O'kei: An American Novel (Annotated)

Boris Pilnyak

Ronald D. LeBlanc (Translator)

University of New Hampshire, ronald.leblanc@unh.edu

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Translated by

Ronald D. LeBlanc
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Note on Translation & Transliteration

As a scholar of Russian literature, I turned to translation only near the very end of my academic career, at which point in time I had become deeply interested in two putative novels that Boris Pilnyak had written during the 1930s: O’kei: An American Novel (O’kei. Amerikanskii roman) (1933) and Meat: A Novel (Myaso: Roman) (1936). Last year, I completed a translation of the latter novel and deposited it into the Scholars Repository at the University of New Hampshire: https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1649&context=faculty_pubs

At the time, I maintained that Pilnyak’s slaughterhouse novel deserved to be translated into English for the sake of those potential readers who – whether they harbor an interest in slaughterhouses, animal rights, and/or human nutrition or they are mainly curious about how Soviet writers sought to depict contemporary social reality in Socialist Realist novels produced during the Stalinist 1930s – are not able to read Russian. There is an even stronger case to be made, I believe, for translating Pilnyak’s travelogue-novel O’kei into English. For one thing, the travel the author undertook was to the United States, and the travel sketches he provided as a result of that trip focus exclusively upon American mores and manners. American readers who are unable to read Russian will clearly benefit from finding out what it is that this Soviet visitor had to say about their homeland.

As far as annotation is concerned, I decided to provide extensive annotation, mainly because I anticipate that the audience that is likely to be attracted to reading this text will not be an exclusively scholarly one. Indeed, I hope that O’kei: An American Novel will be read not only by academics, but also by a good number of lay readers who are curious about the impressions our country made upon a Soviet visitor in 1931. I would like their reading experience to have been enriched by annotation that explains briefly, for instance, what the Fish Committee was or who Aimée Semple McPherson was. In any event, the reader of my translation of Pilnyak’s
travelogue-novel can expect to find extensive annotation in the form of mini-encyclopedia entries on various people, places, and things mentioned in the text. However, for those readers who would rather avoid the possible distraction that footnotes and/or endnotes can cause, I have included a second version of the translation, which contains no annotation at all.

As far as the transliteration of Russian names is concerned, the names of well-known historical figures are given in their English equivalent: for example, Peter the Great, Tsar Nicholas II, Joseph Stalin. All other Russian personal names are transliterated. In transliterating Russian personal and place names from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet, I have largely followed the advice provided by J. Thomas Shaw, who maintained that for English-speaking readers who are not familiar with the Russian language, “a transliteration system should suggest something about the pronunciation of that language” and that “the less the reader knows of Russian, the closer the transliteration needs to be to something representing fairly accurately the pronunciation of the words.” As a result, I have followed System I (the system designed for non-specialists and members of the general public) outlined by Shaw in The Transliteration of Modern Russian for English-Language Publications (1967). I have made some exceptions, however, in those cases where certain spellings (spellings that do not follow Shaw’s System I religiously) would look more familiar or sound less confusing to readers.
On January 4, 1931, the beleaguered Russian writer, Boris Pilnyak (1894-1938), wrote a letter to Joseph Stalin, pleading with the Soviet leader for permission to travel to the United States in order to conduct research for an ambitious book project he was planning to undertake, one that would compare communist Russia favorably to capitalist America. Pilnyak in recent years had become the target of virulent attacks in the Soviet press (especially by fervent advocates of proletarian literature) for having published, through the Berlin publishing house Petropolis, a novella titled *Mahogany (Krasnoe derevo)* (1929), which painted a less than flattering picture of life in Soviet Russia. In his letter to Stalin, Pilnyak openly acknowledges that publishing *Mahogany* abroad had been a serious mistake on his part, but he points out that he immediately sought to make amends for that error in judgment by revising the novella and incorporating parts of it into a Socialist Realist production novel, *The Volga Flows to the Caspian Sea (Volga vpadaet v Kaspiiskoe more)* (1930), where the action takes place during the construction of the Moscow-Volga Canal. “I consider myself a revolutionary writer,” Pilnyak insists in his letter, “the revolution created me, and my bricks are being used in our construction of socialism. I do not see my fate outside of the revolution.” Pilnyak also reminds Stalin that he had just recently traveled to Central Asia to witness first hand how socialism was being constructed in Tadzhikistan and had published travel sketches that describe the wonders of socialist construction that he witnessed in that far-off, primitive land. To strengthen his case for being allowed to travel to America, Pilnyak reminds Stalin that the bourgeois press in the West has been portraying him of late as a “martyred” writer who is being unfairly persecuted by the Soviet regime on account of his purported lack of stylistic and ideological orthodoxy. “It seems to me,” Pilnyak notes, “that it would make for quite a nice political effect if a ‘martyred’ writer such as myself, being of sound mind and body, nicely attired, and no less learned than European writers, were to appear on the streets of Europe and the U.S.A. . . . and if this writer were to declare that he takes great pride in the recent history of his homeland and that he is convinced that the laws of that recent history will rebuild – and is even now already rebuilding – the world. This would be politically significant.” Stalin, who was apparently won over by Pilnyak’s charm offensive, replied in a letter three days later that the writer’s proposed trip had received official approval.

It was Ivan Gronsky, the editor of the newspaper *Izvestia* (the official publication of the Soviet government), who had convinced the persecuted writer to pursue this course of action: that is, to try to make amends by converting his ill-fated novella *Mahogany* into the production novel *The Volga Flows to the Caspian Sea*, by travelling to Central Asia to witness first-hand how socialist construction was taking place there (and then to write about it in his Tadzhikistan sketches), and finally by appealing directly to Stalin himself to grant him permission to travel to the United States. Gronsky, who was born into a peasant family, took an active part in both the October Revolution and the Civil War, and then received a formal education by attending the newly founded Institute of Red Professors, would eventually be appointed editor of the influential journal *Novy mir* and chair of the Organizing Committee of the First Congress of Soviet Writers. More importantly, during the early 1930s he was becoming Stalin’s right-hand man in matters involving literature and the arts. Gronsky appears to have viewed Pilnyak as a challenging reformation project and hoped that by extending his patronage and protection to him he could get this talented but misguided writer to mend his errant ways. In assessing Pilnyak as an artist and
as a person, Gronsky once wrote that this promising young writer and “fellow traveler” (the name given to someone who sympathized with the aims and policies of the Bolsheviks, but was not a card-carrying member of the Communist Party), had become entangled in the late 1920s with some Trotskyites (primarily the literary critics Vyacheslav Polonsky and Aleksandr Voronsky) and that it was under their baneful influence that he had written the disgustingly anti-Soviet and counter-revolutionary novella *Mahogany*. “But we Bolsheviks,” Gronsky explained, “decided to try to give him a chance to reform: we sent him to Central Asia and then to America. Afterwards, he wrote a travelogue that truthfully described the situation in capitalist countries, mainly America.” One year later, in a private conversation he had with Gronsky, Pilnyak reportedly confessed to his patron that he had finally come to realize that he must “go with the Bolsheviks” – that if a writer wishes to remain a writer in the Soviet Union, he must join, “along with the Bolsheviks,” in the common battle for the victory of socialism over capitalism.

Pilnyak set off for America in late January 1931, travelling initially by train from Moscow to Leningrad, and then continuing on, at a leisurely pace, through Poland, Germany (where he applied for a visa at the American Consulate in Berlin), and France, before sailing on the S.S. Bremen for his transatlantic crossing on March 7, 1931. Upon his arrival in New York City five days later, Pilnyak was taken to the luxurious Hotel St. Moritz, where Ray Long, the editor-in-chief of *Cosmopolitan* monthly magazine, had arranged for a room to be provided gratis for the visiting Soviet writer. Long, who was in the process of getting his magazine into the book publishing business, had travelled to Moscow just six months earlier, seeking to get acquainted with some of Soviet Russia’s most popular writers and to find fictional material of theirs that would appeal to the reading public in the United States. Soon after his arrival in Soviet Russia, Long made the acquaintance of Eugene Lyons, an American reporter who was serving in Moscow as the news correspondent for United Press, and of Charles Malamuth, a former language instructor in the Slavic Department at the University of California-Berkeley, who was serving as Lyons’s interpreter and translator in Moscow. Lyons and Malamuth agreed to assist Long, introducing him to several well-known writers, including Pilnyak, who seemed to offer the greatest possibilities for having their works translated into English and then published in the U.S. As Long explains in his account of this brief business trip to Moscow, “We met the writers in their homes, made our deals, and at the end of three weeks I had accomplished all I had come to do.” One of Long’s fears, he admits, was that “all of the literature which had been produced since the Revolution would be so full of propaganda that it might be unpalatable in the United States.” This fear, as it turned out, proved to be groundless. Indeed, he found many of their literary works to be extremely critical of conditions under the Soviet regime. As such, they seemed likely to help American readers better understand the new Russia. This was especially true, he pointed out, in the case of Pilnyak’s recent novel, *The Volga Falls to the Caspian Sea*, which provided, in his words, “a true picture of modern Russia and the Russians of today. Parts of it are almost drastic in their criticism.” It seems no accident, therefore, that the March 1931 issue of *Cosmopolitan*, which was appearing at news stands right as Pilnyak was arriving in America, featured on one of its opening pages a photo of Pilnyak accompanying Long’s introduction to the main article, titled “I Would Like to Take You to Russia With Me,” which summarized the editor’s recent trip to the Soviet Union. Nor is it surprising that almost immediately upon Pilnyak’s arrival in New York he collaborated briefly with Charles Malamuth, who was completing his translation of *The Volga Flows to the Caspian Sea*, readying it for publication in the U.S. by Long’s newly formed Cosmopolitan Book Corporation.
Another event that Ray Long arranged for his Soviet guest soon after his arrival in New York was a reception banquet that was held in his honor at the Metropolitan Club on March 19, 1931. This was a formal dinner that was attended by a number of the leading lights of American literature. As the literary guests were finishing up their meal, Ray Long stepped forward to introduce Pilnyak, who had spent three days preparing his speech: he himself did not speak English, but several of his Russian friends in the New York area had assisted him in throwing something together and had helped him rehearse it. “I spoke about the fences that enclose national cultures,” Pilnyak would later write when summarizing his brief remarks. “I spoke about the U.S.S.R., about the whole wide world, about how the great honor that was being bestowed upon me by this dinner is not a distinction for me personally, but for that magnificent literature, magnificent and youthful, that the dawning of socialism and the thunderstorm of revolution have created.” The banquet is famous, however, not for anything Pilnyak said or did that evening, but rather for the slap that Theodore Dreiser delivered to the face of Sinclair Lewis following the latter’s after-dinner speech. When Pilnyak had concluded his brief remarks, it was Lewis’s turn to speak. The recent recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature began by telling the audience that he was not going to speak about the Soviet Union or about Pilnyak. “I am not able to say anything about the Soviet Union and about Pilnyak,” Lewis explained, “because one of the guests who are present here this evening stole three thousand words from my wife.” He was referring here to the charge of plagiarism that Dorothy Thompson (Lewis’s wife) had lodged a couple of years earlier against Dreiser for “borrowing quite liberally” from the newspaper articles she had written during her tour of Russia (she later combined these articles together and published them as a book, *The New Russia*, 1928) when he was in the process of writing his own travel account, *Dreiser Looks at Russia* (1928). What seems especially to have raised Lewis’s ire toward Dreiser, however, was the widely shared opinion, circulating among many American writers and literary critics, that it was Dreiser who truly deserved to receive the Nobel Prize, not Lewis. In any event, it was the altercation between Dreiser and Lewis (“the slap heard ‘round the world”) that took place at the Metropolitan Club that evening that became the hot news item in the world press the next day, not the reception that Pilnyak experienced as a Soviet writer launching his first ever visit to the United States.

Yet another development that occurred soon after Pilnyak’s arrival in New York was his decision to check out of his room at the luxurious Hotel St. Moritz on March 12, 1931 and move into the nearby apartment of Joseph Freeman, the American journalist, radical social activist, and editor of *New Masses* (a literary journal closely associated with the Communist Party USA). A few years later, in 1934, Freeman would become the founding editor of *Partisan Review*, a left-wing magazine associated with the John Reed Club of New York, another Communist Party organization. Although Freeman was born and initially raised in Ukraine (he lived there for several years before his Jewish family emigrated to the U.S. and settled in Brooklyn) and had spent more than a year working in Moscow as a foreign news correspondent, his command of spoken Russian, as he himself readily admitted, was by this time rather rusty. But the large amount of time that he would spend together with Pilnyak during the writer’s five-month stay in the U.S. helped him enormously in regaining his fluency. Some people have suspected that Freeman had been assigned to chaperone Pilnyak at the request of the Soviet leadership back in Moscow (in order to keep an eye on the behavior of this unreliable “fellow traveler”), but the two men – both of them natural charmers and notorious womanizers – quickly became fast
friends who seemed genuinely to enjoy each other’s company and confided in each other. Freeman introduced Pilnyak to many of his leftist friends – contemporary journalists, writers, critics, and fellow staff members at *New Masses* – people such as Michael Gold, Floyd Dell, Louis Fischer, Isaac Don Levine, Duva Mendelssohn, Theodore Dreiser, John Dos Passos, Upton Sinclair, Margaret Bourke-White, and Regina Andrews, among others. One scholar has opined that during his stay in New York Pilnyak might well have derived “the whole ethos of his travelogue” from his lively discussions with Michael Gold, who was a zealous communist, and from Gold’s writings in *New Masses* and *Daily Worker*. Pilnyak even got to meet Max Eastman, the writer, critic, and journalist who just a few years later would publish an article in *Modern Monthly*, titled “The Humiliation of Boris Pilnyak,” that would excoriate Pilnyak mercilessly for “selling his pen to the bureaucracy” and becoming, in Eastman’s words, “Russia’s leading expert in recantation, abjection, self-repudiation, sighs of repentance and prayers of apology for the sin of having had thoughts, impulses, fancies, emotions, reactions, reflexes, tropisms, or any perceptible knee-jerks or eye-winks that he could call his own.” “The literary journals,” Eastman would intone sarcastically, “are soggy with his unctuous promises and tears of contrition.”

During Pilnyak’s stay in the United States, Joe Freeman accompanied the Soviet writer not only around New York City and its environs, but also on a cross-country trip to Hollywood, taken during the spring of 1931. Pilnyak had been invited by MGM Studios to co-author, along with the established screenwriter Frances Marion, the scenario for a purportedly pro-Soviet film, to be produced by Irving Thalberg and directed by Frank Capra, about a young American engineer who goes to live and work in the Soviet Union. Its cast would include such movie stars as Wallace Berry, Marie Dressler, Joan Crawford, and Clark Gable. Pilnyak was also hired to serve as a consultant on this film, tentatively titled *Soviet*, for which Thalberg agreed to pay him a salary of $500 a week. The MGM invitation had been sent to Pilnyak via telegram while he was making his transatlantic crossing on the Bremen. Ray Long had agreed to sponsor the trip, even paying Freeman a weekly honorarium of $100 for accompanying the Soviet writer to Hollywood and assisting him there as an interpreter. On April 5, 1931, Pilnyak and Freeman set off for Hollywood aboard the Twentieth-Century Limited, an express passenger train that left the LaSalle Street Station in NYC and stopped overnight in Chicago. The pair continued on to Los Angeles the following day aboard the Chief train, whose route took them through parts of the Great Plains and the Desert Southwest. Upon their arrival in California, Pilnyak signed a ten-week contract with MGM, but he and Freeman stayed in Hollywood for only four weeks, realizing early on that Pilnyak had been invited there, “in his capacity as a Bolshevik,” in order to, as he put it, “Sovietize an American film.” The artificiality of the MGM movie sets and props (their “fakeness”), the deplorable conditions under which script writers operated (they were essentially “stabled” workers), the trite and formulaic “happy endings” of the various film genres (gangster films, films of cowboys and Indians, action films with thrilling chase scenes, etc.), and the compulsory distortion of reality to fit the audience’s desires and preconceptions – all of this led Pilnyak to decide to tear up his contract with MGM and head back to New York with Freeman. The two of them had come to the realization that the bosses at the studio wanted them to adapt reality to fit the scenario that the producer had in mind, rather than to work the other way around. They were being asked, as Pilnyak put it, “to make lemons ripen in Greenland.” Their stay in California had not been entirely a waste of time, however. After all, both of them were lodged at the Miramar Hotel, one of Santa Monica’s premier guest residences,
so they were able to enjoy the scenic and exotic surroundings during their time there: palm trees, ocean bluffs, wharfs, boardwalks, fruit orchards, and so on. They were also able to visit Upton Sinclair at his home in nearby Pasadena and to tour some of the Spanish missions in the local area. They even got to observe a religious service of Russian “Jumpers” (ecstatic sectarians belonging to a Russian emigré denomination of spiritual Christians). Pilnyak, who had developed a fondness for American automobiles, decided to purchase a Ford in Los Angeles, to teach himself how to operate it, and then to drive it back to New York along a scenic route. Pilnyak and Freeman were accompanied on this cross-country journey by an unemployed screen actor referred to as Isidor K., whom Pilnyak characterized as “a rolling stone, a man who had despaired of ever finding work in Hollywood, so he was helping us drive the car cross-country in exchange for free food and lodging. He was headed to New York, but he was prepared to go anywhere we wanted. He was a U.S. citizen. Isidor sang American hymns the whole way.”23

The drive back to New York City took this trio of travelers through a number of different states, including, among others, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, Tennessee, Michigan, and New York. Along the way, they managed to attend a rodeo, to observe people prospecting for gold, to watch crowds of people flocking to oil boom towns such as Gladewater, TX, and Lakeview, LA, to marvel at such natural wonders as the cactus desert at the foot of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, the Grand Canyon, and Niagara Falls, and to tour a cotton plantation in the deep South as well as the Ford automotive plant in Detroit. By the end of his five-month stay in the United States, Pilnyak had thus managed to see quite a bit of this broad and geographically diverse country. The several farewell-to-America interviews that he gave on the eve of his departure for Moscow in early August, along with the press releases that his publisher distributed to local news outlets, indicate that, at one time or another during his stay here, the Soviet writer had also managed to visit such cities as Boston, MA, Washington, DC, New Orleans, LA, Birmingham, AL, Charleston, WV, Akron, OH, Santa Fe, NM, and Santa Barbara, CA. Those pre-departure interviews and press releases also allowed Pilnyak to reveal to American readers some of the impressions that their country had made upon him during his five-month stay here, impressions that he would later expand upon and then incorporate into the lengthy travelogue-novel, *O'kei: An American Novel* (1933), which he would begin writing almost immediately upon his return home to Moscow. For the most part, he reiterated how capitalism would soon collapse in the U.S. and be replaced by socialism, how art is stunted (if not entirely absent) in Hollywood, and how gangsterism, which is widespread in the U.S., is essentially a perverse expression of American individualism. None of his impressions of America, in short, seemed the least bit favorable.

On August 3, 1931, Pilnyak departed New York, again aboard the Bremen, to return to Moscow. Several days earlier, at a Brooklyn dock, his Ford roadster had been loaded onto a freighter that was departing soon for Leningrad: Pilnyak, it turns out, had decided to keep the American automobile he had purchased and to have it shipped back home ahead of him. On the day of his departure, he was introduced to Irving De Witt Talmadge, a young American journalist who was likewise sailing on the Bremen that day, headed for the first time to Soviet Russia with his wife on a tourist visa, hoping to find a job in Moscow that would make it possible for them to live there for a while.24 By the time they reached Leningrad five days later, the young couple had become such good friends with Pilnyak that he invited them to stay at his Moscow house with him and his family indefinitely, at least until Talmadge (who had studied Russian and was
responded to find gainful employment in the capital. Almost as soon as the young couple got settled at the Pilnyak house, however, Talmadge was already being given segments of the writer’s American impressions to translate into English. He appears to have been the first (and, to the best of my knowledge, the only) person who attempted to translate Pilnyak’s travelogue-novel into English. As for the Ford roadster that Pilnyak had shipped in advance to Leningrad, the writer drove it home to Moscow a short time later, accompanied on the trip by another of his Moscow friends, the aforementioned Eugene Lyons, who writes that Pilnyak initially drove the car through the streets of Leningrad “tooting the American-accent horn, like a little boy with a kiddie-car.” On the highway from Leningrad to Moscow, Pilnyak, whom Lyons characterizes as a “cumbersome and lovable blond bear,” blew his horn continuously, “as though we were traveling on horn-power alone. Wherever we paused in our three days of leisurely driving, the entire village population soon gathered to marvel and to interrogate.” Indeed, in one village, Pilnyak reportedly took nearly every local man, woman, and child on their first ride in an automobile. As Lyons points out, the American car was a status symbol, “a sign and proof of the affluence of popular writers in the U.S.S.R.,” setting Pilnyak off from “the common run of man even more than his talent and temperament.” Interestingly enough, Lyons would soon purchase a Ford himself and even hire a chauffeur to drive it. Not to be outdone, Pilnyak eventually purchased a second car for himself, this one not a Ford, but instead a Soviet model.

As we learn from the exchange of letters between Pilnyak and Joe Freeman from August 1931 to February 1932, the Soviet writer was busily at work during this time recording his impressions from his recent stay in the U.S. In a letter he sent to Freeman on November 3, 1931, for instance, Pilnyak promises shortly to send off the first packet of his American impressions. Freeman, for his part, alerts Pilnyak to the fact that he will soon be sending some clippings from U.S. newspapers his way. In addition, the September 1931 issue of New Masses included a short piece by Pilnyak, titled “Farewell to America,” to which an “Editor’s Note” was attached, explaining that before leaving the United States, “Pilnyak left behind him the following paper containing some impressions of his stay here.” Those impressions were mainly the ones that pertained to the time he had spent in Hollywood. It is not clear exactly who it was that translated these impressions into English, but it was quite likely Joe Freeman, who was still serving on the journal’s editorial board at this time. Back in Moscow, meanwhile, as evidence that Pilnyak was making progress on the draft version of his travelogue-novel, we learn that the writer hosted a small literary evening at his home on Yamskoe Pole Street soon after he returned from the U.S. This intimate get-together was attended by Ivan Gronsky, the writer’s long-time patron, Karl Radek, a close friend and former member of the Left Opposition who now held a prominent place within the Communist Party as the head of the International Information Bureau of the Central Committee, Aleksandr Voronsky, the Trotskyite editor and critic, Valerian Osinsky, an economist and agricultural expert, and Walter Duranty, the Moscow bureau chief for the New York Times. Gronsky describes the evening this way:

Pilnyak read to us from his latest novel: A Country Where Gangsters Have Managed to Prosper (Strana, v kotoroi bandity uslovili s’ khoroshno zhit’). After the reading, everyone there started to heap praise upon it. I stepped forward and said that inaccuracies had been allowed to creep into this new work, beginning with the title. The people who live in America are highly cultured folk.
(Incidentally, gangsterism did make a lasting impression upon Pilnyak). All of my further remarks were along the same line. When I was done, others started to express themselves critically as well and to talk about the work’s shortcomings.32

“Pilnyak reworked his novel twice and changed its title,” Gronsky adds. “It saw the light of day under the title O’kei. It was a weak work of literature.”33 Nevertheless, early in 1932 the work was accepted for publication in serialized form in the journal Novy mir, whose recently appointed editor-in-chief was none other than Gronsky himself. It was published in the March through June 1932 issues (Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6) of Gronsky’s journal. It was also accepted for publication by two publishing houses, appearing in print in 1933 in print runs of 10,000 copies each. Thus, Gronsky, through his public statements and his editorial endorsements, was seeking to advance Pilnyak’s literary career at the same time that he was disparaging his latest work in private. A particularly salient example of this public-versus-private dichotomy is provided in Gronsky’s Concluding Speech at the Second Plenum of the Organizing Committee of the Congress of Soviet Writers in February 1933, where the editor singles out Pilnyak’s recently published travelogue-novel as an example of the kind of high-quality literary works Soviet writers should be writing these days, immortal works that “will live on for centuries to come.”34

Even before his travelogue-novel was completed in February 1932, Pilnyak had already begun delivering public talks about his recent trip to the United States. One of these talks took place at the beginning of November 1931 at the Press House (Dom Pechati) in Moscow, where Pilnyak was scheduled to speak about contemporary American journalistic and literary practices. We learn from a newspaper report, filed by David Kal’m shortly following this talk, that Pilnyak had just recently spoken about his impressions of American cinema to members of AARK, the Association of Workers in Revolutionary Cinematography (Assotsiatsiia rabotnikov revoliutsionnoi kinematografii). We also learn that at both talks some people had to be turned away because all the seats were already taken. So Pilnyak, it seems, was not having any difficulty arousing interest in his forthcoming book by delivering these public talks.35 Kal’m notes in his report that Pilnyak had some amusing things to say during his talk: about how American journalists loaf about, how American writers brawl, how they dine, etc. He also spoke about how they drank alcohol – in the midst of prohibition’s dry law – during their first meeting with Pilnyak, how they drank alcohol when they were seeing him off at the conclusion of his U.S. visit, and how they drank alcohol in the interim. Frequently employing the expression “American philistine,” Pilnyak spoke about his impressions, Kal’m notes, as if it was a Russian philistine who had visited America. The disappointed audience of journalists and writers, Kal’m continues, did not hear a single word coming out of Pilnyak’s mouth about the financial crisis in the U.S. that had shaken the country’s economy, about the widespread unemployment that had resulted in masses of starving proletarians being thrown out on the street by the thousands, about labor strikes, “about that American reality that any Moscow schoolboy knows.” The audience knows this American reality from newspaper accounts, Kal’m points out, but it had every right to expect to hear fresh ideas about it from a prominent Soviet writer who was a living witness to this reality. Thus Pilnyak’s public talk at the Press House, if Kal’m’s report is to be believed, was very poorly received. To make matters even worse, Pilnyak was briefly followed on stage by a person, identified as Comrade Clark, associate editor of Worker’s News, the newly created English-language newspaper in Moscow, who proceeded to express his total disgust with Pilnyak’s presentation.36 Indeed, a month following this public talk, the newspaper Pravda
reprimanded the management of the Press House for having displayed its “rotten liberalism” and for having committed an egregious “political mistake” by scheduling Pilnyak’s public talk about America at this venue, a talk that it characterized as “politically illiterate.”

