be supported by an organization of its own, excellently conducted by Antek Tatarkiewicz, who devotes to the task the whole of his free time after his official duties—digging out corpses—have been done for the day.

You will doubtless wonder why the service of the wireless set demands so much attention. The whole secret is that the receiving set has to be concealed, since if it were discovered the penalty exacted by the Germans would be death : no less. The Toulouse broadcasts have to be received regularly, since otherwise we could not keep our hands on the pulse of events ; and taken down in shorthand and then written out. Finally there are such apparently unimportant items as radio valves, which cannot be bought in Warsaw. All this requires the co-operation of many people. Our radio set is as well concealed as our printing-shop. And as in the latter, so in the wireless room you would find hand-grenades and revolvers. It has to be so. I may tell you that we have an excellent stenographer in the person of Basia Jarnecka. Perhaps you remember her. Of course you do : a slender, very elegant and pretty blonde with slightly turned up nose. She alone of all our company, which nowadays is pretty numerous, always carries poison. She once told me she had no confidence in a revolver ; the bullet might merely wound instead of killing her. Poison is safer and quieter.

Printing-shop, editorial department, and wireless set : not even that is all. The final element in a secret newspaper, as in a normal paper before the war, is its distribution. Romek Radwanski, accomplishes miracles in this branch. The first number, while he was still confined in a Bolshevik prison, was published in an edition of fifty copies. Now we print two thousand (though there is demand for four thousand) ; the paper reaches the provinces, and thanks to good organization we get back our costs, and considerable profit besides. This goes to 'capital reserve'.

Don't imagine, however, that distribution is now a light matter in comparison with our other difficulties. In the prevailing conditions, with the Germans constantly passing and executing sentence of death on anyone in whose pockets is found a *single* copy of a secret paper, and constantly, day and night, carrying out unexpected searches in houses, in the streets, and in cafes ; and with a great number of spies and *agents provocateurs* constantly in the city, the work of distributions requires extraordinary

smartness, or even, one might say, talent. For, you see, it depends on handing copies of the paper to persons whom one knows and can rely on. And of course, if two thousand copies are to be distributed, a proportionate chain system has to be built up. Romek organized a whole distribution network, with points for districts, sections, and blocks, and thus made sure of the paper's reaching the individual reader. There is the further advantage that the paper printed, let us say, last night, with the latest communiques, reaches the reader in the course of the following day.

But enough of the *Warszawianka* for the present. It does not comprise the whole of the underground work carried on in Poland. It is, indeed, merely a fragment of the conspiratorial movement which has now attained such splendid dimensions and impresses its stamp more and more clearly on our enslaved lives. We all believe that out of this movement, which is really disinterested and patriotic, there will arise, after the expulsion of the Germans, a new Poland, better and sounder than ever before. For you must realize that now, more than ever before, the people at Home are thinking, and that from these thoughts, in hide-outs and dwellings, are springing sound and thoroughly well-digested programmes of social, economic and political betterment.

But beside the 'underground' life, there is at the same time in Poland a normal—or rather I should say a very abnormal —'surface' life. Were it not for the deep faith which we all of us put in the spring; were it not for the great hopes which we place in France, our stagnation would perforce turn into the deepest despair. But there are few who despair. The worse it is for us, the more firmly do we set our teeth and clench our fists, the more confidently do we look to the future, and the more certain are we of ourselves. Don't ask why it is so, for really I don't know.

At present every day is very gloomy and very tragic. Yet I must say that amid all the tragedy there are some who treat everything cheerfully.

A few days ago I paid a call on Doctor Maczek. Doubtless

you remember him: a small man with a great black head of hair, whom we both of us used to visit. Well, I have found that he is a man who never loses his good humour. Even when he is hungry, even when he walks up and down his room in a fur coat with collar turned up and his hands thrust into the opposite sleeves after the manner of a cabman. Indeed at such times his wit and humour are more in evidence than ever. When I went to see him, I found him walking as I have described in a room where the plywood 'panes' in the windows were covered with a thick layer of frost, and he was telling his wife—a beautiful woman who not long since was queening it in the best society, and now was huddled on the sofa—that there was no need for worry. And how he put it to her!

'It might be still worse,' he said. 'We shan't be cold for some days, only you must agree to my proposal. There's no hope of buying coal or wood. In the first place because we have no money, and in the second because in Warsaw it's easier to find a diamond in the street than to buy a quarter of a hundredweight of coal. We will move into this room, and gradually burn all the furniture from the rest of the house. Aren't I right?' He turned to me.

Of course I said he was. But his wife protested:

'It's such good furniture; some of the things are heirlooms; I'm grieved . . .'

'Very well then, look at it and freeze,' the doctor replied; 'anyway the Germans will take it away from you, as they are doing from every house. It's my opinion that we ought to burn it, but the problem is, where to begin. I think, with the sideboard, for it's an old thing, dating back to Napoleon's time; there's a lot of wood in it.'

'Oh no, I won't give the sideboard,' his wife cried. 'What shall we do without a sideboard?'

'Very well, then you won't. Well, I suppose you won't quarrel over the bedroom suite?'

'I'll never give that,' she replied. 'Why, it's olive-wood.'

'There you are! You say, then' (turning to me). 'With women it's always like that. Not this, not that, and not the other either. So what are we to begin with? Do you think the

Germans will respect your olive-wood ? I have an idea !' he cried after a moment. 'A splendid idea ! Let us write out a ticket for each piece of furniture, and then draw them out of a hat !'

The doctor smiled with satisfaction at his idea, rubbed his hands, and went speedily to work. The first lot fell on the sideboard, and presently he was swinging his axe and chopping it up. He worked with such a will and with such energy that even his wife's lamentations could not be heard.

I felt at once, though the wood was not yet kindled, that the room had become appreciably warmer. Half an hour later we pushed the sofa up to the tiled stove, the doctor took off his fur coat, and we drank tea. Even his wife remarked that although half of the sideboard was burnt already, at least our fingers were not stiff any more, and we could hold our cups without difficulty.

'Do you remember our Marysia ?' she asked me presently. 'Not long ago I had a very curious meeting with her, which I shall long remember. I was walking along the street lost in thought and seeing no one, and feeling frightfully cold, when I was suddenly accosted by an elegant lady in an astrakhan coat. I could scarcely believe my eyes : it was my former maid, Marysia !

"With you," she said, "things have changed for the worse, and with me for the better. I have married, and I have a two-roomed flat. I'm in the provision business, and I make quite a lot of money."

'I looked at her and told her I was very glad of her good fortune, and she went on : "Are you surprised that I have such a beautiful fur coat ? I've got five, each more beautiful than the others. You see, when Miodowa Street was burning, they threw the furs out of the shop windows, and shouted to anyone to take them. So I took all I could carry. And do you see what diamonds I've got ?" Marysia showed me her fingers covered with rings. "I took them when the jeweller's in Krakowskie Przedmiescie was burning. I had more, but I've given some away. If you saw my flat, your eyes would open in amazement. What I haven't got there ! I've even got

a great landscape which wouldn't go through the doorway, and the man who gave it me said it came from the Castle, from the President's".

'I proposed to Marysia,' continued the doctor's wife, 'that perhaps she'd like to take me as her maid. And to that she replied very cordially: "As you like; I shouldn't dare to refuse." And presently she even began to encourage me: "We've known each other so long and needn't be like mistress and maid but like two friends." She consoled me, and before we parted said "It's like that in life: now on the cart and now under it." '

'Well, what? A very good proposal!' declared the doctor. 'Marysia would certainly give you a fur coat, or a diamond ring, and you'd have evenings off, not once a fortnight, but twice a week.'

As I left them I reflected that it was indeed cold in the house, and the tea was without sugar, but that if everyone in Poland could face the present misery as serenely as Dr. Maczek, at least there would not be all the suicides we hear of almost daily.

Poverty and misery are leaving their mark ever more clearly on our life. Yet in Warsaw restaurants, bars, cafes and confectioners, are springing up everywhere like mushrooms after rain. And every one of them is a great success. Incidentally, very many people have found employment in them as waiters. At the present moment there are in Warsaw at least five actors' cafes, where the attendants are the most beautiful and most popular pre-war artistes, and the best film and stage actors. There are also journalists' cafes, where our colleagues are employed. Poor Miecio Zawadzki, who wrote leading articles for fifteen years or more, has now to listen to cutting remarks such as:

'Coffee, please, but not as cloudy as your articles.'

Or: 'I prefer a small strong black to a lengthy weak article by our colleague Zawadzki.'

It's not nice for him, but Miecio is an excellent waiter and takes everything with a smile.

I think the majority of our colleagues have gone in for being waiters. But a few have taken up the ultra-modern trade of rickshamen. Our Warsaw ricksha are one-seat vehicles drawn by pedal-bicycles, and are the invention of a mechanic from Messrs. Perkun's. More and more of them are appearing. I think there must be at least fifty of these petrol-less taxis on the streets. Though the horse-cabs are a great success and the tramcars are crowded, the ricksha too enjoys great popularity.

Unfortunately, however, the lot of journalists, like that of those who belong to the other professions (with the possible exception of doctors), begins to be increasingly uncertain. Their number has recently been decreasing week by week. A dozen or more journalists are in prison, and some were shot at the beginning of January. One of these was Stas Nizynski, a young lad, very clever, energetic and handsome, who before the war had been a city reporter. One Sunday there was an accident on Plac Zbawiciela (Redeemer Place), a German car colliding with a horse-cab. A large parcel fell out of the latter and burst, scattering its contents in the street, and they turned out to be freshly printed manifestos by one of the secret organizations. The man in charge of the parcel was so badly hurt that he could not get up from the ground unaided. It was Nizynski. A week later he was shot.

We journalists are particularly ill regarded by the Germans. For it is easy for them to convince themselves of our 'ill will'. When that miserable rag, the *Nowy Kurier Warszawski*, was transferred from Lodz and established in our Press House, its German editors wrote personally to a dozen journalists with proposals for employment. No one, of course, accepted. Consequently all who despised the opportunity of work 'opened' for them by the occupying power were invited to a long talk with the *Gestapo* in Aleje Szucha. For some of them that talk isn't ended yet.

I should have to write a great deal to give you even the most general idea of the conditions under which we now live.

And now, when I am just going to give you my best wishes and finish off my letter, so many scenes, pictures, and events

from our every-day life pass before my eyes that it grieves me not to mention them; for I want you after reading this letter to have some kind of a conception of the strange and uncanny world of life under German occupation.

If television were functioning satisfactorily, so that, sitting by the apparatus in your quiet Bucharest hotel, you could tune in to Warsaw, you would see a very interesting film, even though its theme were but the street.

Krucza Street, for example, off the Aleje Jerozolimskie. The roadway and footwalk alike crowded with people gathered round a symphonic orchestra, composed of at least thirty instruments. On a small table stands the conductor, dressed like everyone else in a warm overcoat with turned up collar, and waves his baton, which recalls the Warsaw Philharmonic—of which only the memory and a few heaps of rubble remain. The sounds of the melody they are playing float through the nearest streets. The public rewards the performers with applause. Small contributions are showered into the 'treasurer's' cap. From time to time some German detaches himself from the crowd and likewise puts in a few groschen—which unfortunately he cannot be prevented from doing.

Or take for example the Krakowskie Przedmiescie. By the Bernardine Church stands an elderly man with a long white beard and long white hair. From behind his gold-rimmed glasses wise dark eyes look out sadly. He does not say a word, but he asks, he implores, he begs, for all that. His hat, crushed in his hands, waits for the offering of the passer-by. A few steps further on a young fellow stands with his face to the wall, playing affecting melodies on his violin. At his feet lies the cap worn by students of the Warsaw Polytechnic. A few more steps: an elegantly dressed man in a felt hat pronounces the one magic word, 'brandy, brandy, brandy', and keeps his hands in his pockets. Everyone understands; he sells pre-war brandy—or hooch.

Or take for example Marszalkowska Street, near Wspolna Street. On an invalid carriage is stretched out a Polish soldier in uniform. He has lost both legs. In a loud voice, with which the walls seem to quiver, he sings: 'As long as great Sigismund

shall ring in the Wawel, As long as there is one drop of Polish blood in our hearts...' The public throws him money, much money; some press banknotes into his hand. The Germans look at him and pass him by with indifference. A little further on another Polish soldier, likewise legless, sits on the ground and whistles martial songs. Beside him lies an uhlan's cap upside down.

Or take for example the busiest point in Warsaw: the corner of Marszalkowska and Aleje Jerozolimskie. It is evening. On a low wall, behind which stick up grimly the ruins of a house, stand three small children; under the wall, at the feet of these three, sit five more children, perhaps even smaller. They are all singing one song in chorus. A song of a Polish soldier from whom they took his country and gave him a wooden cross in exchange. Powdery snow falls, and crowds of people pass the children. The tramcars clang noisily. At the crossing German police regulate the traffic. On the children falls the light of a street lamp. Few only of the passers-by throw any coins. The children sing, and look round cautiously, to make sure of avoiding the policeman.

Or take for example Nowe Brodno. The cemetery gate, beyond which are to be seen great chestnut trees, their branches loaded with snow. In front of the gate stands a clerk from the cemetery office, with a notebook in his hand. He admits hearses, 'black carts', ordinary peasants' carts, and cabs—each containing at least one corpse. The street leading to the gate is filled with funeral corteges. All day long and every day they pass through. The cemetery chapel bell is silent. It would have to sound from dawn to dusk.

Enough! I think even if you had a television set you would have had enough of this. But we have these pictures constantly before our eyes. We live amidst them. We are actors in them, all of us. We await the day of salvation when this nightmare picture will at last vanish from the screen. When we shall change our role.

We draw consolation from the thought that it will be in the spring.

Third Letter

THE NEW GENERATION OF CONSPIRATORS

Warsaw,

May, 1940.

My dear friend,

For a fortnight we have been living under a reign of terror. Never before were there so many arrests and executions. Warsaw has recently been invaded by an incredible number of German police. House-to-house searches are carried out continually, at night. Thousands of men are taken away. No one knows where they are or what has happened to them. Every day the post brings telegrams announcing deaths among them. At Pawiak Gaol fifty persons a day—on an average—are said to be shot. At Oswiecim in Silesia there has been established a concentration camp, concerning which the most incredible rumours are in circulation. It is one of the numerous German penal colonies where the prisoners, after undergoing frightful tortures, are regularly murdered. A motor-car has become for us a nightmare and a curse. The sound of a motor-horn or the noise of a motor fills everyone nowadays with apprehension. In the evenings, if a car stops before any house-door, all the men in it notify one another and conceal themselves as and how they can. The appearance of a lorry in the street creates something like a panic: the men, and particularly the young men, run away and hide themselves in doorways and in other people's apartments. We are hunted down and caught like ownerless dogs by the dog-catchers. Through all the streets move continuous processions of green lorries on very high chassis, in each of which are seated twenty or thirty German police, with steel helmets and machine guns. Apart from the arrests and man-hunts in the streets, the Germans have recently instituted military exercises, and training for street-fighting, which they probably expect. We are convinced that these things betoken the approaching opening of the campaign

in the west, which indeed we now expect daily. The Germans are under the delusion that if they terrorize us we shall leave them alone when the armies of the coalition start to crush them in the West. But they will soon be convinced how much strength we still preserve and how terrible will be our vengeance.

You have got to France and are in the army. Happy man ! How sincerely I envy you your happiness ! And not only I. The blood boils in each one of us. Here we are powerless, and the consciousness that we are so is terrible. To fight, to fight—that is the deep, inward call which sets on fire our youthful hearts, fills our thoughts, and drives us on to seek a way. Only one is left : the underground front. And more and more are following it. But of ten whom you ask, nine most certainly will tell you that it is not the same thing. And of those ten whom you ask, nine are continually seeking a way from here to you, you future heroes in France. All too often their search ends somewhere on the Hungarian or Slovakian frontier, lying in the snow with a rifle bullet in the back. But equally often they get through, and realize their dreams.

In the course of recent months our group has been instrumental in sending many on their way. Of some we already have news from France ; many have vanished from our ken. Recently our organization has broken down. The frontiers are guarded with frequent patrol-posts. But even now from time to time, though very rarely, someone comes to take leave before he sets out for France. Usually the answer he gets from us is one and the same : 'Make haste if you want to get there before they come from France to Warsaw.'

We await you with ever greater longing. The warmer grows the sunshine, the greener the grass, and the brighter the flowers, the greater is our anxiety, and the deeper our longing. When, when at last will it begin ? We talk about it like children. We picture to ourselves what it will soon be like. We imagine Polish flags hung out on all the houses. We imagine columns of Polish troops marching with bands playing down Krakowskie Przedmiescie, Nowy Swiat, and Aleje Jerozolimskie ; a march past on Pilsudski Place, with a dais raised in front of the Ponia-

towski monument, and Sikorski standing on it smiling, accompanied by Polish, French and British generals. Tanks roll by, their French and British crews waving to the assembled crowds. The streets are scattered over with flowers. The music of military bands is to be heard on all sides. There is not a single German anywhere.

When, when at last will all this cease to be merely a dream ? May has already begun. It is full spring. Why does France make us wait so long ? We try and calm one another : patience ! patience ! the moment is at hand.

Recently I have made several journeys outside Warsaw. Not, of course, in connexion with the book trade. I am impressed by the splendid attitude of the people in the provinces, who very often do still better work than we have accomplished in Warsaw. I should like to write you a few words about these folk.

At Skarzysko, where (please note) there was not long ago a massacre of workers, I met the leaders of one of the local workers' organizations. Young men, full of enthusiasm and devotion, and full of love for Poland, deep-felt ; I use the word in no banal sense. As Skarzysko is one great collection of factories, working at present to meet German war needs, the role of the underground movement which is developed there is exceedingly important. The aim of this movement is in the first place to secure the installations from demolition in case of a German retreat ; for there is no doubt that when they go the Germans will try to destroy everything they can. The next task is to train the men who at the decisive moment will intervene to prevent by force of arms the realization of German designs. The third and final aim is so to organize work at present that the taskmasters may get as little good out of it as possible.

Work in our circumstances is unavoidable, one of the men told me. But our slogan is 'ca' canny' ! Everyone remembers it when beginning and ending work. For a certain length of time leaflets were distributed, recommending the workers to save their own strength at the expense of German nerves,

and figures of tortoises were drawn on factory walls. But now all that is needless. The Germans are very angry. They shoot a dozen men a day, and we get rid of the same number of our oppressors. One of the present directors, a German, addressing us not long ago, told us we were enemies of the factory and threatened us with fresh shootings. Sabotage, carried out systematically and day after day by all the workers, gives better results in the end than a single striking act which may put the whole factory out of production for a time.

More than all else I discussed with them the future. We talked incidentally, in connexion with matters of present interest, of the Poland which will develop after the storms of war are past and the dusk of slavery is over. I don't remember the actual words of any of these men, nor do I recall the clearly formulated programmes, which made everything said at Warsaw so strikingly pale and abstract; but I remember very well the sense of what was said by the leaders of the workers' underground movement at Skarzysko.

'The Poland of the future may not return to the forms of our twenty years' independence. The war and the occupation have destroyed the State. We, after the resurgence of the State, must rise again as a nation. The one way leading to this resurgence is socialism. The Poland which is coming must be a Poland of the Polish people, a socialist Poland. In it there will not be millions working for individuals, in order that individuals may make use of millions. We young workers will stand together with the young soldiers who are coming back from abroad. We are ready to carry on even the bloodiest struggle against those who may dare to begin again on the old lines. We will build a new Poland on new foundations; a young Poland, guided by young brains and young hands.'

I repeat to you what was said to me, without exaggeration. Maybe I cannot properly reproduce the extraordinary force with which the workers declare their creed; their sacred conviction that it must be *so* and no other wise. And there is one other thing to which I must draw attention: their unbreakable will to fight, now and in the future. To fight for one thing only: the real, objective greatness of Poland. I visited many

other workers' centres beside Skarzysko, and I talked with many workers who took part in underground political action. The desire to establish a strong and great country by the creation of a truly democratic State is to be found everywhere alike. And everywhere alike is the will to realize this aim.

I was advised to discuss matters with a little group of teachers in a small town near Lublin. I found them busily at work ; when I joined them they were just finishing the printing of an issue of their secret paper, on a duplicator. Their activity reminded me of our start with the *Warszawianka* in November, and I was delighted to see how that handful of enthusiasts in a little provincial town with only a few thousand inhabitants had taken so much trouble upon themselves. Young people here, deprived of the chance of taking up a profession, yet feel the obligation upon them to work—no less than do their unknown but close comrades in the underground struggle at Warsaw, Skarzysko, and so many other great centres of the conspiratorial movement. Their paper was entitled the 'Radio Bulletin', and contained news from Toulouse and London, which means that it was a friut of organized activity, plus the possession of such a treasure as a wireless receiving set. Underneath the title was printed the slogan : 'For an Independent and Democratic Poland'.

I had brought with me a little of our Warsaw sheet, and discussed it for several hours with my new friends. I carried away with me the best impression : of folk who had devoted themselves heart and soul to the work ; folk who knew what they wanted—what they wanted now and what they would want at a later stage. This 'later stage' which I heard spoken of by people of various social classes, in various parts of the country, had the same colouring almost everywhere. One of the editors of that Bulletin, a twenty-year-old lad with dark, fiery eyes, said to me, when we were speaking of the near future :

'It seems that everyone now understands the truth that for Poland there is no alternative : it must be a work-State. But the organization of the regime and the guidance of the State from the earliest days of its existence must pass exclusively into the hands of the peasants, the working intelligentsia, and

the workers. The capitalists, the large landowners, and the clergy must understand that this war is for us a social revolution; that the Poland which will arise after the ejection of the occupying forces will be a State of reborn people; and that in our minds the past has sunk into everlasting twilight. We who look forward to such a Poland as this will of course agree to no compromise with anyone. And if anyone were to try to reintroduce the old order by force, then the Polish people would rise in revolution.'

These words express the prevailing attitude nowadays. Our organization keeps a collection of records, including secret periodicals and various conspiratorial publications. We have already a considerable number of publications like the 'Radio Bulletin' I have mentioned, published in small centres of population, and their ideological substance is most frequently the same as that proclaimed by the young teacher from the Lublin area. The same ideas are prevalent at Warsaw, and among both the working-class and the intelligentsia, alike in large cities and small towns. The same ideas, too, are current in the villages.

It is now May. Quite a time has already passed: eight months of occupation. I believe that in the course of the next eight months Poland will see the publication of a number of books in which various people now unknown will chronicle the details of the present underground struggle with the Germans. When the country recovers its breath a little after the occupation, these chronicles will provide matter of the most thrilling interest. But I cannot resist the temptation of giving you now a few pictures, snapshots they may be called, while they are still quite fresh. They are all beads, as it were, in the immensely long rosary on which countless folk say their daily prayers for the liberation of their country.

Cracow. I came to the place we had agreed upon, and reached it at exactly the appointed time. A delegate of one of the Cracow organizations should have been waiting for me. But he did not appear. It was only some days later that I learnt how, the night before, he had been helping to instal a short-wave wireless set in a family vault in the Rakowice cemetery. Five of them had been engaged on the job together,

all students, when a police patrol had discovered them, supposedly quite by chance. They were only detained in prison a few days. Then they were all shot.

Radom. The first thing I noticed on my arrival was the number of small posters on the wall headed tersely: 'Sentence'. For being in possession of arms, for armed resistance, for sabotage, for listening to foreign broadcasts,—in fact for anything. One notice in particular was very characteristic: five schoolboys, between 15 and 18 years of age, had been sentenced to death for cutting telegraph cables. Everyone all over the town was talking about this sentence more than about anything else. The commonest version of the affair was to the effect that the Scouts had established an organization for the purpose of cutting telephone and telegraph wires and sawing through the wooden posts. The most important lines of communication were thus to be put out of action. The Germans took various measures to protect them: they shot anyone found within a few hundred yards of the scene of the sabotage, and they put up warnings on the telegraph posts along the high roads, threatening the execution of hostages from Radom. Nevertheless, the organization continued its activity for several months: in fact until its last member had been shot.

Lublin. After several cases of sabotage had occurred in factories and at the railway station the Germans went about the town like mad dogs. Executions were carried out chiefly in Dziesiata and Kalinowszczyzna. I was told that during the latter part of April so many persons had thus been murdered that the corpses had to be buried in layers. It was at such a bitter moment that I arrived at Lublin. Before I had left the railway station I noticed a detail bearing witness to the reaction of the local independence organization to the terroristic policy of the Germans. High up in windows and on walls were the remains of small posters which it had not yet been found possible to tear down, and which were easily to be deciphered: 'The higher rises the sun, the nearer comes the Robin'[1]. Outwardly it looked like a joke, but at

[1] *Sikorka*, with a play on the name of General Sikorski, the Polish Commander-in-Chief.

bottom this apparently harmless motto had very deep significance.

I was told of a very good practical joke which had been played on the Germans, who were just beginning to make arrangements for enrolling the population on the *Volksliste*. Someone informed the police that a German had been drowned at Bystrzyca. As the coat found lying on the river bank contained an identity document with a German name, to which some unusually high grade of title was prefixed, various civil and police dignitaries went at once to the spot. The river was dragged, and soon a heavy sack was drawn ashore, inscribed in large black letters with the one word: *Volksdeutscher*. When it was opened, a fat pig was found inside. At Kielce a similar trick was played. One day several seats in the Staszic Park were labelled, *Nur fuer Deutsche* (For Germans only). The very next night some person unknown moved them into the cemetery and left them beside some freshly-dug, still empty graves.

You will not be disposed to deny that, if amid all the horrors of our situation there are still folk who can indulge in humour, it is a good indication.

There are plenty of such cases. But Warsaw will continue to be the chief source. For in Warsaw more happens than elsewhere; the whole underground movement is concentrated there; in Warsaw is the brain and heart of that splendid activity which now embraces the whole country.

The whole conspiratorial movement is developing, and—though this is a measure of self-praise—our *Warszawianka* is developing likewise. I have already told you how we have become more than a mere editorial committee, and are now a political group. Yes, we are now doing really interesting work. Above all, however, we are continually developing our printing-shop. Just imagine: we already possess a zincograph of our own! The work proceeds as in normal conditions. We have learnt to conspire; we are now real old hands, even as compared with many of our older colleagues who still remember the underground activity preceding the last war.

The Germans are helpless in Poland, for we have what I suppose is the richest literature in the world concerning nationalist struggles against occupying powers; our State having originated in conspiratorial activity. It seems to me that there are certain fundamental principles which govern such activity now as they did before. From the memoirs of old Polish fighters it can be deduced that the born conspirator has not only a talent for concealing himself and his work in places invisible and inaudible to the enemy, but frequently also a talent for working before the eyes of everyone and yet not being discovered. A further lesson deducible from the memoirs of all pre-war conspirators is that one's presence of mind must be retained in all circumstances. These cardinal principles are common to both generations. Where it is a question of lightning-swift orientation and control of the nerves in moments of danger, the younger adepts have in general reached a very high level of attainment.

I will give you a minor example: Antek Tatarkiewicz and Piotrus Palus were sitting one evening in Romek Radwanski's rooms. Romek, like the rest of us, had various trifles in his flat the possession of which, if discovered, would send him to the next world within the week. Such things, for example, as a handbook of street-fighting and the defence of houses, written by a commissar of police. Suddenly there came an unexpected police raid on all the flats in the block. The house was surrounded and there was no hope of escape. Presently two representatives of the *Gestapo* appeared in our friends' room.

However, before they arrived it had been prepared for their reception. Romek looked perfectly dreadful: lying in bed stiffly stretched out as though at the point of death, his face smeared with lard and powdered with dust from the floor. Antek opened the door and greeted the Germans with the words:

'What a good thing you have come! Maybe you'll be able to help us.'

The Germans came in, wide-eyed with astonishment.

'Please,' said Antek, 'this chap is almost dying, and we can't get help from anywhere. We've already rung up all the hospitals, and everywhere they say they can't take him.'

'What's the matter with him ?' asked the German, standing at a respectful distance from the bed.

'Well, you can see he's got typhus,' Antek replied. 'And besides he's long suffered from consumption,' he added in a lower tone.

The Germans immediately rushed out of the flat in consternation. And that was the end of the search.

Or another example : One day we had arranged that at twelve midnight Piotrus should take the wireless communiqué from Antek's rooms and bring it over to mine. As usual in such cases, he took a pistol, and put a band with the word *Eisenbahn* (Railway) round his sleeve. (For a certain time many of our people used to wear these bands. It didn't matter whether it was 'Railway', 'Post', or 'Night Watch', as long as there was a proper identity document and night pass to go with it.) He went to Praga, and at first met with no difficulty. He got the paper from Antek, and wanted to take back with him some metal stamps which had just arrived from the engraver's, somewhere in the provinces, and been deposited in a certain house at Praga. There were about thirty of them, including the original stamp of the governor general's office, the stamps of various institutions, and fascimiles of the signatures of various dignitaries ; all in a little wallet, under lock and key.

But just before the Kierbedz Bridge, as Piotrus was riding very fast, a German policeman flashed a signal to him to stop. He accordingly did so. The policeman turned his torch on his armband and asked for his identity paper and pass (in which Piotrus naturally put great confidence, since he had printed them both with his own hand). The policeman then asked him what was in his wallet.

'Various things I need in my trade,' replied Palus. 'I'm a railway locksmith.'

But that wasn't enough for the policeman. He shook the wallet, and told him to open it. So Piotrus began to look for the key in one pocket after another ; he couldn't find it, but at length said in a tone expressing great self-confidence and contempt for the policeman, as being so stupid,

'How ever am I to find the key now, when at 12.10 I have

to be at the Danzig station to catch my train ? Have you never seen pincers and hammers ?'

The policeman shook the wallet again, and then gave it back to Piotrus. Flashing his torch on his wrist-watch, he told him :

'You'll have to hurry as fast as you can, you've only got five minutes.'

I have said that one of the things required of a conspirator is that he should be able to work in sight of everyone. An interesting example occurs to me, confirming the validity of this. We once had occasion to move a wireless set to a new location. Unfortunately, it was just at a time when the German police at Warsaw were examining literally every parcel carried either by vehicle or by hand. And if a wireless set were found, the penalty was, as it still is, death. Romek undertook the job. He hired a cab, put his wireless set in it in broad daylight, and drove with it uncovered through the busiest streets—without being challenged by anyone. Only when he had dismissed his cab a short distance from his destination did he cover the large wireless box with a wrapper and take it to where it had to go.

These are of course minor episodes in comparison with the splendid and really impressive deeds of others, outside our circle ; deeds which one might have thought no one in his sound senses would undertake, or if he did, would have any chance of success. They are more like events in a sensational film. These I have mentioned are, too, happy events, or pictures, or whatever you like to call them, in as much as they ended happily. But unfortunately in our life, and particularly in our field of activity, fortune does not always smile where she is most desired. Without doubt you will have heard of events connected with underground activities which have ended tragically for those who took part in them. I have spoken of such cases at Cracow and at Radom. But there are in Poland thousands of young men such as the students who set up a short-wave receiving set in a cemetery, or the lads who cut telephone and telegraph wires. The underground struggle is quite comparable to a battle between hostile armies. And, as on the open

battlefield, ever fresh sacrifices are required. And as it spreads, and above all as the offensive spirit inspiring it spreads, the number of those sacrifices increases. Only, there is a strange, mysterious side to our character: the more freely flows the blood of patriots, and the more scaffolds creak and firing-squads shoot, the more numerous are the people who take up the work. It would be perfectly true to say of a large proportion of our community that they have lost the fear of death. The statement 'I'm not afraid' has become indeed the expression of a truth. No one actually says it nowadays, but one can read it in the eyes of thousands. It is on the massive foundation of folk such as these that our domestic struggle for independence is based.

Recently there have been several armed encounters in Warsaw between small groups of underground workers and strong German units. At Powisle a large laboratory for the production of explosives had been established. Agents of the *Gestapo* discovered it, and one day about four o'clock in the afternoon a regular fight began. The conspirators barricaded themselves in, converted the house into a strong-point, hurled grenades and fired machine-guns. The Germans answered similarly. The fight ended only after some hours, when the whole house was in flames. All those inside perished: two young women and four young men. How many Germans were killed is not known, but a dozen or more were wounded. A second, similar, fight took place in Poznan Street, where there was a secret wireless installation. *Gestapo* men stopped one of the conspirators in the house doorway and demanded to see his identity papers. He put his hand in his pocket—and pulled out a revolver, with which he shot both the agents dead. At the same moment, hearing the shots, a horde of police burst into the house and began to make their way to the conspirators' flat. Both sides used grenades and machine-guns. But the police took no one alive. They revenged themselves on the tenants of that and neighbouring buildings, shooting a hundred Poles for every German who was killed in the fight.

The underground struggle now being carried on in the capital of Poland is the continuation of the Defence of Warsaw.

The city has not capitulated; its defenders have not capitulated; the spirit inspiring them is still strong, and the fight continues. And anyhow, it is not only Warsaw that is fighting.

In almost every number of our *Warszawianka* we include accounts of meetings with the Germans like these two, at Powisle and at Poznanska Street. How many of them there are! But I often have the impression that all of you, cut off from the country for so long, shrug your shoulders unbelievingly even if the echo of these shots fired in Warsaw does reach you. That in fact you are simply incapable of believing that we not only live and endure, but also fight.

I have already described to you various details of our life, and given you pictures of Warsaw in time of war. But I do want you not only to realize the poverty, hunger, beggary, street orchestras, traders, coffee-shops and bars, the Germans taking delight in gloating over the ruins of the city, the street graves (of which anyhow there are not many now), the rickshas, carrying Germans mostly, and the queues before the shops—in a word, all that composes an ordinary city day; but also to understand that all this is only the background of great, though, invisible patriotic activity: that Warsaw, in a word, is fighting back.

You remember the old quarter: Swietojanska and Piwna Streets and the Castle Place. One day I was walking by the castle. The spring sun silvered the wet roofs of the small houses in Stare Miasto. The granite Sigismund Column reflected the light. On the square fell the shadows of the castle ruins. Children were playing on the sidewalks. In the doorway of Lopacki's stood a bored individual smoking a cigarette. The street-cleaners were flushing out the gutters. Then from Swietojanska came out a group of people: a dozen or more German gendarmes and police in dark-blue uniforms, surrounding five young fellows of between 17 and 22, all of whom had their faces covered with blood, and who were all handcuffed together. The gendarmes had revolvers in their hands; two of them wore steel helmets and carried their rifles, with bayonets fixed, at the ready. Perhaps I should not have noticed the procession, for I was just turning into Piwna Street; but my attention was

arrested by the sound of a song, strange and uncanny: the *Warszawianka*. With strong, deep voices, as though from under ground, all the lads were together singing a revolutionary song, whose echoes filled the great, silent Castle Place. At the foot of the Sigismund Column they began to shout:

'Death to the hangmen! Shame on the Germans! Long live Poland!'

The gendarmes kicked them and hit them over the heads with their revolver-butts. But they only shouted the louder. They proceeded to the Krakowskie Przedmiescie, where a prison-van was waiting for them at the corner of Miodowa. They sang and shouted 'Death to the hangmen!' for they knew it was their last ride among the living, and that they had but a few more days, or perhaps a few more hours, of life.

Since then, every time I pass Castle Place I always have the words and tune of that song in my ears: *Hej kto Polak na bagnety*! (Every Pole come, join the bayonets!).

But I am wrong. It is not only on Castle Place that I have that tune in my ears; it is everywhere. And not only I, but everyone. And not only at Warsaw, but all over Poland.

Fourth Letter

AFTER THE FALL OF FRANCE

Warsaw,

July, 1940.

My dear friend,

From behind the clouds which had hung over us since autumn of last year the sun had already begun to come out, giving us a foretaste of spring. We enjoyed its beams and felt its warmth on our temples and in our hearts. But now, the sky of our hopes is more darkly obscured than ever before. The defeat of France has struck us like a thunderbolt. All our hopes had been placed on France. We believed that France would save us and the whole world. With the fall of France all our hopes, and as it would seem the whole world, have been overthrown. When the German columns entered Warsaw in triumph, many of its defenders put their last bullets in their heads. They believed that with the fall of Poland all was over. But when those same armoured columns rolled on the 14th of June under the Arc de Triomphe at Paris, and loud-speakers in the streets of Warsaw transmitted that saddest of all possible ceremonies, a fresh epidemic of suicide spread through Poland. Those who now took their lives believed that with the fall of France all, absolutely all, was over.

It was on the 14th of June that Stefek Kucharski killed himself: by taking an overdose of poison. He is a great loss to us, as is everyone who is lost to our work. But with his temperament and intelligence the blow is particularly severe. Piotrus Palus alone reacted to the news in his own characteristic way:

'Yes, it's a pity he's gone,' he said. 'But now we have one fool less. How can anyone commit suicide because of France?'

The events in the West have left us stunned. But we now understand many things which we were incapable of understanding before. Only now do we see what the war in Poland was, and what the heroism of the Polish soldier was. Only now do we see how thoughtlessly we laid all the blame for the outcome of the war on a handful of people who governed us, and how thoughtlessly we made free with the expression, 'compromised'. In a word, how thoughtlessly we accepted everything the Germans have told us ever since the occupation began. We never took account of the awful fact that of all the nations of Europe, the Germans alone were prepared for war.

With the fall of France everything about us was strangely changed. It was not merely that German terrorism increased, that we suffered ever more painfully from hunger, or that the shops became empty of consumers' goods. Our feelings also changed. On the streets more alarm and despondency were to be seen in men's faces. One also takes the impression that the splendidly developed underground movement has burnt out. Considerably fewer secret papers are published. Simply because there is nothing to write about. The comforting news from London is in no proportion to the great disaster of the Germans' reaching the English Channel. Now we all tremble in fear for England, which has become the last hope, not only for us, but for so many nations in Europe.

France has capitulated, and with her fall have burst like bubbles all our dreams of Spring and Liberty. The Germans are doing everything in their power to blacken France in our eyes, to make us hate her for the disappointment she has brought us, and to stifle the feeling of friendship and sympathy for France which is concealed in the heart of every Pole.

Indeed it is true: France fell too easily and disenchanted us too grievously. But I don't know whether there is any other nation in the world which could understand France as the Poles did, and which could feel her tragedy as the Poles felt it. Today we count on France no more. We know now that the French army will not beat the German army, and that our liberation is beyond the power of France to accomplish.

The French have fallen just as we did. I don't know what was said or written in France in September and October last year, when Poland was writhing in mortal struggle and when at last she was beaten. But I should like very much to send to France a collection of secret newspapers published here now. How much I should like the French, in despair now as we were in September, to hear the chorus of underground voices on the subject of France. We are affected most painfully by our own tragedy, but apart from that we are living through the tragedy of France along with the French. And if we pray for the liberty of Poland, we pray at the same time for the liberty of France. France always had in us a great friend. Today, in the misfortune which we share together, the splendour of the greatness of France is the same for us as it was before the war, the same as in the months of our illusion, when we believed that over the Seine was brewing such a hurricane of freedom as would sweep away total slavery. We believe in the resurrection of a great Poland, as we believe in the resurrection of a great France. Our writer Staszic said a hundred years ago: 'Even a great nation may fall; but perish, it cannot.'

Hitler promises to review his troops in Trafalgar Square. He promises to conquer the British Isles. The German propaganda rags, waiting with joy and satisfaction for the day to dawn, meanwhile try to vex us with the suggestion that Britain will yield because no other course is open. But the optimism of the Poles is like that Chinese bobbing figure which, however many times knocked down, comes up again with head erect, and it can never be overcome. No! that bastion will not be captured.

Great events develop in their own way, and our drab and humiliated life of slavery goes its own way. I take my stand each day by my little book-cart, and from that small but sensitive vantage-point I observe the rise and growth among the Poles of faith in Britain. Just imagine: Poland, Norway, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, and France, all crushed; the bells in Germany proclaiming ever fresh and ever greater victories; Hitler cackling about a review of his troops in London;—and the Poles in Warsaw are eagerly taking up the study of English!

The German cultural chiefs have placed thousands of books on the forbidden list, and among them all French and English books without exception, together with all dictionaries and textbooks of those languages. This, however, of course does not mean that such books are not in great demand. '*Tysiac slow po angielsku*' (A Thousand Words in English) and McCallum's 'English Self-Taught' fetch the same price as butter: that is to say each of them costs about a hundred zlotys. A secondary-school boy has made and printed on a duplicator a small English vocabulary, and sells fifty copies a day—like soda-water. Polish-English dictionaries fetch fantastic prices, but the greatest trouble is that there are so few of them to be had. Books about England, too, are now presumably in greater demand than ever before. Andre Maurois's excellent 'History of England' has quite disappeared from the market, but numerous examples are passing from hand to hand and provide the most thrilling reading. Old publications, centuries forgotten, are now being brought to light again: descriptions of England, and journeys to England; and are swallowed in Warsaw with avidity.

The eyes of the Poles are turned on London. England is so very far away, and yet nowadays is so very near, so very much our own.

All through the autumn, winter and spring we waited for the advance of the allied armies from the West. We desired nothing but that operations might begin. That the victorious avalanche would roll over Germany and reach Poland—of that we were all certain. We did not even speak about it, for it was self-evident. And we waited impatiently, though with calm spirits, for the spring.

Counting on France as he did, and on the expected aid from the West in the spring, the Polish soldier still held out here and there with arms in his hands, still fighting battles with the Germans although the war was long since over. He knew that alone he could not defeat the powerful foe, but he believed in the coming of effective help and desired to maintain himself in the field to the last possible moment, giving evidence by every shot he fired that Poland was still holding out, that

Poland was still in the fight. I don't know whether you have been told anything of such names as Szalasy, Samsonow, Mniow, or Anielin ; names of villages and settlements in the very heart of Poland, or whether you have heard the name of Hubal. These places and that name are bound up with the most striking incidents in our war with the Germans ; they constitute without doubt the most romantic episode in that war.

In the winter of 1939 rumours began to circulate in Warsaw to the effect that numerous units of the Polish army were still concealed in the forests in the centre of Poland, continually fighting with the Germans. Major Hubal was named as their commander, and various places were mentioned in which engagements with the occupying troops were reported to have been fought. At length the secret press began to print the orders of the day issued by the Separated Division of the Polish Army, quoting a Polish broadcasting station as their source. There was the greatest excitement at Warsaw, particularly among the youth. When it was reported of any young fellow that he had gone to Kielce or to Radom, it was well understood that he had gone to join the ranks of combatants. More was heard of Hubal's army every week. The efforts of its soldiers, who had not laid down their arms nor taken off their uniforms, resounded in Warsaw and made the greatest impression on men's minds. At the beginning of 1940 the secret press was full of descriptions of their fights, which sounded almost legendary. In one paper we saw a map of the terrain where fighting was taking place, with the names of two places near Konskie marked with red circles : Czarniecka Gora and Barycz. It appeared from the reports that the Germans had assembled about two thousand men there. The battle was won by the Poles, who captured some sixty or seventy motor lorries, light tanks, and much war material. About three hundred Germans were killed, and considerably more wounded. During my stay at Kielce I was told that there had been days when whole trains of cars and carts arrived there with Germans wounded in the fighting with the Poles.

