

Proletarians of all countries – unite!

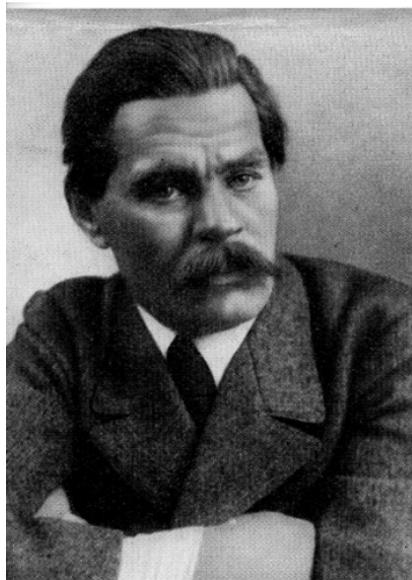
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## **A Tribute to Maxim Gorky**

- I. *Funeral Orations on the Red Square* by V. M. Molotov, Alexei Tolstoy,  
Andre Gide & Gyorgy Lukács
  - II. *The Stormy Petrel & Hatred* by A. M Gorky
  - III. *Gorky's Proclamation to the French Workers* (1906)
  - IV. *The Socialist Humanism of Maxim Gorky* by Eugenia Knipovich
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## Maxim Gorky 1868-1936: *Eulogies from his funeral on the Red Square*\*

*Translated from the German by S. D. Kogan*

### V. M. Molotov

*On Behalf of the Council of People's  
Commissars of the USSR and the  
Central Committee of the CPSU*

*Comrades:*

Bidding farewell today to Maxim Gorky, we, his friends and countless admiring readers, feel as if some brilliant particle of our own life has departed forever into the past. Millions of persons are experiencing this feeling. From the very depth of his spirit, Gorky stood close to us, the people of his epoch, to whom he gave so much in the writings of a genius, in his boundless love for the toilers and his struggle for the freedom of man and by the example of his entire, splendidly unique life.

In order to become the great writer we know, Gorky had during the course of long years to fight a stubborn struggle to break away from heavy need and sorrow



beginning in his early childhood. Not a few times was he thrown to the depths in

which many talented and gifted man has perished. For the sake of daily bread, he had to labor much for big and little capitalists—as painter, baker, clerk, stevedore, hired man.

None of the great writers of our country, ay! and of other countries, knew so closely the life of “the depths” of the people under capitalism. None of them personally experienced so much of the ferocity and infamy of the masters and exploiters. None of them had even seen with his own eyes so many people tortured by slave labor and broken under the yoke of capital as our Gorky, in whom all this suffering was forged into irreconcilable and revolutionary hatred towards the capitalist system, and boundless faith in the liberating power of Communism.

That is why the workers, all toilers see in Gorky *themselves, their own man, their own life and fate, their future*. That is why Gorky was loved, is loved and will be loved so much by the toilers of our own and other countries. Gorky created immortal characters—the people of his times.

His artistic figures of the capitalist, the rapacious profiteer, the fusty philistine of the provincial backwaters, the selfish, parasitic bourgeois intellectual and other gentlemen of old pre-revolutionary Russia are indelibly stamped in one's memory. The proletarian writer Maxim Gorky looked into their very souls and revealed in his works their very nature as oppressors of the masses of the people.

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\* From *International Literature*, No. 8 August 1936.

He gave many vivid and forceful examples of the depths of nothingness to which the brutal capitalist system had reduced some “rolling stone” off-spring of bourgeois sections of society. At the same time Gorky, as a magnificent artist of the proletariat, drew remarkable portraits of freedom-loving and selfless people who would not accept oppression and the slime of life; he gave the best and most expressive pictures of proletarian revolutionaries, picture burning with the warmth of the sincere feel of an artist-genius. Maxim Gorky has millions of admiring readers. Their ranks will grow and grow for a long time to come.

In his powerful influence on Russian literature, Gorky stands with such giants as Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy, as the one who best carried on in our times their great traditions. The influence of Gorky’s artistic writings on the destinies of our Revolution is more direct and more forceful than the influence of any other of our writers. Therefore it is precisely Gorky who is the genuine begetter of proletarian, socialist literature in our land and in the eyes of the toilers of the whole world.

Maxim Gorky came in his own special way as a great artist into the ranks of warriors for Communism. He came into our ranks even before the revolutionary uplift of 1905, but he came with the already unfolded banners of a storm petrel of the Revolution. Gorky began his revolutionary literary life in an epoch of cumulative revolutionary outburst and soon stood completely and organically on the platform of the working class, became a close friend of the great Lenin in the struggle for Communism. It reflects the grandeur of Gorky that his

shining mind, closeness to the people, self-sacrificing and gigantic labor upon the mastery of the cultural achievements of human culture made him a supreme friend of the toilers and majestic inspiration in the struggle for the cause of Communism.

To his last breath Gorky lived as one in thought and feeling with those who with such enthusiasm are now building the new socialist society under the leadership of the Party of Lenin and Stalin. To the last day of his life his eyes sparkled with the fire of unyielding struggle against enemies of the toilers, the fascists and all other oppressors, the assassins of culture and the instigators of war. Every success of the toilers in our country, the successes of the Stakhanovites, the new forms of activity among women, the increase of the harvest and of labor productivity, the exposure of sorties and plots on the part of the enemy, the strengthening of the defense of the country, and above all, the cultural growth of the masses, the growth of literature and art made him as happy as an ardent youth and a venerable sage. Gorky’s example teaches us much.

Gorky was a *literary genius*. Literary men, artists in words, may learn from this example the power which words have when they serve in the struggle for the happiness of man and of humanity, when these words reach the hearts of men and of peoples.

Gorky was a *great son of a great people*. For simple folk, for toilers, the example of Gorky shows that our people, like other peoples, is rich in glorious talents which formerly were able only in exceptional circumstances to rise from

the depths but for which there is now open a free path to full flowering, to victories and to glory. Gorky was a *supreme friend of the toilers and an inspirer of the struggle for Communism*. Is any further proof needed that humanity's finest men, those who have reached the heights of culture and of deep comprehension of the secret dreams of the peoples about their happiness, give their energies supremely and without reserve to the cause of Communism, and in so doing find their highest satisfaction? This in itself shows that the cause of Communism is on the way to its full triumph. Since Lenin, the death of Gorky is the heaviest loss for our country and for humanity. Our strength is in this: the people of the Soviet land to whom Gorky devoted all his tremendous talent and his mighty heart has already risen up on powerful feet, has provided space for the development of its own immeasurable energies and talents, and by this very fact is triumphantly incarnating the hopes and dream of the best representatives of humanity.

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## Song of the Stormy Petrel (1901)

By A. M. Gorky

Over dull grey wastes of water  
winds are massing darkening storm-clouds.  
There 'twixt clouds and surging sea-waves  
proudly soars the Stormy Petrel,  
darting sheer like jet-black lightening.  
Now he skims the foam with wing-tip,  
now—and arrow shooting cloudward,—  
he cries boldly—clouds hear gladness  
in that cry so fierce and daring.  
In that crying—thirst for tempest!  
Mighty of anger, flame of passion,  
certainty of final triumph  
hear the storm clouds in that crying.  
Sea-gulls moan in fear of tempest—  
moan and whirl above the waters  
fain to bury deep their terror  
underneath the surging billows.  
And the grebes, too, moan in panic,—  
They, denied the joys of battle,  
fear the raucous blasts of thunder.  
Foolish penguins hide fat bodies  
timidly behind cliff-crag...  
And alone the Stormy Petrel  
soars in freedom, proud and dauntless  
over foaming grey sea waters.  
Ever darker, ever lower  
sink the clouds down to the sea-waves,  
billows wail, toss ever higher  
crests to meet the breaking thunder.  
Thunder crashes. White with fury  
waves are wrangling with the storm-wind.  
But the wind in hatred seizes  
herds of waves in ruthless clutches  
crashes them against the cliff-crag  
shatters solid emerald masses  
into foamy dust and spraylets.  
Prouder cries the Stormy Petrel,  
darting sheer like jet-black lightening,  
pierces arrow-like the storm clouds,  
grazes sea-foam with his pinions.  
Now he hovers like a demon,—  
black and dauntless tempest-demon,—  
he is mocking, he is sobbing...  
He is mocking at the storm-clouds  
from sheer gladness he is sobbing.  
In the thunder,—wary demon,—  
Growing weariness he senses,  
He is sure, no cloud will ever  
hide the sun, no cloud ever.  
Winds are whining...thunder crashing...  
Blue with flame the clouds are blazing  
over dark abysmal waters.  
Sea-waves catch swift darts of lightening  
quench them in their deeps unfathomed.  
Just like writhing fiery serpents,  
swift reflections of those lightnings,  
disappear into the sea-depths.  
Storm! The storm will soon come bursting!  
Cries the dauntless Petrel soaring  
twixt the sea-roar and the lightening;  
cries the harbinger of triumph:  
Let it break with greater fury!