Pilnyak apparently never did find a foolproof way to improve the quality of the series of public talks he gave in Moscow in 1931-1932 about his impressions of America, although it does sound as if he did try his best, at least, to paint the United States in as lurid and sensational a manner as possible. His American friend in Moscow, Eugene Lyons, who attended some of Pilnyak’s talks during this period, writes that the speaker recounted “strange and fantastic tales of that distant realm” to an audience of “round-mouthed but withal incredulous” Muscovites:

Men who, returning from a visit to the country of Soviets, tell tales of curious manners and shuddering horrors have nothing on Boris Andreyevich after his sojourn in America. But there are few to believe him . . . Muscovites may be naïve and believing folk, but not naïve enough to believe such inventions . . . On and on went the tales, growing stranger and less credible as he proceeded. He implied that in leaving the American shores he escaped from a mad house. And he did bless his stars that he is back in a safe and sane and reasonable place like the Union of Soviets.

When Pilnyak’s impressions of America were published in book form two years later, a few of the reviews were equally lukewarm in their praise. David Zaslavsky’s review of O’kei in Literaturnaia gazeta, for example, suggests, by its very title, “A Bird’s-Eye View” (“S ptich’ego duazo”), that Pilnyak’s travelogue-novel fails to provide Soviet readers with the kind of first-hand observations of the United States from the perspective of an informed eyewitness that David Kal’m had found lacking in Pilnyak’s public talk at the Press House. What the reader gets instead, according to Zaslavsky, are superficial observations from someone who is not at all familiar with the economics, industry, and agriculture of this advanced capitalist country. Moreover, Zaslavsky points out, even when Pilnyak does occasionally provide the reader with some observations that prove to be accurate and true, they “are not, of course, at all new.”

Another less than glowing review of O’kei was provided by Valentin Serebriakov, whose main complaint, it appears, is a linguistic one. Pilnyak, he writes, “for no good reason, except perhaps bad taste, subscribes to the practice, deliberate and ostentatious in nature, of using English words with Russian endings.” “Pilnyak’s Americans,” Serebriakov explains, “lonchat (from ‘lunch’), dineriat (which means ‘eat dinner’), bitchuiutsia (‘lie on the beach’) and baluiut together (from the word ‘ball’).”

For the most part, however, as Gary Browning has observed, O’kei “enjoyed considerable popularity in the Soviet Union.” Indeed, Pilnyak’s O’kei was received relatively favorably both when it was serialized in Novyi mir during the spring of 1932 and then again when it was published in book form in 1933 and 1935. The bitter public campaign against Pilnyak (due to the publication abroad of Mahogany) had come to an end by 1931, and the lingering animus toward him and his works on the part of Party writers and advocates for proletarian literature diminished considerably as a result of Stalin’s disbanding of RAPP, the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (Rossiiskaia assotsiatsiia proletarskikh pisatelei) in April 1932. Pilnyak, as a result, seems to have returned to his place atop the hierarchy of Soviet prose writers.
Stalin himself seems personally to have enjoyed reading Pilnyak’s travelogue-novel. In his memoirs, Ivan Gronsky writes that one day, when he went to the leader’s dacha outside Moscow, he found Stalin, Molotov, and Ezhov there, all three of them reading O’kei and “reacting approvingly to what they were reading.” Those scholars who have written about Soviet travelers visiting the United States during the early part of the twentieth century have, with few exceptions, had largely positive things to say about Pilnyak’s travelogue-novel. For instance, in a study that examines Soviet-American literary connections during the 1920s and 1930s, Valentina Sushkova, a Soviet Americanist, has argued that Pilnyak, when compared with other Soviet travelers to America in the early twentieth century, such as Sergei Esenin (in 1922) and Vladimir Mayakovsky (in 1925) before him and Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov (in 1936) after him, provides “a more expressive emotional impact” in his comparison of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. than do these fellow Soviet authors. Indeed, she claims that Pilnyak, as the author of the travel sketches included in O’kei, serves not only as an eyewitness to the events he records, but also as a documentarian who often underscores his own personal attitude toward those events. A similarly favorable assessment of Pilnyak’s O’kei can be found in Aleksandr Etkind’s more recent study, The Interpretation of Journeys: Russia and America in Travelogues and Intertexts (Tolkovanie puteshestvii. Rossiia i Amerika v travelogakh i intertekstakh) (2001), where the author claims that out of the many travelogues written by Soviet travelers to the United States during the 1920s and 1930s, Pilnyak wrote the most serious of them all, fashioning a “best seller” that became a rare example within Soviet literature of a large-scale intellectual essay that had been turned into an aesthetic work of belles lettres, one that is “detailed, argumentative, and critical.”

Perhaps the most favorable and easily the most detailed scholarly study devoted to Pilnyak’s travelogue-novel thus far, however, is Milla Fedorova’s ambitious Yankees in Petrograd, Bolsheviks in New York: America and Americans in Russian Literary Perception (2013). Unlike other American travelogues in the genre, Fedorova observes, “Pilnyak’s narration ignores his actual trajectory and follows, instead, unfolding recurrent motifs and the development of the narrator’s thoughts.” And although readers of Pilnyak’s travelogue-novel will find traditional descriptions of such iconic American landmarks as Coney Island, the Ford factory in Detroit, the Grand Canyon, and Niagara Falls, they will also be struck by the “absence of a traditional, cohesive narrative.”

Striving for a universal scale of social and historical analysis, its author chooses instead an impressionistic, fragmentary form. A modernist writer with a superimposed ideological task, Pilnyak tries to convey the essence of America by scattering personal observations, reports of seemingly random meetings and conversations, statistical data, newspaper articles, and surveys of historical events throughout the text.

As a result of this non-traditional narrative structure, Fedorova points out, Pilnyak’s O’kei has been “praised for its detailed, critical overview of American life as well as criticized for the haste, superficiality, and anecdotal nature of its approach.” Another departure that Pilnyak makes from the genre of American travelogues written by Soviet writers is the way the author employs poetic means to achieve his rhetorical purpose of showing how the global financial crisis foretells the impending collapse of capitalism in the United States. “It is impossible to
grasp the peculiarity of the travelogue if we leave aside its poetic nature,” Fedorova insists. “As with a poem, the succession of the travelogue’s elements is based on phonetic similarities, subtle semantic shifts, and associations of memory. Repetitions of lengthy passages, so unusual in a novel, become understandable as the mark of a poetic work.”51 These poetic features in Pilnyak’s text often violate speech norms, however, and take the form of lexical, grammatical, and even compositional neologisms, features that can be not only off-putting, but also confusing, for many readers, leading them to view the text as simply a motley mosaic of disparate fragments. “On closer reading,” Fedorova explains, “we recognize the recurrent patterns and threads that disappear from the surface to be picked up again later. The author eventually returns to and finishes the sentences and stories broached in the beginning of the novel.”52 As Fedorova’s insightful analysis of O’kei makes clear, Pilnyak has written a travelogue-novel whose linguistic features and narrative structure impose some very heavy demands upon readers as they seek to understand the author’s impressions of America.

Whether or not readers of Pilnyak’s O’kei will rise to meet the hermeneutic challenge that Fedorova details in her study, they should be able to identify fairly readily the long list of topics and themes that the author addresses in his travelogue-novel as he dissects the character of Americans: nationalism, patriotism, puritanism, gangsterism, materialism, philistinism, individualism, consumerism, racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, and so on. They should also be able to identify most, if not all, of the institutions, organizations, locales, personalities, practices, artifacts, etc. that Pilnyak sees as having figured prominently in reflecting (as well as helping to shape) the values that Americans live by: the Statue of Liberty, the Declaration of Independence, the Great Depression, the Salvation Army, the Ku Klux Klan, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the White House, Wall Street, Park Avenue, the Bowery, the Tombs, Coney Island, Ellis Island, Greenwich Village, Broadway, Hollywood, labor unions, industry, commerce, commercialization, mechanization, motels, Gideons Bibles, bribery, organized crime, Al Capone, Charles Lindberg, flags, rodeos, publicity, advertisements, Negroes (African-Americans), Jim Crow, Indians (Native Americans), unemployment offices, cotton fields, stock markets, political parties, workers’ strikes, skyscrapers, organized religion, political parties, immigration, deportation, prohibition (dry law), advertising, publicity, popular entertainment, newspapers, electricity, urban noise, drugstores, cafeterias, automat, dairy farms, Eskimo Pies, Coca-Cola, Apple Annies, assembly lines, conveyor belts, traffic, automobiles, slaughterhouses, bootlegging, air pollution, film studios, highways, soup kitchens, bread lines, homeless shelters, the foxtrot, dance marathons, and so on. The reader should be forewarned, however, that Pilnyak, in the Soviet role he accepts as an advocate of socialism who must denounce capitalism and prophesize its imminent collapse, sounds highly negative and staunchly anti-American throughout his narrative. Indeed, he quotes repeatedly from contemporary works by left-wing American social scientists – primarily, political theorist Frank Kent (Political Behavior: The Heretofore Unwritten Laws, Customs and Principles of Politics as Practiced in the United States, 1928) and economist Stuart Chase (Prosperity: Fact or Myth? 1929) – in an effort to support his sharp criticism of American capitalism. As a result, Pilnyak’s travelogue-novel has been characterized by one critic as “a one-sided and biased denunciation of capitalist America.”53

Potential readers of O’kei should also be forewarned that the modernist Pilnyak, who was a highly word-conscious verbal artist throughout his literary career, seems to have loved the sound of the English language, a language that he himself did not understand, and that he never seemed
sufficiently motivated to attempt to learn.54 In his travelogue-novel, which was written, of course, for native Russian readers not for English-speaking American ones, Pilnyak tends frequently to provide the Russian transliteration of English words rather than their Russian translation. For example, the word “breakfast” is rendered as brekfest, rather than zavtrak. And the word that serves as the travelogue-novel’s title, “okay,” is rendered as o’kei, rather than khorosho or ladno. The native Russian reader is thus provided with how an English word sounds rather than what it means.55 There are also instances in the text where Pilnyak puns playfully with Russian words that are close in sound but distant in meaning: for example, grob (“coffin”) and gorb (“hump”), standart (“norm,” “cliché”) and shtandart (“banner,” “flag”), sobstvennyi (“private,” “in-house”) and sobstvennik (“owner,” “proprietor”). Word play of a sort also occurs when Pilnyak uses Russian wording that is hopelessly awkward (and unfortunate) for those readers who know both Russian and English, such as saying kovboiskie zhenshchiny (“cowboy women”) when he refers to the female equestrians who are riding at the rodeo he attended in Arizona. A humorously fractured, macaronic brand of Russian mixed with English is on display when Pilnyak relays bits of the conversations that occur at the religious gathering of Russian “Jumpers” (members of a sect of spiritual Christians) that he and some friends of his attend in Los Angeles.56 It is important for readers of O’kei to bear in mind that Pilnyak’s “American novel” was not merely a travelogue-novel, but also a highly “modernist” text, one that is similar in a number of respects to E. E. Cummings’s EIMI: A Journey Through Soviet Russia (1933), where the style is, in the words of one critic, deliberately “obscure and convoluted,” 57 and where there are numerous passages that “cannot be easily grasped in the more conventional way.”58 Both of these modernist texts are, in short, intentionally designed to be challenging to the reader. As far as their respective modernist texts (considered as travelogue-novels) are concerned, Cummings and Pilnyak seemed to be travelling in strangely intersecting orbits: both of them travelled in the late spring of 1931, neither of them was fluent in the native tongue spoken in the country they were visiting, hence both of them were unable to navigate very far on their own, requiring the assistance of a native speaker who was fluent in both Russian and English (Joe Freeman in Pilnyak’s case, mainly Charles Malamuth in Cummings’s case) to help them learn the ropes, and both of them had few, if any, positive things to say about the country they had visited: Cummings’s account of his trip to the Soviet Union is deliberately structured as a Dantean “tour of Hell,” while Pilnyak, as we saw earlier in Eugene Lyons’s account of the public talks he attended, is said to have regarded his return to Moscow following his five-month stay in the United States as an “escape from a mad house.”59 Even more serendipitous is the fact that one of Cumming’s Moscow guides, Charles Malamuth, had only recently returned to the Soviet Union from New York, where he and the recently arrived Pilnyak had met to discuss his translation of The Volga Flows to the Caspian Sea into English. Near the end of Cummings’s stay in Moscow (on May 29, 1931) he was introduced at a social event to Lev Tolstoy’s granddaughter (Sophia Andreyevna Tolstaya), whose companion that evening was Olga Sergeyevna Shcherbinovskaya, the actress at the Maly Theatre who was Pilnyak’s second wife. She is identified not by name, however, but instead as “the spouse of Soviet Russia’s foremost prose writer,” a writer whose “intricately cinematographic portrait of socialism” (most likely The Volga Flows to the Caspian Sea), Cummings tells us, was currently being translated into English by one of his guides, Charles Malamuth.60

Two additional words of warning should be given to the reader preparing to read O’kei. The first warning is that the clever verbal trickery in which Pilnyak frequently engages while narrating the
story of his visit to America can prove to be highly annoying, if not downright aggravating, to some readers. This is certainly the case, for instance, with Boris Paramonov, the renowned Russian essayist, who openly vents his irritation with Pilnyak and his frequent verbal tricks in a podcast devoted to Pilnyak’s *O’kei*, part of a five-part series on Radio Liberty (Radio Svoboda) called “Soviet Writers on the USA” (“Sovetskie pisateli o SShA”). In this podcast, which originally aired in September 2015, Paramonov castigates the Soviet writer for, among other things, deforming several words that have long been familiar to the Russian reading public (and coining many unnecessary new ones), refusing to develop “an intelligibly articulated story,” failing to describe some phenomenon and instead enumerating numerous instances of it (in the case of “electricity,” providing an inventory of applications – stretching from subways to sewing machines – that runs for over a page and a half), filling whole pages with statistics rather than with words (to the point where the prose becomes nearly unreadable), and providing an image of America that is, in Paramonov’s opinion, not very profound or lasting. “Pilnyak’s so-called American novel,” the award-winning essayist concludes, “says more about Pilnyak as a writer – and about his stylistics, and, what is much sadder, about his fate – than it does about America.”

The second word of warning to the reader concerns Pilnyak’s chronic practice of borrowing (often without attribution) from the works of other writers. In *O’kei*, Pilnyak does openly acknowledge the influence of the work of Pavel Svinin, an early nineteenth-century Russian visitor to the United States, but he remains quiet about a number of more recent travel sketches of America, such as those written by Maksim Gorky, Sergei Esenin, and Vladimir Mayakovsky earlier in the twentieth century, sketches that clearly influenced Pilnyak in the way he depicted New York City (with its polluted air and noisy streets), Coney Island (with its philistinism and materialism), and other American landmarks. It is entirely possible that Pilnyak was likewise indebted to Egon Kisch, an Austrian-Czech writer and journalist who wrote a series of American travel sketches in German, titled *Paradise America* (*Paradies Amerika*, 1928), in which he discussed the presidential election of 1928, the New York City jail known as “the Tombs,” digging for gold in California, Sutter’s Fort, the Ford auto plant in Detroit, Hollywood as the capital of American cinema, Upton Sinclair, etc., all of them people, places, and events that Pilnyak (who, as the son of Volga German colonists, could read German) would himself write about just a few years later.

Since this accompanying essay is intended mainly to provide the reader of my translation of *O’kei* with some background information on Pilnyak’s travelogue-novel, let us consider briefly why the author chose to scrap the work’s original title, *A Country Where Gangsters Have Managed to Prosper*, and replaced it with *O’kei: An American Novel* instead. The new subtitle greatly disturbed Valentin Kiparsky, who took the word *roman* quite literally. “This book was really not a novel at all,” he writes, “but rather a semi-fictional account of facts, impressions, and inventions.” It seems quite clear, however, that Pilnyak meant for the subtitle to be taken figuratively, not literally. By calling *O’kei* an “American novel,” Pilnyak was likely alerting readers to the fact that this work seeks to extend well beyond the bounds of the genre of a conventional travelogue, whether it does this in the sense that Aleksandr Etkind has in mind when he characterizes *O’kei* as an “intellectual essay” or that Milla Fedorova has in mind when she speaks of the “poetic” nature of *O’kei*. As for the new title, Pilnyak near the very opening of *O’kei* directs the reader’s attention to the etymological origins of this word in the United States:
At the beginning of the nineteenth century, presidents in the United States were preferably generals, military men, and not scholars. General Andrew Jackson was a president. In the English language there are two words, “all correct,” that mean: everything is correct, everything is exactly right. They brought President Jackson some bills to sign into law. He signed his approval of them by writing the two letters “o” and “k” (“o.k.”). President Jackson, whose literacy was restricted to the aural and who thus understood speech only by ear, thought that he was writing the initial letters of the words “all” and “correct,” because “all correct” is pronounced *oll korrekt*. These two letters – “o.k.” – are pronounced in English *o’kei*. Thus, it was as a result of the illiteracy of the general-president that this *o’kei* began to be disseminated and legitimated in America.

Pilnyak then proceeds to illustrate how widely used (overused, actually) this word had now become in the United States: “An American loses everything in the stock market and goes broke – *o’kei*. An American totally wrecks his automobile – *o’kei*. An American has his cheekbone broken while playing football – *o’kei*. An American is robbed by bandits – *o’kei*. Presidents now sign *o’kei* on bills passed into laws out of solidarity with the presidential ignorance that preceded them.”66 The exclamation *o’kei*, Fedorova explains, “conveys the essence of the American character,” its etymology demonstrating “an officially acknowledged respect for ignorance.”67 It seems entirely appropriate, therefore, that this exclamation should become the title of Pilnyak’s “American novel.” And, in light of the author’s love for the sound of English words – as well as his preference for sound over meaning, for transliteration over translation – it seems entirely appropriate that throughout my translation the Russian transliteration *o’kei* should be used, rather than the English translation *okay* (or *O.K.*). My hope is that it will serve to remind English-speaking readers that Pilnyak’s travelogue-novel was written primarily for a Russian-speaking audience of his fellow countrymen in the Soviet Union.

Let me conclude this introductory essay with one final speculation about *O’kei* as a word-conscious modernist text. In Chapter 23 of his travelogue-novel, where Pilnyak is describing his stay in Hollywood, he talks about the clichéd nature of American films (especially films about cowboys and Indians,), and he includes the genre of films about students, which he claims are “as conventional as films about cowboys.” “A student falls in love with a flighty girl,” he explains, “she scorns him, he suffers. A sporting event takes place: he wins the contest, although no one expected this. The girl’s hand is in his hand, everything is *o’kei!*”68 Next he says, “Vladimir Ivanovich Nemirovich-Danchenko spent time in Hollywood, just like Eisenstein and me. He proposed making a movie about the Pugachev rebellion: a motion picture from the history of the insurrection of Volga Russians against the empire, a revolt headed by Emelyan Pugachev.”69 At first glance, this would appear to be an instance where Pilnyak is shifting thematically from one topic (how trite and clichéd Hollywood films about students are) to a related topic: namely, how Soviet theater directors and cinematographers – such as Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko and Sergei Eisenstein – are, by contrast, serious artists, who find Hollywood stifling for its lack of support for true artistry in both theater and cinema. But it is possible that there might be yet another context lurking here just below the surface. Nemirovich-Danchenko, who visited Hollywood in 1926-1927 at the invitation of producer Joseph Schenck, was accompanied during his lengthy stay there by Sergei Bertensson, who had worked for him at the Moscow Art Theater for several years and would now serve as his personal secretary and

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interpreter. In his memoirs, Bertensson would later report how disappointed Nemirovich-Danchenko had been to find “all the vulgar, routine, senseless, and tasteless things taking place in the world of cinema” during his stay in Hollywood. Bertensson uses a Russian idiom – kliukva (“a branchy cranberry tree”) – to characterize the Hollywood film scripts where there are “lots of unrealistic details, ridiculous historical mistakes, and other nonsense” when it comes to describing Soviet Russia, a Russian idiom that Pilnyak will himself invoke when characterizing the ridiculous artistic demands that were made upon him during his brief stay in Hollywood. Bertensson especially deplores the lightweight operettas and musicals that were being adapted for the screen in Hollywood. One such work, he points out, is a silly musical, with music by George Gershwin and lyrics by Ira Gershwin, whose plot revolves around the misadventures of two British bootleggers, the Duke of Durham and his sister, Lady Kay, set in prohibition-era America and filled with such comic clichés as mistaken identities and farcical plot twists. The play, titled Oh, Kay!, which had its premiere on Broadway in November 1926, was being made into a silent film by Mervyn LeRoy during the same time period when Nemirovich-Danchenko and Bertensson were staying in Hollywood. The musical version is remembered today (if at all) for its enduring song, “Someone to Watch Over Me.” For our purposes, however, the more important tune from that work is, no doubt, “Oh, Kay, You’re O.K. with Me.” Bertensson emigrated to the U.S. in August 1928, accepting an offer that Joseph Schenck, the president of United Artists, had made to him to serve as his personal secretary, and he remained in Hollywood for the remainder of his life, mainly writing screenplays. Thus he was living and working in Hollywood when Pilnyak and Joe Freeman came there in the spring of 1931, and most likely he is the person who told them about the difficulties that Nemirovich-Danchenko had encountered when trying to make a serious film about the Pugachev rebellion. That attempt in 1927 to make a serious film about a historical event in Russia, just like Pilnyak’s subsequent attempt to do the same in 1931, failed because Hollywood is not interested in art. Instead it’s interested in Oh, Kay. But that’s o’kei. After all, everything in America, as Pilnyak would sadly observe, is o’kei.

NOTES

1 A few words should be said at the very outset about the title of this accompanying essay. The choice of the verb “discover” here can be understood in a straightforward, non-ironic way: Pilnyak’s stay in the United States in 1931 was the first (and only) time that he visited America. So it was indeed a discovery for him. But the title can also be understood as referring to another trip to the United States undertaken by a well-known Soviet writer, Vladimir Mayakovsky, who visited the country in 1925 and then wrote about his impressions in a work titled My Discovery of America (Moe otkrytie Ameriki) (1926). Mayakovsky, the so-called poet of the October Revolution, and Pilnyak, the paradigmatic “fellow traveler,” did not appear to get along very well, at least not in public, where they sometimes exchanged nasty insults (Mayakovsky once called Pilnyak a “bourgeois tribune hiding beneath the mask of a Soviet writer”), so this choice of verb would most likely displease the author of O’kei. And, finally, there is the well-known Russian idiomatic expression, “to discover America” (otkryt’ Ameriku), which is used when someone says something quite obvious or very well known as if it were something brand new or original. This, too, would not have pleased the author of O’kei, but, as we have seen, there are some critics who felt that Pilnyak’s impressions of America had little to offer that was entirely new or original.

3 Ibid., p. 346. “I am able to travel abroad only in my capacity as a revolutionary writer,” Pilnyak added, promising that he would come back and write what was needed (literally, the “requisite thing” (*nuzhnaia veshch’*). The “requisite thing,” as far as Stalin was concerned, would be an American travelogue that foretold the collapse of capitalism in the United States and the victory of Soviet communism worldwide.

4 In an interview he conducted with Gleb Glinka in New York City on November 24, 1973, while conducting research for his Harvard dissertation (later to become his acclaimed book on Pilnyak), Gary Browning reports that his interviewee told him: “Pilniak displayed Stalin’s one-page letter to his friends. The ceremony was performed in an atmosphere of blasphemy: Pilniak required all present to fall on their knees while he showed the letter encased in an icon frame and lighted by an icon lamp.” See Boris Pilniak: *Scythian at a Typewriter* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis 1985), p. 203, fn. 13.