But most was heard of Hubal in the spring, when the Germans, taking advantage of the favourable weather, attempted

finally to destroy the dangerous nucleus which was encouraging Poles to raise armed units in other parts of the country : a threat which just before the opening of the campaign in the west seemed to overhang the occupying forces like a nightmare. The Germans spent several days in preparation for the battle, concentrating comparatively large forces, including artillery, tanks and planes. It lasted a week, being fought in the neighbourhood of Szalasy, in the midst of great forests, which afforded shelter and concealment to the Poles. The radio station of the Division was constantly busy broadcasting the course of the battle, which once more covered the standards of the Polish Army with glory, even though that Army had been long since defeated.... It was a fierce battle, and Hubal's losses in killed and wounded amounted to more than a thousand.

The Germans paid dearly for their success, again losing many men and much material—and again without attaining their aim ; Hubal's forces were now so strong and well equipped that the week's battle only gave them a dent, and not a mortal blow. So the occupying authorities poured the whole of their rage on those who had done most to fill Hubal's ranks and had most generously aided his men with food supplies : the inhabitants of the surrounding villages. Many of these villages went up in smoke, and a large number of peasants paid for their patriotism with their lives. In two of the larger settlements, Mniow and Samsonow, the Germans murdered all the inhabitants, burnt the houses, and ploughed over the site with tanks. At Mniow they had two great pits dug, six feet deep, drove six hundred people into them, and killed them with hand-grenades. Then they filled in the pits, containing dead, wounded, and some unhurt, with lime and covered the whole with earth.

Hubal continued the struggle, continually repulsing German attacks. Finally the secret press published the news that on April 30 Major Henryk Hubal-Dobrzanski had died a hero's death heading a cavalry charge at the battle of Anielin. Even the enemy honoured him as a hero, giving him a funeral with full military ceremonial. They even played Chopin's Funeral March over his coffin.

But Hubal's army did not give up the fight on the death of their leader. The command was taken over by Lieutenant Bem. Just when the first news was reaching us of the battles in the West, from which we had expected so much, he fought a bloody battle at Huciska, where the *elan* of his attack scattered considerable German forces, with tanks, artillery, and motorized infantry. His own losses were again serious, but the 'Separated Division' still remained very strong. In an order of the day which Bem issued after the battle, he said that the turning-point in the history of the present war was at hand; that freedom was coming from the West, more speedily than had been anticipated; and that over the corpse of Germany the French soldier and the Polish soldier would pass to the Free Republic.

Unfortunately, aid did not come from the West. On June 29, there being nothing more to count on, Bem issued an order disbanding Hubal's forces.

None the less, those forces had exercised an enormous influence on the minds of men who were burning to perform some concrete task in the work of Liberation, envying those who were able to fight with arms in their hands, and dreaming of sharing in the fight, as the most practical way to promote the recovery of independence.

'Before spring comes as many as possible of us ought to be under arms.' That was a very general conclusion in the months from autumn to spring. The insurrectionary spirit was very strong throughout that period.

It was just at this time that our group began likewise to dream of insurrection. It began one day when Piotrus Palus informed us, when issuing organization instructions, that he had made contact with a military group which was planning an insurrection in Poland. He opened before us the perspective of such an insurrection, and pointed to the successes of Major Hubal. He spread out on the table a map (skilfully copied from the staff map) and said:

'Of course these are dreams, and nothing may come of them. But when I began to think of the realization of these dreams, I came to the conclusion, though I am no strategist, that the greatest chance of success would attach to an insur-

rection based on the Carpathians, or more particularly, on the Eastern Beskids. I am fully aware of the difficulty of organizing such an insurrection, and of the fact that in present circumstances it is like going for the sun with a hammer. But I do not believe in the existence of insuperable difficulties, nor do I regard it as entirely senseless to take a hammer and go for the sun. It would be enough, it seems to me, to control a moderate-sized area in the Eastern Beskids: let us say the wedge pointing in the direction of Sianki, between the present Soviet frontier on the one side and the Hungarian on the other. Equipment, arms and ammunition would be secondary problems, since we should get everything from France. I think such a partisan army might possess a strong air force, which in a short time might be capable of driving the Germans from that triangle and opening to us the area from Sanok to Dukla and Gorlice. It would be the first fragment of an Independent Poland, in which thousands of Polish soldiers would rapidly assemble.'

Piotrus's demonstration made an extraordinary impression upon us. Romek, more inclined than any of us to enthusiasm, listened intently; and I saw how tears gathered in his eyes.

Some ten days after that Piotr spoke again about the project:

'The organization of an insurrection,' he said, 'is well on its way. I was with the leader of a military group, Lieutenant Stefan, at Nowy Sacz, Jaslo, Krosno, Gorlice, Dukla, Sanok, and Halicz. I am delighted with the attitude of the people in the whole of the neighbourhood. Even old women in the villages say they want no more in life but the poverty in which they lived before the war, as long as it is only Polish.'

However, this bubble burst like many other beautiful things and dreams before it. It turned out that Lietenant Stefan's organization was too weak to undertake the task. All Piotrus's ardour was of no avail; and anyhow, as he complained, he was constantly being told on all sides that it was unnecessary, that it was too early, that in the spring everything would be ended, and that it was a pity to lose a single man in such struggles.

I dare say you will think that strange thoughts pass through our heads, and that our ideas are childish and not to be taken

seriously, and that our proposals are divorced from reality. I shall not be surprised if you do. But you must grasp one essential point: all of you free people look at our condition over here with different eyes from ours, since we are slaves. For a prisoner every ray of light which penetrates the darkness of his cell is a joy and a delight; whereas the man who lives in the free world, in the full brightness of daylight and sunshine, does not care even to distinguish the individual rays. You exiles are, it is true, unhappy. But the unhappiness of longing and homesickness is one thing, and that of the uncertainty of the day and the hour when a halter may not be put round your neck, or you may not be placed against a wall and shot is quite another. So I shall not be surprised even if you think that we here are naive and foolish, and fail to take account of the fact that we ridicule our ideas ourselves. But we are like that: we become most excited over projects which, regarded in the light of cold common sense, are unreal and purposeless. But it may be, all the same, that you experience all that we do in the same way as ourselves; that you understand us just as we understand ourselves and as we understand you.

I think that from what I have so far written to you about Piotrus Palus you will have been able to form your own idea of the mentality and charcter of our former linotypist. Piotrus plays a decidedly important role in our group. Yet, as though that were too little for him, he has for some weeks past been co-operating with one of the chief Polish organizations. In my opinion he is making himself into one of the most eminent leaders of the underground movement.

I recall the tall, lean lad, with thick black hair and dark eyes full of life, who not so long ago knocked shyly at the door of my editorial office and said:

'Mr. Editor, must that report really be inserted, about the man with no fixed abode who snatched a bag from a lady's hand? Really it's not he who ought to go to prison, but the Minister of Labour.'

Sometimes when I had night duty I used to invite Piotrus to coffee and a talk. Almost every sentence he uttered was red with revolution.

'Take this office of ours,' he would say. 'We work day and night; we do our best, and anyhow we have to do our best, or else we should be fired. In the course of a year the owners get over one and a half million zlotys. They buy estates for themselves, spend their money in expensive restaurants, or squander it abroad. I'm not asking for that income to be divided among us. But how many schools, asylums, hospitals, or rest-houses for the homeless, might be built for the same money! or how many good books might be printed for free distribution in the villages!'

Nearly a year has passed since we had those talks, in which anyway you sometimes used to take part. Piotrus in the meantime has not changed his social convictions. On the contrary, he has become an apostle of the revolutionary idea, whereby resurgent Poland is to be based on a broadly democratic foundation. And he has become a fighter for the independence of the State. In our group everyone is valuable and indispensable. But there is no one who has put more of superhuman effort into his activities than Piotrus. More than once, when after several nights of uninterrupted work he has at last had one free, he has come to my flat with some new idea which would not let him sleep. I called him an idiot, and forced him to lie down either in my own bed or on the sofa. But next morning as soon as I awoke he would say:

'It was a good thing I couldn't go to sleep. I've quite changed my original plan.'

Ever since the beginning of the occupation we have constantly been waiting for something, hoping for something. Now we are beginning to look towards the East, listening for the sound of the first shot. We don't know what preparations the Russians may be making, but the Germans are constructing several fortified zones along the frontier. When I was at Lublin I saw from a distance strong concrete forts and anti-tank ditches, which were not even camouflaged. Piotrus, after his return from the area where his insurrection was to be organised, told me that he had heard from the local population that one night the Germans and Russians had had an 'argument' across the frontier, carried on by means of machine guns; it was supposed

to have resulted from the throwing of a Soviet grenade at a German frontier guard. (Piotrus described the incident in detail in the next number of our *Warszawianka*). So we believe it will not be long before war breaks out between Germany and Russia. But we no longer believe that the war will soon end, and will quickly be followed by our emancipation. The sky is dark with clouds. We see only black waters advancing upon us.

The first part of Mr. Dolski's melancholy prophecy is being fulfilled. He foretold the fate which has actually overtaken France. The Maginot Line was of no use to France, and perhaps the country was indeed ruined by the three things he named: wine, jewellers' shops, and Blum. I think with alarm of his further prophecies: a seven years', a forty years' war. With such an old idiot one never knows: perhaps he's right. Anyway, I have long since convinced myself that most often wise things are said by people who are regarded as stupid.

One day, when I was busy with a purchaser, Mr. Dolski tapped me on the shoulder.

'Good morning, Mr. Karpinski! Well, didn't I say so? You see! That's that. Dolski said so, and so it is.'

Dolski calls me Mr. Karpinski because once when he introduced himself to me I had to give some name for myself. So I said:

'My name is Karpinski.'

Then, I remember, he began to mention one after another at least a score of Karpinskis whom he knew, and declared that one of them, a certain Arnold Karpinski, an eighth-grade clerk in the Court of Appeal, was very like me. So I said he was my uncle.

Old Dolski always expressed himself at length on political questions.

'Do you think that England will beat Germany? Eh, Mr. Karpinski, I tell you it's only a tale. Germany will be beaten by Russia. You will see. And war between Hitler and Stalin is hanging on a thread; if you only look, it will begin. I tell you, Mr. Karpinski, Russia is a great power; it will not be so easy to deal with her. Why, I remember when I was still an official at Odessa....'

After a long digression on his work in the railway administration at Odessa, Mr. Dolski proceeded to assess the actual strength of Russia :

'For twenty years they have not had enough to eat, and their housing conditions have been bad ; but they have erected factories and manufactured arms. You will see, Mr. Karpinski, how strong Russia is. We shall one day have the Bolsheviks in Warsaw, and the Germans will have them in Berlin, and who knows whether the Russians won't reach Paris ! And that will be not later than seven years from the 1st of September, 1939. You will see, Mr. Karpinski. It is Dolski who is telling you.'

From the very first days of the occupation the Germans were arrogant and barbarous in their behaviour. Now, after the fall of France, their arrogance has increased a hundredfold. There was, indeed, a short period, at the beginning of the French campaign, when the Poles went so far as to elbow Germans in the streets ; but that did not last long. By this attitude of ours, our 'arrogance', we gave the occupying troops to understand that we were confident of their defeat and the victory of France. But now they feel perfectly certain of themselves. We are only a plaything in their blood-stained paws.

Not long ago an acquaintance of mine was released from Pawiak Gaol where he had been detained as a 'hostage' since the 10th of November, the eve of our national festival. He had been released, along with several others, in consequence of an amnesty, granted in honour of the victory over France. His accounts of his experiences are scarcely credible. And yet they are true. Pawiak Gaol will remain for ever a symbol of our martyrdom during the German occupation.

The cells are so crowded with prisoners that sometimes it is impossible to sit down, much less to lie down, for weeks at a time. There are constant examinations, which mean beatings and general maltreatment of the prisoners concerned. The cells are almost systematically visited by drunken soldiers, who torment the prisoners in the most refined ways ; particularly the women, who are not infrequently violated and beaten to death. Other soldiers, again, come with police dogs which

they set upon the prisoners in the cells, amusing themselves with the sight of them worrying and tearing human bodies, and of the terror of the victims, crying impotently for help.

'The most grievous impression of all is made by the children,' my friend told me. 'The tortures inflicted upon small children are really dreadful. In my cell were three boys, two of nine years old and the third of twelve. The two former were detained as hostages for their fathers, who had failed to appear when summoned by the *Gestapo*, and afterwards had fled; while the twelve-year old was there for having defaced one of the posters saying: 'England! This is your Work.' These children behaved in prison with extraordinary self-control, and bore their sufferings more bravely than many a man. They cried only during the first few weeks. After that none of them cried even when the warder brought them back bleeding and semi-conscious after an 'examination'. One of them, the nine-year-old Karolek, a little boy with wonderful childish blue eyes, the son of a high-ranking officer, died one night just after being brought back from examination. We asked him what he had answered. 'Nothing, only that even though they killed me I would tell them nothing about either daddy or mammy or anyone.' Those who were called out of the cells between four and five in the morning never came back. We used to take our last leave of them, knowing that they were going to their death. One day at dawn three names were called from our cell. Among them Tadeusz Pawlak. That was the lad who had defaced the poster. It was long since I had seen tears in the dry eyes of this little boy, but now he began to cry, and repeated quietly, as though wanting not to wake those who were asleep: 'Mamma dearest, mamma beloved!'—From the beginning I had looked after him as though he were my own child, and had come to love him so that indeed I would have rather heard my own name called out. The child threw himself on my neck, and repeated the one word: 'Mamma!' and when the warder called his name a second time, he looked me in the eyes and said: 'You know where I am going.' 'I know.' I said. There was no use in consoling, or trying to deceive him. And in

fact we never saw Tadeusz Pawlak, whom we used to call 'Dzidek', again.

The criminality and sadism displayed at the examinations in Pawlak Gaol surpass imagination. Prisoners were hung by the feet from the ceiling and beaten with iron rods, while water was poured into their nostrils. Not only the young *Gestapo* men, but old and grey-haired ones delighted in pushing red-hot wire under the victim's finger-nails, pouring boiling water on the neck, fastening the bare feet to iron plates, which then were heated by electricity, and so on. The shortest examination, as a general rule, were of persons suspected of having indulged in sexual intercourse with German women, or Jews who had entered into such relations with Aryan women. After various tortures, such persons were handed over to be castrated. They were never detained long in the cells, and after examinations never returned.

Women were subjected to tortures no less refined. German tradition from the time of the last war encouraged the violation of their deepest maternal instincts. For example, before examination a women would be shown a photograph of her child, in German hands, and then other photographs, of children murdered because their mothers had refused to tell the truth. And apart from that, women were subjected to the same criminally devised tortures as men.

Now that I am speaking of Pawiak, I recall a scene described to me by one of the warders. In one cell were several lads of seventeen or eighteen years of age, arrested for distributing a secret paper. A few minutes before his execution each of them was asked to express his last wish. The one who was asked last answered gravely :

'My wish cannot be fulfilled, for it would be to kill at least one German with my own hands.'

It seems to me no satisfactory word has yet been found in any language of the world fully to express the criminality of the Germans. Only think how many Pawiak Gaols there are in Poland ! Think how many people suffer, and that their sufferings are for the one and only transgression of being Poles.

Or perhaps not. Let us be more accurate: we suffer for having lost the war, which we had to wage alone against two powers, of which one is our mortal foe, and the other....

It will be no exaggeration to say that the shadow of Pawiak falls across the whole of our present life. Every one of us is awaiting his turn. For us in Warsaw the way to the other world leads along Aleje Szucha, where the *Gestapo* headquarters are, and through Pawiak, or some concentration camp.

I use the word 'life', and myself find it ridiculous. For by the term 'life' we mean something quite different from the miserable dog's life which we lead as slaves.

Sometimes I lean against the wall by my bookstall and observe the Germans: those who are fashionably dressed, who look at the street galleries of pictures, who purchase flowers for their ladies, who smile, and stroke their dogs; and those who stroll along Bracka Street, Aleje Jerozolimskie, Kruk and Szpitalna Streets. And I consider who really symbolizes these people: Goethe and Beethoven, or the Duesseldorf Killer and Himmler. And I come to the conclusion that the spirit of the German nation is expressed by the two latter. The worst criminals awaiting execution have the same human forms, wear the same kind of clothes, like flowers, and can love music and poetry, just as other men. Nature was unfair. It clearly differentiated the dog from the sparrow or the cow, but it did not differentiate the criminal or human hyena from the man.

When a cat catches a sparrow in the street we are disgusted and say, cats are indeed tame, but retain something of their wild nature. But now, what a difference there is in the conception of wildness. Nowy Swiat street in Warsaw on a sunny Sunday afternoon, not far from Aleje Ujazdowskie. A pretty girl is walking with a young man—perhaps husband, perhaps betrothed. They are walking slowly arm in arm, and in the eyes of both it can be seen that they are in love. Cars pass along the street, driving for pleasure, for it is the district of parks and gardens. One of them stops beside the young couple. Two German officers jump out. One strikes the young man in the face with his fist, the other seizes the girl and drags her into the car. They drive off, leaving behind only the sound

of the girl's screams and the dumbfounded young man, not knowing what to do with himself, and still holding his beloved's beret in his hand.

I witnessed this scene myself, from beginning to end. And I ask : is this anything but bestial violence ?

Goethe and the Dusseldorf Killer. I am living at present in Zoliborz. The windows of my flat look out on to a villa where some German dignitary lives. For a long time I never saw him, and did not know who he was. But in the summer, when the flowers bloomed in his garden, I began to see him every evening from my window. He used to go round in his dressing-gown, with a watering-can, watering his flowers and hoeing the beds. Then I saw him fixing little boards on the trees to hold food for the sparrows, and fondling his dog. And after that I saw him in his own window, feeding goldfish in a bowl. My servant told me he must be an exceptionally good and decent fellow. That he could not be as bad as the other Germans. She even advised me, if one of my family should be arrested, to appeal to him, on the ground of neighbourship. Later on she informed me that his name was Otto Schubert. That was all I knew of him. But one day I learnt from a report by our organization that one of the bloodiest German executioners had been sent from Warsaw to Radom to regulate affairs there, which had become too heated : namely *SS-Obergruppenfuehrer* Otto Schubert. And from that time on my neighbour did not appear any more in his dressing-gown in the garden. He had gone to Radom.

Such is the soul of a German. Once again the mask of the poet on the face of the criminal.

All Germans are alike. Outwardly they make a favourable impression. But if I were in a position to take all Germans without exception and drown them in the depths of the sea, along with their wives and children, their poets, painters and inventors, I should do it, without hesitating even a moment. I should do it in the conviction that I was getting rid of eighty or ninety million criminals : a malefactor-nation.

And so it is surprising that, despite all the bloodthirsty banditry of the Germans, our community not only cherishes

its scorn and contempt in its heart, but shows it expressly in its daily life. That the fear of death does not make us bend the knee before our murderers.

The first clear evidence of the attitude of the Poles to the Germans was a notice put up in November, 1939, announcing the shooting of two Polish women. I tore it down and kept it as a souvenir. This is what it said:

'Notice. By sentence of a Field Court Martial, sentenced to death: the widow Eugenia Wlodarz and the student Elizabeth Zahorska, for an attack upon a German soldier, and for sabotage, namely tearing down posters. Warsaw, November 3, 1939. The Officer Commanding.'

This attitude towards the occupying authorities is extremely costly. The fate of those two women has been shared by thousands of others, and by many thousands of men—and by very many children. You who are now scattered over the world no doubt often turn your thoughts Homewards and above all would like to know how Polish women behave towards the German soldiery. Assuredly you believe that they behave with dignity, but none the less, at the bottom of your hearts there is a certain distrust: you wonder whether every Polish woman has kept her feeling of contempt for the invaders.

Believe me in all sincerity: Yes. The Polish woman, left to her fate, condemned to a hard struggle for existence, persecuted every day by a brutal and licentious soldiery, now, in the most difficult period of our history, is showing her worth, her real greatness. It is the Polish woman, more frequently and more effectively than each of us men, who reminds the Germans day after day, by her attitude and her behaviour, that feelings of disgust and contempt for the whole German people burn in our hearts with a great, consuming flame.

Not long ago I was sitting in a cafe founded and conducted by film and stage actresses. These ladies, who not long since were spending a considerable part of their lives in film studios and on the theatrical stage, now wear little embroidered aprons, and carry money-bags hung from their shoulders by coloured cords. They are waitresses. All of them have their hair done charmingly, have beautiful faces and elegant figures. Probably

each one of them takes as much care of her appearance now, in the cafe, as she did once before the footlights. I was drinking coffee, and looking at the papers: the *Krakauer Zeitung* and the *Nowy Kurier Warszawski*, when suddenly there was a disturbance in the cafe. At a table in the window sat two officers in smart uniforms, with medals on their breasts. Both had faces flushed as red as plush on old sofas, and bestial eyes. A waitress served them with coffee, and one of them insulted her. She struck him instantly in the face. The enraged German reached instinctively for his revolver, but presently put it back again, cursed, and went out with his companion.

Romek witnessed a similar incident in another cafe, but this unfortunately ended tragically. A German officer, struck in the face by a waitress, shot—the innocent cloakroom attendant.

In the early months of the occupation appeals were printed to women to remember their dignity, and the institution of a black list was threatened. But the mere idea of such a proceeding was insulting. The Polish women not only remembered their dignity, but showed themselves as eager as the men to undertake activities in promotion of independence, taking, indeed, very often the most responsible and most dangerous positions.

Excuse my mentioning them in the same breath, but even the prostitutes at Warsaw were loath to give themselves to Germans. I once heard a girl saying to another about a third:

'She's got dough, the monkey, for she goes with the Boches.'

In this connexion I remember a remarkable scene I witnessed in the early spring in Zlota Street, not far from the corner of Zelazna Street. A German soldier was going arm in arm with a girl. Both of them had had "one over the eight." He had his coat collar undone, his cap awry, and an ugly mug. She was excessively painted and perfumed. They rolled along, taking up the whole breadth of the sidewalk. She was singing loudly—in Polish of course:

'No German shall spit in our face... Every doorstep will be a fort... So help us God.'

The German grinned broadly with delight. He did not understand a word. He was pleased that his girl was musical and sang him a song.

In general the Germans are very well aware of the feelings the Polish women have towards them. And so they try and change them—by force, arranging special women-hunts. If a young woman leaves her house nowadays she has no certainty that she will return to it. Not long ago a woman who had gone out for a walk with a small child in a little cart was kidnapped in front of Polonia House in Aleje Jerozolimskie. She was packed into a car, and the child, as usual in such cases, was taken care of by the police. At Zoliborz, a woman went out of our block one morning to fetch some milk from a shop—and did not return. A few days afterwards Piotrus told me of a shocking case. Near his house lived a widow with two daughters, seventeen and twelve years of age. One evening a large lorry drove up before the house, just as the three were having supper. The bell rang. Two soldiers came in, made sure of the names, and told the two girls to put on their out door things. Both of them were then abducted by force.

The German criminal and terroristic organization surpasses all imagination. If ever in the future the Germans tell the world that their crimes have existed only in the imagination of the Poles, the world will be inclined to believe them. For German criminality is so frightful, so improbable, that only those who have experienced it—as the whole Polish nation have experienced it—can believe in it.

Anyhow, if the German occupation of Poland were to last for any length of time, the world would never learn the whole truth about German crimes. For there would no longer be any witnesses.

Fifth Letter

TWENTIETH CENTURY EUROPE

Warsaw,
September, 1940.

My dear friend,

A year has passed since Warsaw so heroically defended the liberty, independence and honour of Poland. Not all was lost. Honour was defended. I don't know whether I should say that it's *already* a year ago, or that it's *only* a year ago. The time has slipped by very fast. Even today the sound of the sirens rings in my ears, and the measured tones of the announcer: 'Air raid warning for the city of Warsaw'. Even today I see our pre-war life, full of happiness, serenity and joy. But then again the burden of the past year is such that it seems as though the nightmare of the occupation had lasted long years—even decades. How much has changed within that time! How many tragedies each one of us has witnessed!

Perhaps we shall never know the real joy of life again. Perhaps on our faces will never again be seen a smile. Our children have no childhood; young people have no youth. We have grown frightfully old in the space of this one year.

A few days ago we buried Romek Radwanski. Yes, our friend is dead. He is one of the victims of the great July man-hunt, in which at least five thousand men were caught and deported from Warsaw. After a month there was news of him from Oswiecim. He was confined in the concentration camp, political prisoner No. 17,300. I can swear that nothing compromising was found on him. Shortly after that his brother at Skierniewice received a telegram from the Camp Commandant's office, to the effect that he had died, that his clothes were being sent back, that his body had been burnt in the crematorium, and that his ashes might be sent if the necessary cemetery and police formalities were attended to at Skierniewice, and the

sum of seven marks paid to the camp account. Roman's brother sent me a wire to let me know when the ashes arrived from Oswiecim. I took train to Skierniewice. I knocked at the door. In the house I found all in mourning: in more than mourning.

On the table, covered with a white table-cloth, lay the coffin, filled with flowers. On a cushion, resting on a little pillow, was a tiny urn, covered with a red kerchief. Why it was covered, why with just a red kerchief, I don't know. Before the coffin burnt two candles, and various persons stood or knelt. One of them lifted a corner of the kerchief for a moment, showing a metal box, like a floor-polish box, tied with a white streamer with a swastika seal, looking like a horrible spider. I was unable to utter a word. I bit my lips till the blood flowed. Four of us took the light coffin, full of great wreaths of flowers, on our shoulders and bore it to the cemetery.

Roman's brother told me that the ashes were sent by ordinary post. So were the clothes, which were cut and torn, and in several places stained with blood.

I am very lucky to be writing this letter to you. For I was within a hair's breadth of sharing Romek's fate. I was sitting in a cafe one day, expecting to meet someone. Suddenly the Germans raided the place, occupied the exit, and took all the men to a lorry which was standing before the door. On the way they took up fresh parties from other coffee-houses. They brought out an old fellow from a bar somewhere, beating and kicking him. We were taken to the Warsaw University building, now the headquarters of an armoured police regiment.

I had plenty of identity documents on me, not one of them genuine. I could not get rid of all the stuff, and was accordingly convinced that my life hung on a hair. That whole evening and night we were kept standing in the open air in two ranks, with hands up. German police constantly threw the beams of their torches on us and belaboured with their rifle-butts, or kicked, those who dropped their hands for a moment, or leant on their neighbours. Next morning we were ordered to stand at attention for inspection. An N.C.O. of police addressed us in shockingly bad Polish:

'Is there any *Reichsdeutscher* among you. ?'

Silence.

'Any foreigner ?'

Silence.

'Any *Volksdeutcher* ?'

'I am,' said the old fellow with beer-barrel figure, who had resisted being taken to the lorry. We were full of anxiety about our own fate, and fatigued with long standing, but we almost all of us burst out laughing. The N.C.O. looked sternly at us and tapped the holster of his revolver meaningly. He took the *Volksdeutscher* with him and went into the building. The *Reichs-* and *Volks-deutsche* were doubtless called out because it was easy enough for a German to be caught in one of these man-hunts without papers or other proof of identity.

After a while the sergeant stood before us again :

'Does any of you work in any German institution ?'

The blood rushed to my head. I thought the time had come to risk all on a single card.

'I do,' I said, putting my hand up.

He came up to me. I took out of my pocket a document certifying that I worked on the *Ostbahn* (Eastern Railway). He took me into the office, which was full of police. On the walls, facing one another, were portraits of Hitler and Governor-General Frank. Another German now took charge of me. He made me show him all the documents I possessed. I took them out of my pocket. There were quite a number of them. Then he told me to go into the next room, where, sitting on a bench, was only one man : the fat and troubled *Volksdeutscher*. I sat there for about an hour. Meanwhile the fat chap was allowed to go.

The same German to whom I had showed my identity-papers now opened the door and beckoned to me. Again I stood before the counter.

'You're a railway official, are you ?' he asked.

'Yes,' I answered calmly and insolently.

'That's right ; it has been confirmed.'

The German folded up my papers and gave them back to me, saying :

'It was a misunderstanding. Forget this unpleasant incident.' And he extended his hand, at parting.

In the smiling eyes of the Germans standing guard at the gate I read congratulations: 'You've managed it; you've had good luck.'

And indeed I had had good luck. Even now I cannot answer the question, whether it was the police or the railway administration who failed to perceive that my railway-worker's paper was forged. Or was there really a man working there with the same surname and christian name as I had chosen?

That July day of the man-hunt, of which Romek fell a victim, was perhaps the blackest day for Warsaw since the occupation began. The Germans, who are still continually proclaiming that they are the bringers of true culture to the world, that day gave Warsaw a sample—or should I say a lesson—in what their *Kulturtraeger* activity consisted. I said to you before that we are pursued like masterless dogs by the dog-catchers. And indeed the expression was hardly a metaphor. As a hungry dog, wandering about the streets, must take care not to fall into a net, so we must constantly be on the watch for motor cars and be on our guard against the German dog-catchers. Nowadays it is those who are hungry who chase masterless dogs, while the position of dogs has been taken over by us, who are enslaved by the Germans. Presumably never before, even in the days of Nero, was the dignity of man so outraged as it is today, when the German *Herrenvolk* sits on the necks of the conquered nations.

But I must tell you about that hunt. I will try to tell the whole story of Lolek Gorecki and Antek Tatarkiewicz, who also were within an ace of sharing Romek's fate. It's a very strange story, but none the less true.

There was an atmosphere of unrest in the streets from early morning. People stopped and looked about in all directions. There was talk of man-hunts in Zoliborz and Praga. Men were said to have been taken even out of their houses. The hunt was reported to be on a large scale, and the streets of those two quarters to be littered with corpses. In the centre of the city folk deluded themselves with the idea that as there

had been a big man-hunt there only a few days before, this day ought to be quiet.

It was a lovely sunny July day. The streets as always were full of people and of Germans. The time was eleven o'clock.

Some men began to hasten their steps and even to run quickly along the sidewalk. The rickshas increased the general uneasiness by continually ringing their bells or sounding their horns. From mouth to mouth with lightning speed ran the warning: 'Look out! *inkaso*! *inkaso*! *inkaso*!' That one word electrified everybody. Warsaw already knew only too well the meaning of '*inkaso*!' Huge green lorries on high chassis were driving along, full of armed German police, and behind them vans covered with tarpaulin.

It was the unmistakable sign of a man-hunt.

As at the sound of the starter's pistol, foot-races began in the streets. Everybody ran: men, women, children, old people. They fled in disorder in all directions. Passengers leapt out of tramcars in motion, out of rickshas and cabs. Everyone sought shelter in house doorways or in shops. They dashed into side streets. Women helped young men to climb over walls separating the street from the ruins of houses, bending down and giving them their backs. Shouts, cries and weeping mingled to form the well-known 'sound background' of the Warsaw streets during a barbarous hunt for human beings.

The Germans have good organization. They approach every task with a well-thought-out plan. Even a man-hunt. At the street crossings machine-guns appeared as though out of the ground. Policemen sprang up suddenly in front of house doorways and shops. Green uniforms, steel helmets and tommy guns seemed to grow out of the earth. And these guns were not for show. A short series of shots mingled its sound with the cries of the captured. Rifles fired volleys, in a gloomy concerto of death. Along the middle of the street the great lorries moved slowly.

At the very moment when this activity was beginning in the centre of the city, Lolek Gorecki came out of a large house in the northern quarter with a portfolio under his arm, stuffed full of material ill calculated to promote good relations

with the Germans. When his ricksha reached the corner of Krolewska and Marszalkowska Streets, the ricksha-man declared he would go no further, for he was afraid of a man-hunt.

'A man-hunt?' Lolek refused to believe it. He knew nothing of it.

'What! You're mad! Why, we had one two days ago,' he told the man. 'Go on. Somebody's been pulling your leg.'

'No indeed. I know very well. I won't go on. And I advise you not to go in that direction.'

Gorecki walked slowly along Marszalkowska. He relied on his identity-paper as 'inspector from the municipal electricity office', which had served him well on so many occasions before. (He was afraid only of one thing: of by mischance running up against a real electricity inspector.) But he hesitated a little. He hesitated still more when he realized that there was a great disturbance in the street, and clearly heard the sound of firing, and shouts. He proceeded more and more slowly. His ears continually caught the words, 'they're catching them! They're catching them!' His portfolio felt ten times heavier than it was. A hundred times heavier. The weight of it began to crush him. It was a quarter to twelve. At twelve Antek Tatarkiewicz would be expecting him at home. He might turn back—but what to do with the portfolio, which had to be delivered at Antek's punctually? Leave it in a doorway? No, that would never do. It's contents were worse than dynamite; everyone in the whole block would be shot. He would have, after all, to turn back. Antek could wait a little.

Meanwhile cars burst into Marszalkowska Street from the gate of the Saxon Garden and from Krolewska Street. People began to run in all directions. The noise increased. Shots were heard from various directions, some from quite near. The Germans threw themselves upon the close-packed crowd, some with rifles, others with revolvers, and others simply with bayonets in their hands. Amid the green German uniforms the blue ones of the Warsaw police showed up as their wearers wielded their rubber truncheons with extraordinary energy.

Lolek went on boldly. God's will be done. He held his identity card in his hand. He waited to be attacked. He looked

at the dreadful scene, endeavouring to keep cool. Before his eyes dozens and dozens of men were seized. Hundreds of them. Packed like dogs into the lorries. Some were carried by a couple of Germans, or a German and a blue-uniformed policeman, who held their victim by the shoulders and feet and swung him into the wagon as butchers do a hog-carcass cut in half.

The first to deal with Lolek was a blue policeman, who seized him roughly by the arm. Lolek shoved his open identity-card under his nose. The policeman held him still more firmly. He pushed the document away, without even looking at it.

'No, I won't let myself be taken,' Lolek thought.

He shouted at the ruffian in German, and again opened the card for him to see that he was Eugen Dworzak (that is Gorecki's name for underground purposes), municipal employee. It helped. The policeman actually saluted him, and soon got hold of someone else: a boy of twelve or thirteen who was standing on a ladder washing a plate-glass shop-window. The policeman knocked the ladder from under him so that he fell to the ground, and then led him off to a lorry.

Lolek turned into Swietokrzyska Street. Again he fell into the hands of the Germans. Again he showed his identity-card Again it helped. And several more times after that either Germans or Warsaw police threw themselves on him. And each time they let him go. But he felt no certainty that he would get the whole way. He hastened in the direction of Copernicus Street. To get to Antek's at the earliest possible moment. Perhaps he would manage it. If he got there he would be safe. Damn! What a long street, this Swietokrzyska, and Nowy Swiat beyond it! There was no possibility of stopping anywhere on the way. The house-doors were either locked (the porters having standing orders to lock them during man-hunts) or occupied by police. But Copernicus was a side-street. It might be quiet there. Anyhow Antek's porter knew him. The noise grew gradually fainter behind him. He had by now got a considerable distance from Marszalkowska. But shots still sounded seemingly quite near.

When at last he caught sight of Tatarkiewicz's house he

drew a deep breath of relief. He ran up the stairs and stood before the door on the fourth floor. He was saved!

But as a matter of fact this is only the beginning of the story, which resembles a cut from a sensational film or a detective story, but is actually an extract from real life; it really happened, in all its details.

He rang the bell of Antek's flat; his usual signal, four shorts. The door was immediately thrown wide open.

It grew dark before his eyes. He felt a cold sweat coming out on his back; his knees shook, and he could not swallow. At first all he could make out was two revolvers covering him from the vestibule. They looked as big as cannon. But this was only for a moment. He immediately collected himself and took in the situation. There could be no doubt that Antek had been taken, and that now they were only waiting to catch his visitors. There could be no doubt, either, that all this had nothing to do with the man-hunt. He stood there in the middle of the vestibule with his hands up, in front of two tall young fellows in SS uniform, with death's-heads on their caps.

'What do you want of me?' he asked in German. 'I'm...'

'Whom have you come to see?' asked one of the *Gestapo* men.

'Number 27,' Lolek answered, and began to breathe more freely, for a good idea had flashed into his head. 'I've only come to take a meter-reading. I'm an inspector from the electricity office.'

It seemed to him as though a ray of sunshine had fallen into the vestibule, or a breath of fresh, reviving air. The *Gestapo* men dropped their hands with their revolvers. They were puzzled. They looked at one another and at him. They told him he might put his hands down.

'Your *Ausweis*!'

Gorecki was about to put his hand in his pocket when one of them first searched him thoroughly. Then both of them looked at his identity-card and read it. All this lasted at least five minutes.

'I've come here in the course of my duty,' said Lolek.

The answer, nevertheless, was crushing:

'Yes, all right. Please take your portfolio. But our orders are to take everyone who comes to this flat to Aleje Szucha.'

'But I'm on a round of duty,' Lolek persisted. 'I'm an inspector. . .'

'I know, and I'm very sorry, but such are my orders.'

That was the end. Gorecki saw now that he was finished. And that Antek was finished. And that everything was finished.

'Meanwhile please come into this room and wait.'

He went into the dining-room and sat down on the divan. He laid the portfolio down beside him. At the table sat the owner of the flat, a middle-aged lady with long, fair hair, a pale face, and frightened eyes. He did not even greet her ; he simply forgot. He was sure they would vent their rage on her for having such a dangerous sub-tenant. There were also two other frightened women sitting at the table : the lady's daughter, a young girl with her hair in plaited pigtails, and the maid, from whose eyes tears dripped like water from a leaking tap. Lolek knew them all, but at this moment they were all complete strangers. Neither he nor they were allowed to leave the room. One of the *Gestapo* men stood in the doorway with his back to them, while the other sat on a chair in the vestibule.

The time passed painfully slowly.

'You're from the electricity office ?' asked the lady of the house, to let him understand that she had heard the conversation in the vestibule.

'Yes, that's right. I've come to take a meter-reading, and here they're keeping me. . .'

'Hm . . .'

The 'inspector from the electricity office' was stunned. He felt his tongue sticking to the roof of his mouth as he answered Antek's landlady's questions. He felt his cheeks flushing and sweat on his forehead. Aleje Szucha. . . An enquiry. . . Inspector from the electricity office. . . Antek. . . The *Gestapo*. . . Death's-heads. . . The portfolio . . .Yes, the portfolio ! What to do with it now ? It was lying by him like a death-sentence. He knew that now he would never get out of the situation, and that the stupid portfolio would cost him his life. At Aleje Szucha they would be sure to look into it. . . And he would

have to take it with him, for even if he left it behind, the whole flat would be thoroughly searched and it would be found... And Antek ? Where is he now ?... He is either already arrested, or they are waiting for him... Ah, if he is still free, it would be better for him to break his leg than to come home now... Poor Mrs.— ! ...They're sure to take these three frightened women... Antek had said the day before that it was time for him to change his lodging, for one of his people, who knew the address in Copernicus Street, had been caught at work near Deblin. There was surely a connexion between that and the raid today... But Antek ! Antek ! If only you could be a clairvoyant at this moment ! Don't come home !

In the mean time the man-hunt in the centre of Warsaw was continuing. Crowds of fugitives ran through the streets, pursued by Gestapo agents, and after them followed the green police vehicles, and after them again the huge vans. The noise of thousands of people advanced from street to street. Dead and dying, wounded and children were trampled under foot, by the fugitives or by the heavy-booted Germans.

In Nowy Swiat Antek Tatarkiewicz fell into an ambush. He tried to escape in one direction after another. But all around were machine gun posts, and green German beasts and blue police beasts now mingled with the crowd. Antek received a heavy blow in the back. He turned round—and a Warsaw policeman with a narrow arm-band inscribed *Generalgouvernement* hit him over the head and back with his rubber truncheon. It was no good trying to get away. It was no good, either, showing his identity-paper, stating that Tatarkiewicz was a mechanic working for the *Ostbahn*; the German, to whom Antek was presented by the policeman, crumpled up the document and threw it on the ground, and gave him a blow in the stomach with his knee.

All the victims caught in that area were packed into a large garden belonging to Blickle's. One lot of police brought them to the gate, and another shoved them into the garden, like potatoes into a sack, and guarded the entrance.

In the garden were a few hundred people. All were looking for a way to escape or somewhere to hide. But here

all efforts were vain. The back and sides of the garden were bounded by high walls, and in front the gate was held by the Germans. In summer the garden was used as an extension of Blickle's cafe. There were fifty or sixty small tables, and at many of them were sitting Germans, with calm, insolently smiling faces. They were eating ices, or smoking cigars. The Polish customers had fled long since, at the first word of the man-hunt.

Antek squeezed his way through the desperate crowd. He approached the walls, the board fence, and the small kitchen building; but nowhere was there a way out. So it was the end. . . He looked round everywhere, and turned in every direction. He was still trying to devise some means of escape. All in vain. Soon the cars would come and they would all be taken off in them. Only the Germans with their cigars and ices would be left.

'Such a miserable end is dreadful,' he thought. 'I have various documents and various names. . . They will find out who I am. . . At twelve I was to be waiting for Lolek. . . At three, orders were to be given out.'

Antek's glance fell on the arm of one of the chairs. He shook himself. Yes, now he knew what to do. The only thing. At once. This very moment.

Over the arm of the chair was thrown a German greatcoat, and on the corner of it a cap was hanging. Hanging down was the sleeve — with a red band and swastika. The chair was standing where, for the moment, no one could see it for the press of people. And the German owner of the coat and cap was sitting at a table with his back to them, watching the people who were waiting with despair in their eyes for the arrival of the vehicles.

Antek did not lose time in thinking what would happen if he were unsuccessful. He squeezed through the press and went up quietly to the chair. The cap was rather too large, but he made it fit by folding back the inside leather band. He took no notice of the people round, but put on the coat in a hurry. It was all the same if they did see him. He was wearing top-boots, for he had only the day before returned from work

in the field, so no one would be likely to suspect he was a civilian. But his tie ? Who would pay any attention to the sort of tie he had ?

The death's-head on the black velvet background and the silver-braided officer's cap—he needed no more. At the gate the Germans extended their right hands and drew themselves up to attention. Antek perceived that he was a Person of Importance. He held his head up, and looked round at everyone with an expression of pride and contempt.