*Translated from the Russian  
by R. Magidoff and Herbert Marshall*

From *International Literature* No. 9,  
September 1936

## Alexei Tolstoy

*For the Union of Soviet Writers*

The artist who deeply and truly reflects revolutionary epochs of history—such as Gorky—the creator who leads humanity to the realization of a liberated world—such as Lenin—Great men do not have two dates of their existence in history—birth and death, but only one: their birth.



The date of birth of Gorky the artist was in the nineties. The young Peshkov gathered in the magic focus of his soul all the explosive forces of the pre-revolutionary epoch; collected all the wrath of the humiliated and the exploited, all the wearied expectations, all the passions for which there was no vent. He felt on his own shoulders the iron strength of the fists of the merchants, the philistines and the police. Not a few times did he fight, madly, alone, against the many, in

**Great men do not have two dates of their existence in history—birth and death, but only one: their birth.**

defense of the injured and insulted. And so, in the nineties—in those terrible years of oppression and tense silence—this tall, thin, stooping, blue-eyed youth with a fierce and fiery soul—raised the banner of revolt. Whoever has a living heart, he said, must shatter to bits the cursed torpor of the philistines, march out to the open spaces and light the bonfires of a free life! With broad strokes of the brush, with the precipitousness of genius, he drew the stupid brutal face of the exploiting class. There you are—the Russian, insatiable mask besmirched with Lenten oil. Feast your eyes upon it!

I was still a boy but I remember the impression of a tremendous explosion echoing through the whole world. In the mould of bourgeois life, which had seemed so durable, a breach had been forced to which streamed all who had living hearts. In a year or so, the name of Gorky traveled throughout the world. He became a forerunner of the Revolution, its storm petrel.

Nearness to Lenin crystallized his revolt, gave his art an impulse towards clearly marked and concrete aims. Nearness to Stalin crystallized his work: apart from his own creative work he took upon himself the tremendous and weighty task of the leadership of Soviet Literature. With undying ardor he led Soviet literature to world heights. He led Soviet literature along its only path—realism, culture, truth, with deep compensation of all the multiformity of our Soviet life. His guiding idea was Lenin's formula: "The very aspiration to comprehend all saves us from stagnation." Such is the path of Soviet literature, the aspiraton to comprehend as much as possible, as deeply as

possible, as truthfully as possible, our complex, creative, flourishing, unprecedented life. On guard over this striving stood and stands Gorky, deathless.

Comrades, not with a funeral march but with the triumphant song of life let us greet the great artist who lives with us, and continues to help us with his unfading word to carry high and still higher the torch of Soviet art. Let Gorky live eternally in our hearts and in our works!

## Andre Gide

*For the International Association of Writers for the Defense of Culture*

The death of Maxim Gorky throws a cloud of gloom over not only the Soviet land but over the entire world. That great voice of the Russian people which Gorky made us hear found echoes in the most distant



countries. Thus it is not my personal sorrow which I have to express here but that of French literature, of European culture, of the culture of the whole universe. Culture has been for a long time the appanage of a privileged class. To be cultured it was necessary to have leisure; one class of people labored in order to let a very small number of idlers enjoy life, educate themselves. The garden of culture, of fine letters and the

arts was permitted not to the most intelligent, not to the most able but only to those since childhood had been sheltered from need. Doubtless it may be pointed out that intelligence did not accompany riches, than in French literature a Molière, a Diderot, a Rousseau emerged from the people; but their readers remained people of leisure. When the great October Revolution lifted up the deepest masses of the people, there were those who said, in the West, who repeated, who ever believed that this wave from the deeps would submerge culture. When it ceased to be a privilege, was not culture in danger?

It is in reply to this question that writers of all countries have grouped themselves with a very clear feeling of urgent duty: yes, culture is menaced, but the danger for it is by no means from the revolutionary and liberative forces; it comes on the contrary from persons who try to subjugate these forces and break them, to put reason itself under a bushel. What menaces culture is the fascism, the narrow and artificial nationalism which have nothing in common with true patriotism, profound love of ones country. What menaces culture is the war to which these hateful nationalisms fatally and necessarily lead.

I had to preside at the International Conference in Defense of Culture which is now being held in London. The grievous news of Maxim Gorky's health called me hurriedly to Moscow. On Red Square which has been the scene of so many glorious and tragic events, in front of this Lenin Mausoleum towards which so many eyes are turned, I take it upon myself to declare boldly in the name of the writers assembled in London and in my own name: it is the great international revolutionary forces which

assume the care and the duty of defending, protecting and giving fresh luster to culture. The fate of the culture is linked in our minds with the very destiny of the USSR. We shall defend it.

Just as, apart from the particular interests of each people, a great common need draws the proletarian classes of all lands together, so does there arise, apart from each national literature, a general culture common at the same time to all nations; a culture made of all that is truly living and human in the particular literature of each country, "National in form, socialist in content" as Stalin has told us. I have often written that by being most specific that a writer attains the most general interest, because it is in showing himself most personal that he reveals himself, by the very fact, as most human. No Russian writer was more Russian than Maxim Gorky. No Russian writer was more universally listened to.

I was present yesterday when the people passed before Gorky's catafalque. I could not cease from contemplating this number of women, children, toilers of all kinds for whom Maxim Gorky was a spokesman and a friend. I saw with sorrow that these very people in any other country than the USSR were those who would have been forbidden access to this hall; precisely those who in front of the gardens of culture come up against the terrible: Private Property,

**I saw with sorrow that these very people in any other country than the USSR were those who would have been forbidden access to this hall; precisely those who in front of the gardens of culture come up against the terrible: Private Property, Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted. And tears came to my eyes as I reflected that what for them seemed so natural seemed, for me, the Westerner, still so extraordinary.**

Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted. And tears came to my eyes as I reflected that what for them seemed so natural seemed, for me, the Westerner, still so extraordinary. And I thought also that there was here, in the USSR, a very surprising new phenomenon: up till now in all the countries of the world the writer of worth has almost always been more or less a revolutionary, a fighter, in a manner more or less conscious and more or less veiled, he thought and wrote against something. He refused to approve. He brought to mind and heart a ferment of insubordination and revolt. Those in the seats of the mighty, the authorities, tradition, if they had been more clear-sighted would not have hesitated to designate him as the enemy!

Today in the USSR, for the first time the situation is quite different: in being a revolutionary the writer is no longer an oppositionist. All to the contrary, he answers the wishes of the great number, of the entire people and, what is most admirable, of its leaders. There is thus as it were a disappearance of the problem, or rather a transportation so novel that the mind at first remains disconcerted. And this will be not the least of the glories of the USSR and of those prodigious days which continue still to shake our old world—to have made rise in a new sky, along with new stars, new problems which until now were not suspected. Maxim Gorky will have had the singular and glorious destiny of linking this new world to the past and binding it to the future. He

knew the oppression of the day before yesterday, the tragic struggle of yesterday; he powerfully aided the calm and glittering triumph of today. He lent his voice to those who had not before been able to make themselves heard, those who, thanks to him, will henceforth be heard. Henceforth, Maxim Gorky belongs to history. He takes his place with the greatest.

## Gyorgy Lukács

### *A Great Proletarian Humanist*

The last great writer of the European galaxy of realists is dead. And with him died the first great classic writer of Socialist realism. The writer whose greatness was an



adumbration of that magnificent development of the art which will be ushered in by Socialist society. Such a fusion of periods in one person could take place only in Russia where the bourgeois-democratic Revolutions turned over the torch falling from its hands to the victory-assured proletarian Revolution. Only in Russia did one generation experience the failure of 1905 and the triumph of 1917.