6 Ibid., p. 157.


8 Ibid., p. 71.

9 Ibid., p. 72.


12 Ibid., p. 110.

13 “The reasons for the striking verbal similarities between the two books,” one critic explains, “were accounted for by the fact that both Thompson and Dreiser relied heavily on the same source, both transcribing material with which the Soviet government had provided them.” See Brian D. Harvey, “Whose Artists in Uniform? Boris Pil’njak and American Writers in the Early 1930s,” *Russian Literature*, vol. 62, no. 3 (2007): 307.

14 Another dinner reception was held in Pilnyak’s honor a few weeks later (some time in April). This one, sponsored by Alexander Gumberg, an influential Soviet-American businessman, was
held not at the elegant Metropolitan Club, however, but at a New York City speakeasy. The rowdy underground party was attended by the entire staff of the Nation, as well as by numerous liberal writers, who, according to James K. Libbey, spent the evening engaged in “a free wheeling debate on the freedom of artists under capitalism and communism.” See Alexander Gumberg and Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1933 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1977), pp. 159-160.

15 This is the view held, for instance, by Albert Halper, an American novelist and playwright, who writes that “Freeman was the interpreter, agent, and Party watchdog for the unwary, doomed Soviet writer, staying at the talented Pilnyak’s hotels, accompanying him to Hollywood, guiding and subtly directing his every move.” See Good-Bye, Union Square: A Writer’s Memoir of the Thirties (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1970), p. 269.


17 See Brian D. Harvey, “Whose Artists in Uniform? Boris Pil’njak and American Writers in the Early 1930s,” p. 304. As Harvey points out, there are numerous themes – the American Revolution, the Civil War, Shirley Temple, automobile accidents, Fordism, etc. – in Gold’s regular articles in New Masses that find an echo in Pilnyak’s travelogue-novel. See pp. 304-305.


21 Pil’niak, O’kei, p. 145.

22 Ibid., p. 150.

23 Ibid., p. 162.
24 In his unpublished memoirs, Albert Parry reveals that he is the one who drove Pilnyak to that Brooklyn dock to arrange for the shipment of his Ford roadster back to Soviet Russia. He is also the one who would introduce Pilnyak to his friend, Irving De Witt Talmadge, one week later when they were boarding the Bremen for their trans-Atlantic crossing to Europe. See Chapter 16, “Sundry Other Talents,” of *Ask That Your Way Be long: An Autobiography*, p. 375-377.

25 Irving Talmadge found employment as a staff writer for the newspaper *Workers News*, a short-lived Moscow newspaper for English-speaking workers and specialists living in the Soviet Union. He was also kept busy, especially during the spring of 1932, by the challenge of translating Pilnyak’s travelogue-novel into English, a project that was under contract with the Farrar and Rinehart publishing house in the U.S. Although Pilnyak kept reassuring Joe Freeman that a completed manuscript for the translation was either already in the mail or soon to be in the mail, the translation project was, in the end, never realized. Some of their correspondence during this period is provided in Boris Pil’niak, “Letters from the East: Toward B. Pil’niak’s Stay in Japan in 1932” (“Pis’ma s vostoka: K prebyvaniiu B. Pil’niaka v Iaponii v 1932 godu”), ed. N. Iu. Griakalova, *Russkaia literatura*, No. 3 (2002): 170-184. Lazar Fleishman has suggested that the poor quality of Talmadge’s translation may have been the reason for the project being aborted. See his magisterial study, *Toward the History of Russian and Soviet Culture: Documents from the Hoover Institution*; *Materialy po istorii russkoi i sovetskoi kul’tury: Iz Arkhiva Guverovskogo Instituta*, Stanford Slavic Studies, Volume 5 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 92-93. English translations of four of Fleishman’s essays in this volume are available at: [https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1793&context=faculty_pubs](https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1793&context=faculty_pubs)

26 The fragments from *O’kei* that Talmadge translated into English were published in Boris Pilnyak, “*O.K.: From a Book of American Impressions,*” translated by I. D. W. Talmadge, *International Literature*, No. 1 (1933): 5-20. Many of the fragments come from the early chapters (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 18, 19, 21), where Pilnyak describes his transatlantic crossing and his initial impressions of New York. Nearly half of the article, however, consists of Pilnyak’s account of his stay in Hollywood (Chapter 23), where he worked for a month as a screen writer and a consultant for MGM Studios.

27 Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1937), p. 440. Here is how Lyons describes Pilnyak after he first met the writer back in 1929: “A big, blond, unwieldy fellow, with a huge smile and a huge appetite for wine, women, and life. Though he had Volga German blood in his veins, he was Russian in a salty elemental way – one of those who could scarcely breathe, let alone write, except on and about his native soil . . . Pilnyak, talented and naïve, with a zest for living joined to a disdain for life, seemed to me a personification of Russia. It may explain why he was kept hopping by the powers-that-be between extravagant adulation and no less extravagant denunciation, sometimes the two simultaneously” (pp. 246-247).

28 Ibid., pp. 440-441.

29 Ibid., pp. 443-444. In his memoirs, the critic Viacheslav Polonsky notes that other Soviet writers felt spite and envy toward Pilnyak for bringing his Ford roadster back home with him to
Lazar Fleishman reproduces this exchange of letters between Pilnyak and Freeman (letters that are archived in the Hoover Institution at Stanford University) and discusses their significance in his article, “Joseph Freeman and Boris Pilnyak” (“Dzhozef Frimen i Boris Pil’niak”) From the History of Russian and Soviet Culture: Documents from the Hoover Institution (Materialy po istorii russkoi i sovetskoi kul’tury: Iz Arkhiva Guverovskogo Instituta), Stanford Slavic Studies, Volume 5, (Stanford: Stanford University, 1992), pp. 158-190.

New Masses (September 1931): 14.


Ibid., p. 107.

Cited by Lazar Fleishman in Boris Pasternak and the Literary Movement of the 1930s, p. 156.

Kal’m’s brief report, titled “Impressions of Boris Pilnyak’s Impressions of America (An Evening at the Press House)” (“Vpechatleniia ot vpechatlenii Borisa Pil’niaka ot Ameriki (Na vechere v Dome pechatii)”), appeared in the November 22, 1931 issue of Literaturnaiia gazeta.

“Comrade Clark” is most likely Robert Clark, the Party name for Walter Snow (1905-1973), an American reporter who was actively involved with the Communist Party USA and the John Reed Club during the late 1920s and early 1930s.

In the January 23, 1931 letter he sent to Lazar Kaganovich, one of Stalin’s closest associates in the Politburo during the early 1930s, Pilnyak complained about this resolution for its unfair treatment of him and his public talk at Press House. See Boris Pil’niak, A Bitter Glory Has Befallen Me . . . Letters 1915-1937, pp. 352-353.


Zaslavsky is not an entirely impartial reviewer, however, since he had just recently published a book of his own about America (a country that he himself had never visited), titled Sketches of the History of the United States of North America During the 18th and 19th Centuries (Ocherki istorii Severo-Amerikanskikh Soedinennykh Shtatov XVIII i XIX v.v.) (Moscow: Ogonek, 1931).

zabavy”), accusing Pilnyak of committing “verbal hooliganism” through his unorthodox phrasings and of failing to show any “feeling of respect toward the reader.” See Maksim Gor’kii, *Collected Works in 30 Volumes* (*Sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh*) (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1953), vol. 27, p. 268.

42 Browning, *Boris Pilniak: Scythian at a Typewriter*, p. 56.

43 As Lazar Fleishman points out, the autumn of 1932 was the highpoint of liberalization in cultural life inside Stalin’s Russia. It was also a point in time, Fleishman notes, when Ivan Gronsky seems to have had Stalin’s ear as his main advisor on literary, artistic, and cultural matters. Needless to say, developments of this sort could only work in Pilnyak’s favor. See Fleishman, *Boris Pasternak and the Literary Movement of the 1930s*, pp. 112, 155.


46 Ibid., p. 39. According to Vitalii Orlov, Pilnyak was “an acknowledged master of the documentary genre,” a writer whose observations about America in *O’kei* demonstrated “in full force his mastery as a writer of travel sketches.” See “Boris Pilnyak’s Extinguished Star” (“Pogashennaia zvezda Borisa Pil’niaka”), *Spectrum: Classics of Russian Literature* (*Spektr: Klassiki russkoii literatury*), No. 17 (017) (December 13, 1999).


49 Ibid., p. 76.

50 Ibid., p. 78.

51 Ibid., p. 82.
Ibid., p. 83. At the back of her book, Fedorova attaches a very useful appendix (Appendix I: “Lexical and Grammatical Neologisms in Pilniak’s O’kei”) that illustrates and explains a number of the various neologisms, as well as non-standard word combinations, that the author creates in O’kei. See pp. 227-232.

Valentin Kiparsky, English and American Characters in Russian Fiction (Berlin: Otto Harrassowitz, 1934), p. 113. Indeed, the Russian émigré writer Vasily Aksyonov once quipped that “Pilnyak’s anti-Americanism must have been the envy of many an Agitprop hack. At every crossroads he would beat his breast and proclaim with the utmost vulgarity, ‘I am a Soviet man!’” See In Search of Melancholy Baby, translated by Michael Henry Heim and Antonia W. Bouis (New York: Random House, 1987), p. 10. In a similar vein, Mark Hale Teeter notes sarcastically that Pilnyak’s responses to America and Americans “have all the spontaneity and originality of a party leaflet.” See his dissertation, “The Early Soviet de Tocquevilles: Method, Voices and Social Commentary in the First Generation of Soviet Travel Publitsistika from America (1925-1936),” (Georgetown University, 1987), p. 244.


Vitalii Orlov asserts that Pilnyak, who modeled much of his early prose after the stylistic experiments of such early Russian modernists as Andrei Bely and Aleksei Remizov, composed his prose works according to the principle of a “dramatic symphony,” seeking to produce, for rhetorical effect, words derived from sounds of nature (onomatopoeia). See “Boris Pilnyak’s Extinguished Star” (“Pogashennaia zvezda Borisa Pil’niaka”).

During this scene, one of the church elders says to the group’s leader: “And so, look here, my dear Ivan Karpovich, light of my life, I had a dream today. I am driving along in my car, then I park my car for a short while near my plantation, in compliance with all the rules. And suddenly I see that my Marfa is walking along with a colored man, they are speaking with each other, and the Negro is holding a torch in his hand, and the Negro is looking rigorously at how I have parked my car.” Pilnyak, as narrator, intervenes at this point to explain that the old man here is speaking a fractured brand of Russian, mixing English words with Russian ones (and/or substituting English words for Russian ones). “To translate this sentence into Russian,” Pilnyak explains, “one needs to make the following corrections: kar [car] means an automobile; parkovat’sia [to park] means to leave one’s car in a designated place, in compliance with the law; plantatsiia [plantation] means a field; kolernyi [colored] means a Negro; spikayt [speak] means that they are talking with each other.” See O’kei, p. 77.


Ibid., p. xii; Eugene Lyons, Moscow Carousel, p. 50.
See EIMI, p. 238. Two days later, on May 31, 1931, while he is travelling by train from Moscow to Kiev, Cummings makes the acquaintance of a kindly old man – he characterizes him as a “very gentle Jew” – who is going to visit his ailing mother one last time before she dies. “Gentle,” as Cummings nicknames this passenger, had come to Moscow to collect the two thousand rubles he had earned as royalties for a “well-known opus,” a three-act Yiddish play of his, titled On the Other Side of the River (1906), that had been staged in the capital. The unnamed author of that play, Peretz Hirshbein (1880-1948), was acquainted with Boris Pilnyak, whom he had met in Japan in 1926, when the two men, along with their wives, spent a weekend together as tourists visiting the “deer city” of Nara and quickly struck up a warm friendship. As readers of O’kei learn in Chapter 16 of Pilnyak’s American travelogue-novel, the author would meet up with Peretz Hirshbein yet again in June 1931 (shortly after Cummings had met this “very gentle Jew” on the train from Moscow to Kiev) while strolling the boardwalk in Santa Monica, California. Pilnyak and Joe Freeman would bring Peretz Hirshbein along with them that evening when they attended an event hosted by the young members of a new American generation of spiritual “Jumpers.” Later that evening, back at Pilnyak’s hotel, Joe Freeman and Peretz Hirshbein would engage in a spirited discussion about Jewish culture, debating whether the younger generation of Jews in the United States retain their Jewishness or become full-fledged Americans instead. One wonders whether they might not have discussed as well E. E. Cummings, the interesting young American writer whom Peretz Hirshbein had encountered just a few weeks earlier while traveling by train from Moscow to Kiev?

See “Soviet Writers on the U.S.A.: Pilnyak” (“Sovetskie pisateli o SShA. Pil’niak”) Radio Liberty (Radio Svoboda) (September 21, 2015) [svoboda.org/a/27261044.html]. Equally off-putting, to Mark Hale Teeter’s mind, is what he considers the key tonal element of Pilnyak’s travelogue-novel: “a kind of measured, disdainful irony that seems designed to ridicule things American while it fosters between narrator and (Soviet) reader a common bond of self-congratulatory superiority . . . the Soviet reader is, in effect, invited to join Pilnyak in assessing America and Americans from above, with a sort of moral authority, colored by irony, that only members of a new society may enjoy.” See “The Early Soviet de Tocquevilles,” pp. 255-256.

Gorky’s travel sketches, including “The City of the Yellow Devil” (“Gorod zhel’togo d’iavola”) and “The Kingdom of Boredom” (“Tsarstvo skuki”), were published in a 1906 collection of articles titled In America (V Amerike), Esenin’s Iron Mirgorod (Zheleznyi Mirgorod) appeared in 1923, while Mayakovsky’s My Discovery of America (Moe otkrytie Ameriki) appeared in 1926.

At the opening of his newspaper report on Pilnyak’s public talk at the Moscow Press House, “Impressions of Boris Pilnyak’s Impressions of America (An Evening at the Press House),” Kal’m makes reference to Kisch’s Paradise America (Paradies Ameriki). “In his time,” Kal’m writes, “Eton Erwin Kisch ‘had the honor of introducing us to the American paradise.’” Recently, Boris Pilnyak returned from the ‘American paradise’ after spending several months there. Most likely he will introduce the Soviet reader to it, in his own fashion, in his forthcoming book.” Otto Moog, another German-speaking traveler who visited the United States during the late 1920s (one whom Pilnyak mentions, and even quotes, in O’kei), pursued what seems to have been a standard itinerary, visiting such popular American sights as Niagara Falls, Times Square,

64 See Valentin Kiparsky, *English and American Characters in Russian Fiction*, p. 113. Alayne P. Reilly voices a similar complaint: “The work is not a novel as the title might imply, but a long rambling, publicist travel memoir that is unworthy of Pilnyak’s talents as a writer.” Reilly finds *O’kei* to be “weakly written,” to reflect a “lack of inspiration,” and to repeat “a few propagandist terms.” “Pilnyak’s heart apparently was not in his task,” she concludes sadly. See *America in Contemporary Soviet Literature* (New York: NYU Press, 1971), pp. 24, 27. Mark Hale Teeter is likewise very dismissive of Pilnyak’s travelogue-novel. “This is a lengthy, humorless and repetitive collection of rather banal observations,” he writes. In the end, *O’kei* remains remarkable, Teeter claims, “only because its mediocrity is so unexpected.” See “The Early Soviet de Tocquevilles,” p. 237.

65 Etkind puns on a different meaning of roman, the Russian word for “novel,” when he quips, “The word roman in the subtitle is being used ironically. Pilnyak’s relationship to America does not at all resemble a love affair (liubovnyi roman).” See *The Interpretation of Journeys: Russia and America in Travelogues and Intertexts*, p. 159.


68 Pil’niak, *O’kei*, p. 130.

69 Ibid., p. 130.


71 Ibid., pp. 54-55. For Pilnyak’s use of the Russian term “kliukva,” see Chapter 23 of *O’kei*.

On the 4th of July 1776, on the day of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, on the day of the birth of the United States, in Philadelphia, an American woman named Betsy Ross gave the first American flag as a gift to George Washington, the first American president. This occurred over a hundred and fifty years ago. On the 7th of November 1931, on the anniversary of the October Revolution, in Detroit, an American woman named Betsy Ross, the great-great-granddaughter of the first Betsy Ross, gave a red communist banner to the Detroit chapter of the Communist Party.

In January 1931, for the first time in the past twenty years, I took half a pledge to believe in God and not to be a gangster nor an anarchist. The taking of this pledge occurred at the American consulate in Berlin, Germany. I was asked to read some paragraphs that were written in an ungrammatical fashion in Russian, as a literal translation from the English, where the subjunctive mood was made to mean:

- if you do not believe in God
- if you are travelling to the U.S. with the intention of getting involved in gangsterism
- if you are travelling to the U.S. with the intention of murdering government representatives and diplomats from friendly nations
- if you are travelling to the U.S. to violate laws

I asked if I could keep this sheet as a memento. They turned down my request. When I had finished reading this cardboard sheet, the consular lady, who had squinted her eyes to express heartfelt concern, said to me: “If there are any points in this form that apply to you, you should tell us ahead of time . . . Have you read it carefully? If there are points that apply to you . . .”

The consul, who stood there facing me, eye to eye, repeated the question: “Have you read the points?”

“Yes,” I answered.

“Are there any points that apply to you?” the consul asked.

When people are at a loss for words, they start talking nonsense. I was about to launch into a historical excursus on American objective reality, discussing how the American population, they say, has actually been shaped by gangsters who believe in God, and pointing out that there actually are, they say, to this day, many gangsters in America. So is it normal that gangsters would candidly – like those who believe in God – acknowledge their intentions, as is apparent from this form? . . .
“But, after all, you’re a Bolshevik!” said the consul.

At that point, having fallen silent, I extended my red passport forward to him. The consul and I looked at the passport attentively and silently, leaving the dilemma of holding a red passport unresolved by words.

“Do you have any dollars?” asked the consul.

“Yes,” I replied.

I was convinced that I would be denied a visa. But they gave me a visa, surmising, most likely, that I do believe in God, just like I do not engage in gangsterism, and obliging me not to engage in gangsterism and to believe in God. It’s impossible to imagine any other reason why they decided to issue me a visa. Having immediately become a religious believer upon receiving my visa, I, for the first time in my life, became conscious of what exactly hypocrisy is, allowing my thoughts to plunge into deep meditation upon religious belief and gangsters.

The consul, handing my passport over to the consular lady for further formalities, said: “O’kei” [okay]. If I had known at the time what on earth o’kei means, I would, of course, have repeated the word right back to the consul as an echo. So let me provide an explanation of this word right here and now. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, presidents in the United States were preferably generals, military men, and not scholars. General Andrew Jackson was a president. In the English language there are two words, “all correct,” that mean: everything is correct, everything is exactly right. They brought President Jackson some bills to sign into law. He signed his approval of them by writing the two letters “o” and “k” [“o.k.”]. President Jackson, whose literacy was restricted to the aural and thus understood speech only by ear, thought that he was writing the initial letters of the words “all” and “correct,” because “all correct” is pronounced oll korrekt. These two letters – “o.k.” – are pronounced in English o’kei. Thus, it was as a result of the illiteracy of the general-president that this o’kei began to be disseminated and legitimated in America, just like oll-rait [all right] in England and mamandi in China.

And it is used more than oll-rait.

An American loses everything in the stock market and goes broke – “o’kei.” An American totally wrecks his automobile – “o’kei.” An American has his cheekbone broken while playing football – “o’kei.” An American is robbed by bandits – “o’kei.” Presidents now sign “o’kei” on bills passed into laws out of solidarity with the presidential ignorance that preceded them. So I, too, took to saying “o’kei” so that it wouldn’t be anything surprising to anybody.

3

In olden days, the pioneers, following the lead of Columbus, spent months sailing to America.
Nowadays the steamer Bremen\(^9\) goes from Cherbourg to New York in four and a half days. The description of these oceanic leviathans provided by Ivan Bunin in his story, \textit{The Gentleman from San Francisco},\(^{10}\) which seemed classic several years ago, has now become outdated in almost the same way that steamboats have. A steamer like the Bremen can’t be compared with the principal town of a district – it’s already the principal town of a province. The \textit{parterre} of the Bolshoi Theatre is smaller than a first-class passenger compartment in the Bremen. The Hagia Sophia cathedral in Istanbul\(^{11}\) was constructed with less luxury than the Bremen was. And so on.

A newspaper is issued every day on the steamer, and a radio broadcast from the American stock exchange on Wall Street\(^{12}\) – the \textit{ticker} – marks the temperature of dollars of capitalist swindlings on a paper tape every second.

Steamers have been constructed for passengers.

The Soviet passenger is an especial person, so we will speak about him especially.

The average first-class passenger on the steamer Bremen could count on being offered various bananas, meats, jams, pastries, cheeses, and pâtés made from dairy, crab, fish, vegetables and even mineral ingredients, to eat five times a day. He could also count on being offered a wide assortment of cognacs, wines, liqueurs, and whiskeys of all possible combinations, called cocktails, to drink. In the gymnasium, he could count on hanging out for a half hour to forty minutes on an electric baba\(^{13}\) in order to shake off some fat, and racing along on a bicycle suspended from the ceiling to work up his appetite. He could count on running along the decks, relaxing on chaise lounges, and taking photos of various people coming and going. Twice a day he could count on taking a bath and changing his clothes. After lunch at two o’clock, he could watch movies. After tea at five thirty, he could play the horse race game,\(^{14}\) where wooden horses move forward according to the numbers on the roll of the dice thrown by the lady in hospitality services whose turn it was to roll them. Everyone totally understands, of course, that these wooden horses are, by virtue of their woodiness, insensate. And this wooden quality of theirs – whether it be their wooden horsiness or else their wooden insensateness – is conveyed to those who operate the tote board for the para-mutual betting, both donating dollars and winning dollars.

After dinner, beginning around nine o’clock in the evening and ending at midnight, the average first-class passenger on the steamer could count on indulging himself [literally, “having a ball”]\(^{15}\) by dancing the foxtrot\(^{16}\) and imbibing an amount of alcohol that makes one’s heart grow as soft as one’s legs. The impediments of traditions and genders are cast away, and the naughtiness and mischief\(^{17}\) that ensue conclude in the semi-extinguished light of narrow passageways between the staterooms, when in the gentlemen’s corridor a woman’s dressing gown will suddenly whisk away and a whisper will squeak behind a partition, while in the lady’s corridor the bed slippers of a gentleman, who out of caution has moved his legs apart, so that they look like those of a horse that has been given too much to drink, will suddenly begin to creak traitorously.
All of these things were offered up to the average first-class passenger amidst the majesty and grandeur of the ocean and to the accompaniment of the white ribbon of Morse code\textsuperscript{18} over the radio that reports every minute on the heat of the dollar, the nobility of frauds, and also the cablegrams for those who are traveling cordially.\textsuperscript{19}

Mornings on the steamer are slow and stiff, like the oceanic fog that the steamer tears through. Trumpeters roar with their trumpets throughout the corridors of the passenger compartments. But the passengers do not go to \textit{brekfest} \textsuperscript{20} requesting instead that \textit{oranzh-dzhius} \textsuperscript{21} be brought to them in their cabin, or \textit{greip-frut} \textsuperscript{22} a fruit that originated just a few years ago, thought up by the American botanist of genius, Burbank,\textsuperscript{23} as a hybrid between a lemon and an orange. Burbank, by the way, who created this fruit, one that is now eaten by three quarters of the earth’s population, had the imprudence to say once that he did not believe in God. And he died, a man badgered by American clerics, as was written about in the newspapers.

There are various sorts of balls that are held on board (in the official section of the ship). There is, without fail, a Bavarian evening, when all the passengers are supplied with frankfurters and mugs of beer and when everyone is wearing a paper hat on their head. Empty spaces are filled with balloons and paper streamers. Sticking out of each passenger’s mouth, besides a cigar, is a whistle, and the party-goers give caterwauling concerts, howling and wailing like felines to the popular tune, “Oh, Meine Liebchen, Lizabett, Lizabett!” [Oh, My Darling, Lisabeth, Lisabeth].\textsuperscript{24} By that time, the members of the orchestra have changed their clothes to look like Bavarians. In a drunken state characteristic of Heidelberg students, the passengers have exchanged their clownish paper hats for clownish student caps – the types of peaked caps worn by “Burschen” and “Korporants,” fraternity brothers who are members of youth associations at German universities.

And there is always, without fail, a so-called American evening. This takes place on the night before the passengers disembark in America, when Americans recall that in their homeland there is \textit{prokhibishen} \textsuperscript{25} that is, a dry law,\textsuperscript{25} and thus they fall upon the legal alcohol with all the gusto characteristic of Americans. The scale of their consumption of alcohol is truly grandiose. They drink grandiosely not only in their cabins, but also on all the stairways and decks, sometimes – for poetic effect – even crawling under the lifeboats. They drink without regard to gender or age. Things that usually occur inside the privacy of a passenger compartment now crawl out not only onto the decks but also into the lounges. In the narrow passageways between the staterooms, time comes to a standstill, stretching out to eternity by means of pouring whiskey straight out of the bottle right into one’s mouth. The gusto and the grandiose scale of this American drinking – taking place on all the ship’s decks – can be compared to Russian boozing only loosely. It’s like comparing a thoroughbred to a dray horse. The Russians can’t compete with the Americans!