He took the nearest way home. There was still hell in the streets. From somewhere or other came the sound of machine-gun fire. The Germans greeted Tatarkiewicz with raised hands. The Warsaw police likewise stood at attention and saluted.

'I was within an ace of being lost,' he reflected as he went home. 'Lolek must be waiting impatiently for me... But he'll be surprised when he sees me... And the porter too... And Mrs.— ... I shall give them all a surprise.'

Meanwhile Lolek found the waiting in the dining-room there in Copernicus Street extremely painful. He felt like a condemned man awaiting execution. The lady went up to the window near him and managed to whisper that they had come for Tatarkiewicz and were now waiting for him.

'They searched the flat,' she whispered, while the SS men talked together in the vestibule.

Gorecki thought of Tatarkiewicz.

'Oh, Antek, Antek ! If you could but know what is awaiting you ! ...Antek, don't come home !... All is lost.'

He strained his ears to listen. He caught every sound.

'Perhaps Antek's coming now.'

The *Gestapo* men broke off their talk and ran to the door. Gorecki heard the key turning in the lock. Antek opened the door himself with his own key. The lady of the house turned paler than ever. Her daughter and the maid hid their faces in their hands.

Lolek waited for the Germans to shout, or to shoot.

But—what was this ?

'Have I gone mad with waiting ?' Gorecki thought.

The Germans spoke politely. They answered questions, instead of putting them. And yet whoever it was that had come had a voice exactly like Antek's.

Gorecki heard everything clearly. Particularly the word *Herr* (Sir) continually repeated by the *Gestapo* men.

'He's already arrested,' said the voice of Antek.

'My orders are to arrest all the people of the house and those who come here,' said the *Gestapo* man.

'Any further orders ?' asked the voice of Antek.

'That is all.'

At this moment an SS officer entered the dining-room, followed by the two *Gestapo* men.

A less impression would have been made if a thunderbolt, or the devil, or Hitler himself had come into that room. The servant cried out: 'O Jesus !' and collapsed. The lady got up and withdrew towards the window. The young girl looked at the officer with wide-open eyes, which seemed every moment as though they would start out of their sockets. Gorecki's first instinct was to rush at him with clenched fists and hurl every curse at him that he could think of. He set his teeth.

'Inhuman monster !' he thought. 'What a swine !' But he did not believe it. No, that would be really incredible. He calmed himself.

For the SS officer wearing the death's-head cap and the swastika on his arm was, obviously, Antek.

'What are you doing here ?' he asked in a menacing voice, not looking Gorecki in the face. 'Who are you ?'

'Ah, it's all right. Antek, you're a genius,' Lolek thought. 'Now I understand everything.'

'I'm the inspector from the electricity office,' he replied. 'I only came to take a meter reading, and I don't know why these men are detaining me.'

'Take your meter reading and clear out.'

Antek played his part marvellously to the end. But only Antek could have made fools of those two menacing *Gestapo* men and the whole *Gestapo* and saved all of them like that. His face betrayed not the least sign of emotion. His voice was calm and level. He spoke German to the Germans and Polish

to the Poles. No, indeed ! No one but he could have played such an unparalleled part with success. Besides courage, level-headedness, and a ready wit, he had one further gift enabling him to carry through his role so splendidly : a perfect knowledge of German.

Lolek took his meter-reading and went. He squeezed his portfolio under his arm and beat it like the wind. Down hill, towards the Vistula. He would have liked to stop everyone he met in the street and shout to them :

'Antek's a most marvellous conspirator ! If you only knew !'

Meanwhile Antek went on with his official activities. He ordered the three women to give him all their identity-papers and their photographs. He tried to make some sign to the lady, but who could know whether she understood ? He made a most thorough search in his own room, bringing in both the Germans to help.

Finally he decided :

'The ladies will go with me.'

He sternly ordered the Germans to continue to wait and arrest all comers.

'Here are his keys. Keep them', he said, giving them some of his own.

The Germans unhesitatingly promised to obey.

When the SS officer took the women away, they stood at attention in the vestibule, raised their hands and gave the greeting:

'*Heil Hitler* !'

'*Heil Hitler* !' Antek replied.

The servant was completely stunned. She wept copiously. And going down the stairs she lamented :

'Jesus ! Mary ! Saint Joseph ! The world is upside down. I'm quite confused. I don't understand anything.'

I have written this account on the basis of the detailed information supplied to me by Lolek Gorecki and Antek Tatarkiewicz the same evening. I am well aware that the reader's first inclination will be to say : 'It's not possible. What a tall story !' Yet I assure you that it is true. In the course of our present life, which is in itself improbable, the most improbable

chances and events do happen. And for the rest, who is likely to have good ideas and a ready wit, and to realize the most fantastic scheme with lightning swiftness, if not folk such as these, who stand on the edge between life and death ?

The Germans track us cunningly, but we also are cunning in our struggle against them.

SIXTH LETTER

THE SECOND WINTER

WARSAW,
February, 1941.

My dear friend,

On one of the frosted-glass panes in my window the real frost has sketched a remarkable picture, of a horseman riding full gallop out of a forest. My wife interpreted it, and came to the conclusion that the forest signifies failure and death, and the horseman the arrival of an unexpected visitor.

'Perhaps it's a good sign?' she asked me.

Like everyone else at Warsaw my wife longs to find consolation in everything. One day she took me by the hand, led me out on to the landing, and showed me—a spider hanging from the ceiling on a long thread.

'Good news!' she said. 'To see a spider before breakfast means good news.'

But what good sign can it be, or what good news can it portend? Only that the spring, which we are awaiting with such longing, will bring the end of our sufferings; that the British offensive will begin. The present winter quiet does not weary us as did the autumn of last year. The news broadcast from London justifies optimism. And perhaps still more encouraging is the tone of German speeches and of everything now written by Germans. The news of the arming of America likewise raises our spirits ever higher.

It seems incredible that we may one day be free again; that the dark night may change into the broad day, full of sunshine and life. And yet it looks as if we were approaching the great change. When, sometimes, I think of the ending of the war and the recovery of freedom, I always fancy that at least half of our people will go mad with joy when the great news is proclaimed. It seems incredible that we shall live to see the

day when the murderers who are in occupation will themselves put their hands up.

And yet it seems that we are not far now from the bend on which the nightmare train of the occupation will be derailed.

You, undoubtedly, are preparing for the struggle. And, undoubtedly, just as we are awaiting you with deep longing, so you are longing for the moment when you will recross the frontier of Poland. You will shed much of your blood on the way, you will more than once again cover the name of the Polish soldier with glory—and you will come to us as heroes.

In our imagination freedom is already dawning. And so we here are beginning to think ever more frequently of the future and to visualize the Poland of the future—the Poland of our dreams and our desires.

Of late Warsaw has given itself up to discussions of the political future. That is a very good thing. Who knows whether it is not due to a collective feeling of approaching change? We are beginning to plan our Tomorrow, our life as a free community once more. We are beginning to furnish the house, which has as yet neither walls, nor windows, nor roof.

One night the three of us, Antek Tatarkiewicz, Piotrus Palus and myself, were working in the printing-shop, and talking of our future after the war. I should say that the discussion had been started by a broadcast by one of our Ministers: a bad, strange, unnecessary speech, bristling with misunderstandings both of us and of the prevailing atmosphere in our community. It was full of pathos, and of hatred for the past, and betrayed complete ignorance of the far-reaching changes which have taken place in the minds and souls of Poles. We did not even print in it our *Warszawianka*, since we were unwilling to annoy people who are today more critical than they ever were before.

'Melancholy disputes of the Old Guard among themselves,' declared Antek.

I have long ceased to take part in discussions concerning our past, or in criticism of governments or individuals. This theme does not interest us any more. The longer our enslavement lasts, the more clearly do we see before us the picture of the Poland we have lost, in all its beauty and splendour. This

picture we do not wish to obscure by any fog of prejudice or stains of unessential internal political intrigues. Ever more clearly, in the words of Mickiewicz, do we see 'in all its embellishment' the beauty of free Poland. It is true that even in Warsaw there are folk who choose to rake the muck of past errors. As they see it the past is nothing but rents and stains. But they are mostly old folk, lacking in dignity, relapsed into childishness, and one need take no account of them. Among the young there is no such raking up of the past. Or if there is, it is a rare and diminishing phenomenon. The young take a different attitude to Poland's past, and likewise to its future. The young, one may say, love Poland in a better way. Our thoughts are on other lines than the thoughts of our elders. And so we do not understand our elders. And so we are not convinced by any speeches loading with abuse the past conduct of our country's affairs.

Tatarkiewicz angrily crumpled up the shorthand radio report and growled:

'These old men are out of their minds. They are choking with hatred for their former political opponents, as if there were no greater troubles nowadays. It is high time these people grasped the fact that they have played out their political parts and now must leave the stage. It's time that the young and strong and courageous and sensible and new men should take their place.'

He sat down on the shelf where the type lay and lit a cigarette.

'One of the principal hidden foes of Poland,' Antek continued, 'was the tacit agreement of the older generation. Poland, throughout its length and breadth, was governed by elderly, old, or very old men. The proper degree of corpulence, grey hair or a bald head, and the proper number of years, beginning with about sixty, constituted a passport to the leading posts, to the highest positions in public life, in all branches of industry, in intellectual life—in fact everywhere. Those people, being disinclined to work themselves too hard or to over-tire their intellects by excess of effort, established a kind of defence line to keep out almost every new idea, every bold experiment,

every daring step proposed by a young man. We young men during the twenty years of our country's independence were treated as a kind of social outcasts, of whom the elderly, old, and very old, spoke as a 'problem'. The dictatorship of age was so powerful and ruthless that every young man, even the most capable, who was ambitious to rise to a higher social or professional position, found himself sooner or later up against this barrier, which it was impossible to overcome. Everything was for the older generation. One elderly man made way for another, and the machine, with its antiquated power unit and its rusting parts, moved in front—or rather, stopped in front. Tarnished minds gave birth to tarnished thoughts, which impressed their mark on the whole of our life. No doubt there were individuals young in spirit, energetic and creative. No doubt even among the elderly there were individuals of outstanding ability, broad-minded, and progressive. But let us admit, they were so few as to be almost invisible.'

There was nothing new in what Tatarkiewicz said. We all of us, being between the ages of twenty and thirty, were quite well aware of this strange state of things. Piotrus Palus, who objected on principle to talking of what had been in pre-war Poland, was all the readier to talk of what ought to be in the future. Everything, as he explained it, sounded quite certain, for in his view whatever ought to be *must* be.

'Recently I was reading a book about Napoleon and his marshals,' Piotrus said, 'and only now do I understand the real reason for Napoleon's success. The politicians behind him were old hands, it is true, but his successes and his greatness were determined by the fact that he himself was very young and that he appointed very young men to the highest positions in the army and the State. I am now continually reading military and revolutionary books, and I have strengthened myself in the conviction that youth is the first condition of success. The most recent example in our history is that of the Polish Socialist Party, Pilsudski, the Sharpshooters' Corps, and the Legions. No one can be fired with enthusiasm for great ideas and great undertakings like young people. After the war, in the new

Poland, we shall need great work and great initiative. The Polish people will choose its own governments, to suit its needs. And the Polish people will certainly not look for men with 'approved' names; it won't look for its men in store, smelling of naphthalene; nor will it put its fate and that of the State in the trembling hands of living corpses, even though those living corpses are already to be regarded as national relics.'

Piotrus is accustomed to exaggerate. But he is right. I am convinced that his opinion and that of Antek are shared by the whole younger portion of our community and by every sensible older man who is not interested in the 'right' to power.

During the short period of our independence much was accomplished; very much. Poland grew and blossomed under our eyes. We lived through twenty years of splendid creative activity, rebuilding the State out of its dust and ashes. But how much more we should have accomplished had we changed the worn-out and useless power units in the Polish machinery for new ones! I understand both of them: Tatarkiewicz and Palus. In their words there is not the least prejudice against the past conduct of affairs in Poland, or against the men who recently ruled the country. Both of them condemn the dictatorship of age, in order to prevent its recurrence in the Poland of tomorrow. They love their country and desire to see it free from errors, free from faults, in the Future. They want a splendid, happy, and young Poland. As we all do.

If such views had been put forward, not today, in the second year of the German occupation, but while we were still free, while our State still existed, and had been incorporated in a revolutionary programme, I could have believed in the possibility of realizing this dream of the rejuvenation of Poland. But now, though I entirely agree with Piotrus's and Antek's views and share their convictions, I am led to the belief that the aftermath of this war and this occupation will be a regular 'season' for elderly folk.

I am led to it by a simple calculation: the whole young generation of Poland will have been ruthlessly extirpated by

the occupying power. The latter's efforts are indeed directed against the whole nation, but it is the young generation which is making the greatest sacrifices. The prisons and concentration camps are filled principally with young people. At the present time the underground movement, which swallows up so many victims, is founded mainly on the work of those who are the most able and the most courageous, that is to say, the young. Further, the closing of schools and universities has caused the country, instead of being refreshed by a new generation of educated youth, to be overrun by hundreds of thousands of half-trained young people discharged from the secondary schools and the colleges. And more than that: a large number of young men perished in the September Campaign. And the enormous army of young Polish soldiers confined behind the barbed wire of German prisoners-of-war camps is living in the most miserable conditions, and after a long period of captivity, will not be young and strong any more. I do not know what is happening beyond the Bug, but judging from the rumours circulating among us, it is very bad there.

There remain you people abroad, on whom we count most. You whom we regard as the happiest of the happy. When we listen to the broadcast descriptions of your life and your preparations for the coming struggle, believe me, those are the happiest moments in our lives, moments when we could shout for joy. One of the secret newspapers once published a photograph of a Polish unit in Scotland; and I have seen people carrying the small picture about with them like a sacred relic and crying feebly like children. But you are but a handful, a small handful, whom Fate may throw on to one front or another and still further reduce your ranks. We here know that this is necessary; that it must be so; that Country and Honour require it. But how intensely we should like to shout to you: 'Come back, all of you! Come back, enriched with knowledge, education and experience!'

I think you will understand the reasons for my scepticism. Hertz called the young generation a young forest. Yet when a great storm sweeps over the forest area, it is the young trees which perish first. Many old trees are overthrown, it is true,

and more than one centuries-old oak may fall, but in the young forest only a few trees will be saved. The present war, particularly for us, is an immense clearing of young forest.

Perhaps I paint in too dark colours. Surely it will all end in the spring, and if only it is not later than *this* spring, it will not be so very bad. In that case many, many young trees will be saved. And in that case the ideas of Antek Tatarkiewicz and Piotrus Palus will be converted into fact.

Meditation on the future, the outlines of which are not too bright, is far from easy. Yet I derive a certain pleasure from writing to you even about so difficult a future as this I see before us. For then I forget what is happening at present: the Germans walking about the streets of Warsaw; those near and dear to us perishing in prisons and camps. I do not hear the tramp of nailed boots beneath the window, and, for a time at least, I am happy. Such forgetfulness is the pleasantest escape from reality. It is a pity that it is always for so short a time.

And our reality is, as always, very gloomy and very sad. And so what I can write to you about it must also always be very gloomy and very sad.

Doubtless you all know already that the Germans are waging war against our culture. You know how they are burning, destroying, or carrying off everything, and how they are trying to wipe out every trace of the existence in Poland of our own rich, thousand-year-old culture. Even when one is merely a street bookseller one comes into direct contact with the process which is bringing into ruin everything which we had built up in that field.

One day as I was standing by my stall in the street, there came up to me a little hunch-backed fellow with grey hair and old-fashioned spectacles like those Prus used to wear. Although it was still February and the frost was intense, he was wearing only a summer overcoat with torn sleeves, stained and threadbare. He asked whether I would buy any books from him, since he was disposing of the whole of his library.

'Today,' he added. 'Come to me today and let us settle everything at once.'

He was a writer. One of the leading Polish novelists. When I arrived at his flat in the evening I found several people there, engaged in taking books from his shelves, sorting them—and burning them. Only the owner was not there. He had declared, before I came, that he could not stand the sight of such barbarism, and had gone out of the house. I did all the business of buying the books with a young woman, possibly the writer's daughter, or perhaps his niece; anyway it was all the same.

'The books you see here,' she told me, 'are the fruits of almost forty years' collecting by a man who was a passionate collector, loved books, lived with them, and wrote them. Do not be surprised that he has gone out of the house; it is better for him not to be at home and witness such a massacre.'

In all the rooms, in the vestibule, and in the kitchen, were heaps of assorted books: history, Polish literature, Polish art, encyclopaedias, rare printed works, first editions, unique works. A great quantity of everything written by eminent Poles about Poland, the Polish past, and the greatness of the country. The examination had been carried out most carefully; every book had been handled and looked at. The essential thing was that not a single forbidden book should be left on the shelves. The tearing of leaves was continually to be heard. The people who were making the examination, probably the writer's family, asked one another about particular volumes, and sometimes compared them with other copies. A middle-aged man in pince-nez sat by the stove and every few minutes pushed in more portions of books from a great heap lying before him. I went up to the heap and turned over thirty or forty splendid and valuable works. Among the books awaiting their turn to be burnt were numerous copies bound in leather: books written by the owner of the collection himself. There were also books with dedications written by Sienkiewicz, Reymont, Przybyszewski, Kasprowicz, Zeromski, and Joseph Conrad. They all had to go into the stove, for the possession of them was punishable with death, like the possession of a revolver or a wireless set.

'It's the first time this year that the flat has been warm,' said the man in pince-nez.

I chose about five hundred volumes which I thought I could sell. I wanted to know how much they cost.

'It does not matter,' the young woman told me. 'Pay what you think them worth. And if they're not worth anything, please take them for nothing. Only do take them away today.'

The mystery of all this haste was easily explained. It was not long since there had been a case at Warsaw in which representatives of the *Gestapo* had visited the house of one of the writer's friends, an enthusiastic collector like himself, had made a thorough search, and had found a large number of forbidden books. They had taken these away, and the book-lover too. Less than a month afterwards a notice arrived from the concentration camp at Oswiecim to say that he was dead.

Under the terroristic system to which we are exposed Poland has already suffered incredible losses, in all fields of national and cultural life, and these losses are growing from day to day. I have mentioned this one private library, but you must be aware that it is not only private collections which are being destroyed, but great and splendid public libraries, of which we had good right to be proud.

Dr. Maczek's wife worked for a time in the so-called 'State Library', composed of all the large public libraries which had existed at Warsaw.

'Nothing of value will be left,' she told me. 'In the various rooms there are huge heaps of books which Jewish workmen pitchfork into baskets and take away to be burnt. Almost every one of these books is of great value, and some are quite unique. At first even the carters were grieved to see what was happening. We all wept over those heaps of books consigned to the fire, and we all wanted as many as possible to be taken to Germany. For we could get them back again from there.'

The whole German administration is confused. But they are very thorough in all work of destruction. And any orders to confiscate works of art, libraries, or single books are carried

out with lightning speed and exaggerated scrupulosity. What must it have been like in the large libraries and booksellers' shops, if my poor little street was constantly inspected by emissaries of the *Gestapo*? To give you an example, I will tell you about the last visit they paid me.

Two civilians and a uniformed *Gestapo* man turned all my books upside down. I felt quite sure that everything I had on my handcart was permissible, particularly as the *Gestapo* were constantly on the look out against underhand trading. Anyhow I had always been very careful about the 'purity' of my wares since a street bookseller had been shot for having a copy of Strasser's 'Hitler and his *Mein Kampf*'. But all the same they found something: Makuszynski's *Czlowiek znaleziony w nocy* (Man found in the Night), Dygasinski's *Cudowne bajki* (Marvellous Tales), Kusocinski's *Od palanta do Olimpiady* (From Rounders to Olympics), Boy-Zelenski's *Nasi Okupanci* (Our Occupiers) (actually a pamphlet about the clergy), and a translation by Boy of Constant's *Adolf*. How they must have been intrigued by these last two!

I speak of confusion in the occupying administration, and I tell you stories evidencing the stupidity of the occupiers. But unfortunately organized stupidity may wreak more destruction in an occupied country that one would expect. It is only those who carry out orders who are stupid. The orders themselves are—from the German point of view—very carefully thought out and far-seeing.

The German war against Polish culture is of course not confined to books. It embraces every field of our cultural life. Valuable pictures are confiscated, monuments overthrown, the most splendid works of architecture pulled down, museums, destroyed, sciencific research laboratories burnt. Police regulations and the threat of death have swept the works of Mickiewicz and Zeromski from the surface of the earth, Copernicus and Matejko have been annexed as Germans, and Chopin driven under ground.

Chopin. At present the playing of Chopin in Poland is forbidden under pain of death. And not only the playing of him. The same penalty is exacted for the possession of his

music, or gramophone records of his works. That is to say, Chopin is regarded as dangerous: equally dangerous, and equally punishable, with the possession of arms, the editing of secret newspapers, holding a school leaving-examination in secret, or fighting for freedom.

The Germans fight against Chopin, but they have not killed him. Chopin is still great and immortal. He has only gone underground.

Not long ago I was at a concert. A secret concert. Of Chopin's music. Arranged by a lady who told each of the guests the same thing:

'I want to hear Chopin once again before I die.'

That evening, that room, and the faces of the dozen or more persons who were present reminded me by atmosphere and character of an important gathering in the cellar where we edited our paper. The occasion seemed great and solemn, and yet all present were breaking the law and running the risk of death. Never mind where it was: somewhere in Warsaw. The preparations for the concert had taken two days. The windows and doors were blocked up with pillows and quilts. A dozen or more quilts, carpets, and various pieces of stuff collected from several houses made a coloured mosaic of walls and ceiling. The floor was covered with soft stuff, so that it was like treading on a mattress. One of my friends, head of a combat group, helped to ensure security outside, by sending two men armed with revolvers to patrol the street.

At eight o'clock all the guests were in the room. The earliest had begun to arrive at five o'clock. Some of the ladies wore black dresses, some of the gentlemen appeared in dinner-jackets. A few minutes after eight the lady of the house entered the room, accompanied by a young and miserable-looking man. This was a distinguished pianist, specializing in Chopin, and he was addressed as 'maestro', or as Mr. Maryan. The lady of the house, tall and slender, with fluffy silver hair kept in place with large combs and a face covered with wrinkles, wore a simple, old evening frock and wooden-soled slippers quite out of keeping with it, and likewise out of keeping with the old lady's feet, for she was an aristocrat, a dilettante in painting, poetry

and music, and a favourite of fortune for decades; but they answered to the needs of war-time life: life without bread, without boots, and without Chopin. Mr. Maryan was wearing a dark-blue coat with shiny back, torn sleeves, and patched elbows, and light grey trousers. He had long, unkempt hair, a thin, frozen face, and splendid blue dreamy eyes: such eyes as are only found in real poets and real artists. When introducing him the lady made use of the title 'maestro,' at which Mr. Maryan smiled and said:

'That is only a pre-war memory, though it is pleasant for a beggar.'

'And a beggar without a licence,' added one of his friends.

So whoever did not know might easily guess that Mr. Maryan was now a street musician, playing on the fiddle—without police permission.

Soon there was deep silence in the room. There were not enough chairs for all, so some squatted on the soft-carpeted floor. The lady of the house lit two candless, to get which she spent some hours hunting over Warsaw. And she put out the electric light. Mr. Maryan sat down to the piano.

He did not hesitate a moment over his choice of a subject, but began at once with rage and fury and a kind of fierce ecstatic predacity.

The 'Revolutionary' Etude.

Before the war I had often heard it. But now, when Mr. Maryan played it, with the Germans roving the streets and ourselves gathered secretly in that room, it was different: more expressive, stronger and more powerful. Its melody, full of pain, bitterness, grief, revolt and hatred of the foe, brought us all to fury, unstrung our nerves, touched our hearts, bade us forget struggle and the death, and awakened us to action, to fight and to vengeance.

The Revolutionary Etude is the song of Warsaw. Chopin wrote it thinking of Warsaw, and for it. When the Russians entered the city and the Cossack *sotnias* drove through the streets, he begged his father to let him return home and fight alongside the insurgents. He was just then at Stuttgart, en route to Paris. But no, he could not go. So he sat down to

the piano and composed his musical revolutionary manifesto under the influence of the vision of the Warsaw tragedy. He saw the city stricken with grief, stained with blood, under the whip of tyrants, and yet unbending and heroic. 'I was thinking of Chmielna Street,' he once said.

Mr. Maryan finished, but rested his hands on the piano and fixed his eyes on the candles as though preparing to jump, and for a long, very long, time silence reigned in the room. But all the more clearly could be heard the weeping of the lady of the house, who was sitting in the corner furthest from the piano, with her face hidden by her shawl. No one spoke a word. Presently she rose, went to the piano, took Mr. Maryan's numb hand in both her own, and pressed it passionately to her lips.

The Germans have forbidden the playing of Chopin in Poland. They have even destroyed his monument in the Lazienki Park. And when I went out after this concert, after hearing the Revolutionary Etude anew, I realized that they must *know* the music of Chopin. They are afraid of the supernatural power inherent in the most Polish and the most patriotic of music. For that is what it is: sentimental in the Nocturnes, nostalgic in the Songs, patriotic in the Polonaises, and revolutionary in the Etude. To the rhythm of Chopin's music one may weep, dream, love, hate, fight, and die.

Chopin is a giant. And the Germans are afraid of giants.

Each day of our life is like the one before it and all before that. Because we continually feel the pressure of the yoke of slavery on our necks, we live now in the normal conditions of captives. Captivity has now impressed a terrible mark on our souls. The subjects which interest us are always the same: who has been arrested, who shot, who has received a telegram from Oswiecim. And, of course, where to get hold of a few zlotys. And, naturally, the news of the world.

Where to get hold of a few zlotys. This problem, which is common to all of us, becomes more difficult every day. We are in such a strange position that a zloty, whose average value is no more than twenty groschen, and indeed often no more than five groschen, before the war, is today a hundred times

more difficult to acquire than it was then. We all hunt after money and foodstuffs, clutching at the most varied means which may enable us only to exist: at least to keep alive. But in the meanwhile the possibilities of earning money and the possibilities of obtaining articles of food grow weekly less. Ration cards for Poles are a fiction, a symbol of German organized paper economy. Prices on the black market are fantastic. On the ruins of Polish life, over and above the whole tragedy of our enslavement, there spreads its tentacles ever more surely and remorselessly a terrible power, the greatest ally of the occupying and murdering invader: namely famine.

Our struggle for existence is hard and sad. Trading, which has become the principal activity and source of income of an enormous proportion of the population, is in normal conditions a pleasant and useful occupation. But nowadays, beside all its favourable features, it has many that are unfavourable. Among these the first is the attraction into the whirlpool of commercial life of almost the whole of Polish youth; for this trade, divorced as it is from all principles of soundness and honesty, is one of the principal elements corrupting the morals of the young generation at home. Polish youth has taken up this kind of trading of necessity, since almost all working Poles have been thrown out of employment and driven to seek their bread as they can. They have been expelled from the schools, and deprived of parental homes and protection. The weak shoulders of a fifteen-year-old boy or girl not infrequently have to bear the burden of maintaining not only their owner but several members of the family. Trading is the easiest and most available recourse, requiring no technical knowledge, and it is accordingly very widely resorted to.

The way in which young people are engaging in this strange commerce is most clearly to be seen in Warsaw, where young folk, often scarcely more than children, employ themselves in every branch; illegally (for what is legal in the Poland of today?) and therefore constantly persecuted by the police and the *Gestapo*.

One day I was sitting in a Warsaw cafe with several friends, when a boy of perhaps sixteen, a stranger to all of us, came

up and asked whether we had not by any chance some resin. He was sure that as we were sitting at a table in a cafe we must be interested in any kind of buying and selling like himself.

'Then perhaps one of you has some sugar ?' he continued, when he had found we had no resin.

But we hadn't any sugar either.

'Or perhaps some cake ?'

Had it not been that we were all used to such incidents, the sight of the lad would have affected us sadly. I would not wager that at the next table, if he found anyone ready to bargain with him, he might not have negotiated for the purchase or sale of some piece of house property worth millions of zlotys.

Trading in gold and foreign paper currency is at present punishable with death. None the less, it is a branch which attracts many operators, particularly among young folk. In the same or another cafe I once overheard a conversation between a boy in a worn school uniform and a bearded elderly man :

'Perhaps you need *softs* or *small papers* ?' asked the boy. 'I have some *pigs* too that I could bring you today.'

'No, I don't need any at present. But I should be ready to buy immediately any quantity of *yellows*, if I could make at least a *point* each on them.'

That is to say, it was a conversation between two practised speculators in this field, who used this argot of their own, a *soft* meaning a paper dollar, a *hard*, a gold dollar ; a *small paper* meaning a forged dollar note, a *pig*, a gold rouble, *yellow*, gold, and a *point*, one zloty. And so on.

Economic sabotage is one of the weapons to hand in our struggle with the Germans. Every Pole makes use of it as he can. Even in such petty ways as not paying one's tram or bus fares. Not long ago the Germans shot several Warsaw tram conductors and inspectors for letting passengers travel without paying their fares. Young persons are as active in this respect as are their elders. No doubt it is necessary ; it's a duty. But all the same I cannot but fear for the future. Above all I fear the demoralization of youth by the conditions prevailing under the occupation. For it often is the case that what is good and praiseworthy from the patriotic point of view is harmful

from the moral. One must, however, believe that the young generation of Poles, who are today fighting for their existence and at the same time fighting against the superior force of the occupying Germans, will after the war show themselves the most valuable and most moral factor in social life. I myself sincerely do so, because I know how ardently the young generation loves Poland, and with what self-sacrifice they devote themselves to the Cause.

It would be unjust if, when I am speaking of the share of youth in amoral commercial speculations, I were to omit at the same time to stress the great share the same young people are taking in the whole underground life of Poland. Remember those Radom Scouts of whom I told you in a former letter. The spirit of those lads is common to the whole of their generation. Would you believe that the distribution of secret newspapers is largely in the hands of fourteen- or fifteen-year-old boys, who often—true heroes without name and fame—too often pay for their service with their lives ? Would you believe—or do you, over there in England, even know—that on one day, January 16 of this year, the Germans shot twelve boys at Palmira for underground activities, the oldest being seventeen and the youngest thirteen ?

Do all of you, a thousand miles away from us, know that these same lads who not so long ago were devouring the stories of Jack London, May and Jules Verne are now with equal ardour devouring the memoirs of socialist combatants, the reminiscences of Pilsudski, and books about revolutions and insurrections ?

The young generation of Poles has matured very early; unfortunately to face a wretched and poverty-stricken life. But simultaneously it has matured to face another life—of struggle, requiring the greatest sacrifices on behalf of the Country.

SEVENTH LETTER

BEHIND THE WALLS OF THE GHETTO

WARSAW,
April, 1941.

My dear friend,

Several times already I have taken up my pen to write about the Warsaw Ghetto—and each time I have put it down again. I did not feel capable of putting on paper all the observations, thoughts, and impressions which in other cases are the stock-in-trade of the journalist. When I think of the Ghetto at Warsaw I see above all a pair of eyes I shall never forget: the wide-open eyes of a handsome old man with grey hair and a grey beard, shot at Leszno from a passing limousine. I see the bodies of small children on the sidewalks, in the gutters, or in house-doorways in Sienna, Tlomackie, and Zelazna Streets. I see a hole in the wall of the Ghetto between Zlota and Sienna Streets, where before my eyes a German heavy machine gun blew off the head of a child of six or seven, who was trying to smuggle through a loaf of bread. I can still hear the words of the doctor of the Jewish Commune: 'Here someone dies every two-and-a-half minutes.'

The Ghetto is quite different from the rest of the world, and the people in it are different from the rest of mankind. The Ghetto is a place where people with faces like the skins of frozen or rotten potatoes endeavour with extraordinary efforts to live, and die with extraordinary ease.

Of late I have been in the Ghetto pretty often, since Piotrus Palus made contact with an 'underground' group of Jews, former members of the *Bund*, who are doing most interesting work. These people, living in frightful conditions and carrying on patriotic political activity, are surely deserving of the greatest respect, as real heroes.

The boundary between the Aryan quarter and the Ghetto at Warsaw is not unlike a normal boundary between two States.

It is true that the place of a Foreign Office passport is here taken by a police pass, but it was far easier to obtain a passport before the war than it is now to obtain a pass from the Germans to enter the Ghetto. Passes valid for a month are issued only to workers in the few non-Jewish factories and workshops existing in the Ghetto, to *Gestapo* officials, various German civil dignitaries, and, finally, to such as are able and willing to pay several thousand zlotys in bribes. There are a certain number of people on either side of the boundary who contrive easily to get over the pass difficulties: these are speculators engaged for the most part in smuggling foodstuffs into the Ghetto, and they satisfy the required formalities directly at the barrier. A sufficient quantity of devaluated Polish currency given to the gendarme and his assistants will open the way anywhere.

On a Sunday a few days ago Piotrus and I visited the Ghetto. We spent the whole day there, taking a good look at everything there for the first time, seeing much and learning much. It is the impressions taken that day which lead me to write to you.

We entered the Ghetto by the gate in Zelazna Street. But first I must describe to you that gate: a swing-pole barrier like those so frequently to be seen at Continental frontiers, across the width of the street. A hut for the guards. German gendarmes wearning steel helmets, with rifles on their backs and bayonets fixed. Policemen with rubber truncheons hanging from their wrists. An enormous board with the inscription in two languages: 'Entrance and transit prohibited. Area infected with typhus.' The tramlines and overhead wires are here torn up or broken. Here is the end of clean sidewalks and clean roadways. A German sentry tramps lazily up and down by the barrier. On the other side is another world. A group of Jewish militiamen in civilian clothes and wearing English-looking flat round caps drive back with their rubber truncheons a crowd of Jews slowly making their way to a side street. Each one of them slows down his steps to take as long a look as possible down the quiet street of the Aryan quarter. From behind corners peep out every now and again the faces

of children, ragged and dirty. They communicate by a look and a well-understood gesture with similar children peeping out on the Aryan side. It is not only they, however, who understand what they are up to. Their secret is shared by the gendarmes in their helmets, the police, and the Jewish militiamen. The 'Aryans' possess foodstuffs; the Jews have come to receive them. Both sides are only waiting for the right moment. The officials are busy from time to time controlling the passage of persons on foot or in vehicles. Then, behind the backs of the gendarmes and ducking under the rubber truncheons, a child darts like an arrow through the barrier. On the other side, in the side streets of the Ghetto, are rows of hungry figures, waiting patiently, sometimes for hours, sometimes for a whole day. From that side, from that other world, the sounds of the noisy life of the Ghetto are to be heard across the barrier. The calls of street traders, beggars, and children.

The requirements for passing the boundary of the Ghetto—legally, that is to say—are similar to those at any Polish-German frontier crossing before the war. With only this difference, that it is far more unpleasant crossing here, and that the attitude of the German to the Pole is usually full of malice. Of course his attitude to the Jew is ten times wrose. Anyone who falls into the hands of these refined scoundrels is a plaything in their hands. Polish women who worked in non-Jewish factories and institutions within the Ghetto have almost all given up their jobs rather than expose themselves to be frequently searched and stripped by the guard, under pretext of looking for smuggled goods. The duty of preventing the smuggling of foodstuffs (from which, be it remembered, these gendarmes and other Germans are making large fortunes) gives them further a pretext to look into purses and wallets,—and retaining their contents. Similarly, in order to 'check up on their sources of origin', they confiscate watches and jewellery and every kind of foodstuff, however small the quantity. I once took to the Ghetto, for a certain professor of the University of Cracow, a pound of pearl barley, half a pound of bread, and an ounce and a half of butter. I had to leave it all at the boundary, although the man for whom I was bringing it was dying of hunger.

The boundary of the Ghetto is above all else a boundary between civilization and barbarism ; it is a meeting-point between unconcealed crime, overbearing force, and cynicism on the one hand and defencelessness on the other. And so, from the edge of the Ghetto gendarmes fire down the streets of the Jewish quarter at human beings as though they were wild duck, and every day may be seen the gloomy sight of brigades of Jews being driven out to compulsory labour.

Along the street before the barrier the Jews are drawn up in two ranks for inspection. A Jewish militiaman is in command and makes his report to the gendarme. The Jews stand stiffly to attention, with bare heads. The gendarme 'makes his inspection', rubber truncheon in hand. I several times witnessed such inspections. As a rule they last about an hour ; as a rule the truncheon draws blood from more than one of the men inspected, and anyone standing out of alignment gets a kick in the stomach. And as a rule the gendarme puts a few questions to the men, which are all answered in chorus : *Jawohl, Herr Kommandant* (Yes, Commandant).

Questions such as these. I heard them more than once.

'All Jews are swine and thieves, aren't they ?'

'The Jews must be exterminated to the last man, mustn't they ?'

'The Fuhrer is the wisest man in the world, isn't he ?'

Of course ; *jawohl, Herr Kommandant*. After this food for the mind there follow exercises for the body : P.T. as it were, usually consisting of 'Fall down !' and 'Get up !'. The same thing every morning and every evening.

When I went with Piotrus, we passed the boundary without the least trouble. The German gendarme looked at our passes (very well forged in our own printing-shop), felt us—and we found ourselves in the Ghetto.

A street in the Ghetto. One of our Warsaw streets, which no long time since was pulsing with life in the light of thousands of lamps and neon signs. We were to meet a new friend, Moses, in a small café, to get to which we had to pass through at least half the Ghetto. But first we went into the church in Grzybowa Street ; not wishing however to be distinguished from the

others and awake suspicion among the Jews, we bought ourselves white arm-bands with the six-pointed star of Zion and put them over our sleeves in the nearest doorway.

Piotr was silent. Then, pointing to figures lying on the ground, stretching out their hands to the passers-by, begging, and showing their naked, dirty, bodies, he said:

'In point of fact, everything hear revolves round a small axis, of which one end is the last piece of bread, and the other, the graveyard.'

The spring of the year had just begun, and as we went along the crowded streets of the Ghetto that Sunday morning, the warm sunshine seemed to give life even to those who were at the point of death from starvation. How many of them there were! There was one of them, lying face downwards, a white trickle of foam from his lips, his hands blue; by his hand, which had only a short time ago been extended, begging alms from passers-by, lay a few five or ten-groschen coins. A few steps further on was a child who would no more beg for bread, nor ever even raise his head, lying there in the filth and rubbish of the gutter. A few steps further again, an ardent newspaper-reader stumbled over a corpse lying across the street.

The streets in the Ghetto are not divisible into sidewalks for foot-passengers and roadways for vehicles. It is true that once, long ago, before 1940, curb-stones clearly marked off the one from the other. But now there are very few who ride in vehicles, and very many who walk. So every street is one broad walk, along which every now and then a lorry makes its way through the human sea, or more frequently, a car or motor-cycle belonging to the German gendarmerie, and still more frequently the low, black hearse of the undertakers, and most frequently of all a ricksha, the vehicle drawn by slaves for slaves. Horse-cabs already belong to the dim past, and there are but few who remember taxis and handsome private cars. The trams pass through the streets like an express train through a wayside station, without stopping. There is a special tramline running through a few of the streets in the Ghetto distinguished by a large six-pointed star on a round yellow

board on the roof. For Jews only. It never goes outside the Ghetto walls.

Moses was waiting for us in the café appointed. He was a small, miserable-looking lad with a curly head and constantly red eyes. He did not care to talk much, being always tired and always shivering. His face and whole bearing witnessed to the difficult and responsible work which he performed every night as a soldier of the Polish Underground Front.

'What news from outside ?' he asked, as every Jew asks every Aryan who comes in.

We quickly did our 'professional' business, and I induced Moses to talk on a subject which till then he had successfully evaded : life in the Ghetto. When I asked him how the Jews managed to live, he blew a wreath of smoke from his cigarette and waited long before answering, calmly weighing his words :

'Here there is in general nothing that may be called life. In the Ghetto there is only death, and the only difference is whether it is light or heavy, swift or slow.'

He considered a while and then went on :

'Our life flows on under the banner of death. The only persons who do good business here are the funeral undertakers. As in the old days bread or milk used to be delivered from house to house, so now the hearses go round collecting the dead. Folk die in masses, mostly of hunger, and principally old men and young children. And hunger has led to the concealment of deaths for several days, in order that the next month's ration-card may be obtained in the name of the dead man. The chemists are forbidden to sell medicines for children under five or old people over sixty ; but as a matter of fact they are unable to make up any medicines, and sometimes for weeks there are no headache powders and no iodine, to say nothing of other specifics.'

'What is the situation of Jewish doctors like ?'

'It is like that of all other Jews. The majority of them work in various stations for the treatment of out-patients, but it is charitable rather than profitable work. They, too, are dying of hunger.'

'And what are the advocates doing, and the engineers, the university professors, and the whole Jewish intelligentsia which has been driven to the Ghetto ?'

'Have you not seen the thousands of beggars stretching out their hands in the streets, or selling matches, cigarettes, and newspapers ? Among them are many former manufacturers, advocates, doctors, and schoolmasters. The intelligentsia is condemned to die of hunger along with all the rest of Polish Jewry. A few are employed by the Jewish commune, a few by the post-office, but the remainder are at the mercy of fate. The more well-to-do, principally lawyers, who have bought up the posts as door-keepers and house-porters, come off comparatively well, for at least they have a roof over their heads without paying for it.'

'It seems to me,' I said, continuing my questions, 'that despite all the house-searches and requisitions, there is still a certain proportion of rich and moderately well-to-do folk, who find it easier to endure conditions in the Ghetto.'

'I don't believe in the existence of such people. The people here are not divisible into rich, moderately well-to-do, and poor, but into poor, very poor, and dying of hunger. There are a few who trade with the Aryan quarter, where they have contacts with the Germans, but they are very few, and really do not count. Apart from them, anyone here who did possess anything of value has been completely stripped by the Germans long ago, so that there is no possibility of the existence of a well-to-do class.'

'Are many taken to compulsory labour ?' Piotrus asked.

'Very many. They are lost folk.' Moses waved his hand and explained : 'Recently some two hundred and fifty corpses were spilled out in the yard of the Jewish Communal Administration. Corpses of Jews supposed to have mutinied while at work. All the bodies were frightfully knocked about. The Germans explained that they had brought them to discourage other Jewish workers from trying to mutiny.'

Moses had enough of these questions and answers. He drank the last drop of tea, and proposed to us a drink of vodka.

'It will be worth your while to drink a glass each. Jankiel has some original, pre-war stuff,' he said encouragingly.

He tapped with a coin on the table. There came a little, lean Jew with a comically winking left eye. Moses exchanged a few words with him in Yiddish, and then we were invited to the 'guest room' behind the shop, where there were two small tables, a few chairs, and a window blacked out with dark paper. We had not to wait long before Jankiel set before us three wine-glasses, into which he reverently poured genuine pre-war, State monopoly vodka. Then he brought a whole pickled herring with onion, wheat bread, and butter.