Maxim Gorky was contemporary, friend and companion in arms of Tolstoy and Chekhov—he was also contemporary, friend and companion in arms of Lenin and Stalin. This unique historical

position occupied by Gorky laid a unique stamp on his art. Gorky was also contemporary with a period marked by a very profound decline of realism in Western Europe (as in Russia since 1905). The realism of Swift and Fielding, Balzac and Stendhal had long since vanished from the scene when Gorky began his activities as a writer. Shallow naturalist and experimental formalism—an empty “craftsmanship” of nonsense—prevailed in literature of the time. Gorky, however, was not affected in the least by this decline. He continued, unabashed, the traditions of the old realists and directly those of Tolstoy.

This statement is not to be taken in a superficial literal sense; however, Gorky’s style differs fundamentally from that of Tolstoy. Gorky inherited Tolstoy’s broad view of the world, a view so thoroughly alive that it wakes to life what seems dead—that “reasonable view of the world” of which Hegel spoke, and which results in the world also taking a “reasonable view” of such men. Like Tolstoy, Gorky was charged with a tremendous *humanistic indignation* against the degradation and sophistication of man by feudalism and capitalism. His was a glowing, unvacillating and consuming humanistic passion for *human integrity*, for an ideally well-rounded and fully developed man. Gorky carried this fire to the real leaders of the exploited and oppressed, to the revolutionary proletariat. The glow of *indignation* he blew to a Promethean flame of *revolution*.

Gorky’s life and works are vivid evidence of the fact that the revolutionary proletariat, that a people freed by the proletarian revolution, is the

real heir to all intense human indignation, to all revolutions of human history, heir to humanism and to great art. His life and works show that this proletariat “masters and adapts everything of value in the more than 2,000 year-old development of human thought and human culture.” (Lenin) The word “man” acquires an altogether new *pathos* with Gorky.

His humanism contains at once more joy and rage; it is both brighter and full of a more intense hatred of all degradation than any previous humanism. The joyful brightness of his humanism has its origin in his close ties with the revolutionary labor movement, with Bolshevism. To Gorky the labor movement, the proletarian revolution, means primarily the emancipation of man, the breaking of all chains that hamper the free and all-sided development of the human personality.

Young Gorky could see the vital human powers latent in people. He could see these forces rise in rebellion against all the misery and degradation that hampered their development. He could also see how these forces were wasted, twisted into senseless, even perverted bestiality by the “Asiatic capitalism” of old Russia. The salvation of the tremendous human forces of the people lies in the revolutionary labor movement, in an orderly gathering of forces for the emancipation of mankind. But not only the distant emancipation of mankind as a whole—a point most remarkable and original in the creative vision of Gorky who could see that the

revolutionary labor movement also frees the *individual* who takes part in it wholeheartedly, that it emancipates his personality and *makes a man of him*. He could see that with Marxism, with the Bolsheviks, the humanist principle is more than an ideal, more than a distant prospect. With them humanism is rather a direct basis and principle of revolutionary practice itself. This Bolshevik humanism makes *Mother* a heroic song of the power of the revolutionary labor movement to free humanity and lends this book its unique power.

**He was the foremost defender of human culture in general. He seemed to feel himself the rightful heir to all human culture, which he was duty bound to defend against the worst forms of barbarity. He was a great writer because he was a great man.**

Other writers have shown the struggle of the proletariat for emancipation. They limited themselves, however, to a picture of the political or economic struggles. Their humanism remained more or less abstract—when it did not degenerate into honeyed sentimental phrases. Gorky also showed at the same time—and emphasized—the already present, actual effectiveness of humanism in the revolutionary labor movement. The labor movement awakens and develops, gathers and organizes the human forces of each one who takes part in it. It is in and by means of the labor movement that distorted, crippled men turn again into human beings. It gives back the power of speech to the dumb, sight to the blind. It wrests mankind from the clutches of dullness, through which can be seen only what is present and direct. Inasmuch as it shows men the future, it also illuminates their past and brightens the present, making it full of purpose—of conscious struggles. It shatters the barriers erected by

capitalism to separate man from man and unites them in the most human way, in a common struggle.

True, Gorky also shows victims, also shows failures, also shows the breaking of human bonds by the cruel necessities of the struggle. But the triumphant song of humanization by participation in the labor movement, of profound union of awakened humanity in their new comradeship sounds out above suffering. Figures like Nilowna or Rybin only Gorky could create. This revolutionary, proletarian humanism permeates all of Gorky's works. Whether he is depicting a tavern, or the lodging-house of a night, a trading office or a stuffy middle-class home, the light of proletarian humanism penetrates every human fate. Without the slightest sentimentality, he expresses a warmth of emotion over the people and their lot such as no other writer could express. To Gorky the capitalist world is a great slaughter-house where thousands of human victims are under the knife at any given moment.

Gorky, the proletarian humanist, says what the greatest Marxian thinkers have repeatedly said: not only does capitalism enslave and exploit the toiler but it also cripples and robs of human semblance the members of the ruling class itself. In *Anti-Duhring*, Engles says: "Not only the laborers but also the classes directly or indirectly exploiting the laborers are made subject, through the division of labor, to the tool of their function:—the empty-minded bourgeois to his own capital and his own thirst for profits; the lawyer to his fossilized legal conceptions, which dominate him as a power independent of him; the 'educated classes' in general to their manifold local limitations and one-sided specialized

education and the fact that they are chained for life to a specialized activity itself—even when this specialized activity is merely to do nothing."

Take Gorky's capitalists—the Foma Gordeyev family, the Artamanovs, Yegor Bulychev and others. They are incomparable; there is nothing like them in world literature. Balzac shows with great power what capitalism does to man. But in Balzac's works human energy deflected, misled and directed into spurious channels by capitalism can discharge itself in tremendous explosions. The setting sun of the heroic period of the bourgeois revolution is still throwing its last rays on his work. Untrammelled human forces still break out or subside in tragic struggle. Vautrin, Gobseck, Nucingen still stand out like figures larger than life.

After 1848, the figures in European literature shrink. The newer realism shows only fightless victims, only "products of the capitalist degradation of man." They are not deformed by capitalism before our eyes; they come upon the stage already deformed. One reading the literature of this period might think that people who were not deformed, not depraved, had been invented in the imagination of the older writers or in the visions of Utopians. In Gorky's works although the final result of the struggle is inevitable for those who cannot rise above the confines of their class, this result does not occur until the *end of the struggle*. Under the surface of bourgeois life a fierce, sometimes grotesque, sometimes heroic, conflict goes on. Human energies seek a way of development. Not only to capture a place in society; there is also a struggle for the development of human

ability itself. Men are invariably crippled, deformed, but they fight—according to the temperament and circumstances—for self-preservation and are subdued only after a long battle.

This is the inner drama of Gorky's works. With this Gorky shows a more profound hatred of capitalism than any other writer. To him the world of capitalism is no cemetery for those born dead—murdered humanity falls a victim only after a severe struggle. This is the humdrum reality of capitalism. A battlefield where thousands of human souls are murdered every day. This inner drama is an important feature of Gorky's style. The latter-day realism of both Europe and America vacillates between two wrong extremes: it either sinks to trivialities of everyday existence or winds itself up to a sort of beastly, soulless and contentless crudity. Both are but different phases of one and the same thing and often appear together in the same work. Gorky needs no crude effects. He does not need any explosions of beastliness to lend inner movement to the life shown, to rob humdrum reality of its dead banality. He sees the inner tragedies, tragi-comedies and farces that are played in the silent home without any visible explosions.

Because this is how he sees and depicts life, his style acquires a stirring simplicity, an inner tenseness. With simple, unaffected words that come naturally with the situation itself, he throws a piercing light on the deepest corners of the human soul, revealing storms of passion and heartbreaking tragedy. The inner tenseness of Gorky's style gives adequate expression to the world he depicts. The complexity of the personalities he depicts lends richness to

his works. Gorky has no use for the schematic simplification, in which the newer European literature indulges. Every one of his characters shows a profound, organic unity of mind and instinct—even though this is a unity of contradictions. But that which more than anything else gives Gorky a unique position in the present day literature is the fact that the spiritual life of his characters is always an organic necessary consequence of their environment, and just as individual a matter as their voices or figures. Gorky is never indifferent to their mental life. He is always aware of what conditioned the attitude of each towards the world, and how this attitude, in turn, reacts upon life itself. Gorky's works are a highpoint of literary culture.