To the Soviet citizen and passenger – I must say this straight out – all of this behavior, independent of its broad scale, seems like so much swinishness. The Soviet citizen, having left behind the arduous, steely grandeur of his home country (and, truly, beyond the borders
of the U.S.S.R., and now beyond the Polish “cordon sanitaire,”26 the star of the U.S.S.R. is beginning to shine in an unusual and majestic way, it’s now a time when one is proud to be a citizen of the U.S.S.R., when it’s majestic to be a citizen of the U.S.S.R.!), the Soviet person understands, of course, that the ticker tape, which is the actual master of the ship and of the people on board the ship, is only understandable, unfortunately, for the few. He also understands that there is no American who could possibly consume all the things that are offered to him, but that in the passenger compartments located below deck there are those who aren’t offered anything – that many Americans, feeling gouty and sad, go to bed well before the foxtrot begins. He also understands that the first class accommodations (even first class deluxe and ritz, where billionaires obstinately insist upon paying an excess fare so that they don’t have to dine with the rest of the passengers), the ticker tape, the vodka, the wooden horse races, the gymnastics and tennis on the upper deck, and the monkei bizness [monkey business] (obez’ian’e delo – the whisking away of women’s dressing gowns in the gentlemen’s hallways and the shuffling of shoes of those who have been given too much to drink in the lady’s hallways) – all of these things are American ideals.

The Soviet citizen stands off to the side, a bit dumbfounded. He would like to be able to allow the crowdedness experienced by third-class passengers, who along with their basic necessities are crammed into the crowded compartments down below, like sardines in a tin can, a condition that the Soviet citizen well understands, to invade the spaciousness of the upper deck and its vistas.

The Soviet citizen, the author of these lines of O’kei, of this American novel, was traveling on the steamer in his capacity as a writer. He knew that he needed to travel to America, but he also knew that, for his country, American harvesting combines and hydraulic stamping presses that weigh thousands of tons were needed much more than his trip to America. Therefore, he did not bring any Soviet gold with him, and he departed from the Soviet border without a single cent.

In Warsaw, he received some zlotys, which lasted him until Berlin. In Berlin, he received some marks, which lasted him until Paris. On the Bremen, this aforementioned writer, standing at the forecastle and looking out at the great oceanic expanses on the horizons and the luminous, phosphorescent mollusks clinging beneath the nose of the ship, pondered:

“from Warsaw to Berlin, from Berlin to Paris, from Paris to New York, – well, things will somehow work themselves out for me over there, inasmuch as, so they say, a single man’s life is not as full of problems and troubles as that of a man with a wife and child in tow. So when misfortune strikes, it’s better to be traveling alone.”

But this writer was a writer, and a list of the passengers had been printed in the steamship’s newspaper. And so on the day that this issue of the newspaper came out, first a lean, aloof lady and then a drowsy-looking mister who deals in furs in the U.S.S.R., inquired: so-and-so is not, by any chance, so-and-so, is he? The young lady became interested in my skill in dancing the foxtrot.27 The mister dragged me over to the manicurist, asking my opinion of the whiskeys blek-end-uait [Black and White] and skotch [Scotch].
And on that same day a number of radiograms arrived from across the ocean. “Welcome,” one of them said. “We are meeting you. Everything is o’kei.” But one telegram read: “A room has been booked for you at the hotel Sent-Moritts [Saint Moritz].”

I asked the drowsy-looking mister who deals in furs what kind of hotel the Saint Moritz is. The mister read the elegant piece of paper – like a candy wrapper – that the cablegram was printed on, and he perked up. He said that this is one of the most expensive hotels in New York, that it’s fifty stories high, and that it’s located between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, right across from Sentral-park [Central Park].

The only cablegram that I sent from the ship was to my editor: “Don’t,” I said, “make a reservation for me at the Saint Moritz!”

That evening I was handed a new cablegram: “It’s imperative that you stay at the Saint Moritz.” Stop. “The room is free.”

I marveled at the publisher’s kindness, though I accepted this room the way one accepts a set of false teeth.

The ocean was majestic. Beyond the poop deck was Europe. The forecastle of the ship was moving toward America. This is the vision that a Russian has:

“. . . it is spring, there is a zavalinka, a grandfather in felt boots is sitting on the zavalinka and luxuriating in all this earthly beatitude, chickens are swarming in the dust, it is warm, young female tractor operators have driven their tractors from the tillage to the garage, swifts in their flight are scratching the sunset – the grandfather has never felt such bliss – and the grandfather says: ‘Grace, oh, what grace it is! . . .’ And he falls silent lyrically. Then he adds: ‘My teeth, for some reason, have not ached for a long time, but Sidor Merinov’s teeth have been aching badly for over a week now . . .’”

That’s it exactly . . . it can’t be otherwise! A Russian can’t feel bliss when Sidor Merinov has had a toothache for over a week. And every Russian, without fail, has his own tooth. Amidst the majesty and grandeur of the Atlantic Ocean, traveling along passageways from the Old World to the New World, passageways that were discovered when the history of humankind was feeling about for the thresholds of capitalism and was trying to crawl in through the gateways of those newly opened gates, already overgrown with elderberry, of the Middle Ages, this Russian writer mused:

“Across the ages, across enormous spans of time, in Atlantis, perhaps, in lands that no longer exist, the first human being emerged. Somewhere upon the shores of the Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean, upon the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, there emerged the first tidings about man that are known to
humankind. Out of nothingness, out of the darkness of times, out of a state of obscurities and unknowns, there emerged on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea the streamlet of the history of humankind that later determined the fates of the earth’s civilizations. This streamlet – by way of Mesopotamia, Palestine, Egypt, and Assyria – carried forth tidings about humankind to the Greeks and Romans, engendering the history of Europe. From the Greeks and Romans, history was halfway recorded. How many peoples, how many civilizations, how many of humankind’s religious and philosophical systems, how many of its state structures emerged, lived, blossomed, and perished! From the Romans, the rickety old rattletrap of history is well known. We know how this history flowed – it truly flowed – how it occurred, how it took place – how it spilled over with the blood of Germans, Huns, and Gauls – how it ossified by means of the Middle Ages, – how steam and the loom overhauled and rebuilt it – how revolutions, with their thunderstorms, followed upon it. But old age is not antiquity. And if Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon perished from the Greco-Hunnish-Aryan peoples, then it was only in the last century that the Hunnish-European peoples reached their brethren, who are still living to this very day in India, China, and Japan. These peoples trace their history back to the time of Artaxerxes. Moreover, Japan intertwined its history with Europe by means of the imperialistic mutuality of plunder and robbery. All this was taking place. And the first history that has its own date of origin – the history of America – is a history not of the native Indians, of course, but of the European colonizers. The history of America is a young history. The mother of American history is old lady Europe. What did the children take from their mother? Did the children vanquish their mother? Is young America more western than the West? Is it truly a much larger West than Western Europe? The great ocean is an enormous seam of the earth where on one side the antiquity of the East ends off at the ocean and on the other side – the youth of the West. It is not for nothing that there is a boundary in the Pacific Ocean where ships either stop time for a twenty-four-hour period or else they discard a twenty-four-hour period from their measurement of time. But the earth is round. And, therefore, at that hour when in the East the antiquity of the night is lording it over the romantics (remember – “the hoary East slumbers!”), in the West the day at that moment is waning, and, consequently, it is morning somewhere. It is morning in the Union of Socialist Republics, whose history has a date of origin: October 25, 1917 (old style), and whose history is not simply taking place, but rather is being constructed, is being made, is being engineered.”

This writer has been to Japan, China, and Mongolia to see the antiquity of the East. This writer set off for America in order to see the most western West. This writer wanted to determine how to sew the seam that is formed by the Pacific, for this writer knew that the seams of national cultures burst one after another, just like the hoops on rotted barrels.

And this writer thought all of this incorrectly, because to think this way is romanticism, which is characteristic of writers, but which is not obligatory for them. Everything is much
simpler. Human history is growing. From the sheepskins inflated with air that people in antiquity employed to get across rivers, humankind has grown to the point of employing sixty-thousand-ton ships that furrow the oceans. In keeping with the principle of sheepskins inflated with air, humankind built zeppelins, while on cloudy days New York skyscrapers, where people are living, extend with their peaks beyond the clouds, which resemble sheepskins. From the Stone Age and primordial communism, man has proceeded to travel the roads of the Middle Ages, feudalism, absolute monarchs, bourgeois revolutions, and capitalist democracies. Each of these resulting epochs believed that it would bring the achievements of humankind to their completion, that it was eternal, – and each one of these epochs died. On the highways of the history of humankind, this was always the first order. That is precisely why, even until now, the Bronze Age of Central Africa and of the Samoyedic peoples as well as the feudalism of Northern India have fallen behind the times in humanity’s lanes and alleys. And in some places in Europe, even up until now, the monarchy smells bad, stinking of dog odor. Humankind is now living through an epoch when socialism is supplanting capitalism. Whoever wanted or did not want this to happen – and however they wanted or did not want this to happen – the fact remains that socialism is not resulting from anything, but is instead being constructed. The bacteria of typhus, plague, and cholera are not encountered in an isolated form in nature. One can only find them in bacteriological institutes. They are completely clean there, placed into an infusion broth, poured into flasks, and are called “cultures” – typhus, plague, cholera. Capitalism in Europe is, in essence, very difficult to see in its totally pure form. Some times your vision becomes obscured by the excavations of the ancients. At other times, the “politesse” of the last Bourbon kings played mischief with your ideas. Some times you sank into the antiquated easy chair of your English grandfather, the coeval peer of English conservatism, parliament, Westminster Abbey, and witches, who at one time were burnt at the stake near Westminster and who are burnt there even now by the speeches of conservatives in parliament. At other times, you see in the royal Château de Chambord the shadow of Molière, whose plays are performed even now and who even now sounds European. America began its history of independence based on the principles of the French *encyclopédistes*. It began right away with bourgeois democracy. In the person of its pioneers, America had people, mainly sectarians, adventurers, and criminals, who did not fit in, who were outside the European sclerosis of the Middle Ages. And is not America today – the United States – a culture of capitalism in its pure form, like a Petri dish, in which pestilent cells are being cultured at a bacteriological institute? What a laboratory flask for the hundred and twenty million free-capitalistic American citizens!?"

Of course, America lies on the high road of the development of humankind.

This high road paved new routes – to socialism.

These routes to socialism are being constructed in the Union of Socialist Republics.

Nowadays the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. are playing the chess match of today’s humankind.

But the ocean, of course, is majestic, a cosmos of water and sky!
On the steamer, a certain American millionaire, Mister Kotofson, who made his millions on intestines, wanted to make my acquaintance, and he did make my acquaintance. This was a real American: he set the American tone on our decks. He was returning from Europe with his daughter, one of whose eyes was bandaged. She was lying down all the time, on the decks and in the cabins, with American magazines in her hands. He was energetic, this American. He squeezed my hand firmly, extending his hand out to me in a broad American gesture, with the palm facing up. We exchanged *khellos* [hellos]. The drowsy-looking mister who deals in furs, who was very respectful toward the intestines millionaire, tried to translate the first few phrases for us. At about the tenth phrase, the American said:

“Well, all right, we’ll go ahead and speak Russian. I’ve come to you for advice. I have, you see, two daughters. By the way, you wouldn’t mind a glass of scotch and soda, now would you? And so, I have two daughters. It’s for their sake that I’m living on this earth. One of them has stayed behind in England. All the same, it’s the most respectable country in the world. The other one is returning home with me; I’ll introduce you to her. She’s a Doctor of Philosophy. A sty appeared on her eyelid as a result of reading so much, and so I took her to Germany so that they could remove her sty. All the same, German medicine is the most respectable medicine in the world. They charged me five hundred dollars for the doctor’s visit. My daughter writes such abstracts that professors gasp from surprise and exclaim, ‘Ah!’ Providing one’s children with an education – now that costs a pretty penny. And so I want to speak with you about my second daughter. In America, our art is hobbling around lamely. My daughter developed a burning desire to become a writer. They say that English literature is currently stagnating. I’m no expert in that area, but all the same English literature is the most respectable literature in the world. I was given a list of the very best English writers alive today. I focused my attention mainly on the female ones. This, you see, seemed to me to be the more convenient and respectable way to proceed. I visited some of these female writers in London, and proposed that they give my daughter lessons so that she could become a writer, too. She’s a very talented girl. And so, what would you say in this regard? In America, we have so little true art!”

“But how did you come to know Russian?” I asked.

“Ha! – if only you knew my life story! I was a complete orphan: I had no father or mother. My uncle in Oryol owned his own slaughterhouse. While still a boy of about age ten, I was already independent, and so I went with my uncle to Siberia to visit some Kirgiz people in Semirechye, to buy up intestines. You know that Russian intestines, those of pigs and sheep, especially intestines from Zavolozhye, from western Siberia, and from Semirechye, do not compare with any others in the world. Incomparable intestines! Scientists believe that this is due to the continental climate and to the poor quality of the food that you give to your sheep – such incomparable intestines. The Soviet government does not know what gold it has in them. I gave your government, through Amtorg, quite a few million dollars in an
offer that would give me exclusive rights – a monopoly – on Russian intestines. After all, you already have a monopoly on trade, and for this business deal I myself would be reviving the good old days of the past! And so, at age sixteen, I wound up on a maritime steamship in Odessa, and at age sixteen and a half, I set foot on land in the New World. Since that time I have been living in America. You don’t know my life story! – No one in America knows the intestines business better than I do! – By the way, will you allow me to pour us both another scotch and soda? – And so, what would you say in regard to the English female writers and my younger daughter? In Russia, I had a surname: Kotov. Now I’m – Kotofson. So, well [well]?

The drowsy-looking mister who deals in furs, when we were left alone, respectfully told me that Mister Kotofson remains to this day illiterate: he cannot read either Russian or English. He can only sign his name on a check. His secretary, however, reads all his business matters to him. In the evening, during the period of mischief-making and naughtiness, when people were “having a ball,” the majority of the society types on our decks were sitting at Kotofson’s table, and Kotofson was plying them all with cocktails to drink.

“The philosophy of history!”

5

The first thing that struck me in America were the national flags.

As we were steaming up to dock in New York, I didn’t manage to see the Statue of Liberty,51 which any travel account of America invariably begins with. The hubbub on board the steamer and the skyscrapers of Wall Street knocked me off balance and didn’t allow me to see things clearly. Neither did I see the Statue of Liberty at any subsequent time. So as not to confuse future travelers to America about her, I must report that it’s possible to fit an entire apartment inside the head of this Liberty and that for a long time an entire casemate of prison dungeons was placed inside the rear part of her skirt beneath the upper pleats.52 This is a fact no less edifying than the history of the word o’kei.

I have preserved the letters that I wrote home during my first few days in America. The refrain in these letters were the interjections: “oh, America!” “ah, America!” “ooh, America!” “well, America!”

Let the reader be aware that ninety-nine percent of Soviet citizens, despite their visas, do not alight immediately on American soil upon reaching the shore, but are instead arrested and sent to Ellis-ailend [Ellis Island],53 which is called, colloquially, the Island of Tears. They are put into a prison there near the customs office, where some Americans adjudicate whether they, these detained people, have the right to be designated Soviet citizens. I didn’t have any grounds for falling outside of that percentage, but prison operations all over the world are never pleasant, and when the steamer was entering the port, the aforementioned charms of the Statue of Liberty were of less interest to me than my own personal liberty. I was not arrested, but two of my fellow Russian countrymen, both of
whom were engineers (one of them was travelling with his wife and child) were sent to experience the thresholds to American liberty at the Island of Tears. This left me thinking about natural human solidarity.

In America, there is prokhibishen [prohibition], the dry law. In its honor, the entire population aboard the steamer drank away the whole night prior to our disembarkation in America. And in the morning, they walked woozily through the buffet lines, searching for something to ease their hangover. The buffets sparkled with the seals of bottles instead of the bottles themselves.

The reporters who were assigned to cover the steamer arrived at the ship together with the police. I was traveling “with publisiti [publicity],” so when the steamer had moored at the dock, the reporters grabbed me firmly by the arm and led me to the nursery in the first-class section of the ship. On the walls of this room there were drawings of laughing and crying children done in the style of Russian handmade toys. There were small-sized tables and chairs for children there. Children’s toys were scattered about the room. On the children’s tables, there were bottles of whiskey and pints of beer. The reporters, who were husky fellows, dispersed to the children’s chairs, lifting their feet up to where they shouldn’t have been placed. These were burly guys: they were poorly dressed, wearing shoes that were down at the heels, yet for all that each of their shoes weighed a lot. These were active and energetic fellows. These guys started quickly drinking whiskey and beer, asking me questions and feeling me out. In the two o’clock editions of their newspapers, it was reported that so-and-so had arrived on such-and-such steamer. He was wearing such-and-such a tie and such-and-such shoes, and he was staying at such-and-such hotel. And nothing more than that. Really, couldn’t they at least provide a description of his hair and his hairstyle? My hair, as it turns out, is sandy-colored.

The port, the Hudson River, and the Ist-river [East River] are all crushed by the skyscrapers of Manhattan and Brooklyn. These skyscrapers are grandiose: they cannot be compared with anything, not with any dream vision – not even with some Tatlinesque fantasy.

The city’s streets, on which there are fewer pedestrians than automobiles, frightened me with their American flags, just as if I had arrived on a holiday, although it was only an ordinary weekday. Air entered straight away into my lungs, air that conveyed the unbelievabilities of this city, where hundred-story buildings protrude up into the sky and there is not a single leaf, not a single blade of grass, on the city’s concrete.

The Hotel Saint Moritz repeated the luxury of the Bremen. My suitcases arrived ahead of me. In my room, besides the suitcases, there were boxes filled with bottles of whiskey and gin. I already knew the price of American alcohol, which had increased due to the tariff imposed by the dry law. There was not enough money in my wallet for me to pay for these boxes. Footmen were serving tea to about forty people. People I did not know were uncorking bottles of whiskey and gin. I was supposed to give an interview.

Journalists, both male and female alike, started arriving, already sluggish and haughty. They shook hands with me and gave me not their own names, but the names of the
newspapers they represented. Some people, it was not clear to me exactly who they were, were distributing to the journalists a statement about me – what a Khlestokovskian scrap of paper – that told people how old I was and who my parents were, what kind of an old so-and-so I was, and who had said what about me. I was not me, a person, but merely some material for publisiti. Those who were gathered there started drinking whiskey seriously and interrogating me. I spoke about the rickety rattletrap of history. They asked me questions:

“How do you like America?”
“How much does it cost to get married and divorced at the civil registry office?”
“How much of a salary does Comrade Stalin receive?”
“How do you like American women and New York?”

When they asked how much of a salary Comrade Stalin receives, I replied that I would have to think that he earns the Party maximum: around one hundred and fifty dollars a month. The crowd was all aflutter, astonished at such a meager paycheck. Is it even worth Stalin’s while, they asked, to work for such small change!?  

They asked me: “In that case, how much of a salary does someone earn? And are there people who earn more money than Comrade Stalin does?”

Having astonished these journalists by telling them that we no longer have any millionaires in the Soviet Union, since they have all been expelled from our country (there are still some people in America, even among journalists, who know little about this), I said that skilled workers, engineers, and people in liberal professions and freelancers, such as writers and performing artists, can earn more than one hundred and fifty dollars a month.

They asked me: “Well, and what about you? How much do you earn?”

I replied that I earn about three times more a month than one hundred and fifty dollars. The next morning it was printed in The New York Times:

“Pilnyak Predicts Fall of Capitalism!”
“Pilnyak is Wealthiest Man in U.S.S.R.!”

That’s the way it was reported in The New York Times. Other newspapers made me into a Rockefeller. Many months later, when I was already back in Moscow, one of my buddies, an American journalist, told me about how he had received an inquiry from his agent in New York, soon after my interview there, asking why and how it is that Pilnyak is not a Pilnyak, but a Rockefeller?!

Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s. I have referred to the Hotel Saint Moritz four times already (the American flag waved over this Moritz). I am continuing an American tradition: I pay not with money but with gratitude. The room free of charge in this hotel and the alcohol free of charge were provided for me not by the publishing house, but by the hotel itself. The publisiti-men [publicity man] at this hotel calculated correctly:
if they were to write about me in the newspaper and indicate what hotel I was staying at, then a room provided free of charge would be less expensive than a paid-for advertisement. Moreover, an advertisement of this kind would be less likely to look like an advertisement. Was it not, perhaps, from such psychological maneuvers that the stock market can trace its history? The stock market is, of course, a psychological institution, one that trades, besides valuables, the psychological emptiness of various warm, sympathetic words that are valued in terms of dollars!? Dear Saint Moritz – tenk iu [thank you]!

A tailor offered to make me a suit free of charge so that I could be photographed in it and then, he says, I could write that there is no finer suit than the one made by the so-and-so company!

On my second or third evening in New York, I don’t remember exactly which, I was taken to the theater. There were six of us in all. We sat in a private box and watched how Negroes visualize what heaven looks like, how the host of heaven – the Lord God of Sabaoth – struts around, just like a Yankee, in checkered trousers and a frock-coat, with a beard that looks like some sort of dog collar. And in our private box we drank whiskey out of paper cups. After the theater performance, we were taken to some klob [club], some cabaret. Americans do things on a large scale, based on quantity. If in Paris five naked women were to be displayed in a cabaret like this one, then in New York there would be a hundred of them. The klob we were in was a famous one. I will omit its name here so as not to give it any bad publisiti. The hundred naked women displayed in it were refined and sophisticated. People danced the foxtrot and drank champagne, cocktails, and liqueurs. Jazz was played and various singers performed. Everything was terribly luxurious, just as it had been at Mister Kotofson’s. Some people would come up to me, introduce themselves, and then leave. And suddenly I came to the realization that they were asking me to come forward and say at least one word in Russian – “Hello” or “Thank you.” It turned out that the program at the club that evening was being broadcast over the radio. It turned out that they had brought me and my entourage to the theater and then to this club, they had plied us with food and drink so that I would speak in public as part of the program of this club that was being broadcast over the radio! They evidently thought that it would be nice to have a Soviet writer, who had just gotten off the ship and landed at a naked-navel ball, rejoicing over the radio! I left this club without any attempt at politeness, right in the middle of eating some dishes. And when I got home, I drank iced water for a long time, in an effort to drive away the vexation – vexation to the point where my hands were shaking – the spite, and the insomnia that I felt. Publisiti, advertising – to hell with them!

Publisiti! advertising! – Honest to goodness, it often seemed to me that people in America exist not in order to be people, but for the sake of publisiti and advertising. That’s the way it seemed to me. But I know full well that all Americans are essentially the victims of advertising, for advertising over there is more important than people, more valuable than people, more important than things, and more valuable than things.
You’re being catapulted up to the sixtieth floor of a skyscraper by a pneumatic lift – this is what advertising, and the reading of advertisements, is like, only without the rapid ascent. You’re riding in the back seat of a taxi, on the other side of the glass, near the meter, there’s a filmstrip with the most alluring information crawling right in front of your nose – this is advertising. You’re climbing up to the elevated train (up to the second floors of New York streets), you’re descending down to the underground of sobvei [subways]. In both instances, you’re being followed by Coca-Cola, Chevrolet, and the young ladies of Lucky Strike and Chesterfield – this is advertising. You’re driving out of town, and you don’t see anything to your right and to your left due to the fences displaying exceptional young people of both genders glorifying cigarettes, automobiles, soap, enemas, frying pans, and nature itself, like the Grend-ken’on [Grand Canyon], – this is advertising, just as is the Grend-ken’on itself. You avert your eyes and gaze into the sky, but there are advertisements up there as well, emblazoned by airplanes and searchlights. You crawl into the bathtub, and on the mat beneath your feet you read advertising beauties. You snuggle down in bed, you turn off the light in the room, and on the wall near the plug – so that you can find it easily in the dark – the words of an advertisement are phosphorescing. You bury your head in your pillow, but into your ears – through the howling sound of the factories and the grinding sound of the city – there crawl the words of an advertisement on the radio.

These advertisements, they bawl and purr, they croon arias, they shock and frighten your eyes as well as soothe them, they knock you off your feet, they keep watch over you at intersections, at gateways, in lavatories, in alcoves. These advertisements crawl into your nose, into your eyes, into your ears, into your food, into your blood, into your heart, and – into your pocket, your pocket, your pocket! For they all exist in order to bawl:

“Buy more (and damage) automobiles, cigarette lighters, refrigerators, if you’ve damaged your fine automobile, we’ll repair it within twenty-four hours, and it’ll be even finer, because we’ll attach to it two new headlights, a spare engine hood made out of nickel, a radio, a cigarette lighter, a clock, an ashtray, and a first aid kit!”