'By what miracle is all this still to be found in the Ghetto ?' I asked Jankiel.

But instead of answering, Jankiel winked his left eye again.

'It surprises you ?' Moses asked me. 'You think it paradoxical ? The occurrence of such miracles among us is simply evidence of the resource of the Jews. Do you know that until recently it was still possible to purchase here original English cigarettes, which had found their way here after the collapse of France ? Is that not still more unusual ? And what will you say when I tell you that German officers have their mufti made by our tailors in the Ghetto ?'

Moses began to shower me with further instances of the same kind. He was himself surprised at their existence. And he finished his list of impossible and illogical things with the revelation that the central office of the Black Market was in the Ghetto, and that the rates of exchange of foreign currencies and the relation of the Polish zloty to the German mark were determined there.

It is no secret at Warsaw that the Ghetto provides excellent business for many Germans. It is no secret that the principal purveyors of foodstuffs for the Jews—which are afterwards sold at black-market prices—are these same Germans. That Piotrus and I saw a most typical picture that same evening in a quiet 'underground' café near the boundary. We did not want to leave the Ghetto till dusk, and so we sat at least an hour in this little café, recommended to us by Moses.

In a corner of the room, directly opposite to us, sat a group of men with suspicious, cunning, rascally, insolent faces. Beside three Jews with white arm-bands there were three visitors from outside. Two in civilian clothes and a sergeant of German gendarmerie. This last had a peasant's brown face and a whole lower jaw full of gold teeth. Soon there came into the room a little fellow with sharp semitic features, in a civilian overcoat with an officer's leather belt, and with a policeman's rubber truncheon hanging on the left side. He came up to the group, gave his hand nonchalantly to each man, and sat down by the gendarme without taking off his cap, on which was a six-pointed Zion star of metal with the words 'Public Order Service' underneath. Their talk, which was loud and animated, was in German. Cards and note-books were passed round. The gendarme had comparatively little to say. They discussed the smuggling of foodstuffs, and the admission through the barrier of some flat carts loaded with flour, meat and potatoes. At a certain point one of the civilians addressed the German:

'You must do something to let through two lorry-loads of sugar and potatoes tonight. If we don't do it today, the whole transaction will come to nothing, for there are plenty of buyers in the city for that sort of thing.'

'Perhaps it can be done,' replied the gendarme.

'What sort of lorries?' asked the Jewish militiaman.

'Ordinary air-force ones,' replied the civilian.

Piotrus, who was sitting with his back to the speculators, gave me a meaning wink. I sat gloomily, drinking excellent mocha and apparently taking no interest in the conversation at the other table.

Men like these really do the Ghetto a great service. Were it not for them, the Jews would be condemned to live on what they could get on their ration-cards, which would mean dying rapidly of hunger. Men like these enable them to live—or perhaps, after all, only prolong their death.

Before keeping our appointment with Moses, Piotrus and I had gone into the Grzybowska Street church. It is one of three within the walls of the Ghetto, now given up to the use

of Catholics who are considered, in the eyes of the Nuremberg Laws, to be Jews.

We reached Grzybowski Place a little before nine. It is now surrounded by ruins, and the exits to the Aryan quarter are blocked by a wall of one storey's height. There were more people there than on a weekday. The square, heavily bombarded as it had been, and cut off from the rest of the city, has lost its former importance; it has become quiet, depopulated, and almost forgotten.

The broad steps up to the church were traversed by people in their Sunday clothes, but all with white arm-bands on their right sleeves. The Jews who had remained faithful to their old religion looked askance at these renegades, and from time to time made some caustic remarks about them. When Piotrus and I went in, the church was already full. Several persons were humbly kneeling in prayer before the altar. The threads connecting all those people with Jewry are very weak, and indeed often were broken long ago. The congregation comprised children born of Christian parents whose grandparents, or one of them, had been Jewish; Aryan women who had married Jews; Aryan men who had taken Jewish wives; and finally converts who had received baptism perhaps decades ago.

Mass was celebrated by a young priest. On the right sleeve of his cassock he had a white band with a carefully-embroidered Jewish star. Similar bands were worn by the boy-attendants, assisting at the Mass; and likewise by all the congregation. They were clearly to be seen when the people raised their right hands in the action of crossing themselves. Another priest heard confessions. Several people with prayer-books in their hands were kneeling on either side of the confessional. They, too, wore the same arm-bands. The church echoed with hymns sung by choir and congregation, and with the delicate tones of the organ. After the conclusion of Mass the young priest went into pulpit. He held a breviary with narrow ribbons ro mark the places. He said, as usual among Catholics in Poland: 'May Jesus Christ be praised!' and the congregation uttered the response: 'For ever and ever, amen!' He began his sermon with the words: 'Beloved in Christ!'

We left the church greatly moved by the strange service and the strange, though very sensible, sermon. On the steps in front of the church were sitting the usual dirty, ragged, half-naked beggars. They stretched out their hands and persistently demanded alms. Not all of those who came out of the church understood their hoarse jargon.

This Roman Catholic church is one more of the peculiar things to be seen in the Ghetto. It surely must be the only phenomenon of its kind in the whole world: here in the very heart of Europe, within the area of the city of Warsaw.

The sufferings of the Jews shut up in the Ghetto are dreadful. The continued existence of such a living cemetery is a miracle. It is beyond the bounds of understanding how these people still contrive to live, still endeavour to struggle for existence, and to work. The Jews greet one another at parting with the new and significant exhortation: 'Don't give up your cards!' That is to say, hold on, endeavour to endure, let your food-card, for which you get a few grammes of bread, give you strength to try and win more bread; don't die, for that will only give pleasure to the Germans. But all the same, the German offices issuing food-cards for the Ghetto find the demand decreasing month by month. The Polish Jews are condemned to death. In such conditions they may live another year, or two years; a few exceptional ones may even survive a third year of occupation. But if Independent Poland is only to be re-established after some years, only the memory of the Polish Jews will be left.

A Jewish doctor told me the following story:

A madman ran along the street, straight towards the boundary barrier. He must have been mad, for in his hand, above his head, he was brandishing a kitchen knife, and he was uttering amazingly loud and threatening shouts. No one could make out any words or intelligible sounds; it was just a loud and powerful noise, expressive, one might say, of the wrongs of the entire Ghetto. Meanwhile the Ghetto slept, for it was long past the curfew hour and the streets were plunged in darkness. Only on the barrier pole hung a lantern, throwing a small circle of light around.

The madman with the knife made for this light like a moth. But he stabbed no gendarme, he broke down no barrier, he overthrew no tyrant. First a searchlight threw its beam down the dark cavern of the street, and a moment later two rifle-volleys rang out almost simultaneously. The echoes rang through all the streets, resounded from all the houses, and died away into complete silence.

'You see,' the doctor said to me, 'that madman is a symbol of all the Jews who are perishing and have nothing to lose. And his shouts, the echoes of which can still be heard by the barrier there, are the cries of Jewry, the cries of the Ghetto, the cries of despair and protest from the living and the dead. I know what he wanted to say if he had been asked why he threw himself armed upon the Germans. He would have said:

"Five hundred persons are dying here every day of hunger and infectious diseases; you do not allow us to enlarge our one hospital, or to introduce the most primitive medical arrangements employed eighty or a hundred years ago; our children, our mothers and our fathers are dying in fearful agony, without help, for you have forbidden their treatment and the sale to them of medicines; you do not allow us to establish even a single elementary school for our children, or even a single cinema or reading-room for ourselves; you do not allow us to use the telephone, or the wireless, or electricity, or gas; you do not let us see even the newspapers which you print in German; you do not leave us the last bit of garden; we have not even a square yard of grass for our suffering children, deprived of air and sun; some you murder, others you bring to the last extreme of exhaustion."

'That loud cry,' continued the doctor, 'was an entreaty to let us live. And a threat to drown you in our Jewish tears and in our Jewish blood.'

The doctor called the madman a symbol. Who knows whether his despair will not one day be shared by all the Jews who are shut up in the Ghetto; whether they will not one day seize their kitchen knives and, instead of perishing slowly of hunger and the most frightful physical and moral tortures, will not throw themselves against the barrier and the Ghetto

walls, and perish all of them in a last struggle, an armed struggle against their oppressors ?

The Poles too are hungry, suffer and perish. But the attitude of the Polish population to the Jews is full of sympathy. It is indisputable that the occupation has completely cured our community of anti-Semitism. After the war there may be some slight manifestation of it among the small percentage of Polish merchants who have taken over Jewish businesses. Hatred of the Jews is a thing of the past. Perhaps just because today we are bound to the Jews by common misery, and common sufferings, and common activities in the underground struggle.

When I say that there is no more anti-Semitism among the Polish community, and that there is fellow-feeling for the Jews, I have in mind two pictures.

The first: I was crossing Zlota Street, by the wall separating the two quarters. A man in dirty working-clothes stopped, looked round, and threw a small packet over the wall. Then he went on his way.

'Are you sure it will fall into the right hands ? I asked him.'

'Of course I am. I threw over a loaf of bread for the Jews. Whoever gets it will eat it.'

Second picture: Along the streets of the Aryan quarter, in the roadway of course, moved a melancholy procession Several hundred Jews in rags, mostly barefoot. All of them with Jewish arm-bands, carrying small bundles in their hands. Sweat dripping from their brows, their eyes unnaturally bright with fatigue. The bigger children dragging along step by step behind their elders; the small ones and the infants peeping out from their rag nests on their mothers' backs. They had come like that for fifty or sixty miles, driven from their homes to the Ghetto at Warsaw. They had reached the last stage of their journey. They moved along like folk condemned, not speaking to one another, not taking any interest even in those Aryan streets which they might never see again, nor in those folk without arm-bands whom likewise they might never see more. Every face seemed to express resignation: Let what may happen, so long as we may only sit down somewhere,

even in the mud, and lick a drop of water. In front of the procession, at the sides, and behind went Germans in steel helmets with rifles on their shoulders.

The procession stopped for a moment at the corner of Krakowskie Przedmiescie and Miodowa Street, just where my book-stall stood for a certain length of time. There the Jews were handed over to a fresh guard. They stood still for at most two minutes. But in that time passers-by went up to them and thrust bread, cigarettes and bottles of water into their hands. The guards, who were busy taking over, did not notice it at once. When they did, they tore the bottles, and the Jews' own bundles, from their hands, threw them all on the ground, and beat up everyone, Jew or Pole, whom they could reach. After that the procession continued on its way.

These two scenes, which I witnessed myself, may serve to illustrate the attitude of the Poles to the Jews. I had a talk on this very subject with Piotrus Palus that Sunday, after we had left the Ghetto.

'If the Jews perish as rapidly as they are doing at present,' he declared, 'then post-war Poland will be entirely without any. And if the war ends earlier, and a few Jews are saved, they will certainly not be excluded from the Polish community. Can you imagine the possibility of hostility to the Jews after all that is happening now ? No one, surely, can deny that the Ghetto is a part of Poland, where people are perishing who think and feel in Polish, exactly as we do who are outside the walls. Take this Moses : he is a Polish patriot. And if such men as Moses are caught and die in torment, they are giving their lives for the freedom of Poland. The blood of the Jews which has soaked into Polish soil, the soil of their fathers and grandfathers, has finally sealed the rights of the Jews to Poland : rights which are equal with our own.'

It seems to me that the enormous majority of the Polish community share Piotrus's views. I disagree with him only when he says that post-war Poland may be entirely devoid of Jews. For if the Germans completely exterminate the Jews, then they will assuredly go on to the extermination of the Poles. And with all the experience they will have gained with the

Jews, they will find this second task comparatively easy. If the war lasts long, there will be nothing left in post-war Poland save Polish soil and grave-yards full of Polish bones.

Returning to the subject of the Ghetto, I must draw particular attention to a phenomenon which is typical, but at the same time strange. This is the serenity of spirit with which the Jews bear their unheard of sufferings. 'We are condemned to death,' say all of them. And yet they arrange evening dances in the Ghetto, present revues full of wit and humour, and indeed contrive to be far more witty and merry than Aryan Warsaw. On the hoardings and walls of the Ghetto posters may be seen side by side : one announcing the shooting of twelve Jews who had hidden in the Aryan quarter, in contravention of the order that all Jews must go to the Ghetto ; the other an invitation to a concert. I shall not be far from the truth if I say that at least half of the 'occupation' jokes circulating in Warsaw are products of Jewish brains.

This serenity of spirit is a bright ray of sunshine in the gloomy lives of these few hundred thousand people, condemned by the occupying power to death. A smile on the lips of a Jew seems nowadays somehow strange, wrong, even impossible. And yet many smiling people are to be met with in the Ghetto. There are no merry faces anywhere, there are no eyes bright with joy, but there are smiles. Suffering and smiles : is not that a fine, and very human, combination ?

Suffering and smiles. I recall a visit I made in the early days when the Jews were just being driven to the Ghetto from their homes all over Warsaw. A Jewish journalist, well-known before the war, took me to his apartment at Zoliborz to look at his collection of books and buy what I could take for my barrow. He had many splendid books ; at least two thousand volumes. We packed them in small parcels, ten or twenty in each. The whole time we were at work the owner of the library had a stern expression on his face and very melancholy eyes ; he was presumably thinking of anything but books. And then suddenly he smiled.

'Look here,' he said.

And showed me a thick volume, with the short but significant title: 'The Progress of Civilization.'

'The progress of civilization!' he repeated. 'The progress of civilization!'

The smile changed into loud and hearty laughter. Continually repeating the same four words, he ripped the book furiously into pieces—and laughed.

He picked up the torn fragments and hurled them out of the window.

Eighth Letter

BEFORE AND AFTER JUNE 22

Warsaw,
August, 1941.

My dear friend,

We have all believed that there would be war with Russia, from the very first day when the line of demarcation[1] was fixed, and during recent months we have been expecting its outbreak from day to day. When Frank came two or thee months ago to Zasanie, the suburb of Przemysl left in German hands, in order to declare that that boundary would be permanent, subject to no change in the future, our belief in the imminence of war became firmer than ever. Particularly as the Germans at that very time were fortifying the frontier zone, and manufacturing thousands of motor sledges, while the men who were deported for compulsory labour in the East usually perished there and never returned. Such as did succeed in evading German watchfulness and escaping told tales of the most fantastically swift and extensive preparations for war. Finally, towards the middle of May, military transport began to pass in the direction of the 'permanent boundary'. Civilian traffic on the railways ceased entirely; day and night trains laden with military stores, horses, and men kept passing eastwards. The Warsaw pavements resounded with the tramp of kilometre-long German columns; the noisy rattle of caterpillar tracks, and incredible numbers of light and heavy lorries. Sometimes one could not cross the street for hours.

Although everyone was well aware that the issue of peace or war was hanging on a thread, and that these columns marching east were destined to march in triumph through the streets of Moscow, German propaganda did its utmost to conceal the true intentions of the *Reich*. Only a few days before the Sunday attack a cinema

[1] This line the Germans, in all their official publications, called the 'boundary between German and Soviet interests.'

erected on the site of the old Main Railway Station showed a film featuring a parade on the Red Square, stunts by Soviet parachutists, and idyllic scenes from the Soviet Ukraine. And the *Warschauer Zeitung* published a special enlarged number devoted to Soviet-German co-operation, with special emphasis on the splendid development of the eastern portions of the Polish Republic under Soviet rule. None the less, everyone felt war in the air. The whole of Warsaw had been living under the shadow of this new war for a month, momentarily expecting its outbreak. Crowds were continually gathered near the loud-speakers in the streets. The newspaper boys selling the German-published rag were sold out in no time. Men's minds were excited by feverish expectation. On the black market the dollar rose day by day. The German mark, which in May was worth 4 zlotys 50 groshen, had fallen by the middle of June to 2 zlotys and pre-war hundred-zloty bank-notes, withdrawn from circulation, found purchasers at double their face value. Manifestos by the underground organizations appeared with ever-increasing frequency. A large-page secret daily was issued under the name of *Nowiny* (News). In the suburbs and factory centres a secret communist paper began to circulare; the *Nasza wola* (Our Will), the technical side of which reached a high level. One day the announcer of the municipal broadcasting station, murdering the Polish language, reported the burning by the Germans of two villages near Minsk Mazowiecki and the shooting of their inhabitants, as reprisal for sabotage committed on the roads in the vicinity. This sabotage had consisted in the scattering of four-pointed spikes to puncture the tires of motor vehicles All-knowing rumour stated that a communist government was already established in Warsaw—for the time being in the Ghetto. The cafés were crowded with Germans and others. Over their morning coffee folk asked one another whether there was any news yet. In the afternoon they discussed the problem of who would come off best, the Germans or the Russians.

But the atmosphere of Warsaw was evidently quite unfamiliar to the Soviet guards posted on the Brzesc bridge over the Bug. For they were quite taken by surprise when at dawn on June 22 they let a German train over the bridge, and found it to contain,

instead of coal or iron as they expected, a German *Sturmabteilung*, who immediately opened fire with machine guns and threw hand-granades, while armoured trains and tanks were rushed across the bridge. That, so it is said, is the way the German-Russian war was begun.

At noon no one at Warsaw as yet knew anything. I went out calmly enough to spend the Sunday at Swider. Only when I got there was I told by a perfect stranger that the business had begun.

Two hours later hundreds of people were leaving that quiet settlement on the outskirts of Warsaw, with their wives and children, travelling trunks and packs. They all wanted to get to the city as quickly as possible. Some of them calculated that the Bolsheviks might arrive that same night. Such was the general excitement that the train, usually punctual enough, on this occasion was several hours late. When it did come at last it was so full that it crawled along and all but stopped altogether. So folk started to walk to Warsaw, with their children and impedimenta.

I got back to Warsaw myself about 9 p.m. I did not find any one of my friends at home. They had all gone to celebrate the occasion by a drink. I went to the most likely resorts, and found them. But it turned out that I had come too late: there was no more vodka, even for medicinal use. So we tried another bar, with the same result. Wherever we went, the stocks of vodka were exhausted. I could scarcely believe that Warsaw, which the Germans had so abundantly supplied with spirits, so that every bar had a full supply, could thus suddenly find itself without any. Antek Tatarkiewicz decided to go to Wola, on the outskirts of the city, where some kind of a distant cousin of his had a spirit-license. But I was not inclined to move.

'You've no right to boycott a national occasion like this,' Antek declared.

So we took rickshas, Piotrus Palus and I sharing one, and Antek and a friend another, and proceeded to Wola. Our ricksha-man, whose seat was behind, bent forward over our heads and pedalled vigorously, skilfully avoiding the groups of people who were—mostly staggering—in the middle of the road. He himself smelt so strongly of spirits that one might

almost have got drunk on the odour alone. In a quarter of an hour or so we arrived at our destination.

But Antek's cousin, a woman with a large red nose, a large comb on her head, and a white lace collar beneath her thick neck, threw out her hands :

'I'm very sorry,' she said. 'If I'd had as much vodka today as there is water in the Vistula, I should have sold it all to the last drop. Since three o'clock I haven't had a spoonful left.'

'Well, we'll celebrate tomorrow,' I told Antek. 'They will be at one another's throats tomorrow too.'

The first few days of the war we had no information from the front. The Germans issued no communiqués, but confined themselves to repetitions of the dry statement : 'On the eastern front operations are proceeding according to plan.' The secret press gave information obtained from the BBC and Moscow, from which all we could deduce was that the battle was on a scale unparalleled in the present war, that the Germans had bombed Lwow and Wilno, and that the losses on both sides were tremendous. The outbreak of this war portended in the opinions of all of us a great change : no less than the approaching re-establishment of Polish independence.

At length, after about a week's fighting, the Germans put out their first detailed communiqué, according to which the Bolsheviks were defeated all along the front, and the German armies were rapidly advancing.

'That's nothing,' we told one another. 'For the time being the Russians are getting the worst of it.'

At the very time when the Germans were announcing the colossal losses they had inflicted on the Bolsheviks and were boasting that they themselves had hardly suffered any casualties at all, Warsaw was taking on the character of a great hospital centre. Ever more blocks of apartments were marked with the Red Cross ; buildings previously assigned for the use of German schools were transformed into hospitals ; and thousands of beds were set up in cinemas and theatres, and even in cafés and restaurants. Whole trains of ambulances proceeded from the bridges in the direction of Wisle. Soon even tramcars were

to be seen bearing shields with the Red Cross instead of their usual route numbers. The Germans who but a week or a fortnight ago had been marching with song and music to the East, and writing on the sides of railway carriages 'For Fuhrer and Fatherland', were now beginning to return.

The communiqués from the Fuehrer's headquarters continually repeated that the German losses were insignificant, yet there was already a shortage of hospital accommodtion in Warsaw. One day I passed through the Plac Trzech Krzyzy (Three Cross Place), where a number of field hospitals had been established. And there for the first time since September, 1939, I saw scenes which gave me heart-felt satisfaction. Wounded Germans were being discharged from ambulances and tramcars straight into the street or square. There might have been a thousand of them or more. They lay on the ground with unbandaged wounds, many having lost an arm or a leg, very many with their heads swathed in bandages, concealing eyes, nose, mouth, and ears. German nurses moved about among them. The whole square smelt of iodine and ether. The Poles looked with indifference on the scene; not a trace of sympathy was to be found on any face. I know that this sounds strange and difficult to believe, seeing that the Polish nature is not infected with Germanic sadism, and Slavonic hearts are usually responsive enough to feelings of Christian charity. But the Germans have cured us of such feelings in relation to themselves. On them the Poles will nevermore have pity.

When the situation at the front had rapidly developed in their favour, and the danger of a grievous retreat through Poland had been averted, the German attitude towards the Poles took a decided turn for the worse. They had hoped that the Poles would support their expeditions to Moscow and would show the same enthusiasm over its success as they did themselves, and since they had been disappointed they revenged themselves by an increase of terrorism. For a time there had been a cessation of man-hunts, mass arrests and executions. But now, immediately after the visit to Warsaw of Himmler's deputy, there was a fresh wave of unexampled violence. Amid it all it became evident that the Germans particularly

persecuted youth. In July, at the time of one man-hunt, they deported from Warsaw two thousand young people, including many whom you and I knew well. Now news of the death of one after another is arriving from Oswiecim, Maudhausen, Dachau and other concentration camps. It may well be that by the murder of our young men they wish to equalize our losses with their own on the eastern front. And again it may well be that by extirpating the Polish young generation they hope to weaken our underground movement, which rests mainly on its shoulders.

Yet it remains true that along with the strengthening of German activity there has gone increased activity on the part of the conspiratorial organizations. There are increasingly frequent cases of the derailment of trains, and attacks on post offices, and the German press carries ever more frequent obituary notices of Germans who have been killed by Polish fighters. There are also more secret newspapers than there were. It is noticeable that, notwithstanding the continual defeats of the Russians, there are but few people in Warsaw who sympathize with them. Even those who were carried away by the wave of sympathy for Soviet Russia after June 22 have now considerably cooled down. This is no doubt due to the arrival of information from the territories now occupied by the Germans. For it is apparent that there is little to choose between the conditions under one occupation or the other. The secret press, even those of its organs which quite recently were writing favourably of the Russians and warmly welcomed the signature of the July agreement between Poland and the Soviets, finds itself unable to refrain now from grave complaints of the crimes committed against the Polish population in Russian-occupied territory. It is not, then, surprising that it more and more frequently publishes comparisons of the German and Soviet communiques in the following form:

	Planes	Tanks	Men
German losses	85	20	2,250
Bolshevik „	125	90	5,400
Total „	210	110	7,650

Not that this attitude to the Soviets alters in the least degree our attitude to the Germans. Our opinion of both our neighbours admits of no modification.

My friend Dolski is rather depressed by the unexpected turn of affairs on the eastern front. He prophesied that the Russians would come to Warsaw, and that they would go on to Berlin and Paris, but it is the Germans who are going to Moscow and Leningrad. All the same, he considers that later on his prophecy will be fulfilled.

'This is how it is, Mr. Karpinski,' he explained to me one day. 'The Russians were to deal with the Germans, and here are the Germans dealing with the Russians. They are going on and on. If it continues like this, they will soon be in Moscow. Well, what do you think, Mr. Karpinski? Is it a good thing or a bad? I think that on the whole it is good. You see, Russia is a frightfully strong power, and such a colossus as is difficult to imagine. Such a power will not collapse easily. Well, the Germans will advance still further, but somewhere or other they will have to stop, for they won't be able to advance across the whole extent of Russia. And then the Russians will have their turn, and when they have begun, they won't stop till they have reached Paris. The Russians are like that. Dolski is telling you this. You will see. I know them. When I was at Odessa. . .'

Here the old man repeated his reminiscences of Odessa for at least the seventh time, and then continued:

'You will see how everything will be reversed, Mr. Karpinski. The Germans must lose this war, and they will be defeated by Russia. Yes, yes, only Stalin will defeat Hitler. Dolski tells you. You will see, Mr. Karpinski.'

When the Germans had taken Lwow, I determined at all costs to go there.

It soon appeared that no German office at Warsaw was competent to give the required permission. I spent a few days in going from one to another, but all to no purpose. So at length I had recourse to an office of my own. We had German police forms authorising the bearer to travel by rail within the limits of the *General-Gouvernement*, which meant, eastwards,

as far as the San and the Bug; but these passes were invalid, since only a week after the commencement of hostilities with Russia the Germans had introduced restrictions on travel by Poles. No journeys to the eastern areas were permitted. So I filled in 'Lwow' as destination, stamped it with a metal stamp, added a rubber stamp with the signature of some 'Commandant' and thus provided stepped into the next train that left in the direction of Przemysl. There, on the old demarcation line, my authorization for the journey and my personal identity-card were studied from every angle (as usual I was afraid I had forgotten my latest surname), —and passed. Evidently the imitation was a good one. I crossed the bridge without difficulty, and was able to eat breakfast at leisure in the town, get a shave, and prepare for the further portion of the journey to Lwow.

I must not omit to say that Przemysl itself is incredibly devastated. The Germans, I was told, bombed and bombarded the town for only a few hours, and yet it looks as if it had resisted a German attack for at least two weeks. I found large numbers of houses demolished, and whole streets covered with rubble, which was being gradually cleared away by the local Jews, who had already provided themselves with arm-bands with the star of Zion. From them I learnt the amazing fact that a good many Jews had attempted to make their way across the frontier to the *German* side! And that some had succeeded.

From Przemysl to Lwow (two hours' ride in peace-time) there was no rail communication any longer, since the tracks had been thoroughly destroyed by the Bolsheviks. But in the afternoon there was a bus, for the exclusive use of the *Wehrmacht*. I got in without hesitation, and reached Lwow without having been questioned by any one, although I was the only passenger in civilian clothes. I was not required to show my authorization, nor to pay any fare.

I got out at the station, or more properly speaking, at the ruins of it. I took a good look at the remains of what used to be one of the handsomest stations in Poland, and noticed that though the front wall was intact, the inscription *Leopolis semper fidelis* (Lwow ever faithful) had vanished, and there was a narrow groove chiselled out in its place. Tramcars

started from in front of the station as of old, only now, instead of having indications in Polish, they were in German and Ukrainian. I walked along the avenue towards the Bem barracks. And what a surprise it was to find quite new enamelled plates at several of the corners, inscribed *Ulica Generala Karasiewicza-Tokarzewskiego* (Gen. K. Tokarzewski Street) !

'They don't know yet what the Germans are like,' I said to myself; for there could be no doubt that the Poles expected more normal times to return now that the nightmare of the Russian occupation was over.

I could not find a name over any one of the shops. At some of the street corners there were still plates with the names of the streets in Russian and Ukrainian. The people were much worse clothed than, say, in Warsaw or any large town in the *General-Gouvernement*. In one shop-window I saw a large wheaten loaf and an appetising-looking poppy-seed cake. So I lost no time in going in to buy them. The shop was quite empty, a chair lay overturned on the counter, and on the walls hung cobwebs in the middle of square patches, lighter than the general colour of the walls, where portraits of Soviet dignitaries had evidently been hung. From the small room at the back came out a grey-haired hunch-backed woman.

'I should like a cake like the one in the window.'

She looked at me in surprise.

'Are you trying to make fun of me, or are you a stranger in Lwow ?' she asked.

I explained that I was in fact a stranger and had arrived less than an hour ago. So she told me the loaf and the cake were made of wood.

'It was a sign that bread was on sale here,' she explained, 'and so it has stayed.'

Later I saw many other such loaves on show. And also tasty hams, sausages, pats of butter, and chocolates—all of wood.

Still more frequently in the shop-windows I saw portraits of Hitler, Skoropatski, Petlura, and various other Ukrainians. But no portraits of Poles anywhere. In front of the statue of Mickiewicz lay a number of large wreaths of white and red roses. Along the streets were transparencies with inscriptions

in Ukrainian. There were plenty of posters on walls and advertisement kiosks, also for the most part in Ukrainian, fewer in German, and very few in Polish.

In the streets were very many Germans, Ukrainian militia, and a few Slovaks. But everywhere Polish was the language that one heard. I walked along slowly and looked about me. I looked for faces, houses, shops, and restaurants that I had known. Legionow Street was without advertisements, without shop-signs, and altogether very melancholy. Yet high up on the walls were the same plates with the street-name in Polish, *Ulica Legionow*, as before the war. And in Akademicka Street likewise. Pre-war cafés and restaurants were closed, their doors and windows boarded up; or else were turned into shops. Some of the houses bore traces of bomb or shell damage; others were completely demolished. Crowds of Jews were clearing away the rubble with spades and picks. So far they wore no arm-bands.

Late in the evening I found the first of my Lwow friends. We had no end of things to talk about. The evening was not long enough for us, nor was even the night. Everything was interesting and exciting: what it was like in Lwow, what it was like in Warsaw. In both places things were bad, very bad.

Many were the questions asked about Warsaw. About common friends and acquaintances. But the essence of my replies could be summed up in a very few, sad words: You will never see again many of your friends and relations in Warsaw, just as I have not found and shall never see again many of my friends and relations at Lwow.

The day after my arrival at Lwow a bomb burst. That is to say, the Germans announced that in Brygidki Prison they had found the bodies of thousands of murdered Poles and Ukrainians, buried in layers under the prison yard. They also said they had found some cells walled up, with bodies inside. The news ran through the town like wildfire. But that wasn't enough for the Germans. They declared that it was the Jews who had instigated the murders, and the Jews who must bear the responsibility for them.

Accordingly, Jew-hunts commenced the very next morning. Large numbers of Germans and Ukrainians with fire-arms, iron crowbars, knuckle-dusters and truncheons proceeded to call the Jews to bloody account. Every quarter of the city became the scene of massacre. Thousands of Jews were beaten to death. Many were thrown from high windows, many were hanged on trees or lamp-posts. Meanwhile the Germans threw open the gates of the Brygidki Prison, that all who desired might come and see for themselves what had been done. Those who went reported that the Germans were employing Jews only to exhume the corpses, and that they had to do it with their bare hands, without spades or shovels, while their German guards beat their backs—wearing gas-masks themselves because of the frightful stench. Jews who fainted were drenched with water, and if they fainted repeatedly, were shot.

I asked whether the Jews had really rendered services to the Bolsheviks.

'Yes,' one of my friends told me. 'Many worked for the N.K.W.D. But one cannot generalize. There were other Jews who did not forget that they were Poles.'

Of the many stories which I heard, one in particular remains in my head. It was about the feverish haste in which the Russian occupants withdrew from the city. Orderly evacuation lasted only one day. Next morning N.K.W.D. cars and motor-cycles drove through the town, bullets whistled along the streets, and machine-guns fired volleys into the windows and porches of houses, into shop windows, cellars and bushes.

Before the Germans entered, Lwow was for two days without invaders. During that time the Ukrainians hurriedly set up their own government, which began energetically to prepare a welcome for the Germans. No one, however, troubled to remove the loud-speakers in the streets, which the Russians had left. And the very day when the Germans entered Lwow the voice of Wanda Wasilewska was heard broadcasting from Moscow:

'Comrades of Soviet Lwow ! Remain faithful to the principles and ideas of communism ! We shall return before long, and, as in September, 1939, shall emancipate you from the tyranny of Hitlerism and capitalism.'

The Germans, who had long petted Hetman Skoropadski and his collaborators at Berlin, none the less had ready-prepared plans for dealing with the Ukrainian problem, not all in accord with the pledges they had given to the Ukrainian leaders. For as soon as ever they appeared at Lwow, they began to remove all Ukrainian and Polish flags and symbols. After my arrival they issued an ordinance prohibiting the exhibition of any transparencies with Ukrainian words, the publication of any Ukrainian newspaper (though after a certain time publication was allowed again, under German supervision), and the peddling of portraits of Ukrainian political workers; and finally they imprisoned the most eminent of the Ukrainian nationalist leaders, including the hetman himself. The climax of their proceedings was the incorporation of Eastern Little-Poland in the *General-Gouvernement*. The dream of a Ukrainian State under the protection of the Fuhrer burst like a bubble.

Evidently the Germans realized the strength of the Poles at Lwow and throughout Eastern Little-Poland (Galicia), for from the very beginning they made overtures to them. The postal and railway administrations were manned with former Polish officials, while the Ukrainians were given the municipal administration. Not because there was a Ukrainian majority in the city. No. Three months after the entry of the Germans, school attendance lists compiled under the special guidance of the Ukrainian municipal authorities showed that, whereas three thousand children were on the rolls of the Ukrainian schools, the Polish were attended by twelve thousand five hundred. Yes, the Germans made overtures to the Poles under the delusion that after the Soviet occupation they would be ready to collaborate with anyone who would bring them a change. But they were disappointed. The Poles were not going to collaborate with any invader.

While I was at Lwow Zalewski's opened a confectioner's in Akademicka Street. Over the door appeared the old pre-war sign. There was a queue of people waiting at least half a mile long. White coffee with sugar and a cake—microscopic in size but excellent to the taste. Eighty groschen altogether. It recalled the good old times of the dim past when the best

cakes in the world were dispatched by plane from Lwow for distribution all over Poland.

The Bolsheviks left frightful memorials of themselves at Lwow. But beside this, the story of their proceedings and behaviour furnished an endless stock of jokes, which were almost the only thing which to some extent sweetened life for the Lvovians. Thousands of jokes, and gloomy memorials: that is all the trace that the Bolsheviks have left of themselves at Lwow.

When I returned from Lwow my head was filled with countless stories of petty, laughable things, and of great and melancholy events. Under the influence of all this fresh information, which made up a broad picture of the gloomy government of our eastern neighbour, I forgot for a time the gehenna which the 'protection' of the Germans was for millions of Poles.

But I forgot it only for a short time. My forgetfulness vanished like a dream of the night.

Next day I went on from Cracow to Warsaw. And now again I saw pictures before my eyes such as I had known and grieved over for two years. And under the influence of fresh events, fresh bloodshed and fresh tears, the film of Soviet occupation faded in its turn.

The train was to start from platform 1A at 4 p.m. It was almost half past, and it had not moved. A mob of German police in deep helmets took position in front of the compartments which were not labelled *Nur fuer Deutsche* (For Germans only). Their criminal-looking eyes inspired greater horror than the long steel bayonets fixed on their rifle-barrels. A second mob, with similar helmets and similar eyes, carried out a search through the compartments, one by one. The train was crowded with passengers and luggage. In every compartment the curses of men where mingled with the loud weeping of women. On the platform was a great stack of valises. More and more were flung out of the carriage windows and fell heavily on the pavement. Railway porters piled them on hand-barrows and took them away to the luggage offices. A woman in a peasant's coloured apron knelt before a soldier, embracing the yellow tops of his boots as though they were the dearest things in

the world. Through the thuds of falling valises, the shouts of the Germans, the sobbing and cursing of the victims, one single word was audible, coming from the poor creature kneeling in despair before the monster :

'Mercy !'

Presently the woman lay motionless and unconscious on the ground, having been kicked in the face.

An elderly man with a bleeding head made his way into the overcrowded compartment in which I had been sitting for an hour and a half. He said he had tried to get back his valise, but that a German had jabbed him with his bayonet in the hand. In his hand he held a bloodstained Polish railwayman's cap. He looked wildly along the seats of the compartment, and then bent down and looked underneath.

'Wait ! you bandits !' he said.

The passengers looked at him with sympathy and offered him clean handkerchiefs.

At last the train began to move. The traffic controller, an elderly German with a large stomach and short legs, had just shouted *Abfahrt* ! (Start !) and was still holding up his green disk. On the concrete platform were piles of valises, sacks, knapsacks, and bottles of milk. The helmeted Germans stood there, with bayonets fixed. Fresh spots of blood stained the German railwayman's uniform, like the band on his cap or the scarf which crossed his dark-blue uniform. There remained the echo of oaths, curses and tears.

That was how we began the journey to Warsaw. Through the windows the grey houses and the lofty towers of Cracow could be seen fading into the distance. It was a perfectly normal and ordinary journey under the prevalent conditions. But, you, no doubt, will take an interest in a photographic decription of it ; I hope you have no conception, from your own experience of what it was like.

Opposite me sat a young girl. Fair locks fell negligently on her forehead and shoulders, and a green jumper was fastened modestly under her chin. Her face was hidden in her hands, and she was stifling her sobs. It was not difficult to guess that she had had much the same experience as the other passengers.

It was full and very stuffy in the compartment. Everyone spoke of foodstuffs, searches, robberies, and losses.

'They took forty pounds of butter from me.'

'A sack of potatoes from me.'

They complained to one another, and told each other their troubles, understanding one another perfectly.

'And you, what do you deal in, if I may ask ?' an elderly woman addressed me.

'Me ? Nothing so far,' I replied.

Then the eyes of all the passengers turned on me.

'Nothing ? Nothing at all ? Then how do you live ?' asked the woman in surprise.

'What ! You're not even bringing vodka or pepper from Cracow ?' another passenger remarked incredulously.

'I live in the country,' I lied. 'It's only seldom I go to Warsaw and I haven't tried yet.'

'Why, it's not at all difficult,' another man broke in. 'Before the war I was chief of a department in the Ministry of Communications and used to travel first class for nothing. Now I go back and forth between Warsaw and Cracow, carrying textiles in one direction and foodstuffs in the other, and somehow I make a living.'

Beside the fair-haired girl sat a pale-faced young man. He wore an old and stained overcoat that had once been light-grey, and since than had lost all its buttons. He was reading a German paper, but he soon got into conversation with his pleasant neighbour. Before we had reached Trzebinia the girl had managed to tell him that she was eighteen, and had not been able to finish her classes at the lyceum (secondary school), and that now she was travelling three times a week between Warsaw and Cracow, carrying anything that she could sell at a profit. The young fellow joked and loaded her with compliments, but she went on to complain that the gendarmes had taken from her ten pounds of butter and twenty-four pounds of bacon.

'But I've still got six hams. If only they don't find them !'

'How have you managed to hide them ?'

'Under the seat in a second class compartment, *nur fuer Deutsche.*'

The young fellow took off his overcoat and hat, shared an orange with his fellow-passanger, and talked animatedly and brightly.

We arrived at Kielce three hours late. It was, however, still quite light. It was long since I had been in this charming, though very provincial, town, so I opened the window to have a look at least at the shell-torn walls of the station and at the people, of whom there were large numbers on the platform. They looked distrustfully and angrily at the patrolling bands of railway police in dark-blue or black uniforms, leading large trained wolf-hounds and carrying revolvers in their hands. They had just finished overhauling the luggage of the travellers from Kielce. The booty, for a station of that size, had been large ; on the platform were two pyramids of confiscated valises and knapsacks.

One person got out of our compartment at Kielce, and in his place two women got in, so it was still fuller than before. The train moved out. One of the new-comers began to tell what had happened on the station during the three hours they had been waiting for the train.

'There's no hiding anything from these thieves,' she declared 'They caught a wretched woman. She had hidden the stuff where she could. Everyone does the best he can. But these scoundrels nosed out that she had got some bacon about her person, to they made her strip naked and took a photograph of her with it. In front of everybody.'

Another case, however, did not end so shamefully.

'No one knew at first what was the matter. They made a woman stand on the platform with an infant in her arms, and lace over its head, and took a photograph of her. But afterwards a gendarme took a second photo of the infant without its lace head-covering, and it turned out to be a fresh-killed sucking-pig.'

'O God ! O God !' lamented the other woman who had got in at Kielce. 'One is disgusted with life. When will we be free at last of these horrible insects ?'

'Don't say that so loud,' one of the other passengers warned her.

'Why not ? What, can't I talk to my own countryfolk ? They want to devour everything themselves, while we are left to die of hunger. Let them eat. Much good our food will do them ; they'll spew it all out together with their own insides.'

'Be quiet,' said the same voice again. 'You may not care for life, but I do.'

'They do, too, but they're dying,' replied the woman obstinately.

'Be quiet, I tell you for your own good. We should all like them to die violent deaths, but you mustn't say so, even though you think so. Anyhow there will be an end of them one day and not one here will be left alive. But it's better not to talk of it.'

The woman was at length convinced and stopped talking. Meanwhile the train slowly dragged along. Behind the windows the walls of forest grew dark. In the compartment cigarettes glowed and gave out an unpleasant smell of chestnut leaves. It was now quite dark. Soon the talk stopped. Some of the passengers snored.

At length the Warsaw-West station loomed up out of the darkness. And once again the gendarmes began their work of examining the whole train. It had scarcely drawn up to the platform when a band of licensed scoundrels and authorized thieves descended upon it, eager for fresh booty, fresh loot.

No one was allowed to alight. Each German had a torch in one hand and a revolver in the other. A whole mob of them climbed into each compartment. They spread along the corridor to prevent anyone from escaping on the far side. They opened every valise and threw a light into every corner of it. They searched both men and women. They looked into handbags and pockets. Even the least bit of foodstuff was seized. From the corridor and neighbouring compartments protests were continually to be heard :

'You mean to say you have the heart to take away from me that little bit of sausage ?'

'Don't rob a child of that little quantity of milk.'

'O Jesus, O Most Sacred Mother !'

The voices of the Germans were loud and brutal like themselves. Sacks, valises, bottles of milk flew out through the windows on to the dimly lighted platform. The sound of machine gun fire reached our ears.

At last it was the turn of our compartment. The blonde young girl shrank into her corner. The young man, who had been so talkative, was completely silent now. He put on his torn overcoat and clapped his old hat on his head, and sat without moving. Scarcely had he finished smoking one cigarette before he lit another from it.

'You're not afraid ?' the girl asked him.

'No,' he answered shortly.

The bright light of a torch fell into the compartment.

'Open your valises,' barked the German who first entered.