Writing is, however, the reflection of life. Throughout his life, Gorky was a fanatic defender of culture. Not only was he a staunch defender of Socialist culture against fascist barbarity in our times, but he also fought constantly for the cultural needs and the intellectual development of the oppressed proletariat, and he recognized the tremendous significance of culture for the class struggle. He was the foremost defender of human culture in general. He seemed to feel himself the rightful heir to all human culture, which he was duty bound to defend against the worst forms of barbarity. He was a great writer because he was a great man. He was our common teacher. At his grave we must confess, however, that we have not learned enough nor the right way from him.

Young Gorky was close to Tolstoy—and what a tremendous heritage he brought away with him from this association!

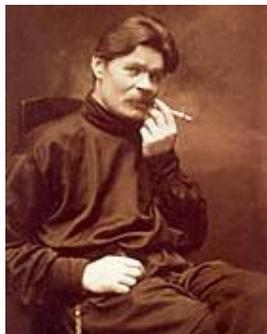
We were fortunate enough to live and work close to the mature Gorky—but did we not foster in his very shadow the most miserable traditions of the decadent literature of the bourgeoisie? Gorky could show the bourgeois man deformed by capitalism as one inwardly alive. To learn from Gorky is not a purely literary task. One has to learn his *attitude to life*, how and what he came to love and hate, how he came to his thoughtful mastery of life, to the unity of the proletarian Revolution, humanism and realistic style. One must understand his cult of life in order to be able to fruitfully learn his literary cult. Only thus can one hope to master his immortal works. It is because of this unity of life and literature that he became the classic writer of Socialist realism, one to follow if one wishes to find the road to Socialist realism. Gorky is dead. But he will always remain not only a classic and an example—he will also continue to be our teacher of great literary culture, of Socialist realism.

## Hatred<sup>†</sup>

By A. M. Gorky

*Translated by Rose Prokofieva*

It had been raining heavily since early morning but by midday the clouds had spent themselves, their dark fabric grew threadbare, and the wind tore it into a host of filmy shreds



<sup>†</sup> From *Tales from Italy*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House: 1964.

How frequently is the new man of Socialism in our works only a straw figure? True—it is not easy to learn from Gorky. The “craftsmanship” of decadent virtuosos of form is much easier to emulate.

and blew it out to the sea, where it was woven again into a dense bluish-grey mass that cast a thick shadow on the rain-calmed water. In the east the dark sky was rent by flashes of lightning while the magnificent sun threw its blinding light over the island.

Seen from far out at sea the island must have looked like a rich temple on a feast day; everything so radiantly clean, decked with bright flowers, and the big raindrops glistening everywhere, like topazes of the yellowish young leaves of the vines, amethysts on the clusters of wistaria, rubies on the scarlet geraniums and like emeralds strewn in rich profusion over the grass, the green underbrush and the leaves of the trees.

The world was hushed with the stillness that comes after rain; the only sound was the gentle babble of the brook hidden amid the rocks and under the rots of the euphorbia, dewberry and fragrant, twining clematis. Down below, the sea murmured softly. The golden shafts of the furze pointed skywards and swayed gently, weighted with moisture, which they shook noiselessly from their fantastic blossoms. Against the lush green background, the light-purple wistaria vied with the blood-red geraniums and roses, the rusty yellow brocade of the clematis blossoms mingled with the dark velvet of the irises and gilly-flowers, and it was all so vivid and glowing that the flowers seemed to be singing like violins, flutes and

passionate ‘cellos. The moist air was fragrant and as heady as old wine.

Under a grey rock, jagged and torn by blasting, the stains of oxidized iron showing in the cracks, amid grey and yellow boulders exuding the sourish smell of dynamite, four quarrymen, husky fellows in damp rags and leather sandals, sat partaking of their midday meal. They ate slowly and heartily out of a large bowl filled with the tough meat of the octopus fried in olive oil with potatoes and tomatoes, and washed it down with red wine quaffed in turn from a bottle.

Two of the men were clean-shaven and resembled each other sufficiently to be brothers, twins even; the third was a small, bow-legged, one-eyed chap with quick nervous gestures that made him look like a scraggy bird; the fourth was a broad-shouldered, bearded hook-nosed man of middle age with an abundant sprinkling of grey in his hair. Breaking off chunks of bread, the latter smoothed out his wine-stained whiskers and thrust a piece of bread into the dark cavern of his mouth. “That’s nonsense,” he was saying, his hairy jaws working methodically. “It’s a lie. I haven’t done anything wrong...”

His brown eyes under their thick brows had an unhappy mocking expression. His voice was heavy and gruff, his speech slow and hesitant. Everything

about him—his hat, his hairy, coarse-featured face, his large hands and his dark-blue suit spattered with white rock powder—indicated that he was the one who drilled holes in the mountain side for blasting. His three workmates listened attentively to what he was saying; they did not interrupt him but looked up at him from time to time as if to say “Go on...”

**The golden shafts of the furze pointed skywards and swayed gently, weighted with moisture, which they shook noiselessly from their fantastic blossoms. Against the lush green background, the light-purple wistaria vied with the blood-red geraniums and roses, the rusty yellow brocade of the clematis blossoms mingled with the dark velvet of the irises and gily-flowers, and it was all so vivid and glowing that the flowers seemed to be singing like violins, flutes and passionate ‘cellos. The moist air was fragrant and as heady as old wine.**

And he went on, his grey eyebrows moving up and down as he spoke: “That man Andrea Grasso, they called him, came to our village like a thief in the night; he was dressed in rags, his hat was the color of his boots and as tattered. He was greedy, shameless and cruel. And seven years later our elders were doffing their hats to him while he barely gave them a nod. And everyone for forty miles around was in debt to him.”

“Yes, there are such people,” remarked the bowlegged one, sighing and shaking his head.

The narrator glanced at him. “So you’ve met that kind too?” he inquired mockingly. The old man made an eloquent gesture, the tow clean-shaven men grinned in unison, the hook-nosed blaster took a draught of wine and went on, watching the flight of a falcon in the blue sky:

“I was thirteen when he hired me along with some others to haul stones for his house. He treated us worse than animals

and when my pal Lukino told him so he said: 'My ass is mine while you are a stranger to me, why should I be kind to you?' Those words were like a knife-thrust to me, and from that time on I began to watch him more closely. He was mean and brutal to everybody, even the old men and women, it made no difference to him, I could see that. And when decent folk told him he was behaving badly he laughed in their faces: 'When I was poor,' he said, 'no one treated me any better.' He took up with the priests, carabinieri and policemen, the rest of the people saw him only when they were in grave trouble and then he could do what he liked with them."

"Yes, there are people like that," repeated the bowlegged one softly and all three glanced at him in sympathy: one of the clean-shaven workers silently handed him the wine bottle, the old man took it, held it up to the light and before putting it to his lips, said: "I drink to the sacred heart of Madonna!"

"He often used to say that the poor have always worked for the rich and the fools for the wise, and that is how it must be always." The story-teller laughed and stretched out his hand for the bottle. It was empty. He threw it carelessly on to the stones alongside the hammers, picks and a coil of fuse.

"I was a youngster then and I resented those words deeply. So did my workmates, for they killed our hopes, our desire for a better life. Late one night I and Lukino my friend met him as he was crossing the field on horseback. We stopped him and said politely by firmly: 'We ask you to be kinder to folk.'" The clean-shaven fellows burst out laughing and the one-eyed one too

chuckled softly, while the narrator heaved a deep sigh: "Yes, of course, it was stupid! But youth is honest. Youth believes in the power of the word. You might say that youth is life's conscience..."

"Well, and what did he say?" asked the old man.

"He yelled: 'Let go my horse, you scoundrels!' And he pulled out a pistol and pointed it at us. We said: 'You have no need to fear us Grasso. And don't be angry. We were merely giving you a piece of advice!'"

"Now that was good!" said one of the clean-shaven men, and the other nodded in agreement; the bow-legged one pursed his lips and stared at a stone, stroking it with his crooked fingers.