“A radio in your automobile will delight your ear while you’re driving through the fields of Texas and the deserts of Arizona!”

“Buy more trousers, boots, dishes, furniture, neckties, cigarettes, cough drops, and acne cream!”

“Eat more meat, ham, and lobster!”

“Eat more bread and butter!”

“Drink more Coca-Cola, coffee, and tea!”

“More! more! more!”
“It’s the very best! No one but you will have it! And it’s the most inexpensive! You have no right not to eat, not to drink, not to own an automobile!”

(We will have occasion to speak about this “more! more! more!” later on, when we discuss the financial crisis. This “more” shouts out at a time when there are slightly more than ten million unemployed people in the country).

Everything is patented. Everything is overlaid with a secret obscurity.

On a walnut there is the trademark of the company that sells it. The machines that brand the walnuts with this trademark – the purchase of this equipment, as well as their service and maintenance – cost more than the walnuts do. The shopper pays more for the trademark than for the walnut itself. Everything is patented. The Patent and Trademark Office conceals the secrets of patents.

As is well known, in drugstores in America, one can eat dinner, buy ice cream, tomato juice, sporting goods, books, and cigarettes, everything but medicine (and each drugstore is, in addition, a tavern). Pharmacists and apothecaries don’t at all need to weigh ounces and grams on their scales. Everything is patented, and it’s impossible to buy an herbal powder made from natural cinchona bark. Instead one must buy patented cinchona bark, not bitter, but sweet, that has been inserted into a small tube. All of this packaging, by the way – the glass tube, the added sweetness and the added beauty of the final product – costs ten times more than the cinchona bark itself.

But this – the cinchona bark – is still not the trouble. This merely points to the fact that it’s not the quality of merchandise, but the ability to sell it, that determines the fate of an enterprise.

Half the trouble is not that a customer goes to shop for a commodity, but that a sales person assaults the customer, trying to ensnare him any way he pleases, from offering him credit and free shipping to his home to threatening legal proceedings. Half the trouble is that a customer has to run away from a sales person and has to live in a state of constant envy, because of this “please, please!” “more, more!” “it’s so inexpensive and it’s embarrassing for any American not to have one!” There are ten million people who are out of work, and the customer no longer has any dollars left to cover the cost of even the most basic necessities, because they have foisted upon him a radio for his automobile, when he doesn’t even own an automobile, and a cigar lighter, when he doesn’t even smoke. And he has bought some women’s toiletries, with their secret patents, but he has not yet managed to get married. Trade, just like industry, is free according to the sacred rights of capitalism. And half the trouble is that every week it suddenly comes to light that it was a certain iron water that an illustrious boxer was drinking (there is his photograph right after his signature), it was the water given to this illustrious boxer – and nothing other than this water – that enabled this boxer to smash the mug of another illustrious boxer. So this water, which has a horribly ferrous taste to it, costs two dollars when sold in the packaging of a certain
company, but its actual cost is just two cents, – and there is no kind of miracle-working
property, no ferrous thaumaturgy,\textsuperscript{64} to be found in this water. The Gillette razor,\textsuperscript{65} from
whose dull blades Russians suffer, was patented during the first years of its existence and
used to cost ten dollars. The patent rights have now expired, and the Gillette razor is now
given away for free – as a supplement to the purchase of a dozen razor blades produced by
Gillette. How many millions of dollars have been paid through the nose by the American
consumer who loves to shave with a Gillette razor?! That is to say, half the trouble consists
in the deception and fraud that lie beyond one’s strength to check because every test for
verification rests upon the “sacred” rights – the freedom to own private property and
engage in commerce – that are enjoyed by the capitalist “whales” – the captains of
American industry.\textsuperscript{66}

The trouble (or half the trouble?) is that the consumer’s largest expenditure is directed
toward \textit{amuzment} [amusement], toward having a good time, toward enjoying pleasures –
when, in actuality, the average American is awash with embossed cuff links, but he doesn’t
have any extra (and needed) boots. And yet he always has a radio and always knows the
latest motion picture made by M.G.M.

The trouble is . . . a group of companies that deal with wooden building materials enters
into a competitive struggle with a group of companies that deal with stone (or iron-
reinforced concrete, or asbestos) building materials (or butchers want to make people eat
meat at the expense of milk, or petroleum companies decide to gain a victory over coal
companies, or a syndicate that produces artificial silk decides to destroy cocoon silk). This
is done in secret. This is empowered by economists, engineers, and millions of dollars.
This hinges upon Wall Street, the White House, the Republican Party, and gangster trusts.
The poor dreamer who wishes to build himself a little summer home on the banks of the
Hudson River or to buy for himself and his \textit{uumen} [woman], his \textit{uaif} [wife] or his \textit{siuit-khart} [sweetheart] some real silk, and not some “chemical” linen, is out of luck: not only
are there advertisements involved here, but there are also orders and behests. It’s entirely
clear here that both people and things are cheaper than these advertisements, orders, and
behests themselves. And from statistical computations we know that it’s not millions but
billions of dollars that have been taken away from Americans in this manner and in these
ways.

And on top of all this – everywhere and everyplace: at homes, at factories, at crosswalks, at
churches, even at cemeteries – American national flags, flags, flags are waving, just as if it's
one big, continuous holiday.

In New York, I used to know a man from Wall Street. I can’t convey the feelings that I
have toward him because I lack the words that would convey such feelings accurately. This
man is about forty years old; he’s a millionaire, lean and simplified in his movements, like a
good penknife. He doesn’t follow the American style of dressing up in all the colors of the
rainbow. He adheres to the traditions of the end of the last century in the way he dresses,
wearing suits that symbolize a steam pipe. In his study, right next to the ticker tape that
connects him every second with Wall Street, there are telephones with direct lines to London and to Geneva (to his informant from a session of the League of Nations). He doesn’t own any business enterprise. His métier is giving advice to people who went from being fools to being American billionaires, telling them where and how to invest their millions so as to earn the largest profit. He doesn’t deal with investment sums less than a million dollars. He’s very much nobody’s fool. He’s also very cynical, as is to be expected of people in the profession he’s in. He knows that if he were to give unsound advice, his brainless clients would find in themselves the brains needed to dismiss him. I saw this man at the moment when he had just hung up the phone on his direct line to Geneva. Laying down the penknife he held in his right hand, he greeted me and a companion of mine with these words:

“Crisis, crisis, and still more crisis! I tell my clients that it’s impossible to think up anything for them to do right now. Sometimes I tell them that the very best and most surefire way to use their dollars wisely would be to invest them in you guys, the Bolsheviks. At least that way the money would remain intact until such time as you yourself show up in our country! . . . Or else I tell them that it wouldn’t be a bad idea to organize a syndicate whose aim is to destroy Soviet power. Not to destroy Soviet power, strictly speaking, but to create a joint-stock corporation that provides evidence that the current financial crisis is occurring thanks to the Soviet government’s predatory pricing policy of ‘dumping’ and to the Bolsheviks’ political agitation and conspiracies. I’d love to see the pair of conspirators – the Soviet government and the Bolsheviks – exposed! . . . I’d give some of my own personal millions to one and the other bizness [business] to help expose this pair. I guarantee you that there would be high profitability for the first six months! Do you remember the Florida swamps in 1926!? And we mustn’t forget that our most recent period of prosperity was created by the automobile, which has become penal servitude for Americans, and by prohibition . . . Once we have a syndicate that is opposed to the Bolsheviks, think what publicity, what hokum, and what amusement there would be!”

For my part, I, as opposed to the Romanian queen (these were regal matters – that is a fact!), did not sign my name to the tailor’s offer to make me a free suit in return for endorsing his company. I did pay for the suit, just as I did move out of the Saint Moritz, after I found out about its generosity, and did move into an apartment where I could pay my own way. And some time during the first ten days of my stay in America, I received a telegram: “Work in Hollywood at the M.G.M. studio.” Stop. “Contract for ten weeks.” Stop. “So-many dollars a week.”

I sent an inquiry telegram back: “Work in what capacity? Doing what?” While waiting for a reply, I showed this telegram to some friends and acquaintances of mine. My friends and acquaintances assessed the telegram differently.
One of them:

“The ‘so-many dollars a week’ they are offering is low.”

“But what will I be doing there!”?

“It makes no difference. It would be awkward for you to take less than a thousand.”

A second one:

“Well, it serves you right: you should have suggested some amount.”

“How much exactly!? I’ve never worked in film and don’t know what to do there!”

“It makes no difference. And what if you were suddenly to write something for Fox or Paramount!? It’s better for M.G.M. to pay you, even in the event that you write nothing for them, than to have you write something for Fox.”

PUBLISITI! . . . Advertising!

I went to Hollywood. I will be writing about that later.

Cinema is the third leading industry in the U.S.A. And this industry is in the entertainment field, providing amiużment [amusement] to people. Amiužment is the main expenditure of the American consumer: movies, a radio, an automobile, and so on. In the environs of New York City, beyond Brooklyn, there is an establishment of mass amiużment that entertains millions of people.

It’s Coney Island.

During the summer months and on holidays, up to a million and a half New Yorkers congregate there for a gud taim [good time], (khoroshee vremia), and for amiużment. Rich people don’t go there. A million people: these are the populations of Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia combined. A million people: these are the masses.

Besides the fact that it is massive, this establishment, called both an island and a city, which is able to gather together so many people in one place, is a crowd favorite. It’s not merely a pimple on the small of one’s back, that is to say, there is a good reason for its popularity. People go there to enjoy themselves, to have fun no matter what!
The following things stretch out for a dozen kilometers along the ocean’s shore (and, in fact, under different names, they stretch out for a hundred kilometers): carnival booths, carousels, circuses, taverns, houses of horrors, shooting galleries, lotteries, and so on, and so on, and so forth. All of this is suffused with electricity beneath American flags. It’s impossible to view all of this electric pleasure in one, two, or three days. The Moscow Park of Culture and Rest is in no way comparable, if only because on Coney Island there is not a single blade of grass. There are several sazhens of beach, sand awash with electricity and mixed with orange peels and banana peels as well as with corks from Coca-Cola bottles, pages from newspapers, and other trash left behind by people. Next there is a sea wall and then iron-reinforced concrete, which is specked, as if flyblown, by automobiles, tens of thousands of automobiles, and which is awash with people, in the same way that the beach is awash with orange peels. From the electricity in the sky, the electricity on the ground, and the electricity under the ground, it’s just as bright there at night as it is during the day.

The ocean isn’t visible from there, and it doesn’t smell of the ocean there, but smells instead of gasoline, paint, and boiling hot frankfurters (called khatdogs, goriachie sobaki, a name that matches the truth). Approximately fifty percent of the people there, after changing their clothes in their automobiles, loll about on the beaches—they bitchuiutsia [go beaching]—and they also walk along the embankment in their bathing suits and bathing pajamas of the most insufferable colors and states of undress. The rest of the people amuse themselves by observing the spectacles, seeing the sights, and watching the shows.

These spectacles wail, whistle, and bellow; they make the sounds of a martyr as well as the sounds of a mosquito, overflowing with warbling sounds, from accordions to jazz saxophones, all in ecstatic delight. These spectacles burn with their searchlights, rockets, and fireworks, with all their electric colors and tempos. Live clowns and electric clowns howl. American flags flutter with their festoons, establishing fraternity with the electricity. A million people press forward, laughing, whistling, and dancing while on the move, as on a steamer, with penny whistles and mother-in-law’s tongues, all dressed up in unusual outfits. A million people eat khatdogs while on the go, hugging and kissing each other. Supernatural fun! Making merry no matter what it costs! Merriment wings its way through the air, flying off every face, flying off every hand placed on the hip, on the waist, on the shoulder or on the chest of the male or female neighbor standing next to them! Every leg rejoices! The men’s neckties are untied. The women are half-clad, and a very large percentage of them are dressed in white or colored pants, preferably striped, that are as wide as those of a sailor. American traditions of dress, which were Old Testament in nature, have now disappeared. Where suits are concerned, they used to follow the model of the smokestack; where checkered trousers are concerned, they used to follow the model of the American flag. They used to prefer fur collars over beards. Now Americans are dressed in all sorts of insufferable colors, men and women alike: in lilac, green, maroon, and yellow trousers, skirts, and shirts. And the most fashionable color is—electric blue! . . .
Couples and groups of friends are going to the “Steeplechase,” let’s call it the “Forty-One Delights.” It’s filled with electricity and decorated with American flags. Couples pay half a dollar per person, and a “Forty-One Delights” badge is pinned on each person’s chest.

The delights begin right away. To the accompaniment of electric music, one has to go through a tunnel that revolves by means of electricity. Inside the spinning tunnel, people fall down, laugh, and squeal. The spinning tunnel does not allow people to stand up, so incredible poses occur, and women’s skirts, if they are wearing any, ride up on them. Some fine young fellows are specially assigned to drag the holiday makers out of the tunnel by their feet. Farther down, some keen sensations begin. Couples race over to electric bumper cars. The spotter punches one delight on their Forty-One Delights token. The tires on these cars are placed not on the wheels but around the car. The cars in the pavilion for this ride are placed into motion by electricity. The cars fly at each other, bumping them with their tires; they bounce back from each other, like balls; and then each flies off to bump yet a third car. Supernatural fun! When they are done with the bumper cars, people climb the stairs up to the top of a giant slide. The slide, which is carefully polished, has all sorts of dips and bumps on it. People race down the slide each on their bottoms, either in pairs or in tandem, holding hands. The dips and bumps scatter people all over, so that it is unclear where their hands are and where their feet. The spectators who surround this slide, standing at the parapet, witness some fantastic flights. Some of them lean up against the parapet. Suddenly an electric current is emitted through the parapet. The current stings the spectators: some of them are stunned and utter a shriek, while everyone laughs. Next there is a disk the size of a circus hippodrome (America is famous for its broad scope: so that in the New York circus there are three such hippodromes right in a row, and circus acts are occurring in all three of them at once). People climb onto this carefully polished disk, piling onto it at its very center. The spotter punches yet another delight on the token. The disk starts to spin, rotating, of course, by means of electricity. One after another, people start flying off from the center of the disk, hanging on to the disk at its edges. The person who can outwit centrifugal force and remain seated at the center of the disk has the right to repeat this delight without having his token punched.

There are swings of all sorts!

There are carousels of all sorts!

There are American mountains (which in America are called Russian Mountains)!

There are pleasures! There are delights!!

Alongside the Forty-One Delights, there is a museum where they display the fattest woman in the world, the smallest midgets, the most frightful monsters, and a woman and a man who are both fish.

Alongside the Forty-One Delights, there is the sale of American flags, beneath which Salvation Army soldiers scream, howling into their bullhorns.
Alongside the Forty-One Delights, there is a museum of skin diseases and the conception of children (children are not allowed admission there).\textsuperscript{81}

Alongside the Forty-One Delights, there is a museum, a house of horrors (children are allowed admission there). Here they display those schemes that the police either caught or reopened during their investigation of sensational murders. Gangsters slit a woman’s throat while she was in bed, the bed and the woman are covered in blood, and the gangsters are bent over her body. A wife killed her husband in the bathtub, the bathtub is filled with blood, and there is a knife in the hand of the half-unclad woman. A husband stabbed his wife to death in the woods. Sacco and Vanzetti\textsuperscript{82} in the electric chair, their faces distorted by the convulsive force of the electricity. All of this is made out of wax with a frightful abundance of hideous facial expressions and blood.\textsuperscript{83}

Alongside the Forty-One Delights, there is the skeleton of a whale that is displayed for viewing for one cent.

Once again, there is the Salvation Army.

Alongside the fortune-telling establishment, which fortune-tellers entice people to enter by their ability to foretell one’s fate, there stands a fortune-teller machine that is like the self-service ticket machines found at suburban train stations: you have to insert a nickel’ (five cents) and your fate will be foretold.

Alongside the Forty-One Delights, people fire guns at a shooting gallery, throw balls and toss rings at a carnival booth in hopes of winning a mother-in-law’s tongue, a whistle, a cap, a teddy bear, or an ashtray for their automobile.

And there is, in the Forty-One Delights, one delight that tops them all. Among a million people, there can always be found a hundred (or a thousand) who are fools (or who have been fooled). Amidst the Forty-One Delights, an auditorium and a stage have been built, both of them adorned with American flags. The auditorium is always filled to capacity with people of all ages, predominantly of the male gender. On the stage, there are invariably two clowns: a freak-midget, who is as fat as a spider, and a freak-giant, who is as thin as a rail. The people who are walking past these electric frights and keen sensations, strolling past them on their own in search of further pleasures beneath the American flag, suddenly end up in some labyrinth from which there is no exit, no way to go back.\textsuperscript{84} They must keep going forward. Some of them realize what kind of trap they have fallen into. Others do not realize that it is a trap. And this doesn’t matter, for there actually is no retreat from this trap. The people who had landed in the labyrinth come out upon a stage. The auditorium laughs with delight. People come out of the darkness of the labyrinth into the blinding glare of spotlights. The people exiting the labyrinth, these men and women, quite naturally get a kick out of this. Moreover, a certain percentage of the women, naturally enough, are wearing skirts; moreover, the women are both young and old, both thin and full-bodied. At the sight of the women in their skirts, the people in the auditorium laugh in an especially lustful manner. In a clownish, affable manner, the freak-spider and the freak-beanpole rush
at the people who have just appeared on the stage and throw themselves at them. Both of these freaks are equipped with sticks affixed to a wire, electric wands; when a person comes in contact with these electric wands, a spark flashes and an electric shock stings the person painfully. The freak-spider invites people to follow him. And suddenly compressed air begins to blow from a floor vent under the feet of the people who have just come out of the labyrinth. The music is choking, making various farting sounds. The women’s skirts fly upward, laying bare what had been – and what had not been – calculated to be exposed by the burst of compressed air. The women spasmodically grab at their flying skirts, trying to gather them up and keep hold of them against their knees. But the freak-beanpole at this point pokes them in their backside with his electric wand. The women shriek from the unexpectedness and pain of the electric shock, and clutch at their backside, letting go of their skirts. Once again the skirts fly upward. Or the women run off to wherever they can. At this point the floor beneath them begins to hop up and down like a goat that has gone mad. The women lose their balance and grab for the handrails. There is, however, an electric current running through the handrails. But the compressed air blowing from beneath them does not throw them off! And nobody, nowhere – unless he has been to Coney Island – has ever seen such facial expressions as those on the faces of the spectators who are sitting in the auditorium of this delight! The auditorium snorts, laughs, squeals, kicks and stomps its feet – it is enjoying itself! For an evening of such visual delights, no fewer than a hundred people will pass through the hall entrance. And how many women’s tights and garters – or even the bottoms of those women who are completely without any undergarments – are being watched by these American spectators that number into the millions! With the men, things proceed differently than with the women. At the moment when the wind strips away a man’s hat and he grabs for it, he is poked from behind by an electric shock. And due to a sleight of hand on the part of the freak-beanpole, instead of a canotier or a hat that has been slightly wind-blown and stretched, on the man’s head there now sits some kind of clownish headgear that makes him look like a fool. The man who has been wind-blown and given an electric shock notices this only when he manages to get out of the torture of stupefaction he has been through. He paid hard-earned dollars for that hat. He examines for a second the tomfoolery that has appeared on his head, which he only learned about when he heard the laughter of the bystanders. He tosses this tomfoolery at the two freaks and demands his hat back. His hat is sitting on a throne in the middle of the stage. They say to him: “Go and get it!”

The sorrow he feels for the dollars he has spent and the sorrow he feels for the dignity he has lost wage a battle inside him, and the man goes to get his hat back. At the moment when he stretches out his hand to retrieve it, the hat flies off to the side, and instead of his hat an electric freak jumps out from behind the throne, a freak that is screeching horribly and frightening the owner of the hat. Incredible fun!

Supernatural fun!

The auditorium laughs, and the music chokes, making farting noises.
The auditorium is decorated with American flags.

But the most remarkable thing – this is in regard to the few seconds of reflection on the part of the man about the cost of his hat and the loss of his dignity – consists in the fact that those people who were visibly made to look like fools rushed from the stage looking cheerful and happy, laughing and feeling in no way insulted or offended. It was clear that this was not the first time that a series of people who were visibly made to look like fools walked around the stage, which was decorated with American flags. They did everything that they were counted upon to do with knowledge and with pleasure. They were happy to do it. It was one of the Forty-One Delights!

On Coney Island, there are several establishments like the Forty-One Delights. And what is more, not only on Coney Island. They can be found everywhere, all over America.

By about four o’clock in the morning, on the eve of a holiday or on the day of a holiday itself, Coney Island empties out. Thousands of people trudge their way to the mechanical civility of the sobvei [subways]. In the name of American rationalization, there are no people at the controls in the subways. In order to pass through to the platform and get to the subway cars, one must drop a nikel’ into an x-shaped automatic machine that resembles those cruciform gates that have been installed on country roads in the Russian provinces so that cattle do not wander out onto the roads. When the nikel’ has been dropped, this automatic machine growls, revolves a quarter of a turn, speedily allowing a person to pass and nudging him slightly for the sake of stimulation. The person is supposed to hop forward, escaping and saving himself from the automatic machine. These thousands of people ride home in subway cars that are so crowded that they produce odd seating arrangements. Our streetcars would not dream of being like these subway cars, if only because women in our country do not sit on the laps of their male friends while riding in streetcars. But an even larger number of people return home from Coney Island by automobile, traveling with people that they are acquainted with, that they are half-acquainted with, or that they have only become acquainted with on that day. And the way that they ride home by car is likewise different from our way of riding, for some kind of water nymph, wearing shorn hair and dressed in an inexplicable bathing suit, is lying on the front fender of the car, spreading her arms out toward the wind. Or else there is a couple, two people who instantly fell in love, that have ensconced themselves on the roof of the car.

Coney Island blazes with glowing lights, with fantasy, with phantasmagoria, with a craze for electricity. A million very happy clerks, male and female workers, domestic servants, salesmen, and tailors crawl home along their floors at the apartment building, delivered there by electric elevators.

On Sundays, while a million people – or even a million and a half people – are enjoying themselves at Coney Island, New York newspapers are coming out in editions of a hundred and fifty to two hundred pages. The majority of these pages in the newspapers are occupied with announcements about American wonders. But in the Sunday edition there is
something for every American. In it, there are reports about the sailings of merchant ships and about the price of stocks on Wall Street. In it, there are dispatches from Chicago about the prices for wheat and dispatches from New Orleans about cotton as well as about the very small foot of a very large beauty. In the Sunday issue, they print events that are only of interest for the Irish. In the Sunday issue, there is a page exclusively for men. In the Sunday issue, there is a page exclusively for children. In the Sunday issue, there is a page exclusively for the miss and the missus, with fashion photos and interviews with famous beauties. Literary supplements. A chronicle of news items in theater and mathematics. A chronicle of current events in boxing. Illustrated supplements.

And – a page of satire and humor. There is likewise an illustrated page on which, without fail, someone flies out of a window and lands in a barrel filled with water. Or he sits down on some flypaper. Or he sticks the lighted end of a cigar into his mouth. Or a husband hides from his wife under the bed. Or a wife ties her husband to the bed with a chain. This must make an American roll on the floor with laughter. And, without fail, there are anecdotes like the following:

**HE TURNED OVER**

“For a whole month now my husband hasn’t been abandoning me in the evenings!”

“Has he turned over a new page in the conduct book he has been reading?”

“No, he turned over the car and now he’s lying in bed all bandaged up!”

**A WISE ANSWER**

“How old are you, my dear boy?”

“Unfortunately, I don’t know. When I was born, my Mom would say that she was twenty-six years old, but now she’s twenty-four.”

**AFTER THE FOOTBALL GAME**

“Today’s game was really uninteresting.”

“Yes, I know, not a single amusing drunk!”

**HE VALUES APPETITE**

“Doctor, I’m eating my dinner without any kind of satisfaction.”

“Why is that?”

“Because the food is ruining my appetite!”
**BOXERS**

“When I hit my opponent with a punch, he feels it right away.”

“When I hit my opponent with a punch, he feels it only a week later!”

**A CLEVER WIDOW**

“Madam, you can’t get married. In your deceased spouse’s will, it says that if you were to remarry, the entire inheritance would be transferred over to your deceased spouse’s cousin.”

“Yes, but it’s that cousin of his that I’m getting married to!”

**A WEAPONS SYSTEM**

“I would like to buy a revolver for my husband.”

“What type of revolver does your husband prefer?”

“Oh, he doesn’t care. He doesn’t know yet that I’m planning to shoot him!”

**IN A STORE**

“I’ve noticed that your last customer didn’t buy anything, but left here completely happy. What did he want to see?”

Saleswoman: “Me at eight o’clock this evening!”

**AN OLD FEMALE ACQUAINTANCE**

He (thoughtfully): “It seems to me that I know you. There’s something about you that seems very, very familiar to me . . .”

She: “Perhaps it’s my panties? I borrowed them from Miss Morgan for tonight.”