Revolver in hand, he inspired fear in all of us. The passengers pulled out their valises. The girl sat in the corner with apparent indifference. She had no luggage, anyway. Suddenly we heard the voice of the young man speaking the purest German :

'That young woman,' pointing at the girl, 'smuggles a quantity of stuff. They took butter from her at Cracow, but she has still got six hams.'

It would have made less of a sensation in the compartment if one of us had been shot by those glittering, threatening revolvers. The German went up to the girl and threw the light in her face.

'Where are they ?' he asked.

'Under the seat in a second-class compartment for Germans,' answered the young man for her, his pale face now, under the light of the small torch, seeming more than repulsive.

The girl burst out crying, loud and sorely. She was certainly hurt less at that moment by her loss than by the meanness of mankind.

She went out with the gendarmes. The spy sat still without saying another word. Nor did any of the passengers speak. But most certainly the fists of every one of them itched to strike that pale rascal in the face. I remembered everything that had

been said during the journey, and felt sure that the careless Kielce woman would pay dearly for her loquacity. Soon the fair-haired girl returned, weeping still more loudly than before.

After a long and wearisome delay the train started again, and in a few minutes we reached the Main Station. Here one of the first to leave our compartment was the pale-faced agent. He carried a small valise and a few German papers. As I passed through the huge, still unfinished central hall, where as usual there were a large number of Germans and where the loud-speaker of the train-indicator was constantly calling out *Achtung, Achtung* ! (Attention, Attention !), I noticed the talkative Kielce woman who had sat near me in our compartment. But no one stopped her, and in front of the station she got into a ricksha.

Presumably the agent's job was confined to the discovering of smuggled foodstuffs.

It would certainly be correct to say that twice over since September, 1939, Warsaw has passed through moments when the temperature of the general excitement reached boiling-point. The first was on May 10, last year, when the German forces invaded Belgium, Holland and Luxemburg, and the second was when the war with Russia began. But after many weeks of unbroken German advance towards the East, our spirits are again falling lower every day, as they did after the collapse of France a year ago. The Germans are going too fast and too far. The Russians have turned out to be weaker than we expected. At many points in Warsaw, and among others in front of the Main Railway Station, there are enormous war-maps of the Eastern Front, on which the Germans move their little flags eastwards, sometimes twice a day. The speed of their advance portends nothing good. The German papers and the Polish sheets which they put out are now continually declaring that the capture of Leningrad and Moscow is now to be expected in a very short time. How sure the Germans are of it may be deduced from their erection of new guide-posts for motor-traffic, with the indications, *Nach Leningrad*, *Nach Moskau* (To Leningrad, To Moscow).

Anyhow our spirits are affected also to a certain extent by the noisy German propaganda, with its numberless transparencies and posters and leaflets, all to the same tune : *Deutschland siegt an allen Fronten* (Germany victorious on all fronts). They are affected also by the nebulosity of British declarations and the delay of the United States in entering the war. Nevertheless the secret papers recall Napoleon's Moscow campaign, finding many resemblances between it and Hitler's, and resting all their hopes on the frosts of a Russian winter.

So once again there is a speck of hope. Once again we believe. And in the spring, anyway not later than next spring, enormous allied armies will begin to move from the West. The worst is that we have everlastingly to wait, and wait and wait.

The Russians are evidently aware of our state of mind, resulting from our fear and uncertainty with regard to their prospects, and they try to encourage us by dropping bombs from time to time on Warsaw. It is difficult to find any other motive for their visits except the desire to convince us that the Red Army has considerable air forces at its disposal and can therefore afford to undertake operations not directly connected with those at the front. So far, anyway, these Soviet bombardments have not done the Germans the least harm, while they have done great harm to the Poles.

The first Soviet air raid on Warsaw was a few days after the outbreak of war. The bombs were dropped, so it was said, from a height of thirty thousand feet, and they fell on the tramlines in Zygmuntowska Street, in Krakowskie Przedmiescie near the Hoover Garden, and in Smolna Street near the Eye Hospital, killing fifty or sixty Poles. On later raids, which were not very frequent anyhow, bombs fell in the centre of the city and on the outskirts, but nowhere near factories, railways or military buildings. Incidentally the Russians declared that one of the Warsaw bridges had been broken, but this is not true.

In the Polish capital, where there is scarcely a house unmarked by traces of war, and where everything was wrecked by bombs or shell-fire during the September siege, these Soviet

bombs rouse feelings of hostility. Not that they make the least impression on the Polish inhabitants, who still remember the German blitz. And anyway, even if they did make an impression, what good would the Bolsheviks get out of terrorizing the Polish population ?

The one good thing resulting from these raids (perhaps the Bolsheviks intended thus to raise our spirits !) has been the opportunity to get to know the Germans better. During alerts the German officers behave worse than the Polish children. They don't like raids, and cannot even conceal the fact. When the sirens sound, the cafés in Warsaw are excellent places for comparing the nerves of Poles and Germans respectively. It is only the Germans who spring up from their chairs and hurriedly make their way to the nearest cellar. Only they ; these heroes who conquered Warsaw and whose breasts are covered with jingling medals given them for bravery. But the Poles continue to sit calmly, smiling ironically at the present 'defenders' of Warsaw. The sight rewards us to some extent for the losses we suffer from the raids, though it is far indeed from counterbalancing them.

The Soviet bombs are certainly not dropped on our cities and on the heads of our people as evidence of Moscow's goodwill and sympathy towards Poland and the Poles. But the Poles, who in general quickly forget injuries, manage to behave at least with decency towards the Russians. Even these quite unnecessary bombs dropped on the ruins of our city are paid for in good coin. Just as I am finishing this letter a proclamation has been posted up by the governor of Warsaw, announcing that some dozens of Soviet prisoners-of-war escaped from a transport passing through the city, and that so far not one has been recaptured. Rewards are offered for information concerning them, and the death penalty threatened for their concealment. I am sure that not one will be found.

When I was returning to Warsaw from Lwow a goods train full of Soviet prisoners-of-war was standing at the station at Radom. Our train was on the track adjoining it. Through the small, barred windows could be seen the unshaven faces of the tired and hungry Red Army men. I do not know how

the Russians behaved when in 1939 hundreds of thousands of Poles were deported under similar or worse conditions to Siberia, but I saw how the people in our train behaved on this occasion. Cigarettes, pieces of bread, sausages, plugs of tobacco, and other things were passed across to the small windows. The Soviet soldiers grabbed everything greedily, expressing their thanks by smiles and symbolical gestures, squeezing their own thumbs.

The general conditions of our life have deteriorated still further since the beginning of the Russo-German war. The prices of foodstuffs and consumers' goods have soared and are continuing to rise every day. The Germans, in order to provide sufficient supplies for their troops, have still further diminished our already limited rations. Famine is increasingly evident in Warsaw. And there is also an increasing shortage of medicines. I imagine how frightful the winter under such conditions is likely to be. Better not think of it.

Ninth Letter

STONES ON THE FIELDS

A Village in the Swietokrzyskie Hills.
October, 1941.

My dear friend,

Two years have passed already since those black days of the beautiful Polish autumn when our miserable slave-life began. In the course of these two years we have become accustomed to great misfortunes, and to crimes committed by the Germans unceasingly against the Poles, and we have had death constantly with us. The news of a death in a concentration camp, or of the shooting even of our best friends, scarcely makes an impression on anyone any more. Our life is indeed of small value. I am convinced that for many who are tormented in prisons and concentration camps, death is desirable, and is prayed for more fervently than any other kind of relief. Those whose main business is the fight against the invaders are particularly resigned to the death of their nearest and dearest. One receives the news of the death of a friend, caught in the performance of an act of service, with stoic indifference, thinking only sometimes: That was a man.

And yet there are times when the death of a close friend and fellow worker is a shock which wounds to the quick and fills the heart with grief. Such cases may be few, but they do occur. That is why I am now staying in this village, my grief all the more painful to bear because there is no one, absolutely no one, with whom I can share it. The more readily, then, do I take up my pen to tell you the sad, sad story.

Piotrus Palus is dead.

He was one of those men who are absolutely devoid of fear. He was one of those men who, when they cross the threshold of that mysterious sanctuary, Conspiracy, condemn themselves to death, and calmly await it, meeting it stoically when it comes.

But the circumstances of Piotrus's death were none the less completely unexpected.

The day before the tragedy we had supper together at about 11 p.m. Afterwards we walked together to the corner of Marszalkowska Street and Aleje Jerozolimskie, and as we were parting Piotrus suddenly proposed that I should spend the night at his lodging. He wanted me to help him to print hundreds of letters on the duplicator, to be sent to German officials. As usual, they were to contain information from the BBC, warnings, and threats. I have no idea why this work, usually performed by others, had that night devolved upon him, and why he had so carelessly arranged to do it at home. I owe my own safety to a mere trifle. My little girl had fallen seriously ill that day, and that was the only thing that prevented me from spending the night at Piotrus's.

Next morning I was standing by my book-barrow as usual, with no presentiment of danger. Piotrus was to relieve me about eleven o'clock, and I was waiting for him. Suddenly there came up to me a young woman whom I had never seen before. She had an overcoat flung over her shoulders, the sleeves hanging down, a face as white as paper, and large moist eyes.

'Follow me to the doorway at once,' she said in a quiet, commanding voice, looking not at me, but at my books.

'What for'? I asked.

'Leave everything and please follow me this moment,' she repeated still more insistently.

I hesitated, but I went. We entered the doorway of a house in Bracka Street, where the unknown young woman began to tell her story very quickly and brokenly:

'Mr. Broniewski was taken away at five o'clock this morning. They came for him with a large car. They surrounded the house. When they came he was asleep. They beat him up dreadfully. The walls of his room are all spattered with blood. They asked us whether we knew the addresses of Kisielewski and Mikula. They took my mother too.'

It was the daughter of the landlady from whom Jerzy (George) Broniewski had taken a room. I did not know her;

or may be it was simply that I had not noticed her; but she had seen me when I visited Broniewski. She knew him only as Jerzy Broniewski, for that was the name Piotrus Palus had given when he registered there.

I don't remember whether I thanked her for giving me the news, and for her courage. But I do remember that I left her in the doorway and went away, striving to keep my self-control, in the opposite direction to that where I had left my barrow, which I never saw again.

They had asked for the addresses of Kisielewski and Mikula. That was, of me and of another of our friends, who just a few days before had gone to Silesia to carry out work, luckily with identification papers in another name. I did not even try to guess the cause of our exposure. My first task was to let my wife know and to save her and our child. But I could no longer go home myself, and we had no telephone. Anyhow I had but faint hopes of finding them at home, if our address had been asked for at five in the morning.

But whom could I send? I walked on, and went over in my mind the names of friends and acquaintances who might serve me in my need.

Suddenly I had a clear and bright idea. My child was sick at home, so why not send the doctor? No one would interfere with him, even if *Gestapo* agents were already in occupation of the flat. There was Dr. Tomkiewicz, who had been looking after the little Miss 'Kisielewska' from her earliest weeks, when she had a different surname. I got into the first ricksha I met, turned up my coat-collar about my ears, and made for the doctor's.

But here I encountered a great and happy surprise.

'Doctor,' I said straight away, 'please put on your things at once and go to my daughter. Please . . .'

'Something fresh happened?' the doctor interrupted me.

'She's sick. Yesterday she got worse. Anyhow you must go there at once, this very moment. And besides, I have a great favour to ask of you.'

'But I had a look at your daughter only two hours ago.'

'What! You've been there?'

'No, I wasn't there. Your wife was here with the child.'

'She ? Was here ? Two hours ago ?' I asked. 'And then she went home ? Did she ?'

'Probably not yet, for she had to take the child to hospital.'

To hospital ! I realized that the child must have been taken suddenly worse, but none the less I drew a deep breath of relief. A quarter of an hour later I reached the hospital, just as my wife was coming out with the child in her arms.

'I was just thinking I should go mad,' she began. 'You hadn't been gone five minutes before Kubus began to spit blood. I dropped everything, put the child in a ricksha, and took her first to Dr. Tomkiewicz. But it was not till I got here that the weight slipped from my heart. They made a thorough examination of her, and certified that she was in no danger.'

Kubus is really called Monica, a serious name which she received in baptism on September 25, during the siege of Warsaw but it has been put off till better times. At present we call her Kubus, and are all well satisfied.

'That's a great piece of luck,' I replied, and immediately poured out to my wife everything I had to tell : 'listen, above all it's great luck, not that the blood-spitting is not serious, but that it happened at all that you left our house.'

'What has happened ?' my wife asked, with fear in her eyes.

'You can guess what has happened. A catastrophe. Palus has been arrested, and I am wanted. So you won't go home any more. You'll take the first train to somewhere outside Warsaw.'

'But I'm not dressed for a journey, and the child hasn't anything either,' she protested.

Two hours later I took leave of my wife and daughter near the railway station. She had with her a little money, an identity card in a new name, and a heart full of anxiety. During the short interval she had managed to send a friend to our house, to the lady who lived in the flat two floors above ours. This friend had returned with the terse report that the child's sudden illness had been providential. The door of our flat had been

sealed by the police, and *Gestapo* men were on guard at the house-doorway and on the stairs.

I long wondered why the visit to my flat had been made a few hours later than the one to Piotrus's. The circumstance threw a certain light on the problem of who had denounced us. It was evident that it must have been someone who knew Piotrus better than me. And the difference in time between the two visits may well have been due to the fact that to get my address the *Gestapo* had to wait for the opening of the municipal registration bureau at 8.30 a.m. Comic, but probable !

My duties kept me at Warsaw for three days more. Then, having settled the most pressing matters, I got on a bicycle and set out. It was a very sultry day, so I put on a pair of shorts and a coloured shirt with a fixed collar. I also shaved my head completely. I looked at least ten years younger. Of course I might have taken a train, but that would have been more dangerous for me than bicycling. I rode in the direction of Grojec, Warka, Radom and Kielce. After dusk I passed through the narrow streets of Kielce. Only here, among my Kielce friends, did I begin to feel safe. Next day I made my way to a certain village, hidden among the forests, which—together with some of its peasants—had been recommended to me at Kielce. I was told the approach to it was difficult, and therefore the Germans came to it comparatively rarely. As the inhabitants could not understand how a 'summer visitor' could appear in October, I explained that I had just undergone a serious operation, and on leaving hospital had been advised to seek fresh air and quiet in the country. After that, I was treated with every kindness.

I had eleven days' splendid and quite unexpected holiday, which rested me perfectly, as in the best days before the war. I went round the various cottages and talked with the peasants ; I interrupted the smith at his work, sitting at the doorway of his smithy while he and his assistants hammered fountains of golden sparks from red-hot bars of iron. My nerves, which had not been in the best condition after recent events, now seemed completely cured. And then after eleven days one of

my Warsaw friends arrived, the young Zenek Tabaczyk, who only a few months ago took the oath before me when he began work with us.

'Piotrus has been shot.'

But he had not come merely to tell me that. He took from his pocket a letter addressed to the wife of Lolek Gorecki. with whom he had lost contact at least six months ago. Lolek, as I have told you, was one of our first editorial group and assisted in producing the first number of the *Warszawianka*. It was a letter written by him from the St. Michael prison at Cracow. I did not know what had happened to him; I did not know he was in prison. I knew only that he had gone to Cracow, where he was to find employment in a TobaccoMonopoly factory, and that he was connected with a group preparing an attack on Governor-General Frank.

Gorecki wrote: 'I know I shall die with the stamp of a traitor on me, but I have not the strength to endure these sufferings longer. I haven't a single tooth left; my ribs are broken, my lungs injured, and I cough blood. I told only lies when I was examined. But now, whatever comes of it, I cannot tell lies any longer. At the last examination I told only the truth. I said I had begun work with Waclaw, giving his real name and the pseudonym which I knew. I told them all they wanted. I gave them the address at Zoliborz and admitted that we had gathered there at the beginning of our activity. I gave them various names.'

Lolek begged us to forgive him his weakness of character, and said he was sending this note to warn me and the others. Finally he sent last greetings to his wife and child.

I gave back the note to Zenek and asked him if he knew any more about Palus. He said he didn't. He had been told only to tell me that he had been shot and that nothing was known of any further arrests in connection with the case.

'But now the most important business is this with Gorecki, I suppose,' said Zenek.

I consoled him by saying that the business was not pressing, and not threatening at the moment. My flat at Zoliborz had been long since vacated, and my real name had long sounded

quite strange in my ears. Other fictitious names I had borne and addresses I had given had been discarded as readily as old hats. The name I had borne longest was 'Maryan Boguslaw Kisielewski,' but that one Lolek did not know. As for the others, they too had changed their names six months ago, and none of them either was living at his former address.

Zenek left the same day, and I was overcome with apathy. I lay down fully dressed on my bed, and remained there without moving the whole evening and night following. Next morning I got up at dawn and rushed like mad into the depths of the forest. I seemed continually to see Piotrus at his work in the printing-office, by the book-barrow, and at the linotype. And continually to hear his voice. His voice! Piotrus's words were echoing in my ears:

'We young men will establish a new Poland.'

Now I am staying in this remote village and I feel very sad. The more, that my thoughts lead me to the conclusion that in Poland the best are perishing: those who have the noblest and most ardent hearts.

But on the other hand I must admit that during my stay in the village I have become aware that noble and ardent hearts beat with love of Country not only at Warsaw and not only in the towns. Here where I am, one may easily convince oneself by talking with the people that they do in truth love Poland and long for their vanished freedom. In this village, it may be said without exaggeration or false sentiment, patriotism burns with a great flame. What pleasure I have derived from my evening talks with these peasants! What strength of spirit there is in them, and what devotion, not merely to their own fields, but to the whole soil of Poland!

When I first arrived here, I stopped on a knoll with a cross leaning over from old age, and looked long at the cultivated plain, surrounded on all sides by sloping woods. After Warsaw, after long months of continuous nervous strain, and after my flight, I smiled at this charming landscape and this area which seemed almost unnaturally quiet. Over the whole district hung a silence which was only broken by the sighing of the

wind in the forest, or by the sharp tearing sound of a circular saw. I felt like a pilgrim, who after long wandering at last finds what he sought: that is, peace.

None the less this Swietokrzyski village lives the normal life of every Polish village. The life of daily cares and troubles, of great anxieties and small pleasures. Once upon a time, before the war, there was serenity and joy. But today the shadow of tyranny falls heavily even on this small and remote township. It is only under the cross on the knoll, at the entrance to the village, that one may forget it.

One evening I went to the house of an old farmer, Maciej Grzela, where the local peasants used to gather. Grzela is a small man with a walrus moustache, large, wise eyes, a dry face, and a straight, rather over-long, nose. He is in his eighties, but in agility of body and mind surpasses younger men. He took part in the revolution of 1905, he has been in the Caucasus and in Siberia, he knows a good piece of the world, but he loves only his bit of ground in the Swietokrzyskie Hills. He is called simply Maciej (Matthew) by all his neighbours, and at his house the Wojciks, the Grzelas, and the Kamioneks come together. (Half the populations of the village is made up of Wojciks and Grzelas). Many peasants were sitting at ease in the little room on benches, chairs and the edges of beds. They rolled cigarettes of poor-quality tobacco, smoked and coughed. Their talk was serious. In the corner of the room Maciej's five-year-old grandson, Janek, squatted Turkish-fashion: a comical little chap with flaxen hair, in farmer's boots, listening intently.

'If we have to go begging, well, we will,' said one of the Wojciks, 'but who will give us a piece of bread? In all the villages the people are hungry. Here among us the seventh child has already died this year. And all the time new laws, every day fresh papers with the stamp of the cock[1], and continual threats. There isn't a day passes without them beating someone so that one's heart is constricted with grief. In the forest they beat them, in the village they beat them, in the commune they beat them . . .'

[1] The German Eagle.

Maciej interrupted him, raising his right hand as he was accustomed to do. He was wearing a white linen shirt, with the sleeves rolled up.

'That is not the point,' he said. 'No one ever did any good in this world by complaining. We are in great misery; that we all know, and we must bear it, because we have lost the war. But the point is, they are already putting the halter round our necks. And the halter is these quotas they demand of us. Last year we could still hold out somehow or other. They fixed quotas, and we had to give them, to deliver them, and somehow we got through. But now, God is witness, they are flaying us alive. They have measured the fields, they have calculated everything, they bid us work hard and say that everything that grows in the field is theirs; that they will assign us a small portion for our own use. They say they will pay for what they take. But may God punish them for that payment of theirs.'

'That's not the end of it,' broke in another Grzela. 'We no longer have anything to work with. They've taken our horses; in the whole village here are only four left; we have to use cows for carting wood from the forest, and how will it be later on with the work in the fields? What are we to work with?

'Yes, yes, one may go mad with these quotas,' added yet another Grzela. 'Quotas of wood, quotas of grain, quotas of cattle, horses, poultry, and even quotas of people for work in Germany.'

Maciej spoke again:

'We must take counsel, and save ourselves; but what counsel to take, how to save ourselves, when nothing escapes the eye of these bandits? That's the whole thing. Until spring one could still do something. They killed our people on the roads, they beat them up, they took them away, but one could still take a little butter, milk and eggs for sale to Kielce or Opatow. The townsfolk came to the village and bought potatoes, fowls, eggs, butter and cream. But now, the death penalty for all that. They actually shot Joziowa, the woman from by the forest, and Frank, the man from between the ponds, for selling their own fowls and their own potatoes. And in the

same way they shot two from our village for selling grain. The *vogt* yesterday read out instructions from the *landrat* prohibiting all kinds of free sales ; everything must be delivered to the Germans. And their quotas are so large that we can't make them up.'

Everyone had plenty of examples to quote, from which it appeared that the Germans applied the same method in all cases. When fixing quotas they took no account of the possibility or otherwise of their being furnished. Their aim was simple : to assure that every farmer, though he had the best will in the world to furnish what was demanded of him, should constantly remain behind and 'in debt', so that he could at any time be called to account for 'sabotage'.

'There is no money,' another peasant complained, 'and there is no produce. Meanwhile for the poorest bit of clothing the price asked in the market is five hundred zlotys, and for a wretched shirt one hundred zlotys. There isn't any lamp-oil, or any salt. To say nothing of sugar.'

The peasants complained and grumbled and cursed. Maciej checked them with a dignified wave of the hand and spoke :

'Against force only one thing will help : superior force. Now, we are weak. We will not leave the soil, for it is the soil of our fathers and of our children, and it is Polish soil.' Maciej considered, and spoke slowly, word by word : 'We must work, and bear poverty and oppression in patience and humility, and—' here he raised his voice—'and do everything to prevent those German dogs' brothers from getting the least advantage out of us and our soil.'

No one said a word. Only after a time did some one quietly declare :

'Sacred words !'

Bronislaw Wojcik, an elderly, strongly-built man, one of the most well-to-do of the farmers, went up to old Grzela and said :

'Maciej, there's my hand. You've spoken conscientiously. We Polish peasants ought not to feed the Germans for nothing. Rather let the soil change into rock, and stones grow out of it !'

Little Janek, who was listening attentively to the talk, took what Bronislaw Wojcik said straight to his heart.

The whole village laughed at the amusing story of the youngster's doings next day. In the morning grandfather Maciej went out into the fields, and found Janek already at work like a practised farmer. With his left hand he held his long shirt, doubled back to his neck, and with his right hand he was taking out something and sowing it like seed over the field.

'Janek !' his grandfather called.

The sower turned his head towards his grandfather.

'What are you going ?'

'I'm sowing stones to grow here,' replied the boy without interrupting his 'work.'

Maciej approached the boy and looked into his shirt, which was full of small pebbles.

'Well, I never !' laughed the old man. 'Let go your shirt. There's a goose just going to peck you behind.'

The forest rings all day long with the sound of the mechanical saws, introduced by the Germans, with which they cut down large old trees. Three hundred men are employed merely in lopping off the branches. Lines of carts move all day in both directions along the road from the village to the forest, and from the forest to the nearest town. All the horses and all the farmers from the villages round about are taken for this work. The day's work begins at six in the morning. Long and heavy logs have to be loaded in the forest on to wagons, transported to the town, and there unloaded at the sawmill. The peasants complain that their backs hurt from the work and from the beating they get. They cannot make up the quota demanded in the time between 6 a.m. and nightfall. The Germans shout at them and beat them up; the quantity of timber is always too small to satisfy their demands. They are in a hurry to cut down the whole of the Swietokrzyski Forests, of which the pearl is the Puszcza Jodlowa, the Stefan Zeromski National Park.

One of the many sad events which have been witnessed by this village during the course of the two years' occupation is this feverish attack upon our forests. It has made a deep impres-

sion on the minds of the inhabitants, who recall it on every occasion. One day, so the smith told me, in July the *vogt* announced that five horse-carts had to be sent to the town, to meet a party of Forestry Inspectors. And as a matter of fact twenty or more Germans arrived. They carried rifles, and also long leather riding-whips. The villagers were seized with fear, but they all went obediently to the appointed rendezvous. One of the Germans addressed them in Polish. He told them that they had been sabotaging the German arrangements by refusing to work in the forest. Immediately after he had finished speaking, the angry band of Germans fell upon the assembled crowd standing humbly before them. The cracking and lashing of the whips were drowned in the cries of the victims. Some of the Germans lost their whips in their excitement, so they carried on with their rifle-butts, laying them about the peasants' backs and heads.

This village in the Swietokrzyki Hills, which to the stranger as he looks down upon it from the foot of the leaning cross on the knoll appears a haunt of ancient peace, feels the weight of the occupation as sorely as any town. For here too, as well as in the towns, the Germans are in control, cutting down the forests and the people who live amid the forests with equal fury.

The very first day of my stay here I learnt of a tragedy which took place here in May of this year. One Sunday I paid a visit to the common grave of many inhabitants of the village. My guide was the pretty daughter of the *soltys* (village headman), who often went there to mourn over her brother.

We entered the forest, with the wind sighing in its branches as usual. From several directions came the strident sound of circular saws, as though answering one another. The cuckoos and woodpeckers sent out their mysterious signals. The sun shone blood red over the forest and rose above the tree-tops. A narrow path brought us to a little clearing.

'This is the place,' said the girl.

In the clearing, framed by green grass and weeds, was a square of freshly-dug earth, scattered over with field flowers. The girl knelt down and said a prayer. And told me the story, which indeed I had already heard several times.

'They came one May morning, took thirty men from the village, brought them to this clearing, and shot them. First they had made them dig a hole. Then they went away, without a word to anyone.'

Here too, as everywhere else, life under such conditions is very sad. Yet there are some episodes which, despite that general sadness, still call forth a smile. And it is these which are most frequently recalled by the villagers.

A year ago two Germans were engaged here attending to the circular saws and looking after the woodcutters. One day one of them was seen walking out with a village girl, called Zocha (Sophia). This was enough to make the women of the village decide on frightful vengeance. They consulted together, and one fine Sunday when Zocha was returning from church in a beautiful new apron they fell upon her unawares and first emptied a pail of slops over her head, and then splashed some thick black paint in her face, very difficult to wash off. Finally all the women together set upon her with sticks and gave her a good lesson in morality. The next day at dawn Zocha went to domestic service at Kielce. She could not endure to stay in the village and be a laughing-stock for everyone. Such was the punishment for going out with a German.

Quite a different story was that told in the village of Franciszek Wojcik, a fellow as strong as a bull, and a head taller than the rest.

The Germans announced the coming enrolment of volunteers for farm work in Germany. The 'voluntariness' of the proceeding was well known throughout Poland. It meant the arrival of police cars in the villages and the flight of all the young men to the woods or the cornfields, where they lay concealed for weeks. But Franciszek Wojcik went really of his own free will to the commission at Kielce.

He took his place in a long line of peasants brought there by force, and waited. He looked at the large coloured posters displayed on the walls : 'Poles working in the Reich', 'cheerful faces of our Jasieks and Jagusias' (our Jacks and Jills), 'harvesting', 'going to church', 'reading the papers and listening to the wireless in the reading-room', 'writing letters home'—idyllic life !

'Scoundrels, cheats!' Franek thought to himself. 'How they deceive! I never yet heard of a letter coming from anyone in Germany.'

When he told the official that he had come from the village to offer himself for voluntary work, the latter's eyes stood out of his head with amazement.

'Only I want to work for a well-to-do peasant in East Prussia,' he said, aware that he had the right, as a volunteer, to express his wishes.

But no one at the *Arbeitsamt* guessed what was really in his mind. No one had an inkling of the wonderful plan which had ripened in that great head under that mass of flaxen hair. He would never leave East Prussia again, but immediately on the end of the war he would come into possession of the whole of the *Bauer's* land on which he worked!

Like everyone else in the village, Franek firmly believed that the Germans would lose the war. And then he would secure his own *Lebensraum*.

Another who did not believe in the victory of the Germans was Jozef Tracz, a farmer from the next village, now in prison.

Tracz and his wife went to Kielce to fetch a plough which he had paid for a year before, and which he was to get that day at the Farmers' Syndicate. As he was passing along Sienkiewicz Street, now renamed *Bahnhofstrasse* (Railway Street), at Kielce, he saw in a new shop labelled *Buchhandlung* (Bookseller) some large portraits of Adolf Hitler. A number of people were gathered to look at them. Tracz also joined the crowd, and looked at the portraits. He turned his head and spat. At last he said:

'A criminal and a bandit like that! And he looks like an angel.'

He said this to his own countrymen, for they were all civilians, without a German among them. All the same, one of the civilians caught Jozef Tracz by the collar. Uniformed policeman rushed up, and began to beat him and knock him about until the blood flowed. His wife begged and implored them to desist, but it was no good.

'Let him go,' she told them, 'he is a perfect fool. If only he sees a stupid picture like that, he stares at it as if it were a treasure. So stupid he is.'

But the Germans did not understand her Polish.

'He didn't know what it was,' she went on to explain, weeping, to the peasants who were standing round. 'Who ever would have cared to push his way up, to see a picture of Hitler?'

There is one more event I want to tell you about which happened in 'my' village . But I must preface the story with a few words about our national solidarity. In the country, among the peasantry, this solidarity is indeed impressive. Whoever tries to break it brings down upon himself the terrible indignation of all. One example of this was the perhaps comical case of Zocha, who was forced to leave the village. But in the same village there was another, far more serious occurrence, showing the reaction of the Polish peasant to dishonourable behaviour by individuals. Luckily such individuals are few.

It was like this :

When Jozef Wojcik, corporal of reserve, returned home from the army in October, 1939, he kept his rifle and a few hand-grenades in the barn. It was the normal inclination of all Poles to collect and keep some arms, which would likely enough be needed later. One day in February the gendarmes came, searched the barn, found the rifle and grenades, and took both them and Jozef Wojcik away. It was not hard to find who had denounced him. Everyone in the village knew at once whose work it must have been. Andrzej Wojcik, a distant relation of Jozef, had known of his action, and had uttered threats against him. On the preceding Sunday someone had overheard a conversation in the church-yard between Andrzej and the *vogt*, who did services to the Germans. Andrzej had spoken of Jozef and the concealment of arms. He even told the *vogt* it was his duty to give information, as otherwise the whole village would suffer for it. The Germans shot Jozef Wojcik in the forest near the village. He was buried in the village graveyard, on the hill. Andrzej went with the rest to the funeral. But everyone looked at him askance, the women called him evil names, and one of the peasants even wanted to strike him.

Two nights later the whole village was roused to find Andrzej Wojcik's house and farm-building in flames. They were

burnt to the ground, and no one helped him to save anything.

From the window of my room I can see every day the blackened remains of Andrzej Wojcik's homestead. The fire which consumed it was an offering by the village to the memory of Jozef. The ashes that remain are a constant reminder that when shame upon the village has to be wiped out, the peasantry will not pick and choose their methods or hesitate for fear of the consequences.

This letter has no luck. I am continuing it now after a week's interruption, from a fresh 'halting-place'. I have had to move. I was brought to a decision by the receipt of fresh news from Warsaw. And anyway it is not good to remain too long in one place.

Before I moved I had a visit from Antek Tatarkiewicz. The mere fact of his coming gave me great pleasure, and besides he brought satisfactory news, though he confirmed the fact of the shooting of Piotrus, of which the latter's family had been informed by the *Gestapo*. That meant of course that either the *Gestapo* already knew, or else Piotrus admitted, his real name. It appeared also that beside Piotrus another member of our group had been taken; a medical student, of whose fate, however, there was as yet no indication. I personally am convinced that he shared that of Piotrus. But the good thing is that the *Gestapo* failed to get on the track of our printing-shop, or to discover where we kept our wireless set. This would seem to show that the information against us was laid by someone who did not know much.

It is also obvious that these arrests had nothing to do with the duplication of the German letters on which Piotrus was engaged that night. Neither I nor the medical student nor Mikula had anything to do with that. It is not impossible that Piotrus's swift execution was the consequence of his refusal to make any statement, which would have been very like him. But, whether that was so or not, the discovery of fresh printed material in his hands was quite enough to convict him.

Two blows fell on me simultaneously. Beside the tragic end of Piotrus, Gorecki's admissions at Cracow now began

to be very dangerous to me. Antek brought with him copies of two Polish papers published by the Germans, at Warsaw and Cracow respectively, which contained notices that I was 'wanted' (under my real name) by the German police.

'Don't you think that's funny?' I asked Antek. 'They're looking for a man who is dead.'

And I told him how, in the early days of the occupation, when the Germans were beginning to get rid of those journalists who had had a bad mark against their names in the card-index of the German Embassy's Press Section, I had decided to cast off my name for the duration of the war. I had prepared the requisite documents, showing that I had been killed during the siege of Warsaw, and had gone with them to the registration office at Warsaw and to the office for registration of births, marriages and deaths at the parish church, where I represented myself as a relative of the deceased. So I had calmly looked on while my name was crossed out in the registers and card-index, with the note 'deceased' in the margin. I had returned home with the certificate of my death in my pocket, duly sealed and stamped. I could have no doubt at all that I was dead.

'That will be a serious diversion for them,' said Tatarkiewicz. 'No doubt when they follow up your address they will come upon the evidence of your death. Then they will be faced with the problem of whether Gorecki's statement were not false.'

'But they may also guess that the statement of my death is false,' I remarked.

'Of course they may. But it is not likely. Such a guess would be beyond the intellectual powers of most of the *Gestapo* men.'

However, Antek had come not merely to see me. He had come to warn me of impending danger.

'You must be prepared for a long stay outside Warsaw,' he told me. 'You must fix yourself up in some place where it is certain that you are unknown. You cannot dream of returning to work for several months at least.'

I was in entire agreement with this, but at the same time I disliked the prospect of life in concealment. I knew anyway

that no shelter, even the most carefully devised, could guarantee my safety.

I told him I did not know whether I could bring myself to look for a hide-out when I knew that I should have to tremble in it in constant fear for my life.

'Well, what other solution have you to suggest?' he asked me.

'I think the best thing would be to return to Warsaw in a few days. That is the only place where one can still conceal oneself successfully. Can you imagine me staying for months in some small town, where there is only one street, one market-place, one priest and one chemist, and where everyone knows everyone else? A village would be still less feasible. Suppose the Germans 'visited' it. What should I answer to the questions where I came from and what I was doing? And as for my personal safety, it would be in as great danger if I returned after some months or even a year as it would if I came back now, after a week. Even if my scent had dried up, it would become fresh again the moment I fell into the hands of the Germans. They don't burn the *Gestapo* records.'

In the end I decided to choose between two alternatives: either to return to Warsaw and continue work as though nothing had happened, or to escape from Poland altogether.

'The second alternative seems to me to be foredoomed to failure,' declared Tatarkiewicz. 'Escape from Poland at the present time is extremely difficult. The frontiers are guarded as they never were before.'

Despite his doubts, however, Antek promised to obtain relevant information for me. After spending the night with me he left for Warsaw, and the same day I transferred myself to another village, where my Kielce friends had some acquaintances.

This village—its name is not to our purpose—lies in the most beautiful Swietokrzyski district, on a wooded height. From it one has a good view of Lysa Gora and the white convent building of St. Catharine's at the entrance to the Puszcza Jodlowa. My new hosts received me with cordial hospitality. They wanted to hear about Warsaw and about Lwow, and they told me their own troubles, which were the same as those of the village under the leaning cross. The very first evening I won their confidence,

and they told me something one tells only to a greatly trusted friend, or—better—tells to no one at all:

'We have a wireless set. Later on we will listen in to London.'

This wireless, very well concealed, was an unexpected, splendid supplement to the picture of a Polish village which impressed itself on my memory.

It is very difficult to find a really good hide-out nowadays in Poland. Sometimes when I thought about it, I came to the conclusion that in the whole area of 389 thousand square kilometres there was no spot where a single individual might conceal himself safely.

I recall a very funny story once told me in the street beside my book-barrow by Mr. Dolski, whose interests were not confined to world politics.

One day he put to me the indiscreet question:

'Do you conceal yourself at night, Mr. Karpinski?'

I relieved his mind, telling him that I did not hide; that I slept quietly in my bed and was afraid of nothing. Mr. Dolski tapped me on the shoulder and said, clearly enunciating each syllable:

'That is the best. That is the best, Mr. Karpinski. I used to be continually looking about for some hole in which I might conceal myself in case of a search, for the devil is unsleeping and one never knows when they may not fall upon one. But now, since I learnt of a particular case, I've given it up. I sleep in my bed, and may God's will be done!'

'Whatever happened, Mr. Dolski?' I asked him.

'Well, now listen, Mr. Karpinski.'

He looked round to make sure that no one could overhear us, and then he rested his foot in its often-patched boot on the wheel of my barrow, as he usually did when talking to me, and thus began:

'You did not know him, but that does not matter. A young fellow, Mr. Karpinski, thirty odd years old, came from a sound family in the civil service, I knew him from a child. Strozewski he was called, but you do not know him, so no matter. I knew his father well also. He was called Strozewski too, an honest

fellow he was, head of the railway administration office at Praga before the last war; died, poor fellow, some time ago. Well, his son, of whom I am speaking, engineer Strozewski, lived with his wife, Ludwika (Louise), in Skolimowska Street, in a two-storey house. I tell you, Mr. Karpinski, she was a smart woman, that Mme. Ludwika.'

Thus Mr. Dolski began his long story about the unfortunate hide-out chosen by Mr. Strozewski. While telling it he made sweeping gestures, whispered some words in my ear, though there was no one within a dozen yards of us, and spoke so 'juicily' that I had to wipe my face frequently.

'Mme Ludwika,' Mr.Dolski related, 'found such a wonderful hide-out in the house that whenever the bell rang, night or morning, Mr. Strozewski vanished like camphor. Though he was always at home. Several times the Germans came for him, but they always went away disappointed. "My husband is not at home," said Mme Ludwika, and that was that. But, you see, there came that fatal Friday. I always say, Mr. Karpinski, that Friday brings ill luck to every one. It was about nine in the evening. Two Germans arrived. Rang the bell. Mr. Strozewski popped into his hole. "Where," they asked, "is the owner of the house?" "Not at home," said Mme Ludwika. 'And then those scoundrels'—he whispered the word 'scoundrels'—'do you know what they did? They said to Mme Ludwika: "Out of the house with you! You can take only a small valise with a few little things. The house has been requisitioned for a German family." What do you say to that, Mr. Karpinski? As soon as they'd driven Mme Ludwika out, in came three soldiers with heavy valises, and behind them a German woman, I tell you, Mr. Karpinski, as tall and thick as an advertisement pillar, and behind her two disgusting children. Fine times we have been through in Warsaw! That toad had scarcely reached the vestibule before she grumbled: "Brrr, how cold it is!" Just wait, you monkey, we'll warm you. I don't know what happened after that, but anyway, night fell, and it was two o'clock, the neighbours in Skolimowska Street say. The German woman and the rascals were asleep. Suddenly one bastard and the other began to complain that it was cold. So the old woman

got out of bed, collected a few pieces of wood from the kitchen, and came to the stove to light a fire. She opened the little iron door, and lo and behold, the stove cried out in a frightful, lamentable voice: "Lud-wi-ka !" For, you understand, Mr. Strozewski's hide-out was in the stove. The poor fellow didn't know what to say, so he called out as usual for his wife, although he must have heard quite well all that had gone on. Just imagine what must have happened at that moment !' Mr. Dolski took his head between his hands. 'What must have happened ! The old woman made a frightful row, waking everyone in the building and in the whole of Skolimowska Street. When the police came, so the porter told me, she was lying senseless on the floor, then she came round and caught sight of the stove, and the next moment she had fainted again. Meanwhile the Germans arrived, with rifles and revolvers and hand-grenades and anything you like. . .'

'But why did the idiot not escape ?' I asked Mr. Dolski before he had time to mention any other weapons. 'He had time enough before the police came.'

'What ridiculous things you do say, Mr. Karpinski! How could he escape when the stove was shut and latched from outside ? It was on hinges. It stood by the wall like a tile box. On the one side it had hinges, and on the other latches. Mme Ludwika always latched it when Mr. Strozewski was inside. Well, the Germans caught him finely, but they never guessed that the stove was hinged and latched, so they pulled it to pieces until they saw the poor, unfortunate Mr. Strozewski in the middle. I tell you, Mr. Karpinski, they beat him black and blue, and most of all that German rat of a woman. And then they took the wretch to prison.'

'It's a good thing you've told me this, Mr. Dolski,' I answered. 'For I've sometimes thought myself of hiding in a stove.'

'Oh, no ! God forbid, Mr. Karpinski !' At this point Mr. Dolski again took his head between his hands. 'A stove is the very worst hide-out, and now it's com-pro-mised. Never hide yourself in a stove. That's what Dolski says. Don't forget it'.

It does really seem as if a stove were not the best of hiding-places.

PART II

Tenth Letter

CITIZENSHIP OF HOPELAND

Warsaw,
December, 1941.

My dear friend,

I used to remind those who sometimes, in face of difficulty, stood still and wrung their hands helplessly, of the words of Napoleon, that 'the art of overcoming obstacles consists in not regarding this or that as an obstacle.' At any rate, before accepting an obstacle as invincible, the attempt should be made to force it. I applied this prescription to my own case, when I had to make the final decision as to what to do.

I returned to Warsaw with the firm intention of not pretending to be absent or dead, of not concealing myself, and of not leaving the country. I returned with a clear plan of further work, believing that in the last resort I should feel safest at Warsaw. Recent events, therefore, and the clouds which were gathering over my head, ceased in my mind to appear impenetrable obstacles.

But a week in Warsaw turned out to be enough. The atmosphere round me began to be intolerable, and life so disgusting that even Napoleon's proud instructions which I had wanted to take as my guiding principle rapidly lost their sharpness of outline. The atmosphere of which I speak was created by a series of petty and individually unimportant 'obstacles', and by the anxious and often alarmed expression I was continually meeting in the eyes of my acquaintances, friends, and relations. An expression which seemed to say: 'We feel affection for you, we will give you the help you want, but keep away from us, for death is in your train.'