The meal was over. One of the men amused himself by knocking the crystalline raindrops of the blades of grass with a thin stick, another looked on, picking his teeth with a dry grass stalk. The air grew drier and hotter. The brief shadows of noon were melting rapidly. The sea murmured a gentle accompaniment to the solemn tale: "That encounter had unpleasant consequences for Lukino. His father and uncle were in debt to Grasso. Poor Lukino grew thin and haggard, he ground his teeth and his eyes lost their brightness that had once attracted the girls. 'Ah,' he said to me once, 'that was a foolish thing we did that day. Words are nothing when addressed to a wolf!' 'Lukino is ready for murder,' I thought to myself. I was sorry for the lad and his good family. But I was poor myself and all alone in the world, for my mother had died shortly before." The hook-nosed worker

brushed his moustache and beard with his lime-stained fingers, and as he did so a heavy silver ring gleamed on the forefinger of his left hand.

“I might have done a service to my fellowmen if I had been able to carry the thing to the end, but I am softhearted.

One day, meeting Grasso on the street, I walked alongside him and speaking as humbly as I could,

said: ‘You are mean greedy fellow, it is hard for folks to live with you, you are liable to push someone’s hand and that hand may reach for a knife.

My advice to you is go away from here. ‘You’re a fool young man!’

he said, but I kept insisting. ‘Listen.’ he said with a laugh, ‘how much will you take to leave me in peace? Will a *lira* be enough?’ That was an insult but I controlled my anger. “Go away from here, I tell you!’ I insisted. Were walking shoulder to shoulder, I on his right. When I wasn’t looking he drew out a knife and stuck me with it. You can’t do much with your left hand, so it went into my chest only one inch deep. Naturally I flung him to the ground and kicked him the way you would kick a hog.”

“‘Now perhaps you will take my advice!’ I said as he writhed on the ground.” The two clean-shaven fellows threw an incredulous glance at the speaker and dropped their eyes. The bow-legged one bent over to tie the leather thongs of his sandals. “The next

morning when I was still in bed the carabinieri came and took me to the sheriff who was a pal of Grasso’s. ‘You are an honest man, *Ciro*,’ he said, ‘so you will not deny that you tried to murder Grasso last night.’ I said that was not exactly the truth, but they have their own way of looking at things. So they kept me in jail for two months before I was brought to trial and then they sentenced me to a year and eight months. ‘Very well,’ I told the judges, ‘but that isn’t the end of it!’”

He drew a fresh bottle from his cache among the stones and thrusting it under his moustache took a long draught of the wine; his hairy Adam’s apple moving thirstily up and down and his beard bristled. Three pair of eyes watched him in grave silence. “It’s boring to talk about it,” he said handing the bottle to his workmates and smoothing his moist beard.

“When I returned to the village I saw there; everyone was afraid of me. Lukino told me that things had got even worse that year. He was sick to death of it all, the poor lad. ‘Very well,’ I said to myself and went to see that man Grasso. He was terribly scared when he saw me. ‘Well, I’m back,’ I said. ‘Now it’s your turn to go away!’ He snatched up his rifle and fired but it was loaded with bird shot and he aimed at my legs. I didn’t even fall. ‘Even if you had killed me I would come and haunt you from the grave,’ I told him. ‘I have sworn to the Madonna that I shall get you out of here. You are stubborn, but so am I.’ We got into a scuffle and before I knew it I had accidentally broken his arm. I hadn’t intended to do him violence and he attacked me first. A crowd gathered and I was taken away.

This time I got three years and nine months and when my term ended, the warden, who knew the whole story and liked me, tried hard to persuade me not to go back home. He offered me a job with his son-in-law who had a big plot of land and a vineyard in Apulia. But I, naturally, could not give up what I had undertaken.

So I went home, this time firmly resolved not to indulge in any useless chatter, for I had learned by then that nine words out of ten are superfluous. I had only one thing to say to him: ‘Get out!’ I arrived in the village on a Sunday and went straight to Mass. Grasso was there. As soon as he saw me he jumped up and yelled all over the church:

‘That man has come here to kill me, citizens, the devil has sent him for my soul!’ I was surrounded

before I had time to touch him, before I had time to tell him what I wanted. But it didn’t matter for he fell on to the stone floor in a fit and his right side and his tongue were paralyzed. He died seven weeks later...That’s all. And folks invented a sort of legend about me. Very terrible, but a lot of nonsense.”

He chuckled, looked up at the sun and said: “Time to get started...” In silence the other three rose slowly to their feet; the hook-nosed worker stared at the



21 - Д. Н. Толстой и А. М. Горький  
Воск. Писка. 1900 г.

Фотомонтаж С. А. Таранов

rusty, oily cracks in the rock and said: “Let’s get to work...” The sun was at its zenith and all the shadows had shriveled up and vanished. The clouds on the horizon sank into the sea whose waters had grown calmer and bluer than before.

## Proclamation to the French Workers (1906)<sup>‡</sup>

*Translated by Selma Schwartz*

French Workers,

To you, who work all your lives and allow your masters to make laws for the protection of property created by labor. To you, who never have enough bread to satisfy your hunger, and who are ruled by people glutted with all that you have created. To you, workers, the real owners of the earth, I address myself:

Before you, as well as before the workers of the world, is a path of struggle for freedom of mankind from economic and political slavery, from the bondage of capital and the state, the sterile agent which supports capital against you. This struggle will soon envelop the whole world and will be a struggle of two races: The race of the poor, who will battle under the banner of reason, truth, love and justice, and the race of the rich, who will defend themselves with all their means—greed and hypocrisy, cunning and cruelty.

This struggle is as inevitable as death—and it has begun. The Russian worker, in the first detachment of the universal

<sup>‡</sup> First appeared in *Red Banner Magazine* No. 4, 1906. Transcribed by *Red Flag Magazine* from *International Literature* No. 10, October 1936

army, has marched into combat. His victories and his defeats are known to you. You know how much strength he has expended and what he will expend, you know how abundantly his blood flowed and will yet flow. He has already inflicted powerful blows upon the enemy, but the enemy is still strong and many combats face the Russians.

The sooner the coming combat breaks out, the sooner its thunder will resound throughout the whole world. And if Russian worker is victorious—the workers of Europe, of the whole world, will draw from this victory new inspiration and strength, and lessons for themselves...Understand that in speaking of the working people, one speaks of the whole world—one family.

Therefore, I confidently appeal to you to help your Russian comrades, your comrades who are going to battle under a common banner with you—under the red banner of Socialism—with one aim: the freedom of labor from, the oppression of capital. They advanced first, and you must help them for I repeat, in this struggle the victory of one is the victory of all.

The day of general revolt in Russia draws near. You will not really permit your comrades to go to battle with empty hands. Give them silver for iron and zinc. I know workers are poor in silver; only their hearts are rich. But we must show the old world of Pharisees and hypocrites that it is in the heart of the worker that the true fire of love for mankind burns, that in him blazes the flame of faith in the brotherhood of man. You must show this fire in your breast to the blind eyes of the greedy and sated...

Let them tremble at the foreboding of their helplessness. And let our militant, our sacred slogan, the slogan of the brotherhood of mankind, sound the death knell of the satiated and dying world of malice and greed, the world of lies and cruelty. **Proletarians of all countries—unite!**

Believing that the brotherhood of mankind is not a dream, that it will be realized on earth, I have faith in this great holiday of the future because I am a worker. I have worked and lived among the working people. I know their nature and I know that only they are capable of creating a new life, a life of brotherhood, a life of joy and reason.

Only they, because the interests of labor are the same everywhere, and sooner or later the workers of the world will clearly see their path to happiness, freedom, truth. This path is the same everywhere and for all. All peoples will meet on it, and it will lead to the celebration of the idea of universal brotherhood.

The world is ever more sharply dividing into two armies—the army of the rich and fated, and army of the poor who all their lives bend their spines under the heavy burden of labor. Gold, that Yellow Devil, coldly and cruelly mocking the world, corrupts people, sowing enmity and envy among them. Some it gathers around itself to pervert their natures with insatiable greed; other it pushes away into the embrace of hunger and labor. Disuniting, it unites. Making the rich avaricious and stupid, it sharpens the mind of the poor, and, dividing all people into two irreconcilable camps,

prepares them for battle, one against the other.