**SINCERE LAUGHTER**

“My suspenders broke in the middle of dancing . . .”

“I can imagine your embarrassment.”

“No, I laughed heartily along with the others. My suspenders were being worn by my friend Lawrence!”
From these satiric and humorous pieces, one is expected to laugh one’s head off, just like one does at Coney Island at the sight of women’s skirts flying up from bursts of compressed air from below.

There’s an awful lot of electricity here!

There’s electricity along the second story of the streets of New York, and under the ground it transports people off into space. Electricity carries people away to their floors in apartment buildings. Electricity opens and closes the doors of apartments and houses. Some houses, in their entrance way, on the wall next to the front door, on a board opposite the apartment numbers, have buttons and next to them there is some sort of aperture. You press the button you need and out of this sort of aperture you hear a voice that asks, “Who is calling and whom do you need to speak with?” This is the owner of the apartment inquiring by telephone from his floor. You speak into the aperture. The owner says, “O’kei,” and the front door, which up until this time has been locked, opens in front of you. This is because the owner of the apartment is pressing the corresponding button on his floor. While the front door is opening, a light is turned on in the hallway. You get on the elevator. The little lamps inside the elevator start flashing, and the hallway disappears into the darkness. And so it goes on in this manner, right up to the door of the apartment on the floor that you need. Electricity prepares and refrigerates meals in those apartments where there is an electric stove and where there is a refrigerator, a sort of white electric box that produces ice. Electric gadgets include such things as: an electric iron, an electric hair curler, an electric tea kettle, and even an electric appliance for browning (and spoiling – to a Russian’s taste) the bread used for sandwiches. Sewing machines and typewriters are set in motion, activated by electricity. Laundry is washed by means of electricity. In some apartments, you press a certain button and your bed is flipped over in the air and climbs inside the wall, closing the wall behind it.89 In every automobile, there is, quite naturally, a battery; many of them, however, have a radio as well. The Hotel Saint Moritz was constructed according to the latest word in electrical engineering, to such an extent that I was a bit afraid to touch the door knobs or door handles there: when you touch them, an electric spark jolts you, just like at Coney Island. For a long time, I tried to figure out why this is so. But I couldn’t make any sense out of it. As they explained it to me, it’s due to some feature of the carpets. I don’t know about that.90 But in regard to carpets and floors generally, I must say that they are likewise cleaned by means of electricity.

Besides electricity, there is also an awful lot of noise here.

And there is nowhere else in the world where you have the sort of noise that there is in New York. Hemmed in on one side by the Hudson River and the East River and planted upon the island’s granite – that is, upon a very strong foundation – on the other side, New York climbed upward, dozens of stories high, setting a record with the one-hundred-and-two-stories-high Empire State Building.91 The one hundred and two stories of the Empire State – this is the highest point in the world that is constructed by man. It is higher than the Eiffel
Tower\textsuperscript{92} and all the antenna-mast structures and cathedrals in the world. Down below, beneath these \textit{bildings} [buildings], streets have remained, streets that, like accordions, have pulled together all the noises of the structures. In Manhattan, there are ten \textit{aveniu} [avenues] (\textit{aveniu}, translated into Russian, is \textit{alleia}),\textsuperscript{93} which run the length of the city, and a little less than three hundred \textit{strit} [streets] (in Russian, \textit{ulitsa}) that traverse the city. Out of these ten avenues, four of them have second floors, which elevated electric trains speed along every minute; as they speed along, they shake the streets and one’s brain with their howling and their grinding. And there is no \textit{aveniu} in New York where this grinding sound cannot not be heard.

All of the subterranean level of New York is dug up with depots, \textit{sobvei} [subways], entrances to the underground tracks for trains, and tubes for the city’s pneumatic postal system, whence postal dispatches are delivered all over the districts of New York from the central post office, not by human mail carriers, but by an underground tubular conveyor system operated by means of compressed air.\textsuperscript{94} The New York railway stations – the most enormous in the world – were dug into the ground. A person in New York, if he takes it into his head to do so (and there are such types whom fate incites to do such things), this person could live for weeks in New York, traveling around the city – from one end to the other – and residing in a multitude of hotels, for weeks he could go without seeing any streets, let alone any daylight, while residing under the ground. And the subterranean level of New York does not for a second cease to hum, howl, and moan, belching out noise onto the streets of the city by means of this, its truly subterranean belly.

There are more automobiles in New York City alone than in all of Germany. We now know that it’s faster to walk the distance across New York City – down three \textit{aveniu} and across ten \textit{strit} – than to drive across it in an automobile. There are more automobiles than pedestrians on the streets of this city, a city whose streets are impassable-by-means-of-an-automobile.\textsuperscript{95} Automobiles here travel in columns at a distance of a meter away from each other and at a distance of half a meter to the right and to the left. Automobiles spend more time standing still at a traffic light than they do actually moving forward. But automobiles, as we know, make noise, even if they are of Rolls Royce quality.\textsuperscript{96} And every second these noises crawl into the floors of buildings and into the nerves of people. Automobiles make noise twenty-four hours a day, more at night than during the day, for at night trucks are delivering all the things that this city of a million people needs.

New York is the largest port in the world. The hum and buzz of thousands of ocean liners and tens of thousands of port steamers, steamboats, and motor boats pour in from both the Hudson River and the East River.

The howl of the city is cut through every minute by the incomparable sound of sirens from police cars, fire trucks, and ambulances. Their sirens are specially made to drown out all other sounds and render everyone numb and dumb. And they do indeed deafen people.

After vacating the Hotel Saint Moritz, I took up residence in the apartment of my friend Joe Freeman on the sixteenth floor of a building on Second Avenue, almost on the banks of the East River.\textsuperscript{97} And just as had been the case at the Hotel Saint Moritz earlier, I could not fall
asleep here either. I would wake up at night and hear a radio wailing, a refrigerator on the other side of the wall sniffing as it was making ice, a service eleveitor (elevator) whistling past the floors of our building as it delivered all the necessary delivery items on various floors at night, as if our building was the chief town of a district. The building was shuddering from the elevated trains that went flying by. The sounds of the underground, which had been built under our building, swept over my brain like a wave of hysteria. Just outside my window, at almost the same level as my sixteenth-floor apartment, there were pipes from the New York electric power station – they say it’s the largest one in the world – and just a little bit lower than my floor, loads of bituminous coal were crashing down – with the rumbling and grinding sound made by hoisting cranes – into the maw of this electric power station. On cloudy days, the pipes of the electric power station and the tops of the skyscrapers would retire beyond the clouds, and the clouds would descend to the same level as the roof of our building, evicting everything from the realm of reality and banishing it to the delirium of howls.

Together with Joe Freeman, a pure-blooded New Yorker, I traveled by automobile across all of America, from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic. Joe speaks Russian, but he speaks it poorly. Of all the languages in the world, I prefer to speak only Russian. And I began to notice that every day during our trip across America we would find ourselves toward evening in the largest possible city among those on our itinerary. And we would get settled in there for the night – this was obligatory with us – in such a way that if not beneath us or above us, then right next to us on one side there would be either trains or factories howling. Although this was not New York, it was still difficult to get a good night’s sleep. Then I started to handle matters my own way. Toward evening, we would drive a little farther away from the railroad tracks and if I were to see a motel, I would shout – “Stop! We’re spending the night here. I’m not going any farther!” We spent one night this way, then another night this way, and I slept great. But on the third morning, Joe fell very ill. So I asked him. “What’s wrong with you!??” He replied in a forlorn and reluctant way:

“I can’t sleep. For three nights now, I haven’t slept at all. The birds are keeping me awake.”

“What birds?”

“Those over there, the ones outside in the yard. I don’t know what they’re called.”

Owing to the poor quality of our verbal communications, I didn’t manage to catch the names of these birds. We drove farther. We saw a flock of chickens in a field. Joe’s face suddenly turned angry. “There – those are the birds I mean. The male version of those ladies!” Joe said, pointing at a rooster.

As we were approaching New York, after we had finished travelling all the way across America, – it was subtropical June so we were driving with our noses, smeared thoroughly with glycerin cream as a skin protectant, peeling from the sun and heat – Joe was exulting over the possibility of living a normal life again.
I remember very clearly the sensation that I felt as I was watching that twilight, when there arose in front of us the smoke and the humps of the skyscrapers in the New York profile, when the noises and gasses of the city had come to meet us upon our return. I sensed physically that I was driving into some sort of worldwide kerosene stove. After all, if there is no ocean at Coney Island, even if it is located nearby, then on the streets of New York one must breathe not air, but burned out gas, the smoke and soot of cars and locomotives.

Ah, this unusual, mechanical, lonely dirt of New York’s streets, this trash consisting of old newspapers and cigarette butts on the concrete, this suffocating smell of gasoline mixed with sweat! This dirt has been theorized by a certain American writer. During a stroll together one night, he told me, in regard to my surprise at all this dirt and trash, that Americans are, it is said, individualists, that each of them lives his own life and answers for himself alone. Therefore, if you’ve been paying attention, you’ve seen that the apartments of Americans are clean, but the streets outside do not concern them! – Ah, this American individualism!

But: Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s. Truisms very often turn out to be true, and the truism of a truth – that a dollar is only a dollar – is the master, the overlord, the dream, the delight of American morality. This truism of a truth is true. And those who have climbed over the fence of dollars, the person who has a dzhab [job] or a bizness [business], for them there are standards and norms, despite American individualism.

This is for those who have climbed over the fence of the dollar.

The European standard is not comparable with the American standard.

For those who have climbed over the fence to get dollars and who have hidden those dollars away in the beneficence of their check book, propped up against the stock market ticker – for all of them, it is obligatory that in their apartments they dream about a radio, which is a source of misery and in no way a positive thing, about an electric kitchen, and about a refrigerator [refrigerator]. Men and women who have climbed for the dollar must sleep in pajamas, each of them must go to their bathroom in the morning and take a shower or a bath, changing their nighttime undergarments for daytime ones. After they have washed themselves up, these people leave for work, returning home after five o’clock. The men must change their daytime gray (or crimson or yellow) suit and their colored shoes for an evening outfit that is darker in color; they must shave, take another bath, eat dinner, amuse themselves, and then go to bed, taking a bath and putting on pajamas before falling asleep. This is how it must be. Only a very few people, even among those who strive to amass dollars, have a domestic servant, and they only eat brekfest [breakfast], a morning meal, at home, loncha [eating lunch] near work and dinneria [eating dinner] as part of a sequence of evening amiuement. Both men and women work, of course. Thus, in the morning, before taking a bath, the individualist must telephone a nearby shop to order what he needs for brekfest, which is delivered to him by a delivery boy. He must leave for work.
On several of the floors in his building, there is a Black scrubwoman, a Negress,\textsuperscript{102} who sweeps the rooms by means of electricity. The individualist \textit{lonchit} [eats lunch] and \textit{dinnerit} [eats dinner] in town, as everyday life determines it should be done. And the variety of dining halls and restaurants is unbelievable. There are two reasons for this: an alcoholic one and a national one.

The variety of eateries begins with the \textit{drog-stori} [drugstores], in other words, the apothecary-restaurants, in which one can undergo medical treatment while having a bite to eat and one can feed oneself while making a full recovery. Located on every \textit{aveniu} are the small bandboxes of so-called cafeterias, mechanized dining halls, where hot and cold food items – soups, salads, meats, fish, crabs, hors d’oeuvres, sweets, fruits, Coca-Colas, both cold dishes and hot dishes – are displayed behind glass along the walls.\textsuperscript{103} A hungry person who wishes to eat something walks along these walls, sees what is being offered to him, and decides what he needs. Each separate dish that he sees is sitting there in the automatic vending machine. The customer who has change drops his coins in the slot (the coin changers and the cash registers, which are likewise automated, are located here), and the automatic vending machine serves him up the same plate that he had seen behind glass. The hungry diner has at his disposal a small marble table, from which the serving personnel assigned to attend to the customers remove only the dirty dishes. In addition, in the majority of cases, part of the tableware – the glasses, the plates, the spoons – are thrown right away into the trash because these plates, spoons, and glasses are manufactured out of paper and cardboard. And since we have just described the cafeteria in its essence – that it’s clean and always white, and that people can dine there to satiety, eating tasty food until they are full, for only forty to fifty cents – let us now talk about press tools and manufacturing dies. The plates, spoons, and glasses, not to mention the paper napkins, are manufactured out of paper. They are used only once, and this is hygienic. Ford\textsuperscript{104} manufactures his automobiles. But in the sequence from manufactured Fords to manufactured plates, there are manufactured doors, frames, beds, tables, chairs, and book cases; there are also knives, spoons, and forks made out of iron and bronze as well as out of paper pulp and various mastics. These are all manufactured items in the sequence of mass production. And this mass production through press tools and manufacturing dies throws these things out into the market cheaply and in quantities numbering millions. And this mass production through press tools and manufacturing dies – not only doors, chairs, and fence grills, but also paper knives for slitting the uncut pages of books, and lamps, and picture frames, and automobiles – these manufactured items are done excellently, gracefully, and conveniently. And it was precisely this mass production through press tools and manufacturing dies that made it possible for Woolworth to start up his ten-cent and twenty-cent stores.\textsuperscript{105} There’s no point in yelping and telling lies about these stores.

Every American, judging by the assurances that are given to us by advertising, ought to own his own automobile. In actuality, this is not the case. But, nonetheless, not to mention wealthy people, almost every petit bourgeois, many workers, and four and a half million farm workers (there are six million of them in all) own their own automobile. The automobile of the standard American who has climbed over the fence for the dollar is driven by that American himself, whether that person be a gentleman or a lady. And this automobile is kept around the corner in a public parking garage. Moreover, there are
several parking garages – in New York, in Chicago, and in Detroit – that are up to ten floors high, where cars are removed from the floors by means of elevators. Moreover, we can assume that the carwashes\textsuperscript{106} that have been built in these parking garages are of no lesser refinement than the restrooms that have been built for people.

The highways in America look more like conveyor belts in a factory than like actual roads. Automobiles travel down them as if they are on a conveyor belt. And motorists, after driving, feel as if they have been working on a conveyor belt. The highways are filled with \textit{trafik} [traffic] signs that indicate traffic rules and regulations. Federal highways in some places have six or eight lanes: that is to say, six to eight vehicles are traveling along them at one time, four in one direction and four in the other. \textit{Trafik} signs – \textquotedblleft STOP," "SLOW," "MAXIMUM SPEED 60," "MINIMUM SPEED 40," "SCHOOL ZONE," "HOSPITAL ZONE," "BRIDGE 300 FEET," "RAVINE 300 FEET," "HILL 300 FEET," "CURVE 300 FEET," "RAILROAD CROSSING" – are not located on the roadside nor are they posted on a pole. They’re written in white paint on the asphalt itself. And in addition to these inscriptions, if the highway has, let’s say, four lanes, then these four lanes have white stripes drawn lengthwise along the road to keep motorists from dozing off at the wheel. The asphalt and tar used in constructing roads are calibrated with a levelling instrument. Curves, which in English are inscribed as “\textit{CURVE},” are constructed the way banked turns are constructed: for a turn to the left, the right side of the road is elevated, for a turn to the right, the left side of the road is elevated. When it isn’t necessary to change the position of the steering wheel on a curve, there is no reason why a vehicle should fly off the road at high speed. By the way, it does happen, nonetheless, that vehicles do fly off the road. America has the highest percentage of traffic fatalities in the world,\textsuperscript{107} and these injuries occur not because cars run over pedestrians, but because cars collide with each other or they veer off the road. Cars that fly off the road and crash are not cleared away. Instead they lie about in roadside ditches, where they serve, over and above the inscriptions written on the tar, as monuments to the traffic accidents. In 1930, more Americans were killed in automobile accidents, than American soldiers died in battle during one year of the World War. There are Shell Oil, General Motors Company, and Ford Motor Company gas stations, fuel pumps, and vehicle repair garages located every ten to fifteen kilometers on all American highways – in some locales it’s every half kilometer, and it’s only in the deserts of the state of Arizona that they are fifty kilometers apart from each other. Highways are adorned with advertising posters, and behind these posters motels are hidden. The American who drives a car doesn’t know the engine in his car. Indeed, besides the steering wheel and the brake, he generally doesn’t know anything about his car. It’s good if he knows how to listen to the engine and feel the shock absorbers. The typical American is not encouraged to know anything about his car. Every time he fills his car up with gas, the car is inspected: this service is included in the cost of the gas. And preventive maintenance, as we know, is very beneficial, not only against malaria, but also against battery leakage. When I changed the oil in the engine, – this happened twice, – they wrote down my address. And about a week and a half later, I received a postcard from the filling station, reminding me that on my odometer there were such-and-such number of miles since the last time I had changed the oil. They were sending me this card so that I wouldn’t forget to change the oil on time. An American must know how to do only one thing – drive a car. This is something that Americans ought to be able to do, and the
current generation, apparently, was outright born with this ability: it’s not a rarity to see ten-year-old boys and girls sitting behind the wheel of a car. Besides knowing how to drive a car, an American must know the rules of the road and accurate signaling, because he’s not simply driving down the road, but participating in a conveyor belt of driving. For every failure to follow these conveyor rules, there is a fine to pay. But if you happen to have an automobile accident out in the country, a repair vehicle will drive out to get you. A Russian cab driver, if he were to drive around New York for an hour, following Moscow’s rules of the road, would be showered with tikety [tickets], receipts with fines, like being showered with snow in a blizzard. And the only reason why this would not have happened is because they would have killed him, together with wrecking his car, during the first five minutes of him driving on New York’s streets. However, I once managed to break a woman’s arm and shoulder with a car in New York. When the police investigated this eksident [accident], they told me:

“Mister Pilnyak ran over the lady while following all the traffic regulations. The lady is the guilty party in this eksident. And, therefore, Mister Pilnyak can demand from the lady restitution for the cost for repair of the headlight that was shattered when it struck against her head.”

The roads are decorated with traffic signs and adorned with monuments of wrecked automobiles. The roads are fenced in by advertising posters, filling stations, the motels of automobile clubs, as well as tourist and sports societies, and motels with various names, such as Chiken dinner [chicken dinner]. All of this is flooded with electricity and entangled with telephone lines. The roads are illuminated at night for hundreds of verstes away from any cities. Cars drive in a procession, one after another, at a distance of one meter away from each other; in some places, they drive at a speed no less than eighty kilometers per hour. On the back of some automobiles hang placards, such as the following: “Go ahead and bump into me, little guy. Really, don’t you know that there’s still a place left in hell!” Not only the inscriptions written on the asphalt, but also the red and green traffic lights, as well as the glove of a polismen [policeman], provide signals to automobiles, and they do this not only in cities, but also out in the country and up in the mountains. With acrobatic agility, the motorcycles of the highway police buzz like bumblebees around automobiles. And the American motorist drives along his remarkable highways truly as if on a conveyor belt. He doesn’t see anything, except the body of the car traveling ahead of him and the fenders of the cars traveling to his right and to his left. He must watch his every gesture so that he drives his car correctly, so that his car goes correctly; otherwise, there could be an accident, a death – there are more deaths on the highways than in a world war. He must watch for every signal on the road. He must signal his every move: for example, “I’m reducing my speed and I want to switch over to the shoulder,” because he has a flat tire. Otherwise, the cars behind him and to either side of him will crash into him. Cars and highways – they suffocate us with their gas exhaust. And the individualist who has climbed off the conveyor belt of highways, having seen on occasion an advertisement rather than nature, went out of his mind with joy, blissfully wiping from his brow the sweat of conveyor belt stress and strain. Highways, these conveyor belts, have traversed all of America, along its length and its breadth – criss-crossing and cross-criss-crossing it from one end to the other. By means of iron, iron-
reinforced concrete, and overhanging bridges, they have leapt across rivers – across the Colorado River, the Missouri River, the Potomac River, the Hudson River. By means of dams, they have gone across swamps and lakes. By means of tunnels, they have dug into mountains. And the highways there do not have names, but they do have numbers: Route 66 goes from New York, via Chicago, to California; Route 11 goes from Boston, via Washington, to New Orleans. Highway maps are distributed free of charge at every filling station and at every roadside motel. In his poems, Mayakovsky expressed astonishment at the Brooklyn Bridge over the East River. Now tunnels have been constructed under the East River and under the Hudson River in order to relieve some of the automobile traffic. By the autumn of 1931, a bridge was opened over the Hudson River, connecting the state of New York with the state of New Jersey. On the first day that this new bridge went into operation, around thirty thousand automobiles drove across it, seven people walked across it, and one horse pulled a carriage across it.

If automobiles in America were socialized, then every American would get to sit in an automobile, and one extraordinary morning the entire American population would be able to ride in an automobile. The notion conveyed by the words “turn” and “angle” is represented in American parlance by the letters “c-u-r-v-e.” In Russian, one reads it as kurve. In English, it’s pronounced kerv. A worker from the U.S.S.R., who was gaining practical experience working at a Ford plant, naturally got himself an automobile, learned how to drive it, and described his successes and his failures as a motorist in his letters home to his wife, a Moscow worker. He described to her how on one occasion he committed a blunder and fell into the hands of a policeman for veering off where he should not have on some curve. In describing this incident to his wife, he wrote: “. . . once again I have had an ekсидant [accident]: I went too wide on a kurve [curve] and received a тикет [ticket] from the policeman with a three-dollar fine . . .” A stern reply followed from his wife in Moscow: “Ugh, you old ne’er-do-well . . . I swear I’m going to divorce you!”

Once I was riding with some friends (in an automobile, of course) in California, up in the mountains, and my friends started an argument over whether the state authorities acted rightly or wrongly when they created some work for those people who were unemployed: specifically, the construction of a new road in the mountains. I asked them where the road work was taking place. They pointed to a road on the right that was heading off into the mountains. I asked our woman driver (a female motorist, the owner of the car, and the wife of a writer) to turn in the direction of this new road work so that we could take a look at these unemployed people working. There were automobiles parked to our right and to our left all along this stretch of newly poured asphalt for up to a kilometer. I asked them, “What’s the deal with all these cars?” “Oh, those are the cars that belong to the unemployed people who came to work here,” they answered me.

Just think, that’s the kind of standard they have in America: people who are unemployed are driving around in automobiles! But the fact of the matter is that the automobile in America has ceased to be a luxury item and has become instead a necessity of the first order. Old models of cars cost twenty-five to thirty dollars there. For a worker, they replace his legs. And the last thing an unemployed person wants to do is to part with his car, because this cuts off for him the possibility of getting around.
Up until two years ago, gold-mining factories were operating, beneath the crags, in the mountains of Arizona – in places immortalized by Mayne Reid\footnote{118} and Fenimore Cooper\footnote{119} – but now they are silent due to the financial crisis. Workers from the mountains and desert of Arizona – from places in the “wild” West, places of Indian traditions – are now departing in their little twenty-five-dollar Fords.\footnote{120} A wagon is hitched to the back of their automobiles. And the automobiles, as well as the attached wagons, are packed with pillows, frying pans, radios, little kids, and poverty. There are plenty of such wagons crawling along the roads. We descended from the mountains of Arizona to the state of New Mexico. We were running late, so we hurried; it was about ten o’clock at night (this was during the time of our cross-country road trip from one ocean to the other). On the highway, the headlights of our automobile illuminated a parked vehicle, a man rummaging around under the hood, a woman lying beside the car on the asphalt, and the curly-haired little heads of three young kids behind the glass windows of the car. We stopped our car to find out what was the matter and, perhaps, to help out. The man rummaging around under the hood said about himself:

“I’m unemployed. I’m going to the Midwest. I don’t know what happened to the engine. There’s gas... but my wife... my wife has had three epileptic attacks today. All of our money has run out, and my wife and kids have had nothing to eat.”

The man looked like an academic. Despite the late hour – it was time when they should have been in bed sleeping – the young kids were chatting merrily, babbling all sorts of childish nonsense about their mommy. Embarrassed, I sheepishly gave the worker two dollars. Joe reproached me for being so stingy. We promised them that at the first auto repair garage we came to, we would have a mechanic sent out to help them.

We arrived at a small town, and as the first order of business we drove to a garage. The man at the garage did not give us time to finish our account about the misfortune that we had just encountered on the highway.

“Near the bridge? About seven miles from here?” he asked. “So that’s our John, our beggar. Oh, what a comedian he is! Twice a week he works this scam. You’re already the eighth person today who has asked for help on his behalf. Oh, what a funny guy he is! He’s working this scam again today, so that means they won’t let me go to bed until two o’clock in the morning!”