I began to feel like a man who ought not be to alive; like a ghost, or an incubus oppressing my friends. I saw that

my presence was a constant source of alarm to them. And finally I came to the conclusion that it was not only my own life which was in question, but that of each of them. People are human, after all.

So I decided to throw aside the method of shutting my eyes to danger and think of leaving Warsaw. It was clear that a man who was compromised and wanted by the police could not live in the same place where he was compromised and where the police were looking for him. That is one of the unwritten laws governing illegal activity. And perhaps such a law is a blessing to the hunted man. For it forbids him to take unnecessary risks or to expose his life foolishly.

The first plan that came to mind was simple and immediately executable. To make my way through Zakopane and Slovakia to Hungary—and beyond. I began to make preparations. I went to Zakopane.

How long it was since I had seen Zakopane ! And how the place had changed ! On the station, among a great number of German posters, there was one representing a skier, with the caption, in German of course : 'When you come here remember that you are in the new German winter-sports capital. Feel yourself not as guest, but as host. Do not forget that you are the victor.' Over the shops are German signs, at the crossings are German plates with the street-names, including of course an *Adolf-Hitler-Strasse*. Almost everyone you meet is German. There are many German disabled men. Trzaska, Karpowicz, Morskie Oko : all German and all *nur fuer Deutsche*. Only the Zakopane cabs and the Zakopane peasant-farmers remain as they were. And the cold, lofty cliffs of the Tatra, with the cross on Mount Giewont.

I ascertained that the idea of getting over to the Slovak side was practicable.

'There are ninety-nine chances of your being caught to one of your getting through,' a potential guide told me.

That meant that the undertaking was not hopeless, and that one might discuss it. But instead of going to Slovakia, I came back to Warsaw. For, while I was talking with the guide at

Zakopane, I had a sudden flash of inspiration, suggesting a far more sensible idea than that of trying to escape through the Tatra. Quite apart from the one-per-cent chance of success, I was disillusioned by the cold calculation that in the Tatra I might fall into German hands; and if I got into Slovakia, I still might fall into German hands; and if I did not, but succeeded in making my way into Hungary, even there I still might fall into German hands.

So I returned to Warsaw, and in the train thought out a fresh plan.

In a small and gloomy tea-shop near the Nowy Brodno cemetery, frequented by frozen cabmen and carters, I met Antek Tatarkiewicz and the man who had taken Palus's place in our group, and who now called himself Ludwik Broncel. We were all of us wearing the same sort of clothes as the other tea-drinkers, so there was nothing to distinguish us from them. I put forward my notion of getting out of Poland by legal methods, and of immediately crossing the Ocean.

'The first thing is to prepare the necessary identity and travel documents,' I said, 'proving indisputably that I was born in one of the South American countries, and that I have a right to citizenship in that country. Then we will send them to the consulate of the country in question at Berlin, and we shall see. If we don't succeed with the first country, we shall try another, and if we fail there, we'll try a third.'

'Quite impracticable', declared Broncel.

'I too think that it will be very difficult,' said Tatarkiewicz.

But he added immediately that he believed in my luck, and therefore the plan might succeed. Broncel turned up his nose obstinately.

'I don't believe it; I don't believe it at all.'

This conversation took place a few weeks ago. Now, on New Year's Eve while writing this letter to you, I am smiling at a small coloured symbol stuck in the lapel of my coat: I am already a citizen of a South-American state.

The story of how this came about sounds unreal and fantastic.

The first thing was to decide which country was to be my fatherland. I went on the assumption that this should be done by drawing lots. We took three cards : an ace for Brazil, a king for the Argentine, and a queen for Uruguay. All three neutral, and all therefore 'acceptable'. Antek shuffled the cards and spread them face downwards on the table. I turned up one of them, and everything then proceeded according to plan.

I won't tell you which card I turned up. That must remain a secret for the time being. For convenience we shall call the country symbolically 'Hopeland'. It's a country where there are a large number of Poles, where the sun shines as of old before the war, and where men are free.

The principal thing required was a Hopeland birth certificate. The first difficulty was to obtain an original one which we could copy. Broncel suggested a splendid idea :

'If there is even a single person in Warsaw in possession of a Hopeland birth certificate,' he declared, 'I'll get hold of it before a week has passed.'

So he made himself responsible for doing so.

One day in the German-controlled *Nowy Kurier Warszawski* there appeared a small and insignificant advertisement : 'Notice to Poles born in Hopeland. Everyone born in Hopeland should in his own interests communicate at once with the Polish-Hopeland Trading Company.' Address and office-hours were appended. Broncel did not overlook a single detail in the arrangements. He made an arrangement with a friend of his who had an office of some kind, and before the latter really knew what was happening, the sign of the improvised Trading Company was already over his door. The point was to have somewhere to interview applicants.

Before the week had passed, the first and main difficulty had been overcome. A birth certificate was obtained by ruse, and a photographic copy made. Special care was taken in photographing the revenue stamps and the impression of the official seal. The owner received his birth certificate back again, and the sign of the 'Polish-Hopeland Trading Company' vanished from the door. After a few more days, a blank form and fresh

Hopeland revenue stamps, still smelling of printer's ink, lay on my table before me. I put a large sheet of paper with the handsome state arms of Hopeland into my typewriter, and filled in all the necessary information about my birth.

So again I took a fresh name. This time we determined that it should be 'Svatopelko Venceslao Molenda'. I have plenty of experience in changing my name. I know that one must follow the principle of having a different birthday and different parents' names each time. Another thing of importance is that the date of birth should be easy to remember. So it is as well to choose New Year's Eve, or New Year's Day, or the First of April, or one's actual name-day or wedding-day. On this new birth certificate I entered the date of my birth as December 24. I stuck on the revenue stamps in the proper place, and wrote across them with appropriate flourishes the signature : Lourival Juliano Torres, 'Official de Registro Civil'. Then I stamped it with the official seal, and—according to my old custom—folded it several times and stuck it in my boot, under my sock, to acquire a good 'patina'.

It is easy to stamp a document if one has a seal, but in this case it was exceptionally difficult to get the seal itself made. Our 'court' die-sinker had gone away from Warsaw for some weeks, just when we needed several small seals in a hurry. So we were faced with the question of what to do. Nevertheless, two days later all the dies were ready. Antek had ordered them in a perfectly normal way from the large engraving establishment in Marszalkowska Street. Curious stamps they looked ! One, for example, read : 'Tea Merchant LOURIVAL JULIANO TORRES, Wholesalers, Warsaw'. Another, with the state arms of the Hopeland Republic, read : 'Trade mark. . .' Of course everything that smelt of tea was afterwards removed by us, leaving only as much as was necessary to our purpose.

The production of the other ducuments was easy enough. A certificate to the effect that 'Svatopelko Venceslao Molenda' had left Hopeland at the age of five, was not a Polish national, and had not served in the Polish Army, was soon prepared for me by Antek Tatarkiewicz. Next I registered myself as a resident in a quarter of the city where I had never lived before,

under the name of Molenda, and sent a preliminary letter to the Consulate of the Hopeland Republic in Berlin. It was not difficult to find the address of the Consulate ; one had only to look in the Berlin Telephone Directory, which was to be found at any post-office.

For a week I waited patiently for an answer. Meanwhile Broncel brought me to the verge of anger with his constant croaking ; his declarations that we should have, after all, to revert to our original plan of escaping to Slovakia. He tried to convince me that, as I did not know the Hopelandish language, I could not possibly be acknowledged as a citizen of the country.

'What will you say when they ask the addresses of your relations in Hopeland ? What answer will you give when they want to know why you never applied for citizenship and a passport before ? What will you say when they ask why you never learnt Hopelandish ?'

It was fortunate that it was I who was applying for the passport, and not Broncel, who would have been unable to answer such simple questions. It seemed easy to me.

A letter arrived from Berlin.

The Honourable Consul of the Republic of Hopeland—God give him health and promotion to Ambassador !—Senor Navarro da Correta, informed me that my right to citizenship in Hopeland was indisputable, and merely asked me to state when, by what steamship, and on what passport, I had travelled to Poland.

This problem led Broncel to devote himself heart and soul to finding a solution. He began at once to go about Warsaw in search of data concerning the date and ship on which I had come. At length he obtained access to the records of a no-longer-existent shipping line, and brought me the required information, of which he was as proud as a hunter who has brought down a bear : on November 21, 1920, the passenger steamer *Bage* from Hopeland arrived at Hamburg. What more did one want ? I sent a long telegram to Senor Navarro da Correta as follows : 'Arrived with father on his passport, when five years old. Travelled by SS *Bage* from Hopeland. Unfortunately have not father's passport. Father died and pass-

port was mislaid. But have certificate from Wilno police dated 1929, stating that my father, a Hopeland citizen of Polish origin, arrived at that city with me and was registered as resident. Will send this document to Berlin today.'

The preparation of the above-said certificate was undertaken by Broncel. We sent the Consulate an 'original' in Polish and a translation into German.

Three days later I received a second letter from Berlin. It was not as satisfactory as the one before. My Consul informed me in a single sentence that my application had been referred to the central authorities in the capital of Hopeland, and that I should hear the result in due course. This caused me some anxiety. So it was with the greater pleasure that I received the next letter, after two or three weeks. Senor Navarro da Correta called me to Berlin, 'to complete the passport formalities and to discuss the question of my return to my native Hopeland.'

So now the matter is quite simple and straightforward. If I do not fall into the hands of the Germans in the course of the next few weeks, I shall not do so at all. I have began to feel in my heart and on my temples the warm breath of the Hopeland air. The last letter brought the perfume of liberty. I am firmly convinced that I am playing my hand well, and that I shall win. So I went on confidently.

It makes me smile to recall that first meeting with the German authorities at Warsaw, when I applied for permission to travel to Berlin. That first meeting with the 'splendid and elastic' German administration, in which it was supposedly difficult to trace even a shadow of that bureaucracy which characterized the pre-war Polish administration.

A week after I lodged my application with the German municipal administration the whole business was attended to. And what attention ! Despite the many faults of the Germans, every administration in the world ought to take example from them. No, one cannot deny the Germans the possession of great organizing talent.

In my application I stated that I was a national of Hopeland, that I had been summoned by its Consul, and that I desired permission accordingly to go to Berlin. Three days later an

official from the Town Hall called at my flat, with a cardboard portfolio, beautifully inscribed with my name, Molenda.

'I've come on the instructions of the municipal authorities,' he said, introducing himself. 'You have made an application, haven't you ? Before it can be dealt with, a slight formality is necessary.'

At this point he spread out his papers on my table, took out his fountain-pen, and said :

'Yes, yes, aha ! You are a foreigner. Hm, aha ! We require a little further information : How many cubic metres of space are there in your flat ? Yes, hm, that is all.'

'You need to know that before you can give me permission to go to Berlin ?' I was surprised. 'Well, if you need the information, you can take the measure.'

The official from the German municipal administration took out of his pocket a measuring-tape, measured the walls, wrote down the results, and replaced the papers in his portfolio.

'I will do my best to push the matter forward quickly,' he promised.

And departed.

I think it was three days after that, that I received a letter from the authorities to the following effect : 'In reply to your application of the ...th instant, the German municipal administration informs you that you have not been granted the allowance of petrol for your motor-cycle.'

Hm ! I had asked permission to go to Berlin, and they had measured the interior cubic capacity of my flat and had told me I should get no petrol. All this had been dealt with quickly and 'elastically'. But an answer to this last letter was required. So I sat down and wrote. The authorities might as well have something to do. So I wrote : 'In answer to your enquiry of ....., under reference (here I gave the reference of the letter about petrol), I beg to inform you that I paid the fee for my Dog Licence to the account of the Tram and Bus Department and duly received the acknowledgement from the Municipal Bakery.'

It turned out that the competent authority for the issue of permission to go to Berlin was the Office of the Governor,

which I had not known before. I had wasted a whole week. But at last I went to the right office.

I dressed in my best clothes (for the Germans respect those who are well-dressed and look down upon them), pinned to my coat a small Hopeland flag, the largest I could find, and made my way to the *Pass-stelle* in the Bruehl Palace.

In this building, the former seat of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in room No. 3 on the ground floor, I found, under a huge portrait of the Fuehrer, the small, lean German who dealt with applications by foreigners. He was undoubtedly the politest official in the whole building.

'Why do you want to go to Berlin?' he asked, and immediately began to try and convince me that I was unwise. 'Now, in time of war, it is even dangerous. It would be better for you to do your business by post, or by telephone.'

'No, I have to go personally,' I insisted. 'I have been summoned to Berlin, and besides, I am a foreigner, a citizen of a neutral State, and you have no right to put difficulties in the way of my going.'

The official cleared his throat, thought for a moment, and then left me for a short time alone. He returned with the consoling answer:

'Very well, we shall give you permission to travel. But only in nine months' time.'

'What on earth do you mean?' I cried. 'In nine months' time you may . . .'

I wanted to say, 'no longer be here', but I bit my tongue. My foreign citizenship gave me great privileges, but these had their limits.

'I am very sorry', the official concluded, 'but you cannot go to Berlin any sooner.'

That is how foreigners, citizens of neutral States, are treated at that office. Yet it was decidedly favourable treatment in comparison to that meted out to Poles who might desire to go to 'Germany', the frontiers of which now lay only a few miles from Warsaw. The queues of people waiting for attention every day are so long that they have to be controlled by the police. Only *Reichsdeutsche* and foreigners are admitted without

waiting for their turn. Poles and *Volksdeutsche* have to wait sometimes for days before they stand before the rude official in SS uniform and make their applications on forms to which are affixed revenue stamps with a large head of the Fuhrer. Applications for permission to go to Plock, to Poznan, to Lodz, to a village near Jablonna—in short, to any area 'incorporated' with Germany. The answer to such an application is only received, as a rule, after the lapse of months, and as a rule is in the same terms for everyone : 'Reasons insufficient ; permission to travel to the Reich refused.'

So I am not to go to Berlin for nine months ?

I should be ashamed of myself if I allowed the success of my scheme for going to Hopeland to be wrecked on such a small obstacle as this.

Though I am anxious to leave Poland, I must say that I am glad I have stayed long enough in Warsaw to see clear traces in the behaviour of the average German of the gangrene which is infecting the administration of occupied territory : the break-down of morale among the Germans in every rank of the administrative hierarchy ; the collapse of their faith in a German victory—a faith which till recently was evident enough in every German face. How strange, how paradoxical, are these symptoms after such a series of military victories ! Slight reverses, checking the march of the German columns to the East—and the atmosphere begins to recall that of 1918.

One may take it as certain that this is not due to any shortage of munitions or equipment. Poland today is a land flowing with milk and honey for the Germans. They are short of nothing here. They have everything, and particularly foodstuffs, in plenty. They even have too much. Various officials, *Gestapo* men, SA men and other such 'Suabian' riff-raff are sent to the *General-Gouvernement* to be fattened. The German civil population in Poland are very well off, not to speak of the army, who have at their disposal not only their barrack kitchens, but all the restaurants reserved for Germans, and the well-appointed *Wehrmacht* canteens. The German soldier in Poland has—at

the expense of much misery to the Poles—plenty to eat; he is well-clothed, and has cinemas, theatres, cafes, cakes and girls to choose from. He is a long way from the front, and enjoys a rest; one would think he ought to be satisfied. But the Polish community is nowadays of a different opinion, observing as they do the uncanny and unintelligible symptoms of dissolution in the German army.

As an illustration, though a petty one: near the Main Railway Station at Warsaw German soldiers are selling military blankets, underclothing, boots, greatcoats, petrol, rubber tyres, bread, meat, and preserves. For 50 zlotys one can buy a revolver, for 100 a bicycle, for 300 a motor-cycle, for 150-200 a horse. I have been told that a band of soldiers sold a five-ton lorry, which was then sent officially to the *Kraftfahrpark*, where it was painted over in the workshops, before being delivered to the purchaser. Not long ago I witnessed the following scene myself: a military lorry was loaded with bread, and two soldiers were hastily serving it out to the public, one handing out loaves and the other taking two zlotys each for them. A third stood on the watch, looking nervously round in all directions. Very soon the lorry was empty, and drove off.

The *Gestapo* and the gendarmerie arrange frequent hunts for such offenders. They are said to have shot many soldiers, and Poles who were buying from them. But this remarkable commerce still goes on, and the square in front of the station and its neighbourhood are already well-known in Warsaw as the 'soldiers' black market'. Many of the Warsaw restaurants get meat, baked bread and cakes, and fats—all in large quantities—every day from German military personnel, who bring the stolen goods in cars, or carry them in sacks. The German soldiers are open to be bribed. (This was not the case in the first year of the occupation). In fact nowadays graft is a common phenomenon among the Germans.

The chief bribe-takers are the SS-men, and above all the police: For a suitable fee they will let a prisoner escape from prison, or exempt anyone from compulsory labour. Very frequently, too, Germans will visit the families of persons arrested by chance, and propose their liberation in return for

a sum of money which may be paid, if so desired, in jewels, watches, or gold.

None of these cases cited is exceptional. They are constantly on the increase. In a sense these may be called 'outside activities' of the German soldier. The Poles are very well aware that the German soldiers in their country are on a road which bodes no good to the Army as a whole.

Apart from this increasing demoralization, there is evidence of a breakdown in other directions also: revolts of units and suicides of officers point to this, although the authorities do their best to gloss them over. We know that several concentration camps have been established for mutineers; that there have been mass executions of such men; that at Skierniewice there is a camp containing two thousand soldiers who refused to go to the eastern front; and we know of cases where officers have deserted or committed suicide. And we have seen soldiers conducted through the streets under guard, often in companies of fifty or sixty at a time.

These occurrences are not, of course, enough to shake the German army and bring about a catastrophe at once. Notwithstanding these manifestations among the troops of occupation in Poland, the army in general will be capable of fighting for years yet. None the less, the existence and the increase of these phenomena are indications of diminishing fighting-spirit and morale.

The spirit of the German soldier may be expected to fall lower the longer the war goes on and the longer his return home is deferred, while the piles of corpses at the front rise higher, and more German cities are bombed.

When one observes the changes which have come to pass in the state of mind of the average German in the course of two years of occupation, one is the more struck by the unshakable attitude of the Poles. Every Pole is nowadays as strong in mind and spirit as he was at the beginning of the occupation. And his belief in the victory of the Allies and the resurgence of his Country is unshaken. Likewise he continues to believe that victory is very near. This faith is evident at every step, and most of all in petty, everyday affairs.

For example, a lady whom I did not know at all invited me one day to look over her library and choose any books out of it which I thought I could sell. It was a large and varied collection. I buried myself in it, and picked out a few books. Then the lady looked through the books I had laid out, and said:

'You may take all of them, but I will not sell any poetry as yet. My son is a poet, and I will not hurt his feelings so. At present he is in Japan, but the war may be over in a few months, and he may return.'

No less a belief in a swift end to the war was shown by another lady, the wife of an officer who is somewhere in the wide world in the ranks of the Polish Army. When, as a fresh-baked foreigner, I was looking for a lodging, someone gave me her address.

'Yes, I was intending to let one room,' she said in answer to my enquiry, 'but I have somehow thought better of it. The end of the war may come at any moment, and I will tell you, I am expecting the return of my husband before long. And it is not worth while to let the flat for a month or two.'

Not all, of course, are such optimists. Not all expect victory in the course of the next two months. But that the Germans will sue for peace in the course of the next six months or so, half Poland firmly believes. Whoever croaks about the war lasting another year yet is regarded as a pessimist; whoever speaks of two or four years more is thought to be unable to read between the lines of the German communiqués; to be in fact a dull fellow, if not actually a defeatist.

The best proof of the excellent morale of the Poles is afforded by the number of secret newspapers which now reach almost every household in every corner of the country. The Germans are quite unable to deal with this flood of words proceeding from hiding-places beyond the ken of the *Gestapo*. It is not long since Frank repeated his determination to liquidate the secret press, and in fact the Germans have more agents engaged in combating it in Warsaw alone than there are editors and distributors of it.

Meanwhile these gazettes continue to appear, in ever-increasing numbers. There must be at least a hundred and fifty

appearing in Poland at present. Two satirical weeklies have lately become very popular, abounding in wit and caricature. In the Ghetto, papers are printed in Yiddish. The Germans take what they believe to be German 'organs', published by Poles. Today there is no power capable of liquidating the secret press. Nothing but the capitulation of the occupiers. For the Poles have shown that they are not afraid of difficulties, or repressive measures, or sacrifices, such as are demanded of them if their press is to continue its work. The Germans themselves admit that the Poles are an obstinate and stubborn nation. What bitter feelings must fill the hearts of those German agents who try to scent out the cellars and caverns where the papers are printed—not only in Polish, but in Czech as well, for circulation in the 'Protectorate'!

Speaking of the bitterness overwhelming German hearts, one should note that it is not only the secret press which is gall and wormwood in their mouths. We have recently had some occurrences which must surely have made the Germans' blood boil.

Do you remember the corner of Krakowskie Przedmiescie and Kozia Street? A restaurant was started there, *nur fuer Deutsche*, and received the idyllic name of *Zur Huette* (The Hut). It soon became famous among the Warsaw Germans for the excellence of its cooking, and soon afterwards for its cabaret, on the first floor. It was open all night, and was resorted to by the German elite, including various dignitaries, military and civil. Even Fischer, the Governor of Warsaw, second only to Frank himself.

The success of the place continued for several months, until one fine autumn day the passers-by saw scores of *Gestapo* men in very ill humour searching through room after room of the recently so merry corner-house.

For the *Gaststaette zur Huette* had been a most excellent Intelligence point. No matter for what country's Intelligence: Polish, British, Soviet, or let us say Cuban. It was standing evidence of the skill and cunning of the enemies of the German *Reich*. It had been found that the only German employed in the place was the chef. And he was the only person the *Gestapo*

found on the premises : of all the rest of the personnel, and of the beautiful dancers—not a trace ! The whole lot had packed up their traps and vanished.

There are numerous situations in which the Germans betray their native stupidity. Not long since they enabled us to gauge it when they posted up on the walls of Warsaw great lists of 'wanted' men. Forty thousand marks, or eighty thousand zlotys reward was offered for information leading to the arrest of two persons who had landed one night by parachute in the neighbourhood of Katowice. The description of these parachutists was indeed ample. The first was 'of middle height; age about 40', and the second was 'wearing a grey overcoat and a cyclist's cap'. That was all. Nothing was said as to how the first was dressed, nor as to the height or apparent age of the second. For at least a fortnight this 'description' was a subject for our jokes and witticisms, and we were grateful to the German police for letting us know that foreign aeroplanes had been over Poland and had dropped a man of middle height and another wearing a cyclist's cap.

I have spoken at some length of 'secret' and 'strictly confidential' matters and paradoxical situations ; so I will tell you something more about the young man in the Cracow-Warsaw train who, as I said in a former letter, denounced a girl to the German police for smuggling hams to Warsaw.

I feel I must revert to this story, in order to do justice to a man I had supposed to be a spy, and against whom, accordingly, I and all the other passengers felt very indignant. He impressed me by his psychological approach to the German police.

Listen ! In Warsaw there appears a secret newspaper printed on a duplicator ; and entitled *Mysl i Czyn* (Thought and Action). Not long ago Antek Tatarkiewicz brought me the latest number, along with various other secret papers. On the last page was a *feuilleton* entitled 'A non-Police Agent', and provided with a sub-title : 'A true story'. It ran as follows :

> '...Now one must loosen a few bricks, and then one goes down a wooden staircase. In a damp cavern, hollowed

out by human hands underneath the cellar, is the laboratory, where explosives and incendiary material are produced. Two young men are at work, one of them wearing a thick, dark cloak and a cyclist's cap, and thick, dark-rimmed spectacles. The other is in a tattered and stained coat and an equally old hat with broken brim, almost hiding his eyes. This latter has a longish, pale face and fallen cheeks. On the wall, on a long cord wrapped round a nail, hangs a lighted electric bulb...'

As you read this, recall the young man in the train, of whom I told you. The *feuilleton* then goes on to give a short account of the encounter of the 'spy' with the blonde girl, her hams, and the denunciation. The young man declares, the story goes on:

'I had the conviction that if I did not do something to make a diversion in the compartment, I should have to abandon my small valise. And then they would take it. It was a lucky thing I had learnt the girl's address in the course of our talk. She recognized me at once, but looked as though she were ready to throw herself upon me and tear me with her nails. She was deathly pale and looked afraid. But I managed to make my explanations, and he took the money for the hams she had lost through me. Taking leave of her, I kissed her hand and asked whether she was still angry with me. She could not answer, she was taken so aback and surprised. She had tears in her eyes, as she had in the train, the time I saw her first. Then she came up to me, looked me straight in the face, and asked in a trembling voice: "Then you are not a German agent after all?" '

'I laughed, and kissed her hand again.'

'"An excellent trick!" ' said the man in glasses.'

'Through the skilled fingers of the conspirators pass glass tubes, rubber tubes, and miniature dishes. At a distance from the table with its instruments and chemicals burns the wick of a spirit lamp.'

'"Tomorrow we will test that Cracow material," said the man in glasses. "I think it's very good. If our lads don't disappoint us, we can count on a hundred fires."'

I was heartily glad when I read this *feuilleton*. There cannot be any doubt that it refers to the events which took place in my presence. I like that bold conspirator. It's a pity he was not my friend. And he was wise to tell his strange story to someone, who in his turn was wise to have it printed in the secret paper. Otherwise I should never have learnt that the man I had taken for a spy was in point of fact an able underground Polish worker.

I wonder much whether any details ever reach you of our everyday life under the occupation. And whether you who are scattered have even an approximate conception of what life is like in Poland today. It is a life completely unlike that of normal, pre-war times, when 'joy' and 'sorrow', and even 'bread' meant something quite different to what they do now. When the schools were full of pupils; when the theatres and cinemas were packed with Polish audiences; when 'Afternoon Teas at the Microphone' were broadcast; when such streets as Nowy Swiat in Warsaw, AB at Cracow, Akademicka at Lwow, and Mickiewicza at Wilno were filled in the evenings with strolling crowds; when a Polish sentry stood before the tomb of the Unknown Soldier; and when Warsaw was bathed in the light of many-coloured neon signs. When, in fact, everything was different.

Twenty-seven months of occupation have now passed. For us this period gives sufficient perspective to look on old, past years as a beautiful dream, or the memory of a marvellous fairy tale. How petty, ridiculous, and even to a certain degree pleasant, thus recalled, are the 'great' troubles and anxieties which once made us passionately angry and roused us to revolt! With what changed feelings does one look today on the strips of an old poster issued by that most comic of pre-war institutions, the *O.Z.N.* (Party of National Unity)!

This is the third winter of the war. A worse winter than

the preceding ones, and harder to bear. A winter without coal or wood, without potatoes and without warm clothes; but with hard frosts, incessant arrests, an epidemic of typhus, and numerous German telegrams reporting the deaths of persons confined in concentration camps. This winter is being passed under very hard conditions. But somehow or other it will be passed. And when one asks anybody in the spring: 'How did you manage to get through?' the answer will be in all cases much the same: 'Somehow or other, I hardly know myself how.' For it is really hard to say how men bear several months of hunger and cold. A ton of coal costs three thousand zlotys, and the possibilities of earning money, even by trading, have recently been reduced to a minimum, while the salary of an official amounts to a hundred and fifty or two hundred zlotys a month.

This winter death has greatly aided the Germans: in Warsaw every other child is sick as the result of cold and insufficient nourishment. In the cemeteries there are fresh rows of small graves every few days: the graves of the most innocent of all the victims of the occupation. But this winter too, as last, everyone dreams of the spring and cherishes hope of the change which spring may bring.

Warsaw in the third year of the occupation looks very poor and very melancholy. The people in general are ill-clad and miserable-looking. Among the beggars in the streets one meets more and more of one's acquaintances and former colleagues. The shop windows are mostly empty. In the corners of doorways and ruined houses pedlars have arranged their stalls and sell various kinds of war-quality stuff. There are no cinemas for Poles (*Tylko swinie siedza w kinie*, only pigs go to pictures, as the saying goes, inscribed on cinema walls by unknown hands), nor are there theatres. (The one 'City of Warsaw Theatre', established by the Germans, is boycotted by the Poles). The atmosphere of Warsaw is rendered further depressing by the great number of Germans who have been imported, including, of late, very many wounded men and fourteen-to-sixteen-year-old schoolpups; these latter dressed in air-force uniforms and being trained in the numerous air schools of

the neighbourhood. Wheeled traffic is composed almost exclusively of army vehicles and rickshas. A large proportion of horse-cabs have vanished as a result of lack of fodder for the horses. One meets many poor creatures in rags, their bare skin showing through despite the frost.

In every street in Warsaw one hears the tap-tap of wooden-soled boots, and sees coats, suits and dresses made of paper. It must be admitted that the sound of the wooden soles is melodious and pleasant. Particularly when they are new and not yet penetrated by damp. Clogs are in general use, notwithstanding the hard frost. Everybody wears them: men, women and children. Only Poles, of course. This kind of footwear gives the streets of Warsaw a peculiar character of their own. The tap-tap of wooden soles resounds everywhere and every day. The show-windows of what were formerly the most elegant shoe-shops are now full of shoes of various patterns, none of them having any leather in them. But it is, after all, not surprising that shoes in Warsaw are made by joiners and turners, and not by shoemakers, for real slippers are not to be had anywhere for less than fifteen hundred zlotys. Similarly it is not surprising that the tailors' domain is now invaded by the makers of paper products; for suits which before the war cost two hundred zlotys now cost from three thousand five hundred to five thousand. Our gloomy life is full of strange paradoxes, which amuse us and to which we have become accustomed. Every day I pass Lopacki's, the coffin-makers, in Castle Place, and every day I see an exhibition there of the latest models of suits of clothes. Made of paper, and not by any means intended for the deceased. So things have become strangely intermixed, when a joiner makes shoes, men's suits are produced by Franaszek's, the carpet-makers, and an undertaker's is transformed into a display of gowns!

Outwardly, Warsaw today has not much in common with the former capital of Poland. The Germans must be very pleased, for from the very beginning of their rule they have been trying to reduce the city to the rank of an unimportant provincial town. From the very beginning they have been destroying with fire and sword the centre which radiated its thought,

spirit and character to all parts of the country. Yet they have not attained their end, for despite the murder of an enormous proportion of the Warsaw educated class, despite the pillage of all our monuments of culture and art, despite the closing of higher and middle schools, despite the breaking up of all Polish organizations and the Polish press, despite the destruction of statues and memorials, and despite the reduction of the Polish population to the most extreme misery—they have not deprived Warsaw of its character as the natural capital of Poland, nor have they quenched the fire which burns there more brightly than in any other town of Poland. And further, despite all their germanizing efforts, despite the transformation of streets, names and shop-signs, and despite the tens of thousands of Germans who have been imported into the city—they have not germanized Warsaw, nor won it for themselves as they dreamed. Every one of them is compelled to admit that Warsaw is as Polish a city as Paris is French, or London is English. The erection of a capital at Cracow is the same kind of military measure as the erection of the *General-Gouvernement* as a whole. When the war is over these ersatz institutions will be remembered only along with other melancholy memorials of the past.

When I now, in the third year of the war, think of leaving Warsaw for a considerable time, I involuntarily see before my eyes that unforgettable picture of September 7, 1939. We were leaving our editorial office, to return after a few days.

'Keep your eyes open and make notes,' said our chief. 'You must write full reports, for on Saturday we will publish a double number.' On Saturday !

I well remember those words, spoken with such conviction : 'On Saturday' ! And now so many Saturdays have gone by. Our building is half in ruins. Men have settled themselves in our offices who have not learnt even to write Polish correctly yet. Our linotypes set up communiqués from Berlin, and articles pouring contempt upon our nation. Technicians like Hergel and Lehman, who had been years in our employment, with their own hands hung up portraits of their Fuehrer, received German

decorations for sacrifice and endurance at their posts, and began their activities by drawing up lists for the *Gestapo* of the most active of our colleagues.

When, dear Mr. Director, when will our Saturday come? When shall we return to our posts? When shall we publish our double number, belated, but not through our fault? I am preparing to leave Warsaw, but I firmly believe that we shall live to see that great Saturday. That we shall most certainly resume our posts. Only I know that not all of us will be there. Some of us fell at the front in September, many have perished in places of punishment and before firing-squads. We must remember them: we must write about these colleagues of ours in our first number. We will write a worthy obituary. And we will place a tablet with their names on a wall inside our office building. The best place will be on the ground floor, under the clock, opposite the main door. And we will include there the names of Roman Radwanski and the compositor Piotrus Palus.

But when will *our* Saturday come? When shall we publish that number with our special reports?

I must stop now. My hand is getting numb with cold. Outside the window snow is falling. An atmosphere of melancholy pervades the room.

ELEVENTH LETTER

TWO TRIPS TO BERLIN

BERLIN,
February, 1942.

My dear friend,

There are certain situations in which man finds himself led by the hand by Fate, that mysterious force, which leads him safely through dangers, along unknown paths to an unknown end. I feel myself that since the ground began to burn under my feet, when I found myself on the very edge of the abyss, I have been guided by some unseen power, inspiring me with unaccountable and decisive thoughts at almost every step. I wade ever deeper into this thicket of events and consequences, I am tossed like a ball from one danger to another, I am always doing something foolish, which in the sequel turns out to have been the wisest thing I could have done. To escape from the pursuit of the Germans, I have located myself in Berlin.

So far, everything has gone as well as could be. So I believe I am on the right road. Only it is a pity that I am merely escaping from danger, and that my road leads me no further than that.

This is the second time I have been in Berlin since I wrote to you. I came here at the beginning of January, and then I returned to Warsaw, whence after five weeks I again came to Berlin. There are such a number of interesting matters, large and small, to relate that I really do not know where to begin.

The first time I came to Berlin I had scarcely any trouble at all. Broncel got hold of a sample of a German frontier pass, and soon I was in possession of an even better one than the original. In general I remarked long ago that our printing-shop is sounder in its workmanship than the German ones. I got into a first-class compartment, and arrived at the Friedrich-strasse station as a neutral foreigner. At the border between the *General-Gouvernement* and the Reich, at our Polish Olkusz, which the Germans have renamed 'Ilkenau', I presented my

documents to the officials, asked what time we were due at Berlin, and acknowledged with a slight nod their raised right hands and *Heil Hitler* ! when they left the compartment. This was only a few days after my conversation with the lean young official at the *Pass-stelle*. I recalled it with a feeling of grim humour when I drew back the curtain of my carriage window that morning and looked out on the roofs of Berlin.

During my journey I had a long talk with a certain party dignitary who got in at Breslau. He must have been a person of importance, for he had an unpleasant face and a row of decorations. We came presently to the subject of British air-raids on Germany. The opinion of the party dignitary was the same as that of the newspapers published under German control in Poland. That is to say, scarcely any bombs fell on military objectives in Germany; nearly always it was churches and hospitals which were struck. We went to sleep and had a good night's rest, and forgot our evening's talk. And then, next morning, I looked through the window and immediately, on both sides of the railway tracks outside the Warschauer Strasse station, I saw rubble and ruins, with tall factory chimneys sticking up out of them. There were, indeed, many such sights to be seen in the Greater Berlin area.

'I suppose there were churches and hospiatls all over this part,' I said to the party dignitary.

But he merely muttered something inaudible and prepared to get out.

Then I began to understand why they put such difficulties in the way of persons desiring to travel from Warsaw to the Reich. They don't put any in the way of persons going to compulsory work—who will most likely never come back.

When I found myself at the station, I could not resist the temptation to have my boots shined by a genuine *Reichsdeutscher*. It brightened my self-respect as well as my boots.

When I came from Warsaw to Berlin the first time, I had really no idea of how the Germans lived in their own country and their own capital. I was inclined to the opinion, like almost all my countrymen, that as they had plundered the whole of

Europe the Germans must have plenty of everything at home. But only an hour's stay in Berlin was sufficient to convince me that the Reich was like a sack with holes in it, which could probably never be filled, no matter how many convoys of foodstuffs were imported from the occupied countries. The only things one could purchase without cards were vegetables ; everything else was rationed. So you can imagine the trouble I had to find a cafe where I could get something for breakfast without a ration-card. Unfortunately I had to pay my first visit to the Consulate without having eaten. It was not till I got there that I was provided with an emergency card for foodstuffs.

That first visit of mine to the Consulate of the Hopeland Republic ! And my first talk with Senor Navarro da Correta, on whom everything now depended ! He was a typical South American : with black, curly hair, large eyebrows, a short, clipped moustache, and keen, coal-black eyes. Further, he was middle-aged, of medium height, with an elegant, athletic figure, and well-dressed. He spoke German fluently with a Berlin accent.

He laid the portfolio containing the papers relating to my case on his large writing-table and looked through them with me.

'I have done my best to deal with your case quickly,' he said, 'for I perfectly understand that conditions of life in Poland must now be difficult. I am constantly receiving despairing letters from Hopeland nationals resident there.'

'Yes, indeed,' I answered. 'The Germans have transformed Poland into a land of hunger and misery. But for foreigners it is still comparatively good. At least we can feel ourselves personally secure.'

The Consul put on one side the birth certificate, which I had sent him from Warsaw, and one other paper.

'Everything, really, is now in order,' he said, pointing with his finger to that paper. 'The telegram which I sent to the Hopeland State Department has been answered, to the effect that all the information given regarding yourself is correct, and I have received authority to issue you a passport.'

I hastily expressed my regret that I had not preserved my father's passport.

'You would not have had any use for it anyhow,' he consoled me.

I filled up a number of forms, signing my name twice on each, and in two places impressing the print of my right thumb and index finger. The consul took the forms and went with them into his private office. Presently he returned, accompanied by an elderly man with an enormous shock of black hair and gold-rimmed spectacles, whom he introduced to me as Vice-Consul Marqueso da Campaho.

'You must now take the oath of allegiance to the Republic of Hopeland,' Navarro da Correta informed me.

The Marqueso da Campaho had come to witness the administration of the oath by the consul general. I repeated the prescribed formula after him in German. Da Campaho stood in front of us with his hands folded on his capacious stomach. When we had finished, each of us signed his name on yet another piece of paper. Navarro de Correta then offered me a cigar—Havana of course—and left the room.

I was left alone, sunk in the depths of a comfortable armchair.

Everything throughout the affair seemed clear and natural to me, except for one thing which I could not understand: the telegram from the Hopeland State Department, saying that everything had been checked and found in order. For everything I had stated concerning my birth in Hopeland and my consequent right to citizenship there had been from beginning to end fictitious. The very name of Molenda had been a product of my imagination; my birthplace I had picked out on the map of the republic, and besides, every single document which I had proffered was a forgery. How could it have happened that no one noticed? If I had known that the papers prepared by the secret press in Warsaw were going to be sent to the capital of Hopeland for examination, I should have hesitated to send them to Berlin at all, and who knows whether I should not have given up my whole design? I can find only one explanation for the favourable answer from Hopeland, and that is the

heat of the climate over there, making the inhabitants indolent. I imagined them dealing with my application something like this: A high official of the State Department lying on a deck-chair under a large parasol under the palms. He was brought a telegram from Berlin. A certain citizen of the Republic, lost in far-away Poland, had mislaid his passport but produced other evidence of his nationality. The high official was tired and read no more. He instructed a lower official to reply to Berlin that everything was in order; let them give Molenda a passport and not worry him over here where it was so hot.

Of course that is merely a humorous idea on my part. The reality was probably quite different. But none the less, sitting there in the arm-chair, I felt exceedingly grateful, not only to the consul, but to the distant country which was at the same time so near to me. Hopeland had become my second fatherland. I was pained by the consciousness that the methods I had adopted to become one of its citizens had not been fair, but I consoled myself with the reflection that one day I should find an opportunity to explain my motives, beg pardon of those whom I had deceived, and thank the Republic. I sorely longed for that opportunity to express my thanks!

Consul Navarro da Correta returned after ten minutes, and handed me a booklet in a green leather cover.

'Please sign your name under the photograph,' he said.

Then he translated into German for me a special note endorsed on the passport in Hopelandish, to the effect that I might travel gratis on vessels flying the flag of the Republic.

'Now you had better return to Poland,' he concluded, 'and I shall make application to the German authorities for permission for you to travel. If there are no unexpected difficulties, in two months you will be eating bananas and pineapples.'

He advised me to register myself with the police in Warsaw, and gave me the address of the leader of the Hopelandish colony there, recommending me to make contact with him. He then dismissed me with a friendly smile.

From that moment I have been a foreigner, a citizen of the Hopeland Republic by right of birth. Going down the

stairs I felt light-hearted and cheerful. Now I could walk about the streets of Berlin freely, and without fear.

Accordingly I did so for two whole days. I wanted principally to find traces of the visits of the R.A.F., and was disappointed to find so few. In the actual centre of Berlin, round Unter den Linden, there is very little destruction. However, at least the Opera House has suffered the same fate as ours at Warsaw in September, 1939. In the side streets of the central part of the city, and in the outlying sections there are far more bombed houses. But I consoled myself with the thought that the war was not over yet, and that perhaps the time would come when Berlin would go through a hell comparable to that of Warsaw in September, and be left in the same state of ruin as our capital.

However, if the bombing from the air has done no very great damage here as yet, it is obvious enough that the war has left its mark here very clearly. Above all in the economic sphere. At every step one notices the shortage of consumers' goods. Cigarettes, for example, are on sale for only half an hour a day, and even then in very small quantities. There is not much for sale in the shops anywhere. There is a shortage even of writing-paper, and pencils, to say nothing of the most essential articles. If one discusses the subject with the average Berliner one meets, his answer is always conclusive :

'But we shall win the war. Until then, every sacrifice must he made for the sake of the Army and the State ; that is to say, for final victory.'

It does not matter that the windows of the automobile show rooms or of the great department stores contain only portraits of Hitler instead of their usual merchandise. The Germans tell themselves, logically enough, that automobiles are more needed round Moscow and Leningrad than in Berlin.

The German war machine has stripped Berlin of its young men. The lack of them is noticeable at every step. Numerous shops are closed and exhibit placards with the words : 'Closed on account of the owners having been called up for military service.' In many trades which formerly were regarded as

particularly men's, women now do the work. For example, barbers' shops are now served almost exclusively by women, with here and there quite elderly men.

When one observes the behaviour of the Germans in bars, restaurants and cafes, and even in shopping queues, one perceives that they calmly accept all restrictions, and understand the necessity for sacrificing comfort and pleasure for the sake of the war effort. It may be that they are really tired of the war and the victories which have so greatly lowered their standard of living, but they do not give evidence of it. On the contrary whomsoever one talks to, be it worker or educated man, is definite in his praise for the leaders of the Third Reich and in his faith in German victory.