The workers of each country are united in a closely knit family and the day will come when the workers of the world will unite in one brotherly army of labor. Uniting, they will see clearly how few are their enemy, and how weak to be able to rule the lives of hundreds of millions. And they will see that the evil of life is god, property. And from that day there will reign on earth not lies but truth, not hypocrisy but sincerity, not greed and envy and evil, but reason, goodness and love. Those who hold this belief are bound to serve it with all their strength since it alone will restore the world, will free man from the bondage of sorrow and need, will cleanse the spirit of everything that debases man.

Each worker who sees a comrade in need and sorrow must help him since all workers are one family. And the workers of one country must help the workers of another country. This aid to remote and unknown people is truly humane and far-seeing.

Help your Russian comrades in their bitter struggle against the tsar and gang of hangmen, who have drowned all Russian in blood. Do this. In the name of solidarity of interests of all workers, you must hold out your hand to help the Russian workers. When your day of struggle arrives and you also will need help—then you will find friends who will respond to your cry:

Help, comrades.

## The Socialist Humanism of Maxim Gorky<sup>§</sup>

By Eugenia Knipovich

In 1927 Gorky finished article on the Tenth Anniversary of the October Revolution with the words of brotherly greeting to “the new Russian man,” to “the builder of a truly new world,” to “the most necessary person on earth.”

These words were more than the congratulations of a comrade. They were the words of communion between he deputy and his electors. The Russian, and international, master of culture hailed those whose will, passion and hatred molded and reared his incomparable talent.

Gorky’s words embody revolutionary life, underground work, prison, exile, hard labor, the greatest revolution in history, civil war and the heroic and victorious struggle for the building of a “truly new world.” Gorky personifies the fearless mind of the “new Russian man,” who storms all heights of past and present culture. His works stir with that new and formerly unknown quality which distinguishes the conquests of our aviators, miners, cotton pickers, geologists,—all manifestations of the same Socialist culture, based on the free labor of free men. That is why Gorky stands in the world of letters not only as the bearer of the great traditions of Russian culture, but as the first representative of the universal Socialist culture, bringing with him a creative and liberating knowledge of ancient and contemporary culture. In the name of

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<sup>§</sup> From *International Literature*, No. 10-11, Oct.-Nov. 1937

millions he can demand the fulfillment of all the promises made by the humanists of bourgeois revolutions.

Past culture has nurtured for mankind many wonderful conceptions, liberty, harmonious development of personality, the rule of reason, the brotherhood of peoples, equality, justice. However, in a world founded on private property, on wolfish egoism, on forced labor, they remained visions. Loyalty to the great ideals of the past, which penetrates the works of the “prodigal sons” of bourgeois culture, is accompanied with expressions of agony, bitterness, impotence and alarm.

Gorky, in the cultural world, is endowed with special privileges, as the “representative” of a many-millioned master, a master conscious of his rights, armed with revolutionary theory, disciplined and educated by free labor. In the possession of this master the great concepts, values, slogans of the past acquire for the first time actual, not abstract and hypocritical meanings. And in the name of this new master Gorky has a solution for every problem that had tormented the lone keepers of the great cultural treasures. Each reply had been brought with their life and blood. And Gorky also paid for them with his own blood.

This determines the specific nature of Gorky’s humanism.

Gorky was first known as a romanticist, but his romanticism was born not of disillusionment with the world, not denial or evasion, substituting for the living reality always accessible to the creative hand of a master, picture world, personal, invented and sterile. To such

“individualistic” romanticism Gorky contrasts another kind, which “springs from man’s consciousness of his bond with the world and the confidence of creative powers which this consciousness evokes.” This type of romanticism Gorky called “social, or the romanticism of collectivism.” “It is only now being born,” wrote Gorky in the period of the “disgraceful and infamous decade, and its owner is the class which is entering life as the carrier of the Socialist idea of liberating mankind from the clutches of capitalism, as the carrier of the idea of free and brotherly labor—of the Socialist system.”

Yes, Gorky was both a realist and a romanticist. But his romanticism had the same qualities as the romanticism of the creative Soviet people today.

For our pilots and scientists, our statesmen and workers also dream. Their visions have created new lakes, have turned the course of rivers, have opened new airways as important historically as the routes traced by Columbus and Vasco da Gamma, have produced new flora and fauna; what is most important, their dream has remade the remaker of the earth—man himself. The dreams of a Bolshevik-Leninist, of a man of Stalin’s epoch, are creative. Tomorrow the dream becomes a plan, and the day after countless loving hands are carrying it out.

All of Gorky’s works from the romantic legend to the realistic would confirm this orientation to the future, this faith in collective labor.

To the humanism of the masters of Western culture Gorky contrasted proletarian revolutionary humanism of

pity the humanism of truth, which is “above pity”; to gentle scorn—the severe demand to respect man; to the cult of “autonomous personality”—the glorification of the great mass of individuals, the real creators of cultural values. To the imagined superman Gorky contrasts the fighter, who has grown to the stature of a titan in the revolutionary battles of his class. Gorky, insisting upon the tie between the artist and the world, exposes the illusory nature of art isolated from reality.

At the same time—and here, again, the deeply proletarian nature of Gorky’s humanism declares itself—every genuine protest against bourgeois terror, every expression of discontent with the unjust world of private ownership, every act of devotion to the cultural heritage of the world is near and dear to him.

That testimony of “the death of a world” which the great modern humanitarian artists have left us, in one form or another, is consummately presented in Gorky’s works. Hatred of the capitalist system, which in the work of the best Western writers is often feeble and unfocused, has, in Gorky’s writings, a creative function, merges with active love of the new society being built. Lastly, the charges of the murder of man, which the humanists of the West bring against the old world—in Gorky’s works these charges go deeper and further; they force a reckoning with the old world in the name of humanity, in the name of the emergent new world.

Wretches? Gorky saw and portrayed wretches more ghastly than any monster of the Russian and Western decadence.

Here is Igosha, the Nizhni-Novgorod half-wit beggar, hungrier, more hunted than an animal. Here is Panashkina, with blue blood rot in her veins, wall-eyed, dreaming of “an affair with an officer not lower in rank than a lieutenant.” Here is the “dog’s mother,” whom misfortune has crazed, whose companions are a pack of stray dogs. And finally—“mother Kemsikh”—mad-woman with a fit brood of seven children—cripples and idiots, for whom she sacrifices her life. A starved bitch who feeds her puppies on garbage is more dignified than this morsel of ridiculously suffering womanflesh.

Man’s brutality? What writer has a more appalling kindergarten of abused children? Jacob (*The Three*), sweet Bubenchik (*Among People*), Koska Ulyucharev (*The Spectators*), etc. They perish not so much from barbed inhumanity as from dull indifference. Similarly, in women’s lives, Gorky lays bare their torment. They are beaten not out for cruelty alone but because on them the men folk avenge their own sufferings—the anguish and humiliation of their degraded and oppressed lives. Such is the fate of Nilovna (*Mother*), Orlova (*The Orlov Family*), Nikon’s mother (*Summer*), etc.

To Gorky, however, unlike some Western writers, this world of wretchedness was not fixed and immutable, not the creation of man but of the bourgeois. It is not the mutilated but the mutilators who must answer for these crimes.

Gorky’s protest against injustice began when as an eight year old child he saw his stepfather beating his consumptive mother.

“I heard sounds of the beating, broke into the room. I saw my mother, who had fallen on her knees, lean her back and elbow against the chair; her back was arched with pain and she was groaning. Her head was thrown back and her eyes glittered with terror and fever; and he, neatly dressed in a new uniform, kept kicking her in the breast with his big heavy foot. I grasped a knife from the table—it was a bread knife with an ivory and silver handle. It was the only article of my father’s left to my mother—I gripped it and with all my might struck my father in the side.”

Gorky knew from experience that justice is not restored, “once and for all,” that “each time the fight begins anew.”

One must crush the brothel “bouncer,” who drags a drunken prostitute by the feet, while her head knocks against cobble-stones (*Among People*); one must crush the underworld scum, who perform their vile, blasphemous ceremony on the student at the flop house (*My University Days*); and one must, even at the cost of one’s life, attempt to rescue the tortured woman of whom Gorky writes in *The Conclusion*.