America is a country of records and technology. Once I was visiting farms in the Midwest. I was visiting a dairy farm. In the cow barns on dairy farms like this one, they have a radio playing for the cows so that they will give more milk as a result of their nerves being calmed by the soothing sound of the music. Each cow is provided with her own water conduit so that the cows are not drinking out of a common trough. The cows are milked on a conveyor belt by means of electricity.\footnote{121} Each cow – the cows come out onto some
carousel the size of a good-sized race track – each cow stands in a stall. The carousel turns clockwise with the sun. The cow, along with the stall she is standing in, moves to the left a distance equal to the width of a stall. A second cow enters the neighboring stall. During this time, a shower pours soapy water under the tail and stomach of the first cow, as well as on her udder. The carousel moves on to another stall, pouring clean water on that first cow, washing off the soap. The carousel moves on to yet another stall, using warm air to dry that first cow under her tail and around her udder. Then an electric milking machine is attached to the cow’s teat. By the time the carousel has brought the cow back to its original spot, she has been milked. She has been milked without human hands touching her. The electric milking machine drives the milk along intricate tubes that show the chemical composition of the milk: its wateriness, the amount of casein protein in it, and its fat content. These clever tubes also sterilize the milk and pour it out, hermatically sealing it into bottles and then placing the bottles into crates.

These crates are transported in refrigerated vehicles and trains to cities, where the milk – taken straight from the cow’s udder without being touched by human hands, but nonetheless sterilized – lands directly in the mouth of a person who wishes to take a little drink of milk.

This is a record. But in that same Midwest, I also visited farms where the cows are simply milked by human farmers with the help of their own five fingers, cows that are no cleaner than our Ryazan cows. I visited farms where the cows live in black sheds under a tile roof in the tradition of our privately-owned Ryazan cows. And in that same Midwest, there are farms that have been abandoned by farmers thanks to the financial crisis and to starvation.

The city of Chicago is located in that same Midwest. And slaughterhouses are located in that city. Much has been written about the Chicago slaughterhouses. Without digressing from this theme, I should mention here that the only thing that has not been mechanized at the Chicago slaughterhouses is betrayal. At these slaughterhouses, there are non-mechanized betrayers: the betrayer-goat, the betrayer-hog, the betrayer-bull. The slaughterhouses are dug deep into the ground, which smells of the blood of the millions of animals that have been killed there. Droves of sheep, pigs, and cows by the train-full have been tossed underground so that several hours later – in the form of filets, choice cuts, beef briskets, sausage, and canned meats – they can be sent across the country in refrigerated vehicles. The droves of animals beneath the ground are filled with deathly horror. Then the calm hog (or goat, or bull) approaches the enervated animals in their mortal anguish; the calm hog affectionately nudges the pigs, calms them down, and leads the reassured animals behind him. The pigs follow him. The calm hog leads them into the narrow labyrinth of a corridor. In a dark spot in the corridor, where the pigs walk single file one after another, the calm hog suddenly jumps off to the side and disappears. Nooses then spring upon the pigs that have been following him, and the pigs fly up on metal cables to a conveyor belt, to their death. And the calm hog in his calmness proceeds to a new railway car to calm down a new drove of animals!
This is no longer an American theme – or is it an American one!? – but if we return to the theme of American milk, then we can say that such milk landed in the mouth of the person who wishes to drink a little milk taken straight from a cow’s udder.

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All of this – the milk, and the pigs, and the radio equipment – all of this is for the benefit of those who have climbed over the fences of the dollar.

Ah, the dollar! . . . oh, American individualism! Eh, these millions of people upon whom the jets of compressed air blow from below at Coney Island! Well, it’s New York!

By the way, New York is actually one floor lower than is indicated by the numbers: there isn’t a thirteenth floor in a single New York building, nor is there an apartment or room numbered thirteen. From the roof of a semi-skyscraper, I saw the Woolworth skyscraper, the fifth highest building in New York.123 This is the very same Woolworth who set up ten-cent and twenty-cent stores all across the country.124 In these stores, any item costs ten cents or twenty cents; this is the standard of American individualism. Ten cents for a spoon, a notebook, a handkerchief, a pair of socks, a pen, a cup, a glass, a toothbrush, and so on, and so on, and so forth. And a mechanical fortune-telling device – one that predicts the future, constructed after the fashion of a vending machine on the passenger platform at a railway station – it, too, costs ten cents! Vending machines such as these sell cigarettes, matches, postage stamps, chocolate, peppermint candies, chuing-gom [chewing gum] (Americans chew so much of this chuing-gom – that is to say, chewing rubber – in the underground subways and at factories run by the non-smoking Ford), and so on, and so on, and so forth, mass consumer items on the order of American individualism. The mechanical fortune-teller that predicts the future, supported by the absence of thirteenth floors, repeated to me what had been predicted by my American girl friend, a semi-famous actress,125 who every two weeks used to go eat breakfast at a Gypsy restaurant on Fifth Avenue, where a Gypsy fortune-telling session about the future was included in the price of lunch [lunch]! . . .

And all of this – the mechanical and the Gypsy fortune-telling, the absence of thirteenth floors – all of this rests upon:

“Eat more! Drink more! More! more! more! Go blind from reading advertisements! Suffocate from inhaling the gas! Go deaf from hearing the roar of the city! Choke on automobiles and radios! . . .”

All the while one can lyrically reason that the city, together with the people who inhabit it, has gone crazy, has reared up on its hind legs, in order to crawl away to nowhere and to inhumanity after having muddled all sorts of perspectives.
And everything for Americans is a sports competition. Moreover, such concepts – a sports competition, a record, о'кей – have various meanings. The garments that Americans wear – they are a sports competition (and a record, and о'кей!). The automobiles that Americans drive – they are о'кей, they are a sports competition. In every vacant lot, in New York and all over America – a golf course the size of a ping-pong table is a sports competition, just as is true of boxing, and tennis, and football, they are all о'кей, they are all records. In Chicago, on top of a skyscraper, a man hung on a pole for an entire month: he ate, drank, slept, and lived on the pole – this was a sports competition, this was a record. In Chicago, at some dance hall, from the day of its opening, some people danced for two thousand hours without a break – this was a sports competition, this was a record (and publisiti, of course), this was о'кей. Two young guys dragged an automobile ten paces away from their home, without any gas, and then they drove it for two thousand miles, without buying even a single drop of gas, by begging for a liter of gas from the people they encountered along the way – this is a sports competition, this is a record. This was written about in the newspapers. Lindbergh got into an airplane, without telling anyone, and flew it across the ocean – this is a sports competition. One of Lindbergh’s colleagues, who envied Lindbergh, climbed into an airplane and dangled above New York inside it for three weeks: he ate and drank there, and they poured gas and oil from another plane into his, while in flight, to refill his tank – this is a sports competition and this is a record, even a world record; this is о'кей, the newspapers were going crazy over it. Footwear is a sports competition. Being blasted from below by jets of compressed air at Coney Island – this is a sports competition. What a remarkably sporting country this is! Everything here is a sports competition, even gangsterism.

And there are so very many American flags being displayed! In California, in New York, in Santa Fe, in New Orleans, in Buffalo – on trains, on steamers, on the streets, on the wrapping paper used in restaurants, in store windows, in clubs, in the middle of fields, on mountain peaks – there are flags, flags, and more flags! Flags are continuously being displayed, just as if it were one long, continuous holiday, a self-perpetuating celebration of the galloping standart [banner] and standart [standard]. There are even flags being displayed in cemeteries!

There are so many American flags being displayed that an afterthought is beginning to creep in: has the American nation perhaps been replaced by American flags? After all, one could construct a paradox and maintain that in America there are no Americans. We would do well to consider the Indians to be native Americans. But they were either massacred by the Saxons or assimilated by the Spaniards. And those Indians who are currently residing in the U.S.A. are not considered American citizens! The American Indians are not even citizens of the American republic of the United States! The British are the progenitors of America, but in America they dislike England above all other countries, they have disliked it ever since the days of the War of Independence. When a man like this arrives in Paris or Moscow, it’s obvious from five meters away that he’s an American: he’s a clumsy man, a man who is ill at ease and a bit embarrassed because of his awkwardness, a good-natured man, and one who smells not only of French cologne, but also of dollars. Go ahead and get
into a conversation with him: is he not a Kotofson?! The city of New Orleans is an easy-going French city, its streets are named after generals of the French Revolution, and on these streets one hears French being spoken. There are more Italians in New York than in Rome, and the largest Italian newspaper in the world is published not in Rome, but in New York. The state of New Mexico, by its very name, tells us that it’s a Mexican state. Catholics, Mexicans, and Indians live in this state, and they speak Spanish there. The writer, Theodore Dreiser, an American classic, used to tell me that he considers himself a German. During my very first few days here in America, I was for several hours a son of Saint Patrick. The Irish have an apostle by that name, and the Irish consider themselves his children. On his feast day, the Irish petite bourgeoisie walked down Fifth Avenue with flags and songs. In the evening, the Irish grosse bourgeoisie – Patrick’s children, capitalists, lawyers, engineers, Roman Catholic priests, judges, prosecutors – held a celebratory dinner together. I accidentally turned up there at the end of the dinner. One millionaire, I forget his name, shook me by the shoulders, at the same time holding onto them for support. Try as he might, he could not focus the pupils of his eyes on my glasses and he said: “They tell me that you’re Pilnyak . . . You have a head on your shoulders! . . . You have a head on your shoulders, and I have millions of dollars. Let’s get the two of them together!”

The dual citizenship of Americans has a series of consequences. In New York, and all across America, you will find French, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, British, German, Italian, Polish, and Russian restaurants. But you won’t find any American restaurants. For an American restaurant, you have to go to Tokyo, to Shanghai, to Paris (to the Ritz Hotel there), to London (to the Ritz Hotel there), and to other capitals in the world that have a Ritz Hotel, even to the raunchy, tasteless Grand Hotel, the former Bolshaia Moskovskaia Hotel, in Moscow. After all, cafeterias and mechanical politeness – these are the only American culinary inventions. But Americans do eat greip-frut [grapefruit] in the English manner. Americans invented the ice cream bar, eskimopai [Eskimo Pie]. But New Yorkers decide before dinner that they should eat some French asparagus today, and that tomorrow they should pickle themselves with Spanish spices and tequila, a Mexican vodka made out of the sap from either the cactus or else the agave plant, the most bitter vodka in the world. Dual citizenship helps, of course, to promote American Nietzscheanism. At the Ford automotive plants, they place workers of various nationalities right next to each other on the assembly line so that they will talk less to each other while working. “Since I’m Irish, to hell with an Italian! I couldn’t care less about him!” One must always bear American dual citizenship in mind when it’s a question about everyday life. And by no means is it worthwhile to give preference to the English. American nationalism arises when people start talking about the dollar, because – it’s the American flag!

Everything is the dollar! And everything is in the dollar! You have one person who has graduated from college and another person who reads in the newspapers only about murders. The first person – the college graduate – earns only a dollar an hour, while at the same time the second person earns five dollars an hour. The person who earns five dollars an hour is the one who is held in esteem. The first person graduated from college, whereas the second person is a gangster. The second person makes more money and is more highly respected than the first person. Educated people, people who are engaged in the
humanities, even civil servants, are people of second class quality. If you can’t become a *mei-moneishchik* [money-maker],140 well, then, you should go become a student at the university. A good golfer – what is a good scholar compared to him! College students need to be asked not what department they’re enrolled in, but what sports team – football, basketball, or hockey – they’re playing on. Studying theories is nonsense, if one can’t convert them right away into dollars.

And patriots! They are in ecstasy over themselves, in ecstasy over their country (even if the fathers of half of all Americans were not even born in America)! America is the pinnacle of humankind and of civilization, it’s the crown of creation! And Americans are in no way cosmopolitans. “What the heck is Europe or Asia? Athens, where is that located? . . . in Mexico? Moscow, oh, yes, that, it seems, is in the state of Kentucky, right? Ulysses Voltaire141 – that’s the name of the cooper from over on Second Avenue, isn’t it?” But, in general, this isn’t important: America has not been outdone or surpassed by anybody or anything, anywhere! And it cannot be outdone or surpassed! By the way, if Europeans over there invent anything new, then it’s only for the sake of America! All the rest is nonsense! Our American flag is being displayed – even in cemeteries!

By the way, if you listen to some American citizens, it turns out that everything that has been written above bears no relation to America. Even New York, it turns out, bears no relation to America. One must search for America, it turns out, in the Midwest. It turns out that America – just as was true a hundred years ago, so it is true today – lives in a democracy, in Puritanism,142 in freedom of speech, of conscience, and of religious worship, in fearsome virtue, diligence, and chastity. On holidays, people attend church; moreover, several churches are built in such a universal way, in the name of freedom of worship, that religious subdivisions are installed within them – Lutheran, Catholic, Methodist, Jewish, and so on. On Mondays, it is said, America washes its linen. It lives according to a fearsome sexual morality and protects this morality by means of such laws as, for example, one whereby people who are not related to each other and people who are not husband and wife cannot cross together (in an automobile, a carriage, a boat) from the state of New York into the state of New Jersey: that is, they cannot cross the Hudson River, otherwise they will be arrested for adultery. And a husband and wife have a strict timetable to follow in establishing the status of their conjugal obligations, which must be registered a year in advance. America, they say, is inhabited by democrats, when the worker at a Ford automotive plant can tap Ford on the shoulder and say: “Khellow [Hello], Henry!” (as regards Ford, he is the most inaccessible person in America, living in a fortress and receiving almost no visitors, but once a year, it’s true, he does appear among his workers, when his co-workers must shout out to him: “Khellow, Henry!”). It doesn’t matter, they’ll say, how you earn your money. When people in the evening are sitting on a bench near their home or are at a club or a restaurant – everyone is equal. Everyone greets one another. And out in the country, the wife of the cooper knows what kind of chicken they’re having today for dinner at the home of the sheriff’s wife.

And, truly, I can testify to it, all of this is justified up to the present time, not only for the Midwest, but even for New York. Now here, now there, the past century of American Puritanism suddenly crawls out of the slumber of times, and leads to bewilderment,
because from the automobile of contemporary American velocities you suddenly find yourself immersed in the slowness — forged in iron — of the wagons of the pioneers. This is what confuses a great many people and muddles a great number of the nodes of their brain. This is what lights candles and consigns intellectuals to build cottages in the style of the peasant huts of woodcutters. This is what ships peasant dresses from the cities to the countryside, and not the other way around. This is what brought me into contact with a certain woman in a Bronx park, in the rain . . .

This is what brought me into contact with some of my fellow Russian countrymen, who are now Americans, and with Aimée McPherson in Los Angeles, California.

I had read this song:

Song 91
“The adulteress in Sodom,
She lives in Babylon;
She sits on a throne;
She holds a cup in her hands;
Full of abomination from her lips.
She sits, reproaches, and
Wishes to beat them all unmercifully,
Holy God, our Sacred One,
Take revenge upon her in our presence,
So that our eyes can see
What we were waiting for:
Pour Your cup of anger upon her,
Extirpate her from the face of the earth;
Lead her off to the precipice . . .”

And so on.

“Glory to God and His dominion.
For ever and ever. Amen!”

I read this song in a book titled A Zionist Songbook of the Centennial Period of the Christian Religion of the “Milk-Drinkers” and the Spiritual “Jumpers” in America. First Edition in Los Angeles 1930. This little book was published in a very nice edition bound with a leather cover. In the section titled “From the Publisher,” I learned the following:

“Having embarked upon the first edition of the Zionist Songbook, let us explain. The songs and tunes contained here are divided into the categories of mournful, triumphant, and intermediate. They are to be sung in a way that corresponds to the circumstances of one’s life: in the presence of suffering, of
a sorrowful condition, they should be sung with bended knee, uplifted arms, and tearful lamentation; while in the presence of well-being, of a joyful mood, triumphant songs should be sung with a spiritual dance, put simply, with formless jumping. Such chants provide reinforcement to those who are weeping and consolation to those who are exulting. When the people in a congregation weep, pray, give thanks to their Lord, and praise Him, the chants, with their glorification of the saints, the extreme degree of rapturous exaltation, reaching the point of ecstasy, of self-abandonment, calls forth a spiritual dance.”

I was visiting the home of these fellow Russian countrymen of mine, who are now Americans.

Twilight in subtropical locales changes over to night precipitously. We had to drive through the center of Los Angeles, drive across railroad overpasses, and lose our way on side streets. And – Holy Mother Russia! – beyond the palisades there were white peasant huts of the type constructed in Caucasian and Caucasian-Russian communities. At the crossroad there was a Russian Orthodox – forgive me, Lord! – puddle, as in the Gogol story, but above the puddle there was an American street light. Two women were standing beneath the street light, two very stout women who were wearing white dresses that looked like night shirts and white kerchiefs. We asked them in Russian: “Where is the devotional meeting house?” Both of them answered right away, in an affable manner and in the melodious voices of Russian peasants. They explained where it was located. A high-axle Model-T Ford drew level with us and stopped. A man, with a beard as thick as a forest, dressed in a white Russian shirt, asked: “And who, brothers, might you happen to be?”

We explained, telling him that one of us had just recently arrived from Moscow and wanted to attend the prayer service. The Ford drove off ahead of us and showed us the way there. Riding behind the Ford, I reflected on the fact that we had to come halfway around the world to meet with fellow Russian countrymen and to see firsthand a worship service of the religious sectarians known as the “Jumpers!” But I remembered that in Berlin, at the American consulate, they had suggested to me that I should believe in God. And I wanted to see the “Jumpers” not only because they were Russians, but also because they were – Americans. We drove up to the building, which resembled a village schoolhouse in Russia, climbed up to the terrace, and went inside a large room. There were about a hundred and fifty people inside this room, which was lit up by electric lights. To our left, there was a table standing in the corner, covered with a white tablecloth, on which lay a Bible. Rows of benches, perpendicular to each other, radiated out from that table. On the benches that ran from the table to the far end of the room sat the women; on the benches that ran from the table to the door sat the men. Both the men and the women were dressed in white. The women wore their hair bound with a white kerchief. The men wore very bushy beards. The sight of beards in today’s America is a wondrous and marvelous thing. There were no men nor women there who were younger than thirty-five years of age. The women, without exception, looked as if they had been handpicked for their stoutness. Alexander Brailovsky, who had brought us there, taught us how to bow in greeting them. We
greeted them, and they responded in kind. I was scrutinizing the electricity with the greatest attention: the “Jumpers,” as is well known, satisfy the divine requirements in America, and the American authorities have placed upon the “Jumpers” just one divine condition: not to extinguish the lights during their ecstatic ritual, when they are working themselves up into a religious frenzy. They need to do that with the full electricity on.

Around the table, beyond where the tablecloth ended, sat the elders – thick-set, solidly-built old-timers – and they were carrying on a spiritual conversation, turning to the moderator with questions or for a word from him to add:

“And so, look here, my dear Ivan Karpovich, light of my life, I had a dream today. I am driving along in my car, then I park my car for a short while near my plantation, in compliance with all the rules. And suddenly I see that my Marfa is walking along with a colored man, they are speaking with each other, and the Negro is holding a torch in his hand, and the Negro is looking rigorously at how I have parked my car.”

To translate this sentence into Russian, one needs to make the following corrections: kar [car] means an automobile; parkovat’ia [to park] means to leave one’s car in a designated place, in compliance with the law; plantatsiiia [plantation] means a field; kolernyi [colored] means a Negro; spikaiut [speak] means that they are talking with each other. The old man spoke unctuously, mumbling melodiously.

Ivan Karpovich smoothed out his beard and then uttered with heart-felt pathos:

“Mm, yes, this, of course, is a dream . . . In the Holy Scripture, it is said . . . Mm, yes, the colored man, this, of course, is the devil Beelzebub . . . And the torch in his hand . . . Mm, yes . . .”

One of the old women, who was sitting on the women’s bench, propped her cheek on her hand and, in a grief-stricken voice, inserted her word:

“And the dorch, please notice, is burning with a red flyme, as if it were an oil-petroleum dorch, and what I would like to say, and what I do say is . . . I don’t remember . . .”

Ivan Karpovich uttered with heart-felt pathos:

“You do not remember, sister, what you were talking about? Mm, yes, but I will make it known to you. This Beelzebub, he carried this torch to darken the eyes of spiritual Christians. You need to jump a little, Marfa, as one should jump . . . Mm, yes . . .”

Another old man started up another spiritual conversation:
“And I wanted to have a little chat with you – one of my neighbors borrowed ten dollars from me on credit. I won’t reveal his name in view of the fact that he’s a member of our spiritual brotherhood. He needs to buy some silage. He promised to pay me back at this prayer service, but up to this time he still hasn’t given it back . . . Did he act spiritually or not?”

Ivan Karpovich, again after smoothing out his beard, uttered with heart-felt pathos as before: “Mm, yes, this is, of course . . . in the Holy Scripture it is said . . . Mm, yes . . .”

They chatted spiritually in this manner on five more topics. A crowd of people had formed. Each new arrival greeted the other people with a bow from the waist. When the spiritual topics had run dry and a crowd of people had gathered near the elders, Ivan Karpovich read a page from the Holy Scripture in Old Church Slavonic. This was a page of such utter nonsense, wrenched from out of the Middle Ages and revived in the American contentions that America exists today, just as it did a hundred years ago, as a Puritan country, washing its linen on Mondays, believing in any God one wishes, and dwelling in chastity. It’s still a country where it’s forbidden to drive from the state of New York to the state of New Jersey with a woman who is not one’s wife. Ivan Karpovich was reading the page rhythmically, at times gasping for some reason, at times getting agitated for some reason. And when he had finished reading, I saw that those who had gathered here had already been brought to a state of exaltation. “Let us sing a little, brothers,” Ivan Karpovich shouted out.

The table and the benches were moved aside, the people stood up, and the men and the women, after lining up in two groups that were at right angles to each other, started to sing:

“Peace onto you, brothers and sisters,  
Why have you come here?  
Spirit, spirit, spirit,  
Why have you come here! . . .

Why have you come here?  
You have endured much suffering.  
Spirit, spirit, spirit,  
You have endured much suffering! . . .

You have endured much suffering.  
What troubles have you borne.  
Spirit, spirit, spirit,  
What troubles have you borne! . . .

What troubles have you borne.  
Did you trouble yourself about  
Whether you avow the spirit to our fathers?”
The song was very lengthy. I am omitting three quarters of it here and giving you the ending in abbreviated form to illustrate just how stupid it was:

“We do not know what we should do,
On what ship we should sail,
But we will take a seat on the boat,
Each of us will become a servant to God,
And Our Lord is one,
We will render glory onto Him.
Glory and dominion onto God,
For ever and ever. Amen.”

I have to give them credit: they sang ecstatically, rapturously, fanatically. The “Jumpers” sang a cacophony of completely senseless verbal compositions. They began with slow rhythms and then after that they kept speeding up the rhythms continuously. By the end of the song, it was no longer a song, but a hysterical, hypnotic vicious circle of rhythms and howls. It had reached the point where it was incomprehensible to me how these people had enough breath left inside them to sing these words, words that were closing up, retreating into hysteria and hypnosis, all the while speeding up, all the while growing in ecstasy.

The first person to start jumping was the same one who had been expounding about the ten dollars that had not been given back to him on time by his neighbor. This jumping was simply terrible, and it was falling out of the rhythm, and this . . .

. . . a bearded man who was about fifty years old, a broad-shouldered peasant, with a black beard and dark eyes, wearing hobnailed jackboots, distorted his face to the point of absurdity and suddenly started to jump. He was jumping up very high and, it seemed, was jumping in order to make a hole in the floor, since he was making such a tremendous effort to batter it with his hobnailed jackboots. He was squatting down on his haunches, throwing back his arms, flying up into the air and wildly banging his heels against the floor. He was doing all of this faster and faster. He started jumping while facing one of the elders. He cried out, interweaving his experience of the revelation of the Holy Spirit, which had descended upon him, with the words of the song:

“Spirit, spirit, spirit! . . . and who was it that took those ten dollars? . . . I won’t tell you! I won’t tell you! . . . But we will take a seat on the boat! . . . Spirit, spirit, spirit! . . . I won’t tell you! . . .”

He fell to the floor for a minute, rolled around feebly there, and then lifted himself up, looking pale and not comprehending anything. Then he went back to where he had been standing and continued to sing. By this time, two other men and a woman were jumping. The woman’s kerchief had slipped off her head, her hair had become disheveled, and her white shirt-and-skirt outfit had fluffed up above her knees.
Truly, linen is washed on Mondays! Did I really need to travel halfway around the globe, when I was upside down facing Moscow, in order to witness such delirium, which was blessed by American Puritanism?! To see these jumping people was simply shameful.

The Middle Ages had gone on a rampage, and it was shameful to see it because it was human beings that were jumping, distorting their faces and their bodies. When I was leaving the prayer service, one of the people who had been praying there exited behind me. He asked me in a simple, home-spun way, “Would you happen to be the one from Moscow who wanted to visit our prayer service?” I answered in the affirmative. My interlocutor said:

“I read about you in the newspapers. So how are things back in our homeland? . . . Allow me to invite you to come over to my place after the prayer service to drink some tea. Please don’t refuse. Please tell me about the U.S.S.R. We sent some peasant messengers to Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin in Moscow. We’re planning to return. Only there’s one thing – jumping – that we will refuse to give up.”