'This war was necessary,' said a chance German acquaintance to me. 'We shall win for certain. Even if the war ends in some kind of a compromise, we shall really have won it.'

I did not quite grasp what the German had in mind, but anyway his words bore witness to the sound morale of the inhabitants of the Reich.

When I got back to Warsaw and shared my impressions of Berlin with my friends, Antek Tatarkiewicz declared that statements like this proved nothing.

'During the last war,' he said, 'the Germans held out very well for two or even three years. But morale is like a tightly-stretched violin-string, which may suddenly break at any time.'

After my return to Warsaw I began energetically to prepare for my departure to Hopeland. I was under no delusion, and was well aware that if I stayed in Warsaw it would be difficult to complete all my arrangements, despite the best will on the Consul's part. For that reason I determined to move as soon as possible to Berlin, where I could keep in touch with the Consul and the Embassy, and be at hand for personal attendance when required. There is an old Polish proverb: 'Messengers fatten no wolf,'[1] and I thought of it now.

The Consul had advised me to register my passport with the German authorities at Warsaw. So I betook myself one

[1] If you want a thing done well, you must do it yourself.

day to the office of the *Gestapo* in Aleje Szucha, to give in my name as a citizen of the Hopeland Republic. I passed some tall fellows in SS uniform, with steel helmets on their heads, who were on guard at the entrance to what had been the Polish Ministry of Education. Another one gave me a pass, and soon I was sitting in the presence of an elderly *Gestapo* officer, with a sharp sparrow-like mien and a monocle in his eye.

He looked at my passport very closely, and studied it through his monocle, and then with the naked eye. At length he asked:

'Where did you get this passport?'

'From the Consulate,' I replied.

'And you are only registering it with us now, after more than two years of war?'

'I could not register it before, for I didn't have it. I only got it a few days ago'.

'And why did you not register as a foreigner?'

'I was waiting for my passport, and the formalities took all this time.'

'How did you get this passport from Berlin?'

'The Consul sent it to me. That was the only way I could get it, since the German authorities refuse permission to foreigners, even when they are citizens of a neutral country, to visit their own Consul.'

This last remark, uttered in a rather loud and slightly ironical tone, had its effect. The officer adjusted his monocle, forced a smile, and then said in a much politer tone:

'I must apologize for having spoken as I did, but I was surprised that you had not registered for so long. However that is nothing. All is now in order.'

He took out of a drawer an oblong stamp with the word *Angemeldet* (Registered), and a round one with the 'cock' on it. These he impressed on my passport, wrote the date, made an entry in his book, and, handing me back my passport, did not forget to repeat:

'I beg your pardon if I was rude.'

It was needless, for I cannot really say that I went out feeling that I had been insulted.

I also followed the Consul's second piece of advice, and went to call on the head of the Hopelandish colony in Warsaw. His name was Senor Natalio, and he kept a haberdasher's shop; but in face he much more resembled an inmate of the Warsaw Ghetto than a South American. He also spoke with a marked Jewish accent. I told him I had been to Berlin, and that the Consul advised me to call upon him. Also that the Consul was receiving despairing letters from Hopeland citizens in Poland, and that something ought to be done to help them. Of course I did not say a word about my design of leaving Poland. Senor Natalio took my remarks to heart, and a few days later I received word from him that there would be a meeting in his house of all the members of the colony, 'in connexion with a conversation which a member of the colony, Senor Svatopelko Venceslao Molenda, just arrived from Berlin, has had with the Consul General there'.

Well, the meeting took place. It was attended by thirteen persons. They were all very dissatisfied that the Consul did not help them; but still more that the head of the colony did not approach the Germans in matters concerning the colony; that he made no effort to procure coal for them for the winter, and, in short, that he was no good. These reproaches made Senor Natalio so indignant that he rose from his seat and declared his resignation from the headship. You may easily guess that the meeting then immediately proceeded to the election of a new head, in the person of myself.

'Unfortunately, gentlemen,' I said, trying to get out of it, 'I am extremely busy. I shall not be able to devote my time to the affairs of the colony, and so there is no sense in my being chosen head of it.'

'But that would be unpatriotic,' a young fellow replied. 'If you like we shall work together; I shall be secretary. We want to get something done, and you know the Consul and it will be easier for you.'

The others supported the patriotic young man's proposal, and there was nothing for it but that I should accept the honour thrust upon me. So I began my activities at once, telling the secretary to write minutes of the meeting and send them by

registered post to the Consulate in Berlin. I also dictated to him a letter to the district commissioner in Warsaw, asking for an allotment of coal for the members of the colony. On the following morning I signed the minutes and the letter, and that was the end of my activities in this field. But at least my letter produced a ton of coal for each member from the Germans !

The last weeks of my stay in Poland passed amid various petty events, not always, unfortunately, as cheerful as this one. I began to take leave of my nearest friends. I went to the village where my wife and daughter were freezing. I promised my wife that I would try and get a certificate from the Consulate to the effect that she was the wife of a Hopelandish citizen. In the mean time I brought her a valid Polish and German identity document in the name of Molenda. I begged her when she received the consular certificate to move to some town and register herself there under her new name. I considered that if she did this, she would be safe at least against deportation to labour in Germany. I did indeed propose to take her abroad with me, but not being sure what chance there was of realizing this project, I said nothing about it then. I was unwilling to expose her to the chance of serious disappointment in case of failure.

Everything pointed to my being able to travel to Berlin in quiet and safety. But. . . ! Once again 'but'.

Three days before the date fixed for my leaving Warsaw I was packing the most necessary articles in my valise. I was tired, and wanted to go to bed early. However, the telephone bell rang : my friends invited me to a parting supper, and, though unwillingly, I went. Again, as in so many cases before, it seemed that my fate was leading me by the hand and saving me from misfortune. For what would have happened if I had not gone out to that supper, and if that supper had not lasted till so late at night that I was prevailed upon to sleep at my friends' ?

Next morning I had an appointment at my dentist's. So I did not go home, but went direct to her surgery. From there I telephoned to my house, to ask if there were any letters for me.

A totally strange voice answered. I asked if I might speak to the lady who owned the flat. The voice asked me what about. I said, on a personal matter. Presently I heard the voice of my landlady, and the mysterious words:

'Good morning, uncle! I am sorry, but we shall not be able to see you today, or perhaps for some days to come.'

I realised that some fateful event must have happened once again. The more fateful that, if the police were waiting for me at my house, my Hopelandish passport must have ceased to protect me. However, I remembered that in moments of danger one must not get excited, or think only of the danger; one must try to escape it. So I sat back in the dentist's chair with wide-open eyes and considered a fresh plan of operations.

That same day I learnt what had happened. Of course it was once more a denunciation. But at the same time a great stone was rolled from my heart, for I discovered that this new search for me was quite unconnected with previous adventures, and that I ought to be safe in my character of foreigner.

It was quite a new business, and had come upon me quite by chance. On my way back from Berlin to Warsaw I had stopped with old pre-war friends at Katowice,—Poles who felt very deeply their patriotic obligations and their duty to make every sacrifice. Mikula had been taking counsel with them on various matters concerning which he was then 'officially' engaged in Silesia, and the Warsaw police had been looking for him on the day when Piotrus Palus had been arrested. These friends had asked me to help in a certain matter which was of importancé to the Poles in Silesia, and it was through this that the new and unexpected trouble had fallen upon me.

I had long been aware of the existence of a 'police boundary' between the Dabrowski Basin and Silesia. It was true that both those areas had been 'incorporated' with the Reich, but all the same, owing to the large number of Poles who lived in the Dabrowski Basin, the Germans had set up this internal boundary, isolating several hundred thousand Poles in a narrow strip between the *General-Gouvernement* and Silesia, with which latter province the Germans considered the Reich in its purest sense to begin. Thus the Poles living at Sosnowiec

were precluded from communication even with their families living at Katowice, and vice versa. Passes were granted, it was true, but only to Germans and *Volksdeutsche*. What I was asked to do was to supply my friends with a thousand pass-forms, made in imitation of a copy which I took with me to Warsaw. The delivery of the forms was undertaken by a certain engineer, working in one of the mines, who was coming to the *General-Gouvernement* in two or three weeks in the course of his ordinary duty.

I had such confidence in my friends that I gave the engineer my private address without any hesitation. I advised him to come to my house, promising that the printed forms would be there ready for him. And so they were. I did not forget, either, to put in the necessary metal stamps of the German police at Katowice. He came and took away the parcel, and I supposed that everything was all right.

But in the meantime, while I was sitting happily with my friends at the farewell supper, the *Gestapo* received a telephone message from Katowice: 'At the border-crossing between the *General-Gouvernement* and the Reich a car has been stopped and found to contain a parcel of forged documents and German metal stamps. The bearer of the parcel gave as its source of origin a foreigner named Svatopelko Venceslao Molenda, of...'

The engineer had presumably 'spilled the beans' when examined. I guessed that he had counted on my extricating myself somehow by means of my 'foreign nationality', and that he thought it would be easier for himself, too, to save himself that way. But he was mistaken, poor fellow. The *Gestapo* acts quickly in such cases. An hour and a half after I had gone out a green police car manned by several SS-men armed with rifles stopped before my house.

This surprise put me in a completely new situation. It deprived me of the possibility of providing my wife with Hope-landish identity papers, and prevented me from travelling quietly to Berlin as I had done before.

If I was to get across to the Reich for a second time, then, I had to give up the idea of using a frontier pass, and to make my way through the 'green border', as we say. The night was

most unfavourable for that kind of adventure, being moonlight, with a great expanse of fresh-fallen snow on the ground. I wrapped myself in a white sheet, however, and followed in the tracks of my guide—which were all I could see of him, he likewise being 'sheeted'. I therefore felt sure that the German guards would not observe us. I waited for morning in a village a mile or two on the Reich side of the border, and then found the nearest railway station, whence the rest of my journey was easy. I had, however, to wait the whole day at Sosnowiec before crossing the 'police' boundary between the Dabrowski Basin and Silesia, in a similar manner, the next night.

Sosnowiec, the chief town of the Basin, had retained its Polish character. All the shop-signs, street name-plates, and posters on the advertisement kiosks were in German, it was true, but everywhere the language one heard spoken was only Polish. The town was much quieter than it used to be, and had a melancholy look. As soon as one left the station one was struck by such war-time sights as cabs and carts drawn by men with the six-pointed star of Zion on their arm-bands. The Germans took away the Jews' horses, but left them their vehicles. So the Jews harnessed themselves to them. In general the Jews at Sosnowiec have much more freedom of movement than their co-religionists at Warsaw and other towns of the *GG*. The Ghetto here is not cut off by walls and police posts from the rest of the town. It is merely a quarter in which all the Jews must reside. There are also a few streets which Jews are forbidden to enter. They are, however, allowed to work in German undertakings all over the town, though their pay is restricted by the local *Arbeitsamt*.

The Poles live in the same atmosphere of sorrow and oppression as weighs upon them everywhere in the *General-Gouvernement*. Yet every one is convinced of the transitory nature of the present state of things, and believes—as we in Warsaw do—in the swift resurgence of the Polish State. Underground organizations are very active. On the board-fences surrounding factory buildings unknown hands are for ever writing: 'Long live Poland!' 'Work slowly, that is the way to defeat Hitler!'

And in many places the symbolic names, *R.A.F.*, *Sikorski*, or *Churchill* are written up. Even little triangular labels have found their way here from Warsaw with the inscription : *A ja powiem wam na ucho, ze z Niemcami bardzo krucho.* (Let me whisper in your ear. That the Germs have much to fear !).

But the Germans work with their normal activity at Sosnowiec too. They shoot Poles against market walls, the gaols are overcrowded, and many inhabitants of the town are in concentration camps. In front of the new municipal administration building, approached by an avenue of trees, there stands a lofty gallows. On September 1 last year four boy-scouts were hanged upon it, for carrying out sabotage. This execution was unusually 'solemn'. The Hitler organizations were made to go to it, and the *Hitlerjugend* put in an appearance with flags flying and band playing. When the young heroes were actually hanged, a salvo of artillery was fired, and afterwards the band played a march. The gallows was represented as a symbol of the 'justice of the new order', for the Germans have an eye to propaganda even when they are committing their crimes. Even for murder they seek to set up a suitable (according to their own ideas) background and stage decoration.

Early next morning I had my breakfast in a small cafe at Katowice, where once before the war my colleagues of *Polska Zachodnia* (Western Poland) and the wireless had used to forgather for good coffee. Its owner, Jozef Sobecki, is now a hundred-per-cent German. Over the doors is the sign, *Joseph Sobetzky* ; and in the large room, in place of the former small portrait of the President of the Polish Republic, there now hangs a large portrait of the Fuehrer. Herr Sobetzky in a yachting cap wears three separate medals with the swastika. In the big window of the cafe, as in all shop-windows, there is a piece of cardboard with a gear-wheel with the swastika in the middle, and underneath '100%'. That means that all the employees of the firm belong to their trade union. Exactly opposite the portrait of the Fuehrer Herr Sobetzky has hung up two mottoes : in the first *Gauleiter* Bracht of Silesia informs his subjects that Hitler is a genius and a prophet, building a new order which will last a thousand years, while in the other a nameless author

is quoted: 'If you hear anyone speaking Polish in Katowice, shoot him. This is required in the interests of the German State.'

Herr Sobetzky set a cup of coffee before me and we talked, like old friends, on every conceivable topic: changes in the appearance of the town, our common acquaintances, coffee, the weather. But Herr Sobetzky was not satisfied with such talk as this. He touched on dangerous subjects. At length we began to speak of the thousand years of 'new order'.

'Everything goes so fast nowadays,' he said, 'that an hour may be regarded as a year.'

But such things may only be listened to. They must not be discussed.

Katowice! A town in which I worked for several years, and saw with my own eyes the Polish spirit and atmosphere growing up again after six hundred years of enslavement of Silesia. Now everything is cold and strange. The use of Polish is completely discontinued. It is commemorated only by the placards on the walls: 'If you hear anyone speaking Polish, shoot him.' According to German statistics, of the 180,000 inhabitants of Katowice, two per cent are now Poles. The remainder have been deported or murdered. Before the war the proportion was reversed: the great majority were Poles, and a small percentage were Germans. But before the war those Germans made themselves heard and felt. Now the Poles are not to be heard at all. Even Polish epitaphs in the graveyards have been removed. So as to leave no trace that we were ever here, or that the city, like the whole of Silesia, is an integral part of the Polish State.

The only traces which remain are the post-war Polish public buildings. The Polish eagles actually remain on the splendid Silesian Diet building, on the strip of ornamentation which runs round it. But even these annoy the Germans. The Poles had not completed the erection of the Silesian Museum, so—although the roof was already on it—the Germans determined to pull it down. A few years ago I attended the ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone for this projected monument of modern architecture; and now I heard the rattle of pneumatic

drills up at the top of the edifice. Probably the space is needed for a monument of the Fuehrer.

When the German *panzer* division entered the town in September 1939, the Polish youths distinguished themselves in the street fighting. So when Katowice fell the Germans poured out the vials of their wrath on the young men above all. Mass executions were carried out on the market-place which used to be called Jozef Pilsudski Square, and is now known as Adolf-Hitler-Platz, before the Diet building, and in the Kosciuszko Park. More than a hundred boy-scouts were shot in front of the Wyspianski Theatre. They say that when facing the firing-squad all the boys held each other's hands and sang the Polish national anthem. The Germans themselves at Katowice say so.

When I got into the Berlin express I did not feel too secure. I no longer wore the little Hopeland flag on the lapel of my coat. But I had two sets of documents: the one, those of a citizen of the South-American republic, concealed in my 'conspirator's' pocket; the other, harmless enough, in case there should be a check-up in the train. Beside a personal document in the name of Bazyl Wereczenko (of Ukrainian nationality, permanently resident at Katowice), I also had a certificate from the Ukrainian firm of *Maslosojuz* (Butter Co-op), stating that I was going to Berlin to purchase agricultural machinery for them. All these papers had been produced by Broncel in a single night, the last before I left Warsaw.

I arrived at Berlin without incident, and went straight to the Consulate; I was rather afraid some German agent might be waiting for me in front of it, but it had not occurred to the Germans in Warsaw that the man they were looking for might have gone to Berlin. I began by telling the Consul frankly that the police in Warsaw were looking for me, that I had made my way across the 'green border' (illegitimately), and that I really did not know what the Germans had against me.

'That's serious,' said Senor Navarro da Correta gravely. 'But here not a hair should fall from your head,' he added.

'In any case,' I declared, 'I am not going back to Poland. I've come here hoping to go on as soon as possible.'

The very next day I went by the Consul's advice to the Police Headquarters in Burgstrasse, to which he had previously telephoned to say I wished to be registered in Berlin. For the Germans have the inconvenient requirement that whoever desires permission to leave the city and go abroad must first obtain the right permanently to reside in the capital of the Reich.

I stood in a queue behind several other applicants. I was presently dealt with by a police-sergeant, an old fellow of at least seventy, with an unhealthy complexion and a hunched back. I told him I was a citizen of Hopeland, that I wanted to return there, that I had been advised by my Consul to apply here, and that I had arrived in Berlin a few hours ago. I was then given five large forms and four sheets of carbon paper, and had immediately to write down the answers to a number of questions. So I wrote down in a bold hand all the data concerning myself, until I came to the question: Where had I come from to Berlin?

Was I to say: From Warsaw? No indeed! I said I had come from Poznan. (Poznan is incorporated with the Reich, and there are no restrictions on communications between it and Berlin). I gave some kind of an address there, filled in the date, signed my name, and handed in the forms. The old fellow now began dealing with my particulars. He impressed the stamp of his metal seal on each copy, signed his name clearly, and after a few minutes handed back to me one copy, with the remark:

'Now this must go to Poznan to be checked up. When it comes back you will be informed by letter.'

To Poznan? To be checked up? When I never lived there in my life! And don't even know if there is a Danziger-Strasse, where I said my flat was!

The old sergeant certainly never guessed what a blow his words were for me. I smiled, pretending to be very well satisfied, and asked how long I should have to wait.

'About a week,' he answered.

I left the police building in great anxiety. The prospects before me were not bright. I stopped the first taxi I met and drove straight to the consulate. When I had paid the driver I heard my name called behind me:

'Herr Molenda!'

It was Senor Navarro da Correta just coming out of the gateway.

'Have you had dinner?' he asked me.

'Not yet. I wanted to have a talk with you before dinner.'

'Then let us go to the restaurant together.'

We got into a black Packard, with the letters CD on it, which was standing before the Consulate. The Consul first of all told me on the way that Kranzler's in the Kurfuerstendamm was the only place in Berlin where one could get good fish, and then only if one ordered it ten days in advance. He had ordered two plates, for himself and his vice-consul, but the latter had a slight attack of flu.

When the fish was served, I began to speak of my visit to the Police authorities.

'Do you think, Mr. Consul, that I might have said I had come here from Warsaw?'

'Out of the question. If you had done that, you would have made trouble for yourself and me.'

'Of course when I wrote down that I had come here from Poznan I was doing better than to write that I had come from Warsaw. I cut myself off completely from the *General-Gouvernement*, and thereby from the *Gestapo* who are looking for me. But I am afraid there will be trouble all the same. For they will find out at once at Poznan that I never lived there, and that the address I gave is a false one.'

'We shall deal with that later, when the answer comes from Poznan,' the Consul consoled me. 'We shall tell them you didn't understand the question, and anyway I shall think it over in the meantime.'

For Senor Navarro da Correta the problem was much simpler then it was for me. So we talked only of what interested him, namely of conditions in Poland. All his questions and his

keen interest in the fate of the Poles betrayed his sincere sympathy with us and his dislike of the Germans.

'Yet I think,' said the Consul, 'that the Germans would be less enraged, and the Poles would suffer less, if the Poles did not behave so brutally towards them. I understand that it is one of the methods of fighting against an occupation, but yet such brutality does harm to the reputation of the Poles.'

'I agree, but I don't quite understand. Are you speaking of the brutality of Poles or of Germans ?'

'Of Poles, of course.'

And Senor Navarro da Correta proceeded to quote several cases of brutality, nay, of atrocities, on the part of the Poles against the peacefully and friendly inclined Germans. For example, bands of Poles hunted German women and children and murdered them, after first cutting out their tongues or burning out their eyes. German children were thrown out of fast-moving trains. No German could walk quietly along the street in the evening or night, because of armed bands lying in wait everywhere with knives and revolvers. Two gendarmes on patrol had been thrown off a bridge into the Vistula one night. . . .

When I had heard enough examples of such murders committed by the Poles, I asked the Consul how he knew about them.

'Why, the Germans invite us to conferences where they give us the fullest information. They have accurate data.'

'And you believe what they tell you ?'

'Well, you see, it is hard not to believe when they tell you all the details, with names and often photographs.'

'If it were really as they say,' I tried to convince the Consul, 'it would undoubtedly be very good. And undoubtedly the time will come when the Poles will deal with the Germans in just such a manner. But believe me, Mr. Consul, everything that they tell you, the representatives of associated and neutral powers, is false ; is the product of German propaganda laboratories. Yea, Poles do kill Germans in Poland, it cannot be denied, and no Pole would attempt to deny it. But if the Poles fire at the Germans, if they murder occupying troops, one may not call it either brutality or barbarism. Only a few Germans have

lost their lives thus in Poland so far. Only individuals perish. It is only a modest, and symbolical as one might say, reaction on the part of a nation tormented to an incredible degree and murdered in incredible numbers. The German occupation policy, on the other hand, aims quite simply and clearly at the extirpation of the whole Polish nation. Do you know that the secret press has declared that the Germans murder on an average 2,500 Poles every day, and that since the beginning of the occupation more than one and a half million Poles have been shot by firing squads or murdered in concentration camps ? Do you know that the Germans carry out mass murders in villages ? That for example not long ago at a certain village in the District of Lublin they drove five hundred Polish peasants, with their priests and school-teachers, into a hole nine feet deep, and then threw a dozen grenades into the midst of them ? You believe in the brutality of the Poles, and in these lies, intentionally circulated in Berlin ? Consider, Mr. Consul, whether, perhaps these cynical lies of theirs are not intended to justify before the world the greatest crimes in human history, committed by the Germans against the Poles, who are now suffering because the honour of their nation is not to them just a mere phrase, and because they are devoted to their country and love liberty.'

Senor Navarro da Correta listened to my words with great attention. What he heard from me was new and startling to him. He half-closed his eyes, bit his lip, and said : 'Uncanny, fantastic. . .'

At length he admitted :

'What you have told me is very important. I had not any conception of it before.'

After tea, about six o'clock, I was lying on the sofa in the hotel bedroom, reflecting on the consequences which might follow for me from a compromising answer from Poznan. I was 'wanted' by the *Gestapo* at Warsaw, and though I was aware of the unparalleled stupidity of the Gestapists in Poland, I was still afraid they might guess I had gone to the Reich, and might send an account of me to the police in Berlin. Then my

telephone bell rang. It was Senor Navarro da Correta, asking what I was doing that evening.

'I am going to a cinema.'

'Would it make any difference if you went to the cinema tomorrow ?'

'No, of course not.'

'For you are invited to supper this evening by the Ambassador's wife. I will come for you with the car at seven.'

'Thank you very much. I shall be ready.' Obviously the cause of my receiving this unexpected invitation was the talk I had had with the Consul about Poland. He had probably mentioned my statements to his Hopelandish friends.

Senora Rosa Dalisca, wife of the Hopelandish Ambassador, received me like an old acquaintance ; indeed, like a friend She was a young person with large, dark, merry eyes, and a beautiful, typically South American figure. She spoke broken German, but that gave her still more charm. She was courteous, witty, hospitable and charming.

Supper was served at eight, when the ambassador, Senor Jantari Dalisca came home : an elderly man, fashionably dressed.

'I know all about you,' he said when Senor Navarro da Correta had introduced me.

Not quite everything ! I thought. It soon transpired that he did luckily know very little, and I felt correspondingly relieved.

'We get the most improbable news of what is happening in Poland,' the Ambassador said. 'It must be dreadful there now. Is it true that children are dying of hunger, and that the Germans are indifferent to the fate of the poor Poles ?'

'They are not at all indifferent,' I replied. 'On the contrary, they do all that is in their power to destroy and murder as many Poles as possible.'

This naive enquiry of the Ambassador's about the 'indifference' of the Germans is evidence of the way in which Poland is isolated from the world. Even here at Berlin no one knows what is going on there.

'Do you sometimes listen to the broadcasts from London ?' I asked. 'The BBC has much to say about Poland.'

'Yes, sometimes we listen. But I continually get the impression that what London says is rather exaggerated, and that it is mainly propaganda.'

'There is no exaggeration in it, and no propaganda. It seems to me that even the BBC knows too little about the situation in Poland, and says decidedly too little about that country.'

'It is surprising,' argued the Ambassador, 'that German policy in Poland is so different from what it is in the other occupied countries, France, say, or Czechoslovakia. For in fact the Germans are nowhere as brutal and ruthless as they are in Poland.'

'In Poland there is no Hacha or Petain,' remarked the Consul.

'Yes, perhaps the reason is to be sought in the fact that in Poland there has been no collaboration between Poles and Germans,' continued the Ambassador. 'Only I cannot solve the riddle, who it is that is opposed to collaboration: the Poles or the Germans. If it is the Poles, then I should understand the meaning of German brutality and atrocities. It would be vengeance. But if it is the Germans, then the German extermination policy would justify itself by the need to cleanse the Polish area of Poles if the German *Drang nach Osten* is to be realized. In the latter case the prospects for Poland and the Poles would indeed be tragic if Germany were to win the war. Do you think the Germans have tried to find collaborators among the Poles?'

'Undoubtedly they have. But in vain. For, had the Poles been inclined to collaborate with the Germans, they might have done it before September, 1939, when the Germans repeatedly tried to persuade them to it. But Poland chose its path, and has not swerved from it.'

'It may be that the choice was good for someone else, and was justified by the idea for which Britain and France went to war, but it is not certain whether it was the best choice for Poland,' the Consul remarked.

'The war is not over yet,' replied the Ambassador. 'It is too early to judge.'

'Of course it is too early,' agreed the Consul. 'But none the less it is a fact that the attitude taken up by Poland before September, 1939, was decisive as leading to the outbreak of a fresh world war, and will be decisive in relation to future changes in Europe, and perhaps outside Europe also. Above all, one thing is beyond doubt: that in 1939 Poland saved Russia. For if she had then joined with Germany in a common attack on the East, there would have been an end of Russia long since.'

'And Russia showed its gratitude to Poland,' I reminded them, 'by attacking Poland at the moment when she was mobilizing all possible forces in her eastern provinces in order to continue the war against Germany.'

Jantari Dalisca summed up the conversation in the following words:

'In intercourse between individuals it is only the really magnanimous man who feels gratitude; and similarly in international relations it is only a really magnanimous nation.'

From that house, and particularly from that first supper, I carried away really pleasant memories. Further, I obtained a passport for my wife, and a promise from the Ambassador and his charming wife that the Embassy would use its best endeavours to facilitate our departure—'our', note!—to Hopeland at the earliest possible moment.

I had to look forward to at least a week's waiting before I was called by the police. A week's uncertainty. Only after completing the police formalities could I begin my further proceedings in the matter of leaving the country, so I did not feel at all cheerful. For waiting is the very hardest thing to bear for a man who is in a hurry. But on my return to my hotel after supper at the Ambassador's I found a way out of the situation.

The following morning I informed the hotel porter that I was going to Poznan for a few days, and asked him to keep any letters that might come for me, as I should be staying in the hotel again after my return. In the evening I went to a cinema, and at half past twelve midnight I got into a train and

went—to Vienna. Instead of boring myself at Berlin, I decided to do the same at Vienna, where anyway I should not be afraid of a police visit during the night.

Before I fell asleep in the comfortable first-class carriage, in which I saw the Polish eagle and the letters PKP (Polish State Railways) on the leather window-strap, I thought of the anti-Polish propaganda film, *Heimkehr* (Return Home), which I had been persuaded to see by some words of the Consul's during our dinner at Kranzler's. The scene was laid in pre-war Volhynia, inhabited (strangely) by Germans almost without exception. The Polish authorities thought only of persecuting these Germans. In a cinema at Luck, while a picture was being shown accompanied by a speech of Marshal Smigly-Rydz's, the public rose to their feet and sang the Polish national anthem. One man alone, wearing the uniform of a Polish corporal, failed to stand up and sing. A disturbance followed, in the course of which the German (for he was a German) was killed. To the accompaniment of Chopin's funeral march the coffin was carried along a country lane to the grave-yard. (Some German girls who were sitting next to me put their handkerchiefs to their eyes, and some of them sobbed audibly, at the dreadful picture of German suffering.) After that there was a prison-scene, with a mass execution of Germans, who however were saved by a miracle, for war broke out and the *Luftwaffe* landed in front of the prison. Tumultuous joy on the part of the German crowds, shouts of 'Long live Hitler !', portraits of him exhibited everywhere on the roads, and German Volhynia returns to the Fatherland. There was even a scene showing the Polish burgomaster of Luck driving a German out of his office and thundering at him in Polish: 'Only without any anti-State accentuation !' It was not difficult to recognize the voice of the old Polish actor, Boguslaw Samborski. Actually in the whole of the film only this one thing is really sad and painful. A Pole who sees the film is ashamed of that one actor. Otherwise the propaganda is so poor and trifling that the director must have counted on the majority of spectators being like those girls sitting by me who cried. Every scene without exception is artificial and invented. The whole thing is a lie. An official

of the League of Nations, once asked how the German minority in Poland got on, replied: 'The Germans in Poland are better off than those in Germany.' And it was true. The Poles never at any time persecuted the Germans. Indeed they never persecuted any minority. The representation of the Poles as brutal and barbarous monsters has presumably the same purpose as the information distributed to foreign press-men in Berlin, that the Poles are now murdering harmless Germans, as is proved by photographs taken while they were doing it.

But in the *Heimkehr* film, the German directors were not very successful even from this point of view. I do not, indeed understand why Senor Navarro da Correta pressed me to go and see it. Did he believe the lies it put forward, as he had believed in the 'crimes' of the Poles, narrated to him by officials of the German Foreign Office ?

Vienna ! At half past nine in the morning I was walking along a narrow old street, running up hill towards the centre of the town. The first person I talked to was . . . very strange. At a stall with newspapers, picture-postcards, and stationery, in that narrow street near the railway station, I noticed finely engraved flags of various countries, including my South American republic. The seller, an old man of at least eighty, spread out before me a whole collection of flags of different sizes. Suddenly I caught sight of a Polish one.

'You are allowed to sell these ?' I asked him.

'Why not ? Nothing is forbidden. May be you speak Polish'

'I do a little,' I replied.

The old man smiled and said in the purest Polish:

'I speak Polish quite well. I worked for thirty years on the railway at Cracow.'

'Then you know the Poles well ?' I asked him in Polish.

'Yes, I do, and I like them very much. They are going through a period of great misfortune, but it will pass. That flag,' pointing to the Polish one, 'will still be important and respected.'

'I think so too.'

'Are you not a Pole ?' he asked curiously.

'No, I am a citizen of the Hopeland Republic, but I have lived long in Poland.'

'You speak Polish very well. I like the Polish language very much.'

'So do I.'

'I am really more of a Pole than an Austrian,' the newspaper-seller continued. 'I had a Polish wife, my sons studied at the University of Lwow, and my father came from Bochnia.'

'Why, then you are a Pole !'

'Only my mother was Austrian.'

'May I ask your name ?'

'Antoni Remiszewski. We spell it with a *sz*, and with an *i* at the end.'

I am sure that when I meet Antoni Remiszewski again after the war, no matter whether in Vienna or Cracow, I shall see a miniature flag on the lapel of his coat : a flag which 'will still be important and respected.'

I spent a week in the capital of former Austria. I must say that even now it is a city in which one can find plenty of interest. The people are quite different from the Berliners ; and the atmosphere, whether of street or cafe or wine-shop, is likewise quite different from that in Berlin. But it is impossible to overlook the fact that in the Vienna of today there is not much resemblance to old Vienna : the Vienna of Francis Joseph, or even the Vienna of Dolffuss and Schuschnigg. Pre-war Vienna was one of those few cities of which men dreamed, and for which they longed with sometimes a wild longing. Pre-war Vienna was a city where, as it seemed, the day was more beautiful than elsewhere, for the sun shone differently, and the night was more beautiful, for the moonlight was different there from anywhere else.

Today, when one arrives at Vienna, one does not feel sure whether one has got out at the right station. For present-day Vienna has no longer any of that charm which dazzled all who came to it. One has the impression that the sun which used to shine on old Vienna no longer casts a single ray of light

upon it. Present-day Vienna is a melancholy place, and the Viennese have preserved but scant traces of their former serenity of spirit. None the less, it is quite different from Berlin.

Vienna is, indeed, far from the war fronts, but the war has left its mark upon it not less distinguishably than on Berlin. Restrictions in all fields of life will not allow the new-comer to forget the war for a single moment.

You want to take a taxi from the station? The driver points to a tramcar and tells you that during the war taxis are only for the sick and wounded. You want to buy a newspaper or some cigarettes? They are rationed during the war, says the seller; I am very sorry, but I can only let you have a very small quantity. You want to buy some trifle you see in an artistically arranged shop-window in the Kaertnerstrasse? The shop-assistant spreads out his hands: Very sorry, during the war we have nothing except what is in the window. Perhaps after two or three months. In the large Vienna stores you see V-signs on the walls, and the slogan: *Deutschland siegt an allen Fronten* (Germany is victorious on all fronts), justifying the miserable menus and the empty restaurants, where the waiters yawn in the corners.

Food restrictions are the same as in all the other German cities. Without coupons you can get only an *Eintopfgericht* (one pot course). The large stores are empty. It is equally difficult to buy tooth-paste and bootlaces. Nowhere, for any price, can you get *Wiener Schnitzel* (Vienna Cutlets), or a 'Vienna breakfast'. Night resorts and wine-shops are quite full, to be sure, but all you can get is a mug of war beer, for ten or a dozen pfennigs.

The war has had a crushing effect upon Vienna. The standstill in non-war trade and industry, the almost complete absence of young men, who have been called up, the number of people in mourning, the empty shops, great and small, which used to belong to Jews—all this has had a very marked effect on the general appearance of the city. The picture is not brightened even by the Prater, that famous Viennese pleasure resort, which functions now only partially for the amusement of a low-class public. The period of Vienna's splendour ceased

on the day when the independence of Austria was brought to an end. Today Vienna is a most melancholy place.

But its inhabitants still delude themselves with the hope that the light of freedom, when it shines once more in Europe after the present Arctic night, will lighten Vienna too. Once when I had left a wine-shop at midnight and was making my way to my hotel, I was accosted by a fellow who was somewhat in liquor. Evidently he did not want to go home, for he asked me if I knew a wine-shop in the neighbourhood which might still be open.

'Unfortunately I don't know Vienna, so I cannot tell you.'

'And where have you come from ?'

'From Warsaw.'

'From Warsaw !' he repeated in a loud voice, holding out his hand. 'Beautiful city. Have the Lazienki survived the bombardment ?'

'Yes, they have. Do you know Warsaw ?'

'Yes, I was there in 1937. I am a painter. I did a good deal of painting there. But what are you doing in Vienna ?'

'Oh, I just came to have a look at it.'

The Viennese then put his arm in mine, and said in a low tone :

'This isn't Vienna any more. You've chosen a bad time. This is only a memory of Vienna.'

And then, evidently placing confidence in me, he spoke of the changes which had taken place in Austria since the *Anschluss*.

'But we Austrians do not believe we have lost our independence for ever. We shall still fight for it. France and Poland will regain their independence, and we also shall rise again.'

When parting he heartily squeezed both my hands and said:

'I should like to meet you again here after two years.'

But there are few such people in Vienna. Chance acquaintances with whom I talked showed for the most part resignation, or even satisfaction, at the present state of things. A certain young woman whose officer husband had been sent to the eastern front, and whom I met when visiting the castle at Schoen-

brunn, spoke with the greatest contempt of everything that had preceded the *Anschluss*.

'Hitler', she said, 'gave work to all who could not find any before, he restricted the arbitrary power of the capitalists, and disinherited the Jews, and after the war he will give us all the conditions for a happy life.'

'And did you work before the *Anschluss* ?' I asked her.

'No, I didn't. But immediately after it I got work, and now I work in a shop where seven persons are employed, whereas it employed only four in the time of Dolffuss and Schuschnigg.'

This young woman, like so many people in Vienna, wore a brooch with the head of Hitler and used the greeting, *Heil Hitler* !

Anyway this *Haitla* was to be heard all over Vienna, in the restaurants and in the streets. Not only uniformed party men, but civilians, old women, and bootblacks put their hands up and exclaimed *Haitla* ! This deification of Hitler at Vienna makes a strange impression on anyone coming from Berlin, where a civilian who puts his hand up and pronounces the sacramental greeting is looked upon with some amusement, as an obvious provincial. There are far more *Heil Hitler* ! enthusiasts even in Warsaw and Katowice than in Berlin, for in the former cities every German distinguishes himself by using this form of words.

When one talks with the Viennese about Poland one can convince oneself of the extraordinary effectivenness of German propaganda. Almost everyone to whom I broached the subject repeated what I had heard for the first time from the lips of the Consul : that the Poles were bandits and barbarians, murdering German women and children, and that even before the war the Germans in Poland suffered a perfect Gehenna of maltreatment. This propaganda works in two directions at once, for, not content with representing the Poles as degenerate, idle and poverty-stricken, Goebbels's laboratories have manufactured thousands of marevllous stories of the pioneer work of the Germans in the territory of former Poland. Every Viennese can go on for hours relating how the Germans have organized agriculture, built roads and railways, founded schools for Polish illiterates,

given instruction in handicrafts, and encouraged the use of sugar and salt : in a word, now they have done what was never done in Poland before, and was completely unknown to the Poles. The news-reels are full of pictures of this 'missionary' work carried on by the Germans in Poland, and for 20 pfennigs one can purchase a thick book, demonstrating incontrovertibly that this wild and unknown country of Poland is now being splendidly colonized by German pioneers.

When I tried to show up these statements for the lies which they are, and called attention to the German crimes, to Oswiecim, Palmiry, or Majdanek, I was always met by the same answer : 'Oh, those are the shameful lies of hostile propaganda.'

When I got back to Berlin the answer from Poznan was already lying at the Police Headquarters. But I asked the consul to enquire by telephone as to the prospects of my receiving the formal permission to leave Germany. I was expecting great trouble.

But the Consul laid down the receiver and said : 'All is well. You are to go to Burgstrasse and will get your document today.'

I was extremely surprised, and at the the same time delighted, when the old police-sergeant held out the paper to me and said :

'The answer has just come from Poznan. There are no objections. You will receive the right of permanent residence in Berlin immediately.' And he laid a sheet of paper on the table, headed in large print : *Anmeldung bei der Polizeilichen Meldebehoerde, Berlin* (Registration at the Police Registration Bureau, Berlin).

I waited patiently a quarter of an hour while the old fellow filled up the registration form. How cheerful and pleasant the office seemed to me now ! Even the personage with the lock of hair hanging over his brow and the black square under his nose, looking out from his glazed frame, looked cheerful rather than gloomy. I tried to get a look at the communication from Poznan, but my gaze was drawn by a red notice on the wall : 'Be on guard ! a spy looks at everything and listens to everything,' So I only guessed what it might be : 'The citizen

of the Hopeland Republic Svatopelko Venceslao Molenda is not registered in the card-index of political offenders, and the *Gestapo* at Poznan has no observations to make about him.' The answer must be something like that. And in that case, everything was all right. For of course, if I did not live at Poznan, I could not very well be registered in the card-index of the Poznan *Gestapo*. And the Poznan Gestapists would never dream of doubting that I lived at Poznan if the Police Headquarters at Berlin said I did. There would be no need to check up on it. All that was needed was to see whether I had my card in the index.

The septuagenarian sergeant handed me a form filled up and stamped, and my passport with a fresh registration endorsement. And from that moment I was a permanent resident in the capital city of Berlin. I immediately filled up another form of application for permission to leave the country, attached three photographs of myself and my wife, and left the office.

Only now could I put forward my application for permission to go abroad. The first thing, however, was to get my wife and child to Berlin, since, as I have already mentioned, the decision that we should go together was taken the first time I visited the house of the Ambassador. It was a complicated business, but as I was determined to go through with it I disregarded the complications. I sent a telegram to one of my closest friends at Warsaw, begging him immediately to send someone to Berlin. The answer came in a few hours : 'Tomorrow evening meet the train from Warsaw via Poznan at the Friedrichsstrasse station.'

If I remember right I have already told you how one of our working group is Basia Jarnecka, an elegant, slender blonde who cannot pronounce her 'r's.' Walking up and down the platform, it did not occur to me that at the carriage window I should see the smiling face of Basia.

I took her valize.

'Be careful,' she warned me. 'There's a present for you inside. Antek has sent you a few cakes from Gajewski's.'

Basia had come with a forged pass. It turned out most useful to have a stock of these passes in hand. It was now

perfectly simple for our people to travel to Berlin. I begged Basia to forward my wife and child to Berlin. This meant that she would have to go and see her in the country, and provide her with some convincing temporary documents, including a frontier pass. It was necessary also to provide her with a certificate of marriage to a Hopeland citizen named Molenda, and to furnish our daughter with a birth certificate in the same name; for these two latter documents had to be deposited at the Consulate. And all this had to be done very quickly and very discreetly. Basia had wanted very much to spend a few days at Berlin, but she returned to Warsaw the very next evening. She is very daring. For a long time she used to take down in shorthand what we heard over the wireless, and beside that there were other difficult jobs which she undertook. She took an ardent interest in everything, and was never afraid of anything. So it was quite an ordinary thing for her to travel from Warsaw to Berlin and back again on false papers, although she knew what would happen to her if she were found out. When we parted at Berlin I asked her:

'Tell me, Basia, are you really not afraid?'

'Really. Well, they can't do anything to me. At the worst they will shoot me.'

Yes, at the worst they will shoot one. That is the *worst* that the Germans can do. And Basia is not the only one who is not afraid of that. That is not so dreadful.

A few days later I stood on the platform again. My wife and Kubus came by the same route, through the same dangers.

'It was a near shave that we might not arrive at all,' she said. 'At Koluszki they made a thorough examination.'

There was cause for alarm. My wife was not only in possession of a forged frontier pass and forged Polish and German identity papers; she also had a birth-certificate and a marriage-certificate in the name of Molenda, which she needed in order to obtain a Hopeland passport.