*The Conclusion* was founded on an episode during Gorky’s wanderings in Russia in the nineties of the last century [1890’s]. These barbarities inflicted on a woman actually occurred in the village of Kandybovka. Gorky told what he had seen but he left unmentioned what he had done. A passerby—Alexei Peshkov (Gorky) threw himself on the tormentors, was given a beating that almost finished him, was flung into the bushes, to be picked up by a chance pedestrian who carried him to the

hospital. However, the memory of this chivalrous passerby remained alive in the village. In 1936, more than forty years later, the daughters and granddaughters of women who had suffered like that tortured one, members of the Kandybov collective farm, sent Gorky a warm letter full of love and gratitude. They described their work, their present life—the life of free and equal Soviet women—and invited him to visit Kandybovka and see the changes with his own eyes.

Gorky saw the truth in the person of a tormented bloodstained woman; and for her blood he shed his own.

Gorky won the treasures of human culture, reached the highest levels of humanism through continuous fighting.

Gorky with his rich life-experience more than any other writer realized that labor is the foundation of culture, that every great work of art comes from the people. To Gorky a genuine artist was one whose works reflect the deep and vital processes of society, whose works mirror and entire epoch.

Patiently and lovingly Gorky recreates the figures of those industrious masters of Russian culture, who were in such close touch with life, those wonderful people who do honor to the human race by the worth of their lives,. Tolstoy, Chekhov, Korolenko, Karonin, Kotsubinsky—in each Gorky marks their perseverance, these men who helped beautify the earth, by attacking in the name of life and the dignity of man, stagnancy, ignorance and violence.

And above all these great men, in Gorky’s memory, towers the huge image

of Leo Tolstoy, the image of a demiurge, a universal man, whose creative powers are so immense that “it seems as if he shall rise, wave his hand, and the rocks will begin to stir, and everything shall quicken, make itself heard, speak up in different voices, about themselves, about him, against him.”

How can the world “refuse happiness” to such a man? He is real, bred on the creative forces of an entire epoch. The works of such people when taken of by the masses remake man and consequently the face of the earth.

To the cook Smury, one of the best stepsons of tsarist Russia, “the proper book,” the one he looks for, is a weapon in struggle; and in Gorky’s understanding it is in truth a formidable weapon. One who has come into contact with such works of art becomes aware of his human dignity, of his right to happiness and beauty, to a life worthy of man—and demands them.

Gorky has left us unforgettable pages describing his first communion with great works of art, describing the joy and pain of awakening to new levels of understanding. Gorky describes his introduction to Pushkin, to the musical lines “so easy to memorize, that festively adorned everything they mentioned; this made me happy and my life easy and pleasant. The poem sounded like chimes of a new life. How fortunate to be literate!”

Then his discovery of Balzac! Gorky describes how he found doubles for every character created by the great realist, in the people around him. How old Grandet helped him understand his avaricious grandfather, who refused to

feed his wife and grandson, and how the very image of old Grandet shone with new light and new truth from this verification in real life.

The capitalist world not only forces a physical half-life upon the worker; it stultifies him, it fosters ignorance, superstition and savagery. “Consciousness” in a capitalist society is limited to the few privileged “specialists” who in the capitalist “division of labor” have drawn this assignment. And it is against these “few,” against the bourgeois intellectuals, hangers-on of capitalism, usurpers of cultural treasures, parasites on creative thought, that Gorky directs his stern on creative thought, that Gorky directs his stern and shattering wrath. The greedy commercial attitude towards cultural values, the fooling around with ideas which the life ferment of a real artist has paid for—this, to Gorky, is sacrilege.

The roots of culture are in the creative potentialities of the people, and Gorky blasted those who stood between the masses and culture, stole from the people their lawful inheritance, blasted them as imposters and thieves, “empty bags” inflated with other people’s words and ideas. Gorky knew well who these charlatans were—they were his persecutors all his life. They squeaked about “the end of Gorky” when *Mother*, that artistic manifesto of revolutionary humanism, appeared, these were the hysterical advocates of suffering and humiliation (for others) who slandered Gorky when in 1913 he had the courage to speak frankly about the “truths” of Dostoyevsky. It is they, then white émigrés or “mechanical citizens” of the Soviet Union, who poured feeble,

insolent libel on the name of the greatest contemporary fighting artist. And it is they, who through Radek and the Trotskyite traitors, who had penetrated into Soviet literary organizations, attempted to soil with false words the name of the founder of Socialist literature.

Gorky was tireless in exposing these people, exposing their cowardice, futility and treachery. Such is Klim Samgin—this half-man, ruled by fear and lies, who shrinks from action, all his life seeking a “third way” between revolution and bourgeois counter-revolution. Never in world literature was bourgeois individualism so comprehensively exposed, and stripped of its pretensions as in *The Life of Klim Samgin*. Klim Samgin is a vacuum enclosed in phrases. Cultural values are phrases to him; those created them, the people, are nothing to him. As a characteristic feature of the “critical-minded” bourgeois intellectual, Gorky in the fourth volume of his epic points out the complete indifference of Klim Samgin toward Tolstoy’s death.

Mental parasitism, emptiness, worship of his own non-existent personality brings Klim Samgin very near to that offspring of decaying capitalism most despised by Gorky—the provocateur. Klim Samgin did not work in the tsarist secret police but the atmosphere of the secret police permeates this “critical-minded” individual’s whole life. An empty soul leading an empty life, the provocateur, to Gorky, was one who could not keep from doing evil through the fear that otherwise his “quite life” might be disturbed. A provocateur is the quintessence of the corrupted, whose worldly wisdom is shuffled along walls,

never contradicts, so that nothing need be changed, so that one should never have to make any decisions, never have to act by one’s own free will. This paralyzing passivity, actively harmful and corrupting, this drag toward stagnancy Gorky embodied in Karamor, the “useless man,” and in the most loathsome of provocateurs—the potential provocateur—Klim Samgin. Those with whom Klim Samgin feels most compatible, most secure, most soothed in his twilight indecision, inevitably turn out to be agents of the secret police. Samgin is more dangerous than the provocateur, because he contrives to make cowardly inertia a value, seeks to endow it with tradition, decorate it as a preserver of “human personality.” These seducing in activities of Samgin’s are more disintegrating to revolutionary action and consequently more effective than the activities of provocateurs.

A. A. Lunacharsky was correct when he wrote: “No, it is not true that we can allow the dead to bury the dead. The old saying is false, and this is expressed in another proverb: ‘The dead snatch the living.’ Yes, the dead snatch the living; the social corpse, the dead class, the dead mode of life, the dead religion have an after-life of vampires; they are not still in their graves but return among us. They rise with the fumes from the chimney of the crematorium and again settle down on earth and cover it with black filth.”

Did not the voice of Klim Samgin’s “original personality” echo in the confessions of the Trotskyite-fascist conspiracy, this “black filth,” during the trials of 1936-37? And Gorky deals ruthlessly with another outgrowth of the

same philosophy—passive pity and consolation. Luka (In *the Depths*), Markusha (*The Life of Matthew Kozhemyakin*), Serafim (*The Artomonous Affair*), the old apiarist (*A Story about the Unusual*)—all expose these “consolers,” these “teachers of life.” Gorky himself did not immediately understand this cunning and odious breed of the old world. In the figure of Luka he does not yet completely reveal that deep contempt of man and his sufferings which make him console only so as “not to disturb the rigid peace of an all tolerating frigid soul.” (*About Plays*) This characteristic of “the teacher of life” is impressively exposed; their hidden aim: to muddy the soul of man with words, so that he should become so sluggish for discontent and action, is revealed. And “the consoler” is shown finally in his inevitable “social function,” as secret counter-revolutionary, the underground agitator against the “restless people”—the Bolsheviks who “demolish life.”

The philistine nature’s sluggishness and disgusting clammy indifference—this is the core of the “original personality’s” individualism, of the “humanism of pity and consolation.” Gorky undresses these two fetishes, strips them of their ceremonial robes, makes them stand forth in their hideous nakedness as the quintessential expressions of philistine morbidity.

Studying the changes in the life of the bourgeoisie, Gorky analyzed two generations of Russian capitalists—noted the fate of the “fathers”—the plunderers of the period of preliminary accumulation, and the different destiny of the “children.”