At length the whole Molenda family paid a visit to the Consulate.

The atmosphere there while my wife's passport was being made out was very cheerful.

Unfortunately, however, this cheerful atmosphere prevailed only inside the Consulate. The first days of our stay together at Berlin, while I endeavoured to obtain permission from the German authorities to leave the Reich, opened my eyes to the immense difficulties which still remained to be overcome. I made due application to Police Headquarters. But when, a few days later, Senor Navarro da Correta intervened in the matter with the police, the answer was not all pleasant for me:

'The business will take three or four months.'

'You had better go to the Ambassador,' the Consul told me. 'Perhaps he will be able to do something at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.'

Again a few days passed, and again I was disappointed. They had told the Ambassador that the business could not be settled at once.

But if only that had been the sum total of my troubles!

One day I received a telegram from Warsaw, couched in a kind of cypher: 'The patient has a high temperature, and the end may be unhappy.' That was to say, the Warsaw *Gestapo* were feverishly looking for me in my present name. Later I learnt that the landlady from whom I had hired my room had been detained for a fortnight for examination. The telegram was intended to warn me. My friends were afraid that the Germans might send information about me to the Central *Gestapo* in Berlin. I fully realized that if they did that, our fate was as good as settled.

So I decided to take one more risky step. I sent my wife and child back to Poland, keeping my wife's freshly issued passport and other documents showing her 'foreign' identity. This was the only sensible solution of the matter. My calculations were simple enough: if there were no complications, and Berlin gave permission for our departure, then I would bring my wife back from Poland. But if the Berlin authorities definitely refused the permission, or if the police began to look for me here, I would flee, no matter where, so long as I could avoid falling into German hands. The departure of my wife was essential. Misfortune might fall upon her any moment.

I had to choose between two dangers: discovery during the journey to Poland, and discovery in Berlin. I chose the former.

So again I was left alone in Berlin. The days passed with painful slowness. There was no reason for going either to the police or to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: the former had told me to come again in a few months; the latter, that when there was anything to report they would let me know by letter.

I began accordingly to feel terribly bored. But Senora Rosa Dalisca found an excellent remedy. She persuaded me to learn my 'mother' tongue, and herself found me a teacher. So I am taking lessons, so as not to be unintelligible to my countrymen when I arrive in my 'native' land. My teacher is Mr. Richard Matysa, former 'lector' of German at Lisbon and Madrid. He wears the uniform of a Lieutenant of Siege Artillery, with the Iron Cross for valour on the Soviet front. In his house a small portrait of the Fuehrer stands on his wireless set, while in his bedroom there hangs over the bed a picture of the Blessed Virgin, which seemed strangely familiar, though for a long time I could not remember where I had seen it.

I come for my lessons at eight o'clock in the evening, at which time we two are always alone in the house. But once, when I was invited to the Ambassador's for nine o'clock, and did not want to give up my lesson, I arranged for it to be at seven. Then we were not alone. The Lieutenant's wife was putting their four-year-old son to bed, and talked with us for a few minutes. I observed at once that she was not a Berliner, and that her German was far from perfect. Presently all was explained. The door to the bedroom was ajar, and through it I heard clearly in Polish:

'Blessed be thou among women, and blessed be the fruit of thy womb.'

Herr Leutnant Richard Matysa got up and closed the door. He looked at me suspiciously and rather ashamedly.

'Do you also speak Polish?' I asked him.

The Lieutenant smiled. He evidently had no doubt that I had clearly heard the Polish Ave.

'Yes, I do.'

He immediately added that he came from Silesia, and that his child had been born at Opole in Upper Silesia.

Then I remembered where I had seen the original of the picture hanging in the bedroom: it was the Blessed Virgin of Piekary in Silesia, a miraculous picture worshipped by the Silesians for centuries; the picture before which the king, Jan Sobieski, had prayed when he was on his way to the relief of Vienna, and before which Jozef Pilsudski, in 1922, had paid homage to the heroic Silesian people.

From that time onwards we frequently spoke Polish. And whenever I saw the little boy I greeted him in Polish:

Jak sie mosz Karlik, pieronie ? (How are you, Charlie, my lad ?)

Once when I was just leaving after my lesson the sirens sounded. So I went back into the house and waited for the 'All Clear,' chatting with Mr. Richard Matysa.

'What is Berlin's reaction to the Allies' raids ?' I asked him.

'We are gradually getting accustomed to them.'

'Don't you think it will be difficult to get accustomed to really heavy raids, such as those made on Hamburg ?'

'Well, yes; but they have special reasons for attacking Hamburg.'

'Possibly they have. But can you imagine what will happen here when the British and Americans carry out their fantastic plans of bomber production ? There may come a time when Berlin will be subjected to a hail of bombs by day and by night.'

My teacher said, 'We shall get accustomed to it,'—when the sirens sounded. But when the 'AA' guns began to thunder with increasing violence, and from time to time the floor shook and the windows rattled, and when a bomb burst not so far away, the lady of the house came out of the bedroom wearing her fur coat and carrying the sleeping child in her arms.

'Let us go to the cellar,' she said. 'These raids are dreadful', she added immediately in Polish, looking at me. 'But this is the first we have had like this since the autumn.'

The house shook. The bomb must have fallen quite near.

'O Jesus !' she cried out in Polish, and ran down the stairs.

Herr Matysa threw his military greatcoat over his shoulders, put on his cap, and going down to the cellar asked us to speak only German, and not to talk about the bombing.

The cellar was already crowded with people. All of them were evidently alarmed. Every noisy explosion was received with audible sighs or exclamations of fear. Lieutenant Matysa's face was as white as paper, as were indeed the faces of the majority in that cellar, illuminated by a weak electric bulb. One of the men, an SS officer, puffed incessantly at his pipe, which resolutely refused to draw. Moreover, it was horribly cold in the cellar, and the children cried. After an hour and a half the sirens sounded the 'All Clear.' We came out of the cellar shivering, with our teeth chattering. My teacher made me stay and have a cup of tea.

'No, perhaps we shall never get accustomed to that,' he said.

'Particularly as the coming raids may be many times heavier than these,' I added. 'Who knows ? Maybe a hundred times heavier. And who knows, maybe every day.'

'I would rather not wait for that.'

'But I think it is unavoidable.'

As I returned to my hotel through the darkened streets, the searchlights still roved over the black sky. The silver beams crossed, and went out, and then came on again, illuminating the streets as brightly as a full moon. The Berliners breathed with relief after the raid, and I heartily envied the airmen who were returning to England after performing their task. I envied them after every raid.

The prospect of my obtaining permission to leave the Reich begins to seem hopeless.

I am depressed, and the days drag along painfully slowly. I stroll aimlessly about the streets. I have even been to Moabit, to have a look at the outside of the prison ; for I have a continual feeling that the gates of that institution will open one day soon to admit me.

One day I saw two motor lorries full of Polish prisoners-of-war in their uniforms and square caps draw up by some bombed houses in the Wilmersdorf district. Frightfully thin

and tattered and miserable they looked. A German N.C.O. was taking them to work.

How hurt and how ashamed one felt ! They are not the only Poles I have seen during my short stay in Germany. In Berlin and Vienna I have seen brigades of Polish slaves, composed for the most part of civilians caught in the streets of Warsaw and other Polish towns when man-hunts were in progress. They are all dressed in light drill suits, recalling prison dress, with a large P on the back and breast. They wear the same clothes in winter and in summer. The brigades destined for the hardest labour are made up almost exclusively of educated persons : university professors, priests, writers, students. From the moment they are kidnapped, their families have no news of where they are or what is happening to them. And they themselves know nothing—except that they are slaves ; and they see nothing—except their own tragedy and the armed guards.

I met Polish slaves of another kind by chance in a Berlin beer-cellar. Lieutenant Matysa and I were sitting in a corner, and as he was not in uniform we talked Polish.

The waitress came up to us : a girl of eighteen or twenty with large blue eyes, fair hair, and an intelligent expression of mouth. She wore a black apron. She asked in German if we wanted any beer.

'I suppose there's nothing else we can get,' I said to Matysa in Polish.

The girl opened her eyes wide, smiled, and after glancing at the buffet where the owner was standing, whispered in Polish :

'Are you Polish ?'

She came several times to our table, making a few remarks. She spoke more freely of her troubles to us than to other strangers, for we spoke Polish. They had taken her from her home at Lodz, and deported her to Germany under dreadful conditions, in a train made up only of cattle-trucks, along with hundreds of other young women. For a month she had been confined in a 'distributory' prison at Leipzig. The large party had been divided into several smaller groups, and the one in which she

was had been brought to Berlin. She and another young Polish girl had been assigned to this *Kneipe*. The work was very hard. She received Rmk. 1.20 a week as wages. The owners of the bar were brutal in their behaviour, and compelled her to submit to the soldiers. Twice a week she had to present herself at the police station.

'What did you do before the war ?' I asked her.

'I was studying at the Academy of Fine Arts.'

Her eyes filled with tears. She began to say something, but bit her lip and went away. Presently she came back.

At the other end of the room several soldiers were sitting at a table, accompanied by a young girl in a black apron. The student of the Academy of Fine Arts pointed to her, saying :

'We have to sit with the soldiers and drink with them. That is my friend sitting there.'

I looked into the girl's beautiful eyes, and I could not say a word ; not even to express my sympathy and give her a slight drop of comfort. Poor girls ! Poor Polish girls !

When paying for my beer I discreetly slipped a fifty-mark note into the waitress's hand. Equally discreetly she gave it me back.

'The owners are continually searching us,' she explained. 'We are not allowed to keep anything except what they pay us.'

A Pole in Berlin is equally distressed when he hears German soldiers speaking Polish.

One morning I was drinking coffee in a cafe where the only patrons beside myself were three soldiers, speaking fluent Polish. I went up to them, using the old pretext of asking for a light.

'You are a Pole ?' they asked me.

'No, I'm a foreigner.'

'And we are from Poland.'

I sat down at their table, and we began to talk. These German soldiers were not merely 'from Poland'. They were Poles. Why were they in the army, then ? They had been mobilized. They had been told that they were Germans because they had been born at Poznan.

'But why are you in Berlin ?' I asked.

'Because they sent the Poles first of all to courses in Germany.'

'Surely they have military specialists enough on the spot, even at Poznan?'

'No, it was not for courses of that kind,' said one of the trio. 'They sent us here for a German language course. We are learning German. Sixty Polish lads in uniform are attending the Berlitz school here, and because not one of us knows a word of German, they are teaching us.'

And in fact they all had note-books and Berlitz text-books for beginners.

It is a question whether these Poles, thus forcibly enrolled in the ranks of the German army, will become Germans after they have finished their language course. And it is a question whether they will fight for the German cause. Indeed one may say that it is certain they will not. They are only slaves, forced to wear the uniform of a hostile army. They will learn to speak German, but they will not cease to feel and think in Polish.

None the less, it is as painful to find Poles in German uniform as it is to find prisoners-of-war or slave-labourers with a P marked on their clothes, or to find a Polish girl carried off from her parents' house and forced to serve in a Berlin *Kneipe*.

'Do you speak Polish?' This question was put to me repeatedly in Germany. By various people, and most often in quite unexpected circumstances.

When I was getting my transit visa at the Portuguese Consulate I mentioned to the official that I had lived in Poland. Ten minutes later, when I was waiting in the ante-room to be received by the Consul, I was addressed by a tall, lean man with a thin face, who smiled and asked me in Polish:

'Excuse me. I hear that you are from Poland. Do you speak Polish?'

He told me his name and we began to talk. He was a Jew, born in Poland. For the last twenty or thirty years he had been a German citizen and had lived in Berlin. He was endeavouring to obtain permission to go to Argentina, and had completed all the German formalities, needing now only the

Portuguese visa. He was proposing to leave the Reich in a few days. That evening I visited him at his house, and was introduced to his wife, likewise a Jewess of Polish origin. Both of them had yellow patches sewn on their breasts, with the letter J, for *Jude* (Jew).

In their flat there was no furniture at all. Just a few large valises, sealed by the customs authorities: that was all the possessions they were taking to Argentina.

'Last week', he told me, 'two parties of about six hundred persons each set out. We are going in the next party, in three days' time. We are looking forward to the moment of departure as we should to our salvation.'

I asked him whether they were allowed to take any money or valuables with them.

'Only underwear, clothes, and a few trifles. Nothing more,' was his reply. 'One is also allowed to take fifty marks per person. But no rings, nor even watches.'

'And what do those people do who possess valuables?'

'There is a regulation saying that everything must be given up to the German authorities. But most frequently one distributes one's valuables among one's acquaintances. It is forbidden to take them with one, or to sell them, so one at least makes presents of them.'

'You say you are allowed to take only fifty marks. But there must be Jews with capital. What happens to their money when they go abroad?'

'The same as to their valuables. There are three possibilities: to give it to the authorities, to distribute it among acquaintances, or to burn it. But it is dangerous to give it to the authorities, since Jews in Germany are forbidden to possess more than a hundred marks; the possession of more is punished with imprisonment. It is equally dangerous to distribute it; Jews are unwilling to receive it because they are afraid, and with the Germans one never knows; two out of three collaborate with the *Gestapo*. So the most practical course is the third: to burn it.'

'And do you believe that they really burn it,' added the lady. 'Last week the papers had an account of the catching of a Jew

who burnt money all through the last night before he was to leave Germany. He was said to have burnt seventy thousand marks and several thousand dollars. Instead of going to Argentina he was sent to the next world.'

Two days later I went to the house again. Jews have no right to buy cigarettes (they beg for them in the streets), so I had been asked to get them at least a few. When he had lit up, the man said:

'If only we get to Portugal! I shall smoke one after another there.'

'Our sufferings are ending', said the lady. 'We are going tomorrow at seven o'clock. Our valises are already on the station. We shall be in freedom sooner than you. Please write to us as soon as you get to Lisbon.'

They gave me their address at Buenos Aires, and we said goodbye.

After a week I learnt that my acquaintances had really left the country. The party was made up of nine hundred Jews. They had been packed into cattle-trucks, which were then sealed, and taken to Warsaw, where they were put in the Ghetto. Their baggage remained at Berlin.

I tore up the address they gave me, and shall not write to them at Buenos Aires.

Life in Berlin is hopelessly sad and gloomy. Waiting and waiting. One can wait anywhere, but in Berlin it is frightful. I feel most wretched. Anyhow there is no chance of being cheerful or of finding amusement here. There are no amusements. The only cheering thing is that the Germans are afraid of British air-raids.

But once—I suppose for the first time in Germany—I did find myself heartily amused.

One day I was having dinner at Kempinsky's in the Kurfuerstendamm. It was crowded, as usual on a Sunday. I passed through one room after another looking for a place. Suddenly a man got up from a table where a dozen persons were sitting and offered me a place there. They were all Bolivians, and had recognized the Hopeland flag which I was wearing as usual

in my coat. One of them, who had had perhaps more than was good for him, began to make a speech in fulsome praise of Hopeland and its people. Then he stood up and raised his glass to the prosperity of my 'native' country and its president. I was touched by this evidence of sympathy for 'my' country, and as the only representative of the Republic of Hopeland I had to respond. So I spoke of the traditional bonds of friendship between our peoples, and the sympathy and sincere co-operation which united them. I wanted to add that the boundary between our republics joined, rather than separated, us; but unfortunately I could not remember whether Bolivia had a common frontier with 'my' State.

Amid petty events such as these time passed. At length I went one day again to Burgstrasse to see the police president.

'You must wrap yourself in patience for at least another six months, Mr. Molenda,' he answered me.

But I had not the least inclination to wrap myself in patience As I left the police chief's private office I made up my mind to prepare a plan for getting over the Alps to Switzerland.

First of all I convinced my Consul that I must have a Swiss visa. Spain and Portugal had given me transit visas in the course of a few days, so I did not doubt that the Consul would be able to get me a Swiss one also without trouble. One day, therefore, we went together to the Schweitzerhaus. The Swiss consul-general assured us that I should get a visa in ten days. In any case I filled in forms for two passports, my own and my wife's. I know that it is a difficult undertaking, but in the last resort obstacles are made to be overcome.

If all goes well my next letter to you will be written in a fortnight or so, from Switzerland.

Twelfth Letter

ESCAPE TO FREEDOM

London,
May, 1942.

My dear friend,

After Berlin, Barcelona, Lisbon and Gibraltar, the next and final stage in our journey from Warsaw to London, our escape from captivity, is a small house in a suburb of the British capital, bearing a tablet with the inscription, 'The Royal Patriotic School.' It is a place where the English receive new arrivals from all over the world; a kind of quarantine station, where wanderers shake off the dust of various continents; and at the same time a place for meditation and confession, where intelligence officers inquire into unknown persons' souls.

I have been here for some days. When I have finished my statements, as I expect to do in a few days more, I shall come and see you. I warn you, in this last letter, not to faint when you see me. I shall ring at your door three times, and you will know that it is I, arrived from Warsaw.

It is only here, in this 'patriotic school', that I begin to realize the extraordinary character of my adventure. So I am not surprised at the hundreds of sheets of paper on which the conversations with me have been written down, and I do not complain against the English for keeping me here so long.

'It sounds like fancy raised to a higher power by hallucination,' said a British captain when writing down my statements. He speakes excellent Polish, with a strong Lwow accent. He works on me very hard. Our daily talks sometimes last till eleven p.m. I have much, very much, to tell.

In my last letter I wrote about my preparations for making my way from Berlin to Switzerland. But like so many other plans which failed of realization, so this one—luckily as it turned out—was not crowned with success.

One day I was called to the Embassy.

'Things are beginning to move,' the Ambassador told me after we had said good morning. 'I have received a telegraphic communication from Hopeland telling me that you all are to leave the country within a short time.'

'Does Germany agree to that?' I asked incredulously.

'It seems that it has already agreed. In any case I advise you to get your wife and child here at once.'

The Ambassador's words left me thunderstruck, for I had long lost hope of his successful intervention with the German authorities.

The Consul and I went together to the police chief. That dignitary, who had not long since advised me to wrap myself in patience for another six months, received us with extreme courtesy. He took my passports himself and handed them to an official whom he had called on the house telephone. He offered us cigars and discussed the difficulties of the journey to Lisbon.

'You can purchase a railway-ticket to the French-Spanish border in Berlin, but after that you will have to help yourself as best you can.'

'Of course,' I answered politely. 'But the German authorities allow us to take only ten marks each: an amount which is quite insufficient to cover the expenses of the journey through Spain and Portugal, particularly with a small child.'

'Your consular officials must help you on the way.'

'Could we not induce the *Devisenstelle* to permit the export of somewhat larger sum?' the Consul asked.

'That, I am afraid, is at present quite illegal. The best solution would be for you to obtain authorization to travel from Berlin to Lisbon by air. But only *Reichsdeutsche* are allowed to travel thus.'

The official brought back the passports. The exit visas were all in order. The police chief, taking leave of us, wished me a good journey.

I now turned all my efforts to the storming of the next strongpoint in Berlin: the *Lufthansa* authority. As the Consul had no confidence in the attempt, which he regarded as fore-

doomed to failure, I applied to the Embassy. The latter addressed a letter to Ribbentrop's Ministry, which I took there myself, and to which I begged for an immediate answer. Two days later an Embassy official notified me by telephone:

'The *Lufthansa* people have received intructions. Please go to their office in Wilhelmstrasse and pay for your seats.'

The way now opened straight and easy before us. None the less, right until the end surprises happened, which prevented me from feeling safe and at ease even for a moment. The day after paying for our places in the plane I telegraphed to my friends to send my wife to Berlin. But one hour later I sent a second telegram to hold up her journey. For in the meantime I had read how two Polish women had been caught trying to get across the border with forged passes. A special tribunal had condemned them to death, and the sentence had been immediately carried out. Under these conditions I could not risk sending my wife and child with forged passes. And how fortunate it was that I did not, even if my wife had got through successfully!

One day I received in my hotel two written summonses, for myself and my wife, to come to the headquarters of the *Gestapo* in Berlin. I did not know what this meant, and felt pretty uncomfortable. But the Consul strongly urged me to go at once. So I merely pressed him to find out first what it was all about. It was merely the usual interrogation by the secret police of persons applying to leave the country. I went to the large, gloomy building in Albertstrasse. I was questioned for hours. Everything interested them; what I had done from the day of my birth up to the present moment. From begining to end I told them nothing but lies. I had by this time reached such a pitch of facility in telling lies about myself that neither of the two *Gestapo* officials who cross-questioned me had any doubt that I was speaking the exact truth. I mentioned the most fantastic details about my family over there in Hopeland—and they made notes of everything, with addresses and all details.

They summoned my wife several times, and I answered each time that she had left Berlin for a short time, and that I expected her to return any day. (She was registered along with

me as permanently resident in Berlin.) But I was dreadfully afraid of what she might say when questioned, for I knew that she would not be able to wade through the river of questions, all of which had to be answered with lies. One incautious statement on her part might shipwreck the whole masterly construction on which we were designing to float away on the waters of freedom. So I purposely kept her in Poland until the very last minute.

Late in the evening, only a few hours before the departure of the passenger plane from the Tempelhof airfield, the express from Warsaw arrived at the Friedrichstrasse station, and my wife and Kubus alighted. In Berlin for the second time. This time they had passed the boundary between the *General-Gouvernement* and the Reich without mishap, although with a forged pass. The guard who examined their baggage asked the passengers what they had in their valises. My wife had to tell the truth, since the things might be opened and her statements tested. So she said:

'I have a few pounds of sausages, half a ham, and six pounds of butter.'

The passengers burst out laughing, and the guard laughed loudest of all; a Silesian he was, who spoke Polish.

'You have a good war-time humour,' he said, and did not trouble to examine the contents of her valises. He supposed she had made a good joke, and went on to the next person. But my wife really was bringing what she said, in case she could get no food in Berlin. For she did not expect we should be leaving the Reich so quickly.

At last came the long-awaited moment: early in the morning we packed our traps. Someone knocked at our room door. It was the Consul.

'I shall drive you to the place.'

A few minutes later we were rolling along the still sleepy, frosty streets to Wilhelmstrasse, where a bus was waiting before the *Lufthansa* office to take us to the airfield.

Senor Navarro da Correta kissed Kubus heartily and gave her a packet of sweets for the journey. Squeezing my hand, he said:

'*Au revoir* in Hopeland. Only don't lose your way.' And smiled a strange smile, looking me suspiciously in the eyes.

'I won't,' I promised him. 'And thank you very much for all your kindness. *Mil gracias* ! *Tantas gracias* ! *Hasta la vista* !'

'*Hasta la vista* ! replied the Consul.

My lessons with Lieutenant Matysa had at least enabled me to take leave of the Consul in my 'mother' tongue.

Lieutenant Matysa ! A strange man. I saw him the day before we left. That evening, strolling along the darkened Unter den Linden, he spoke to me in a quite different way from hitherto. He spoke of Poland, of Silesia, and of the Silesians. He remembered his child's prayer, and suddenly, in a choked whisper, he said:

'I know what you are thinking of me; but as we shall not see one another again, I want to tell you that in my veins flows Polish blood.'

The airfield was covered with a thick mist. The buildings were invisible from the windows of the waiting-room. Nor were any planes to be seen. We should have started at half past seven, and were already an hour and a half late. Kubus was cold, so she stamped with her boots and said, let us go by tram. At last the mist began to disperse. Soon we climbed the steps to the body of the plane. The engines hummed. We stretched ourselves at our ease in arm-chairs. A minute more, and we were looking down on Berlin.

All was left behind and underneath.

Kubus is a child of the air age. When we were already flying through the clouds she asked:

'Are we going to drop some bombs now ?'

Our route led through Stuttgart, Lyons, Marseilles, Barcelona and Madrid. At each of these cities there was a stop, the longest, of over twelve hours, at Barcelona. The most magnificent section of our journey from Berlin to Lisbon was undoubtedly the passage over the Pyrenees.

That same day in the evening I went for a stroll through the streets and alleys and taverns of brilliantly illuminated Barcelona. For the first time for ever so long I saw a city with the street lamps lit and neon lights shining; a city full of grapes,

bananas, and oranges; a city without any Germans. In a quiet alley I went into a small restaurant where music could be heard. At the tables, amid jugs of wine, sat cheery Spaniards. Some of them were singing, others talking, and others laughing boisterously.

When I returned to my hotel at midnight I remembered a restaurant where I had been not long ago, a long way from Barcelona. A restaurant at Warsaw, in Wspolna Street. There were a lot of people there too. Sometimes an eminent singer would stand by the piano and sing songs. Different kinds of songs, mostly sentimental. One of them began: 'I know a little street in Barcelona. . . . '

But from that Barcelona tavern everyone went safely home. Whereas from the Warsaw one not all were sure of doing so. One evening when I was there four Germans suddenly entered, with steel helmets and fixed bayonets. The whole place became quiet. All the more clearly resounded the voices of the Germans, examining the identity-papers of particular persons. Some of these persons they took away with them. Then the pianist sat down at the piano again, and the hum of voices broke out once more. Such things are normal features of restaurant life at Warsaw.

The Catalonian capital has not yet recovered from the wounds it received in the recent civil war. It is full of bomb and shell marks. On the outskirts, where the Catalonian workers defended themselves most desperately, there are many ruined houses. More than one of them were hit by German bombs. The German airmen practised here for the destruction of Warsaw.

Barcelona lies far from the war fronts, but, like the whole of Spain, it lives with the consciousness of war, and perhaps suffers more even than the warring countries from its effects. There is no bread to be had even in the fashionable restaurant of the Ritz Hotel. In the streets are crowds of begging children. The newspapers are full of accounts of the Blue Division sent to the eastern front.

Next day at ten a.m. the aircraft started from the field at Barcelona.

This time we did not fly very high, over the hills of Spain. The country looked like a desert, uninhabited and very melancholy The soil lies fallow, burnt up by the heat of the southern sun.

At Madrid we stopped for two hours. But the airfield is so far from the city that we had to give up the idea of seeing the Spanish capital. In the waiting-room of the Madrid airfield there hang portraits of Franco, Mussolini, and Hitler, and in the windows are small flags with the swastika . . .

When our plane took off, the Spaniards extended their right hands in salute. Presumably the regulations require them to do it. Three hours later we landed at Lisbon, which is outside the range even of the 'German greeting.'

The airfield at Lisbon is a centre of air communications between various countries, belligerent and neutral. Our plane, marked with large swastikas, stood a few yards from a British craft. A common corridor gives access to the offices of various lines; the British and the German find themselves side by side.

Lisbon! A fairy world. The first few days I felt so fine, so splendid, as almost to be ill. The whole time I seemed to be in a dream, where nothing was as it seemed to be. In front of my window a tall and spreading palm-tree rocked in the breeze. The splendid Avenida da Liberdade was lit up by a thousand lamps and coloured neon lights. On the table was a dish full of oranges, pineapples, grapes, bananas, and dates. But if anyone banged the door, I always felt a nervous shock. A habit which would not pass very soon.

Lisbon is one of the numerous places in the world where Poles are gathered. After only a day or two the news of my arrival had spread. Not that I was well-known, or that my name conveyed anything particular, but simply that I was a Pole who had arrived from the country. A course of lectures was arranged, which I gave in the evenings at the Polish club, whose quarters were in the basement of a large house in Rodrigues Sampaio Street. They were attended even by Poles from outside the city, thirsting for news of home. What a joy it was to be able loudly and openly to tell a public meeting of Poles the

truth about their country and the Germans ! At the end of the front row sat an elderly gentleman with a long moustache, wearing a military cloak : a former Minister of the Republic. He covered his face with his hands, and then presently took out his handkerchief and wiped his tear-stained cheeks. At the very end sat a lady in a large bronze-coloured hat, who gazed at me as though hypnotized, paying no attention to the tears which flowed down her face.

Lisbon is supposed to be one of the most attractive cities in the world. It is new and splendid. A city of modern white houses, palm-trees, sunshine, wealth, and care-free life. The very long and wide Avenida da Liberdade, shaded by a double row of palms, is said to be the handsomest street in the world. The beauty of Lisbon consists mainly in its picturesque and hilly situation. Through the centre of the city runs a single, straight and central avenue. Hundreds of streets, lanes and alleys climb uphill. In the very heart of the city one reaches one street from another by means of a lift. In some very steep streets the tramcars have specially built undercarriages. The new Lisbon, rebuilt after the earthquake, which had almost completely destroyed it, is only forty or fifty years old. That is too short a period to make it perfect in every respect. One has to look at the city monuments with a certain allowance for this fact. Anyhow the Portuguese themselves do not like them.

It is only four hours by air from the capital of little Portugal to that of great Spain. But there is an enormous difference between life in the one country and life in the other. Portugal is really far removed from the war, and if it feels it, it is only in a favourable sense. The war is enriching it. At Lisbon imposing buildings and whole quarters are springing up under one's eyes. There is as much employment for the bank officials in the Rua Aurea as for the waiters in the great amusement places in Praca Rossio or the Avenida da Liberdade.

Involuntarily one thinks with envy : 'And meanwhile Warsaw. . .' I sat for hours under the palms in the spring sun, looking at the silver cascades of water overflowing from bottomless stone pitchers. My thoughts were in Warsaw. I leant over the balustrade of the hump-backed little bridge, looking

down into the crystal-clear water and watching the movements of the goldfish.

Lisbon and Warsaw. Here, a flourishing city, plenty of work, and a gay life; there, ruins, slavery, and a melancholy stagnation. Here, the sunny, singing Avenida da Liberdade; there, the gloomy caverns of Aleje Szucha.

I meditated on my country, and my nearest and dearest, whom I had left behind, where the Germans rule, with Death as their adjutant.

Life in occupied Poland, German slavery, the whole nightmare tragedy of Poland—all that in our distant Country seemed already almost normal and natural, but here, in the perspective of time and space, it began to show up in its true shape and colours. It was only here, when I had begun to breathe the air of freedom, when I had begun to feel almost ill at ease in the atmosphere of personal safety, that I was able to look at present day Polish life as a whole, and gathering together its separate fragments and uniting diverse events, to succumb to the temptation of drawing fundamental conclusions.

The German occupation, I recalled, was now in its third year. During that time the Germans had murdered—according to the calculations of underground workers—more than a million Poles. Some would put the figure at a million and a half. The Russians have murdered fewer than the Germans, but on the other hand have deported into the interior of the country, principally to Siberia, over a million Poles, of whom the majority have perished of hunger and cold. The German account is not yet made up. For in their concentration camps (of which there are about seventy) and prisons there are over a million more Poles, who quickly die and make room for others. In the Reich, engaged in the hardest compulsory labour, which exhausts the last remains of their physical strength, are a million and a half Poles. In the prisoners-of-war camps, and in the ranks of the German army, in which they were forcibly enrolled there are about seven hundred thousand Poles. Accordingly, the number by which the population of Poland has been diminished exceeds five million. In a State of thirty-five millions,

of which twenty-seven were Poles, this is an enormous and alarming percentage, and all the more so, because the victims of German crimes are principally drawn from the educated classes and the young generation.

The German occupation has brought Poland nothing but devastation and death. The death rate increases month by month, as the population become impoverished and epidemics spread. Before the war the birth rate in Poland was one of the highest in the world; whereas now the death rate surpasses all records. In Warsaw in the first two years of the occupation 32 per cent of children under five died. The German machinery for starving the Polish people works with ever-increasing speed. The number of revolutions per minute of its wheels grows greater from hour to hour. If the Polish nation should have to be ground in the mill of occupation for a lengthy period, say ten years, it would be completely destroyed by starvation in the end. The graveyard is all that awaits us. And if a few million peasants and workers survived, they would be only such as passed through the sieve of German selection. Not only the evidence and traces of our nine-hundred-year-old culture would vanish. We should perish as a nation. Let us have no illusions that it might be otherwise. Perhaps we do not fully realize the situation. But most certainly we feel instinctively the danger overhanging us: the greatest in the whole of our history. Therefore the *whole* of the Polish nation is in the fight. An unequal, and perhaps even a hopeless fight. The attitude of the country towards the enemy is certainly not a result of our fine chivalrous traditions, or of the aptness for conspiracy taught us by those excellent teachers, the organizers of our national insurrections, and later the leaders of the socialist movement. It is a direct result of the instinct of self-preservation. Even children take their part in the Polish underground movement—and pay highly for it with their blood. Poland has become a volcano, in the interior of which boils a fountain of revolutionary lava. The craters of that volcano will open if all our calculations are disappointed and the nation finds itself entirely *alone*. In this tragic case would follow the last, deadly settlement with the enemy, a settlement in which the whole nation would share.

The underground struggle which is going on at present has the one aim of systematically weakening the enemy and preparing the community to rise in insurrection at the proper moment.

A healthy national instinct united us at the outbreak of the war. And when the gloomy night of occupation descended upon us, the idea of the freedom of the nation and the independence of the state cemented the community into a granite-hard block. Old pre-war political and party convictions, class and religious differences, were all crystallized into this one granite block, called the POLISH NATION: a name which took the place of all previous signs, distinguishing marks, coloured shirts, and programmes.

The spirit of combat has penetrated all Poles—not only those in Poland.

It is not the search for adventure, or convenience, or ambition which drives Poles into the ranks of the armies, wherever they rise. It is instinct which bids them fight for their nation in its mortal danger. Someday, when we have attained a happy future, poets and writers will create epics of the Polish soldier, who by various paths found his way to join the exiled Polish armies.

At Lisbon I made the acquaintance of a twenty-year-old youth who was going to join the army. But how, and how long, he had been making his way! He had fought in September, 1939, as a volunteer, and after that in France. Then he passed into German captivity. He escaped, and went on foot through Germany and France, begging his way. Then, alone, without a guide, he crossed the Pyrenees. On a mountain pass he met only a single man—a Polish soldier like himself, who slept the everlasting sleep. (In his pocket was just one thing: the photograph of a young girl, inscribed in Polish 'to my dearest'.) In Spain he fell into the hands of the police, and was sent to prison, and then to a camp at Miranda. He escaped again. And had just reached Lisbon.

He wanted to join the air force, he told me. And he wanted to make his first operational flight to Berlin, for in September, 1939, a bomb had killed his mother at Warsaw.

There are very many such Polish avengers, who despite all difficulties and dangers have traversed thousands of kilometres

in order to reach the Polish armed forces and fight against the enemy. They pass dozens of frontiers, ford rivers, cross lofty mountains, pass through prisons and concentration camps, drawn like moths to the light: the light of the Polish army. What magic magnetic power that Army has! What a hot fire of patriotism burns in the hearts of Poles!

Future poets and writers will also doubtless write of the Wandering Pole, who, driven from his father's house, sought refuge through the world. The September evacuation is still operative. The same men who in September, 1939, crowded all the Polish roads and lanes, escaping from the foe, are still moving, still seeking a halting-place.

Lisbon is one of the stages on their way. Ships under various flags sail hence to various quarters of the world. There is none which sails without Poles on board. Sometimes Polish is heard spoken in the port even more freely than Portuguese. Whenever I waved goodbye to a departing vessel, I was overcome by a strange emotion. Here were Poles departing for the distant places of the earth. But they went as though they would soon be returning again. They took leave of those they left behind without any deep emotion. 'Till we meet again! Write when you have time.' They go out into the world as refugees, banished from their native land, but not as emigrants. I never heard that word in the port. Everyone of them knows that he is going only temporarily.

Their house has fallen in ruins. Some have remained in the smouldering embers, others have scattered in all directions. Will these wanderers someday return, when the Polish house is built anew?

My departure from Poland was made successfully in the strangest conditions. When I now, in London, reflect on the multitude of events and paradoxes with which my path of escape to freedom was strewn, I am forced to believe in the existence of good luck: of great and incredible good luck.

It supported me till the last minute of my stay in Berlin. It was always behind me that everything collapsed.

One day at Lisbon I received a registered letter from the Hopeland Consulate at Berlin. Senor Navarro da Correta wrote to me :

'Two days after your departure from Berlin police officers called upon me. They showed me proofs that you obtained Hopeland documents illegally, since you are a Polish citizen and your real name is quite different. After comparing the photograph of you which is at the Consulate with that which is in the possession of the *Gestapo*, it is perfectly clear to me that you are the person in question. Although I could quite understand your proceedings, I cannot even suppose that you deceived us. I shall therefore be grateful if you will send me an explanation of this affair.'

I answered at once :

'I am deeply hurt by your letter. How could you suspect me of deceiving the Consulate ? The name supposed to be my true name is in fact false. My true name is simply Svatopelko Venceslao Molenda. For the rest, I will gladly tell you full details of this matter after the war.'

I should dearly have liked to write a letter to the Consul telling the whole truth. But I decided to continue to play the role I had taken upon myself.

Even before I left Berlin I had promised myself to thank the authorities of 'my' country and reveal the secret of my nationality only when I should have landed on free soil.

At last came the time for parting from Lisbon. I did not want to wait weeks, and perhaps months, for a place in the plane. So we chose to travel by sea. On a moonlight night the little four-ton Belgian cargo-steamer *René-Paul* sailed from a quiet little port in the south of Portugal. On board were some fifty or sixty Poles, who after various trials and a short rest in sunny Portugal were at last approaching their goal. They said farewell to the beautiful and happy country with Polish songs, whose melody died away among the white houses and the palms of the sleeping port-town. We slept in our clothes and life-belts. On deck Poles, French and Belgians, armed with machine-guns, took turns to watch. Next evening, when

the sun was blood-red in the sky and the shadow of the cliffs of the African coast lay on the sea, we reached Gibraltar. Among the numberless vessels lying at anchor in the bay were two proudly flying the Polish flag. They were the passenger-ships *Sobieski* and *Batory*.

The Belgian sailors of the *René Paul* recognized them and said to the Poles:

'There are your passenger-boats.'

Field-glasses passed from hand to hand. The Poles were filled with pride. With joyous eyes they looked at the white and red ensigns.

'Is the second one, there on the left, really the *Batory*?' asked the Belgians. 'The Germans announced some time ago that the *Batory* had been torpedoed.'

The *René Paul* came slowly into harbour. All the Poles gathered on the cargo deck, with their faces towards Gibraltar, and sang loudly, loud enough to be heard on the two Polish vessels:

'*Hej kto Polak, na bagnety*'!

We found room for ourselves on the *Sobieski*, and waited at Gibraltar many days and nights for a convoy. At last one morning I was waked by the vessel's cold and heavy rocking. We were already several leagues from Gibraltar. Far, far away the dark outline of the land was still visible. Beside us flew several gulls. Before us moved a white destroyer, rolling heavily. From time to time it communicated with the *Sobieski* by twinkling Morse signals.

The Ocean! We were now hundreds of leagues from Gibraltar, yet it constantly seemed to me, when I looked over the right side, that I saw Gibraltar under its black, humped rock, with its square blocks of yellow houses, and on the left the mountainous coast of Spain, and still further to the left the dark pyramids of Africa.

One day we noticed a gull flying alongside the ship. Gulls had long since ceased to accompany us, so no one could explain where this single one in the broad ocean had come from. We saw it in the afternoon, and then again at dusk. When I went on deck again next morning, it was still there. At Gibraltar

we had grown accustomed to gulls being lazy and comfortable. So we were now the more surprised. It disappeared only two days later.

Throughout our voyage the Ocean was calm and quiet and, one may say, dignified. The sailors recalled other voyages over the same course. In stormy weather the waves might be forty-five feet in height. The vessel at such times is like a husk, thrown from crest to crest, leaning over to one side or the other, dipping now its bows and now its stern into the water: a plaything of the arrogant, malicious and powerful waves. But we had good luck. The sea was very calm and very gracious. It gave the impression of being lazy and bored. The vessel rocked, but only enough to remind us we were sailing the Ocean.

We sailed round the west and north coasts of Ireland and—after nine days—cast anchor in a Scottish harbour.

Now, in the London 'Patriotic School', the British officer with the Lwow accent is talking with me. His custom is always the same: when I go to his room he offers me a cigarette, and says:

'Let us go on!'

THE END.

INTRODUCTION TO THE POLISH EDITION.

THIS is a book about my native country, as I saw it and as I lived in it under German occupation. It is a book about the occupation and the occupants ; about the way in which the Poles are enduring tyranny, fighting for liberation, dying, and—finally—believing in the coming of a fresh Resurrection.

The book is a reconstruction of memories, for the most part my own personal memories. It is composed of a series of 'unsent' letters to a friend. At one time, in Warsaw, I dreamt of finding a way of sending out, particularly to friends, truthful letters on the situation in Poland and in our lives. Unfortunately those dreams could only be realized now, when I am no longer a captive in German hands. These are therefore letters imagined at home, but set on paper here, abroad.

Everything here recalled is true. Security considerations have required only the suppression of the real names of people who are mentioned, and of the details of underground activity. None of the facts or events chronicled in the pages of these letters is either imaginary or exaggerated.

The book has not been designed to give a presentation of the whole of our life under the occupation, or of our conspiracies and struggles. It sets forth the observations, experiences and reflections of a single individual. Particularly in the field of underground activity I have confined myself to the recollection and description of the small group of friends with whom I worked and of the secret periodical of which I was editor. (The title of this periodical has of course been changed.)

My departure from Poland was accomplished in decidedly original circumstances, for at the very time when agents of the *Gestapo* at Warsaw were doing all they could to discover where I lived, a German plane was carrying me with my wife and child from the airfield at Berlin into the wide world outside. I have accordingly devoted some space to the description of my escape from German hands. I have thought it necessary

to do so in order to emphasize the little-known fact that the *Gestapo*, though powerful, is also stupid. To this stupidity of the criminals wearing the death's-head some few individuals owe their lives when thousands of Poles were murdered; and of these few I am one.

When this book finally appears, Poland will be undergoing a great change of scene in its great tragedy. The Germans, driven out by other invaders, will be evacuating our country, leaving behind them fields of graves and forests of crosses. For the Poles it will mean only a change in the uniform of the occupying forces.

Events in this war develop with unparalleled rapidity. Blood shed yesterday is today coagulated and forgotten. What was yesterday of general interest, written and spoken of throughout the world, is today dull and out of date.

So this book of mine is likewise in a sense out of date. It is like an echo of the cry of occupied Poland, but it is not that cry itself. None the less, it is worth while to preserve at least this echo. It is worth while particularly now, when more and more is being said in the World of Freedom about the existence of good, honest Germans.

May this book furnish evidence of the truth, that the Germans are a nation of murderers. And let it also illustrate the fact that Poland in September, 1939, acted like a lunatic, sacrificing herself in defence of the freedom of the nations who desire to be free.

What are the consequences of this madness I have endeavoured here to show, giving a cross-section, as it were, of life as it is lived in our country.

WACLAW SLEDZINSKI

London, January, 1944.

25,—

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Crim. Kod; Sledniški ut.