“We should not paste the class label on a person as we are used to doing,” wrote Gorky in his article *About Plays*; “the class feature is not a mark, it is something internal, biological, of nerves and brain.” This is why Gorky does not give us the “capitalist shark” of poster presentations. The awakening of class instinct in Ilya Lunin (*The Three*) or Matthew Kozhemyakin, an awakening that shocks the heart and reason, Gorky depicts as a dialectic artist, organically understanding what “social environment” means. And at the same time Gorky’s portrayal of capitalists (Ignat Gordeyev, Ilya Aratamov, Saveli Kozhemyakin, Vassa Zheleznova, Yegor Bulychev) is far from the weak-minded slogan: “Look for good in evil and evil in good,” with which the Trotskyite “critics” attempted to mislead Soviet literature in its struggle against the enemy.

Gorky does not “sympathize” with the merchant Yegor Bulychev or the factory owner Vassilissa Zheleznova because one of them is an “honest” man and the other a “devoted mother.” No, he shows how proterty consciousness mangled and disgraced splendid human material, perverted wholesome instincts, turned the passion for creation, for beautifying the earth into a pursuit of shadowy, stolen profits. Yegor and Vassilissa (of the second version) themselves understand that their service to the “cause” is senseless and unreal. Unreal because in the case of the factory owner Zheleznova her “heir” as well as the merchant Artamonov’s son become Bolsheviks, and Yegor Bulychev, when revolution breaks out, declares that he had “saddled the wrong horse,” that he, “the man,” found himself robbed of money.

Having made the rounds of capitalist society, high and low, in pre-revolutionary Russia, Gorky through the remorseless witness of his characters, pronounces death sentence on that word. But from the outset Gorky understood the Leninist dictum that the national crisis is the forerunner of the approaching revolution, that intensified distress gives intensified force to man's protest against his oppressor, that together with decay of "one world" another is being born; and facing the old world, in struggle, man rises to his own full height.

"...On the huge steppe, barren and waste, a huge thousand-handed man moves in great circles, ever wider girthing the earth, and in his path the dead steppe comes to life, quivering juicy grass shoots forth and everywhere towns and villages emerge; and he strides ever on, farther towards the edge, sowing what is live and human.

"Then one feels toward people a new tenderness and respect; feels in them an inexhaustible vitality that can vanquish death, that eternally transforms what is dead into life, moving toward immortality by mortal roads—death overshadows people, but it cannot engulf them."

At times during his wanderings in Russia Gorky conceived his hero as a folk image—Mikula, Ilya, Vassilissa the Wise, for example—figures in whom the toiling people embodied its faith in its own measureless creative power. But to Gorky this "thousand-handed man" is not a featureless incarnation of stormy, elemental forces. His novels, biographical sketches and short stories, his autobiographical writing and

journalistic work show with what untiring care and devotion he worked to save from oblivion, from featureless anonymity the protean figure of his hero—the man who adorns the earth. The creative personality was to Gorky the greatest value in the world.

And if the "original personality" of Klim Samgin, the individualism of emptiness, sluggishness and property owning conceit when in contact with revolution turned into "a dirty bag, filled with worthless angular things," then at the same time the awakening of revolutionary consciousness revealed and raised up the millions of human personalities, crushed by capitalism. This transformation of man is not "a miracle" for Gorky, no sudden transfiguration. In all his works there are tributes to the mighty impetus of creative force that seeks liberation, that shows even through the scum of "swinish filth" of bourgeois society; the healthy, creative forces break through, good, human things grow, protecting and justifying faith in regeneration to a free and noble life.

Grandmother Akulina Ivanovna, the workers Tsiganok, the boarder "Gooddeed," the cook Smury, the bakers, icon painters, typesetters, stokers, the student Gury Pletnyev, the Narodnik Romass—imposing is the gallery of wonderful Russian people, strong and sweet individuals, who have preserved inner beauty, dignity and courage through the unbearable hardships of Russian life, despite the efforts of the "teachers" and "masters" to blot from man his human countenance.

Gorky knew that in the brutishness and ignorance of workers the guilty were

those who had driven them into beastly existence Gorky noted how these oppressed and degraded victims of capitalism at the first possibility reveal creativeness and human dignity. He marked their instinctive esteem for skill and labor—and he knew these responses to be the foundation of human culture.

In *The Life of Klim Samgin* and *Foma Gordeyev*, in stories and autobiographical narratives (*Among People*) Gorky pictured collective labor, which—if only for a short time—gives him the wonderful release and contentment of self-fulfillment. Collective work even under conditions of capitalism creates “a legion of labor” among people which anticipates the time when labor shall be “a thing of honor, valor and heroism,” as it is in a Socialist society.

These recurrent witnesses of glowing humanity, of the transformation of man through labor, love, friendship, contact with works of art, permitted Gorky to view the world with elation.

“I passionately want to live—live so that the old stones make merry and the white horses of the sea rear and prance still higher; I want to sing a hymn to the earth so that, drunk with praise, she should with more abandon unfold her riches, display her beauty, inspired by the love of one of her creatures—man, who loves the earth like a woman and burns with ardor to impregnate her with new beauty.”

On the Ukrainian steppe a peasant “who feeds the world” died; an ordinary “little man” left the world; but thinking of his work “it seems astonishingly great.” But then, between Sukhum and Ochemagari,

a “new young eaglet” was born; the mother, just up after its birth, gazes at the sea, the forest, the mountains and the face of her new-born son, and “her eyes, washed with tears of agony, once more become amazingly clear, blossom and burn with the blue flame of inexhaustible love.”

Countless people, whose paths crossed Gorky’s, who stored up in his soul the “honey” of their experiences and knowledge, also pined for a nobler life, grieved for vainly perishing forces.

All the imperceptibility small, who do “great things,” all the downtrodden, oppressed, bitter and furious, all whose strength and abilities are unused—all shall find the right road, because there is a force—and Gorky always knew of it—which is the touchstone of genuine human character, which draws out of man his best humanity. This force is revolutionary consciousness.

In *Enemies* and *Mother* Gorky depicts the revolutionary movement and revolutionary ideas first of all as factors restoring in man what is most human in him. The flame of revolution, the struggle for the building of a new world, burns out in man the petty bourgeois dross deposited in him. Man is transformed while transforming the world. Revolutionary, proletarian, Bolshevik humanism—this is Gorky’s answer to the “accursed problems” which tormented the great humanists of the West.

Not the last feeble offspring of bourgeois humanism, not a fictive titan and creator, conjured from the past, are called upon to solve these historical problems as inheritors of the great legacies of the

past. There is no need to look for an heir—he has appeared and entered his claim. Revolutionary consciousness, which penetrates into the very thick of the masses, creates millions of heroes and heirs. Simultaneously the theme of the rupture between the artist and the world becomes an anachronism; for one of the events of the new created world is their reconciliation; liberated humanity thrust forth the artist as the fighter, toiler, worker for the great common cause.

The tasks of a genuine master of culture in the days of great class battles and social upheavals arouse to his aid millions, who for the first time become aware of their rights, their human dignity, of the revolutionary and humanitarian traditions of the past, of all that has been accumulated by mankind during the thousands of years of its conscious existence.

Unforgettable in Gorky's works are the figures of men molded in the revolutionary movement and together with it. From Pavel Grachev to Pavel Vlassov, Gorky realized in loving portraiture fighters of the vanguard of the proletariat, to whom revolutionary enlightenment brought will, faith, new emotions, new ideas.

One of the finest and most beautiful of these figures is Nilovna, "the mother," the impersonation of the universal power and significance of revolutionary enlightenment. For forty years prevented by the bestial conditions of capitalist society from the fulfilling the great resources of active love stored in her heart, she is reborn when she comes in contact with revolutionary

consciousness borne into the world by revolutionary youth.

In the image of Nilovna, portrayed in clear and vivid epic form, with stirring simplicity, Gorky has shown how new consciousness, new social feelings do not fall from the sky, but are dormant in man himself, are eternal, and only change in quality.

Love of her son, of her flesh and blood, gradually grows into a love of her son's truth, of his comrades, of all the oppressed, fighting for their emancipation; she joins their ranks, for they have become her children.

"Children, through truth and reason bring love to everything and array everything in new colors; they illuminate all things with an imperishable flame—which comes from the very soul. A new life is being born, thanks to the children's ardent love toward the entire world. And who shall extinguish this love? What power is above it, who shall overcome it? The earth gave birth to it and all life wants its victory—all life!"

Gorky with all his works, all his life served the slogan: "Support the rebel," and his works as well as his life are an example, a lesson for all.

Gorky not only advocated revolutionary humanism, but he is a living memory of those battles in which this humanism was born.

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