I went to this man’s home to drink tea with him. He was a canonic Russian peasant with a canonic kulak lifestyle. The only difference was that along with the cow in the backyard there stood a Ford, instead of a horse, and instead of the Russian nyet [no] he used the English nou [no]. The “Jumpers” came to America about twenty or twenty-five years ago and took up residence in places that were not yet settled. Los Angeles at that time was itself only slightly larger than the village that they – the “Milk-Drinkers” – had lived in. They took up farming. Farming now is on their back burner; their main source of income now comes from dealing in old clothes as ragmen, as well as collecting trash in Los Angeles. This is a business where the “Milk-Drinkers” enjoy a monopoly. The “Milk-Drinkers” now – quite naturally – are Americans, citizens of the country of Puritans.

It was likewise in Los Angeles – the City of Angels – that I first saw Aimée McPherson. I needed to go to the train station to meet Al Lewin, my supervisor. When I arrived at the station, I saw that there was a throng of people, filmmakers, waiting at the fences, there was a lot of commotion, and there were American flags. There were flowers, automobiles, a very well-dressed crowd, and, primarily, young people, people under the age of thirty. Aimée McPherson was arriving.

“Who is this Aimée McPherson?” I asked. “A movie star?”

“No,” they answered angrily. “A saint!”

A California saint was arriving. I ensconced myself with some of the filmmakers on the roof of an automobile so that I could get a good view. The saint had gone on a trip, travelling across Europe. In America, billionaires can order separate railway cars for themselves, and thus on the threshold of just such a railway car there appeared a woman, attired in the most fashionable dress, whose age – due to the presence of so many available colors on hand – it was impossible to determine, either seventeen or thirty-seven, and who
was very beautiful. They started to shower her with flowers. The filmmakers started to work. Out from behind her, and out from behind the flowers, a man thrust himself forward. One could see right away that he was her *souteneur*, and her lover. The woman uttered something, and the crowd repeated her words so that they could be heard from my perch on the roof of the car: “Stay eternally young, my Christians!”

Behind this woman and behind her *souteneur*, suitcases and round bandboxes for hats were coming out of the railway car. The woman and her *souteneur* seated themselves in a Rolls-Royce, where they found peace and quiet. I scrutinized her from close up: she was a beautiful woman, already a bit worn, painted with make-up, like actors in grease paint. The crowd was going wild, everyone was happy, and everyone was glad. The banner is galloping off.

I was trying to make some sense out of all this – what was going on!? – and I couldn’t make any sense out of it. I had gone to a prayer service in honor of the arrival of Aimée McPherson. So let us say that a temple had been constructed in the style of Hellenic temples – Hellenism of the kind that accords with American ideas of it! Everything was covered with flowers. I don’t know how best to express this: was it an altar or a stage? Onto the stage stepped this selfsame Aimée McPherson, smartly attired in a new outfit, and she enjoined her audience, first of all, to kiss one another. After that, she sang a little. After that, Aimée began to talk to them about her trip to Europe, about God, about Parisian fashions, and about the divine – à la Ritz – mores and manners there. So let us say that the temple was packed with people aged twenty-five to thirty-five years old: clerks, store salesmen and saleswomen, domestic servants. What’s this!? Igor Severianin in a skirt, I suppose!? This woman, who had once hidden herself away at her lover’s home and then later announced to the world that she had been kidnapped – she said that she spent three days in the desert, as it was reported in the newspapers – and that she managed to escape and save herself only by the will of Christ. This woman argues that the most important moral good in life consists in beauty, which Jesus Christ categorically demanded of people. Therefore, men should comb their hair in the right way, wear the most fashionable suits and ties, while women cannot in any way lag behind in fashions and without fail – for the sake of Christ – must wear make-up, powder themselves, and shorten or lengthen the hems on their skirts to the extent that fashion and their strength allow. This woman argues that – in the name of Christ – everyone ought to hug and kiss one another as often as possible, inasmuch as this is beautiful. Does this woman have a legalized lover, in imitation of Christ, or something? And everyone ought to do this! Above the temple, an American flag is flying!

I have spoken about Miss McPherson in addition to the “Milk-Drinkers,” the spiritual “Jumpers.”

During the same time period, I was walking once along the embankment at Santa Monica beneath the palm trees. “Boris Andreyevich!” I look all around: it’s Peretz Hirshbein.

I first met this wonderful man, a Jewish writer, in Japan. I once wrote a story about him that is called “Deer City Nara.” When I first met him, what astounded me most about
this man was the fact that he was traveling all the time. He had traveled around the globe, going to Africa, Australia, Asia, America. Just before I met him in Japan, he had been traveling for an entire year already, and we agreed that we would meet again in Moscow in two years. He was supposed to go from Japan to China, to India, to Palestine, and then on to Moscow. I asked him at that time why he traveled so much, why he had such a burning desire to see things? He answered that he travels not because he wants to see things, but because he does not want to see what he has already seen. We greeted each other and then we went over to the place where I was staying. We both were surprised at the extraordinary serendipity of our encounters. That evening we went to visit some of the young members of the new American generation of spiritual “Jumpers.”

And this was a truly excellent spectacle, because I got to see how the people were jumping. This was not taking place in a devotional meeting house but in a school. Young lads and young ladies were sitting on benches, dressed and coiffed like Americans. They were mainly speaking English. Their bearded fathers, sitting on the rear benches, were peeking out with looks on their faces that indicated incomprehension. A young man in gym gear gave a talk in English, occasionally inserting citations from Slavonic-Evangelical texts into it. An elder delivered some homilies of the kind that we have already spoken about – the spiritual conversations among the old men at the meeting house. So his speech to the young people prompted some giggles and snickering from the audience, especially in those places in the speech that were particularly stupid. A girl spoke, again in English, reading from a sheet of paper and getting terribly nervous. It was a classroom composition about the God of the “Jumpers.” There was no mention of any dance. So this was the kind of public debate they could have in college when the parents are in attendance. Thus we sat for an hour and a half, and then the kids streamed out of the classroom in droves, ready for some relaxation. The second generation of “Jumpers” – they are already Americans who speak Russian poorly, they are athletes, and they are young people who attend high school and college.

What is being written down here destroys my contention that in America there are no Americans. It turns out that there are indeed Americans: they are those young people who were gathered together beneath American flags. I took what I had seen among those young “Jumpers” as evidence of this – Joe rejoiced at this discovery of mine – and suddenly Joe and I saw that Peretz Hirshbein was very saddened by what we had observed, saddened to a greater extent than were the “Jumper” elders.

We had a conversation on the drive home and once we arrived back at the hotel, where we arrived after midnight. Our conversation was about the following. Joe was claiming that the second generation of Jews in America are no longer Jews, but Americans, that Jewish newspapers are dying with every passing day, and that Jewish writers in America – in this, the wealthiest of countries – are compelled to publish their works in Poland. Joe and Peretz are writers, both of them Jews. Joe considers it right and proper that he write in English. Joe contends that the Jewish question only exists in those places where the persecution of Jews exists. Where this persecution doesn’t exist, Jews cease to be Jews, becoming Americans instead. And this is no accident. Therefore, Jewish publishing houses that publish the works of Jewish writers, and of Peretz in particular, are located in
Poland, one of the most backward countries in the West. Joe considers the assimilation of the Jews to be not only a natural development, but also a positive one, and he maintains that it’s not important to him whether a person is a Hellene or a Hebrew: what is important is that this person is a laborer. Joe also maintains that the Jewish question is a remnant of the Middle Ages that should disappear in the future, and that there is nothing terrible about that. Look, he says, here is Pilnyak: he’s a person of German descent who is a Russian writer, he belongs to that group. And it’s a very good thing that the children of spiritual “Jumpers” don’t jump and that they feel themselves to be Americans, that they’re interested in the Komsomol. Peretz could not deny these facts. Peretz became very nervous. He spoke about the glorious history of the Jewish people and could not fathom why one should preserve the history of the English or the Russian people. He also could not fathom why one should preserve the history of the English or the Russian language, and he claimed that the Jewish language should be destroyed. Both Joe and Peretz looked through the fates of the Jewish colonies in the world. Suddenly Peretz’s image lit up in front of me, the image of this tragic person and writer. I recalled my conversation with him in Kyoto, when he told me that he travels around the world not in order to see things, but in order not to see what has already been seen. This man, who has placed an American passport in his pocket, travels the world to find a Jewish ghetto – a Jewry – that is passing away, to preserve his reader and his people, who are leaving him. The Jewish ghetto – Jewry – in America is dying with this second generation, just as the religious practices of the spiritual “Jumpers” are dying with their second generation.

I am wrong, of course: capitalist America gives precedence to throwing off those medieval hoops of nationality and social class that restrict people (I will have more to say in this regard later, when I speak about Indians and Negroes). America befogs and masks the recasting of people into social classes, when there are no Hellenes and no Hebrews and no Russian “Jumpers,” but there are laborers and there are those lazy do-nothings who lounge about at the expense of those who do the toiling. This is at the threshold. But meanwhile we have the American flag instead of the American nation, and the banner, the shtandart (or standard), is galloping off! . . .

Aimée McPherson, it turns out, is a Baptist.

And, thus, the American flag!

In New York City, on the corner of Second Avenue and Tenth Street, there is an Anglican church, where once a week, following the priest’s sermon, half-naked women perform various spiritual dances. This is done in God’s name, as the local clergyman who thought up these dances assured us. Others believe that these dances were produced in order to increase attendance at this temple of God, since church attendance on this earth is generally falling off. In any event, the police did not protest at all against these instances of nude dancing, since God requires them. The only ones who were outraged were the clergymen at the neighboring churches. The dance temple attracted no fewer visitors than did any burlesque show, the public disrobing of women in America that also goes by the name of “revue” or “follies.”
I have recounted how religious faith is permitted. And I have recounted how dual citizenship is disappearing: first of all, in nations where people were oppressed in their semi-medieval homelands. The people in these nations were gathered up under the American flag, under the jubilation of American democracy, under the dollar.

By the way, if you listen to some Americans, even New York, along with its dance temples, has nothing to do with America, neither do “Jumpers” and Aimée McPherson. They will tell you that America, the U.S.A., is a puritanical, orthodox, law-abiding country, where laws come first. To confirm this truth, I can recount for you, as an example, an episode that took place in Detroit. The American city of Detroit is separated from the Canadian city of Windsor by a bridge. The automobile I was riding in crossed the bridge from Canada into the U.S.A. and drove farther, abiding by all the American traffic regulations. A policeman suspected that our driver was a butleger [bootlegger], a dealer in contraband alcohol.167 The policeman on his motorcycle followed us behind our vehicle. Our automobile was traveling in compliance with all the traffic rules. The policeman finally lost his patience and stopped our car; he conducted a search of the vehicle and found several cases of whiskey inside it. And – in keeping with the court’s verdict – the alcohol was returned to the driver. The righteous American judge ruled that since the automobile was being driven in compliance with all the traffic rules, the policeman, consequently, had no right to arrest the driver. And since the policeman had no right to arrest the driver, then the court would not know anything at all about the whiskey. And the court ruled especially that everything that had been found inside the automobile should be put back into the automobile. It goes without saying that the law prevailed. As was already mentioned above, when a couple is crossing the Hudson River from the state of New Jersey in a vehicle, it’s required that a non-husband and a non-wife be arrested. This law exists, just like in the state of Utah there exists a law about polygamy. But Americans go to the state of Nevada – to the city of Reno – to get divorced. Divorce is not allowed at all in the state of South Carolina, not for any reason. In the state of New York, one must provide bedroom evidence of adultery on the part of a spouse for a divorce to be granted. And in the state of Nevada, nothing has to be provided for a divorce to be granted, aside from the desire to be divorced and proof of citizenship. New Yorkers and people from other states travel to Reno, the capital of the state of Nevada, to get divorced. Formerly, one had to live there for three months and one day in order for that to happen. But now, on the strength of the rapid pace of life, only three weeks and one day are required. Those people who live in the state for three continuous weeks, without leaving, automatically become citizens of the state. On the day after they acquire the rights of citizenship, they can be granted a divorce. The period of residency has been reduced to three weeks due to the competition they face from another divorce-granting state, I forget what the name of that state is, where the innkeepers campaigned for and secured liberal divorce laws. What casinos and hotels they have in Reno! Members of the bourgeoisie, while waiting for a divorce, get to rest and relax on a vacation! The law, as you see, is in force and is to be obeyed.168

All the time that I was in America, I would keep dreaming the same dream: all the time, I wanted – with my imagination and my knowledge – to stop those ships that were carrying
the pioneers to America, to stop a sailing vessel with people on board like those who had grown beards and were sitting at table in saloons in the light of smoky oil lamps. For they were coming to America with one single desire – to live well, to live well in every way possible, each according to his own understanding of what that entailed – and they were coming to America from all corners of the globe, fleeing from the oppression of the European authorities of that time, fleeing from hunger and the lack of civil rights. These people were sectarians, brigands, adventurers, dreamers. One can gauge the negative aspects of European history by the waves of immigrants entering into the American population. Time has incarnated the good life in dollars.

Ah, oh, ooh, eh, America!

We must return to New York to put things in their right place. Just now I used the interjections “ah, oh, ooh” – just as I had in my first few letters home from America. And just as I had in the first few pages I wrote of this novel to convey how America has gone crazy.

In one of my novels, I once had an image that I filled with my new sense impressions in New York. These sense impressions that I have of New York are indispensable for me in describing all of America, all of the U.S.A.

In that novel, I wrote:

“. . . at the burial mounds in our country, they sometimes dig up the stone images of old women – for an archeologist, this old woman is a thing of magnificent beauty. But for a very tiny insect that crawls across the cheek of this beauty, the only things it will see are clods of dirt, stone, and dust. One needs to stand to the full height of that beauty in order to see her.”

Indeed, we admire some beautiful lady, we see how everything about her is beautiful, how everything is in its right place. But the infusorium that at this very moment is crawling across the cheek of this lady – from her mouth to her eye – this infusorium fell into the crater of her nostril, dangled above the red sands of the Arizona desert, which is called the cheek, and saw the palmaceous plantings of the eyelashes. The emotional line of these stone images of the old woman and of the beautiful, cosmetically painted lady do not coincide with the emotional line of my sense impressions of New York. Nevertheless . . .

From the sixtieth floor, the hundredth floor of New York, we see an astonishing, indescribable, unusual, sinister, ominously beautiful city, a city that signifies the triumph of industry, the amplitude of human ability. Neither Tatlin alone, nor a single European urbanist poet, ever dreamed of something so extraordinary, so majestic, so grandiose; they never dreamed of such constructions, such lines; they never dreamed of something so inimitable, so singular in the entire world. For a European, New York, seen from the height of its skyscrapers, is more like a dream than a reality. And it’s a dream that cannot
be compared with anything else. After all, from childhood there remains the memory of a fantasy, the Biblical recollection of the city of Babylon, which none of us has ever seen. And it is precisely this feature of never having been seen that makes New York resemble Babylon. New York is a grandiose city that lacks humanity: it is an inhuman, sinister, astonishing construction. From the top of the Empire State Building (or from the gargoyles of the Chrysler Building), one can see the ocean, the Hudson River, the mountains of New Jersey – they are your brothers. New York from the tenth to the sixteenth story (and, on average, it is a ten-story city, having a wide array of three-story districts) – this New York lies at your feet, in the smoke, the fog, and the hum of the streets below; it lies far beneath you. And standing next to you in the clouds – and sometimes above the clouds – are your skyscraper-brothers, who are equal to you in rights. In the distance, the skyscrapers celebrate the majesty of Wall Street, an inhuman beauty, as an equal brother and a lord.

A person standing on the roof of the Empire State Building, a person buttressed by the Empire State Building, is a person standing at the level of the – inhuman! – beauty and singularity of New York.

But if a person is walking along the streets of New York (walking or riding in an auto, along the second [elevated] level of streets, or in the subways), New York is a horrible city, the most horrible city in the world, it doesn’t matter whether you’re going down Park Avenue or through the Bowery. This city is deafened by an awful din. This city breathes not air, but gas. This city has been deceived by the seductive, prostitute-like beauty of electric advertisements. The streets of this city, which are without a single leaf, are flooded with trash. This city has been transformed into some kind of enormous kerosene stove of soot and suffocation. This city has been driven mad as it climbed ever higher, piling iron, concrete, stone, and steel upon itself, crushing itself. This is a city in which it’s impossible for a person to live, just as it’s impossible in this city for a person to ride in an automobile, since automobiles are forced to drive not along the streets, but on top of one another, despite the fact that in this city the largest number of automobiles and the widest assortment of makes and models of automobiles in the world have been collected together.

Individualism! People walking and riding along the streets of New York, people enjoying themselves by listening to the radio, going to movies, burlesque shows, Coney Island. These people are the tiny creatures that crawl across the magnificent beauty of the stone statue of an old woman, dug up out of an excavation of very, very ancient and very primitive burial mounds!

To this city belongs the disgrace of the Bowery, the only street in the world filled with members of the *lumpenproletariat* with *tremps* [tramps] who have come tumbling down with the collapse of the dollar (and there are more of these *lumpens* – the type portrayed so memorably in Gorky’s works – in America, of course, than in China). In shops on the Bowery, they sell the shoes that have been removed from the corpses of homeless derelicts in the morgues. On the Bowery, there are flophouses, but people there sleep out on the asphalt sidewalks, placing trash under themselves – newspapers that they have picked up off these selfsame asphalt sidewalks – because these flophouses work in four shifts. Every
six hours, a flophouse empties itself out of people in order to allow in a new batch of people — namely, those who had been waiting in line out on the asphalt sidewalks. If in America there is not an eight-hour workday, then for the people from the Bowery there is a roof over their head at the flophouse for only six hours each day. The people on this street, the entire population of people who are wearing shoes removed from the feet of dead people and who are suffering under the collapse of the dollar, go at night to the corner of Broadway and 42nd Street, they go to the most central location of theatres and of the insane billboards advertising luxury items. They go there to stand in lines so that they can get a cup of bouillon and a sandwich from the Salvation Army at one place and to get a nickel, five cents, as a reward for listening to the divine delirium of the Salvation Army, at another place. They also go there to see how waves of people, reinvigorated by visiting Coney Island, enter into and exit out of movie houses, experiencing American joy! The scene on the Bowery is repeated on Mott Street, where homeless people sleep in an “all-night church” to the accompaniment of the howling of religious clergymen. This city, like all of America, bears the shame of the Negro question, which has come to rest upon Harlem. This city suffers persistent, unremitting poverty and persistent, unremitting congestion, as well as a persistent, unremitting will not to starve to death and to live in a human way. This city wages a filthy – even though it is attired in a white collar – as well as a most incommodious and a most desperate battle for survival on the East Side. Individualism! No sort of bustling farmer’s market, like Odessa’s famous Privoz Market in olden times, can compare with the vendor’s stalls and hawker’s stands one finds on the side streets of the East Side, where to the thundering sounds of the city are added the cries of young kids, who have been growing up on the concrete of the streets near the wheels of automobiles, and the bawling of small-scale peddlers, who shout out their wares in all the different languages of the world:

“Milk!”
“Bananas!”
“Fish!”
“Oranges!”
“Electric irons!”

Once I was standing with a certain poor millionaire on the roof of a semi-skyscraper that belonged to this poor millionaire. This took place on the thirtieth floor. The city was laid out below us. We were sitting on settee swings beneath umbrellas. Palm trees were planted on the roof, making it look like a garden. Above the roof streamed an American flag. In America, people who are only millionaires, but not billionaires, like some swine kings, steel kings, or intestines kings there, are called “poor” millionaires. The poor millionaire I was with was pointing at the skyscrapers that surrounded his semi-skyscraper in the dark blue of the sky and explaining that this skyscraper over here, he said, belongs to billionaire so-and-so, while that skyscraper over there belongs to billionaire so-and-so, and a third one over there belongs to . . . he could have counted up to about fifty skyscrapers in this way.

I walked over to the parapet at the edge of the roof and started looking down below. Alongside the semi-skyscraper of my poor millionaire, one could see the roofs of some
neighboring seven-story to ten-story buildings down below. Their roofs were turning black from the soot. On the clotheslines strung across the roofs hung the poverty of laundered bed sheets, shirts, and so forth. Beneath the clotheslines hung with linen, children were running and playing. On one of the roofs, a pair of lovebirds, lying on a mattress, were kissing each other. On another roof, several workers had spread out some newspapers and were sleeping on them. On the cement of roofs, just like on the asphalt of streets, the garbage from orange peels was scattered about.

Interrupting the poor millionaire’s story about the buildings belonging to billionaires, I asked him: to whom did the building standing next to his semi-skyscraper belong?

My poor millionaire answered that he didn’t know.

The sunset was very beautiful.

Everything became clear to me.

In New York, there are forty to fifty people who are buttressed by the skyscrapers that have led to the rise of New York. For these people, New York is beautiful. These people are called billionaires, that is to say, capitalists. They possess visible and invisible offices on Wall Street.

The sunset was beautiful. On the roof of the neighboring building, orange peels were strewn about, thrown there, one would think, from the roof of the semi-skyscraper owned by my poor millionaire, for the legend about manna from heaven, just like the legend about heavenly oranges, cannot be explained by the laws of physics. Oh, how sinister and inhuman New York appears when seen from the top of its skyscrapers! Oh, America! Ah, the America of American flags, which are waving even in cemeteries!

The poor millionaire’s mustache, which was trimmed in the same style that Friedrich Nietzsche and James Ramsay MacDonald trimmed theirs, was turning gray. The lilac-colored suit and the red low-cut shoes he was wearing made him look chipper. His shirt, necktie, the handkerchief in his jacket pocket, and his stockings were made in one and the same design, pattern, and color. The poor millionaire’s eyes and his movements were lyrical and softened. Ah, American-Nietzschean individualism!

I recounted above about publisiti [publicity]. On October 11, 1931, a notice appeared in the New York Times that Harry Reichenbach, a certain well-known American publicity man, had died. He died and left behind his memoirs, in which he maintained that there were no more than about fifty people – and he was one of them – who possessed, managed, and determined the taste of the entire American population of a hundred and ten million white-skinned people. These fifty men were the ones who put clothes and shoes on Americans, dressing and undressing them. They were the ones who shortened and lengthened women’s skirts, who selected the Indian colors for men’s suits, who seated people in various makes and models of automobiles, who gave them Coca-Cola to drink,
who deafened them with radios, who shaved them with Gillette razor blades, and so on, and so on, and so forth.

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By the way, all of these noble-minded acts of generosity are for the benefit of those who chase after the dollar. New York, with all of the “Ahs!” and “Ohs!” it prompts, consists in national banners and standards.\textsuperscript{184} It exists for those who have a check book in their pocket. And the more dollars they write their checks out for, the more “Ahs!” they prompt. While those who collapsed while trying to climb over the fences of the dollar . . .

This is precisely American-Nietzschean\textsuperscript{185} individualism, this is what it actually turns out to be. It’s the almighty dollar that is the main American follower of Nietzsche. And it’s precisely this American Nietzschean who talks about individualism and who lives according to such legends as the one about Abraham Lincoln, the president whose face is stamped on one-dollar bills, that his existence began in the small log cabin of a wood-cutter,\textsuperscript{186} and the ones about Herbert Hoover, that he was a farmer’s son.\textsuperscript{187} namely, the legend that every American can – that every American is given the opportunity to – break away from the crowd and escape into an expansive individualism of wide-open vistas. An American can do this in the same way that skyscrapers have broken through the clouds (and when an American has reached that point, he can then send for his favorite barber to come to London from New York to shave him, in view of the fact that native Londoners give such a poor shave!). Historical monographs are written about the skyscraperesque life stories of Lincoln and \textit{Empaier} [Empire]-Hoover, about things and people, about how young bois’y [boys] up and went one day and suddenly, quick as a whistle, skyrocketed up to the hundredth floor!\textsuperscript{188} But life stories about those who collapse and fall down beneath the dollar are seldom ever written, yet they are a product of this self-same American “individualism.” These scrap heaps and rubbish dumps are more natural than skyscrapers, and there are a million more of them than there are of Lincoln’s log cabin.

The law of American – “free!” and “individualistic!” – labor relations states that if today, at twelve fifteen, a boss were to say to a worker (or a worker were to say to his boss, for, in accordance with the law, it makes no difference who says it to whom, although workers seldom invoke this “right” of theirs): “You can go to hell!,”\textsuperscript{189} then, starting at twelve fifteen, there would have been no relations existing between the factory and this worker. On Saturday, this worker would have received an envelope with a paycheck inside; this is how the office settles matters with this worker, paying him off for today’s hours worked, up until twelve fifteen.

A buddy of mine, worker X, a Russian by birth, told me about his work at a factory. He came on board at the workplace, where they gave him a \textit{dzhab} [job]. He worked on an assembly line. Only two of my buddy’s muscles were used in his assembly line work along a conveyor belt, only two muscles. All the rest of the organism of this healthy person was inactive. These two muscles turned blue from being overworked. My buddy showed his boss the two overworked muscles that had turned blue and asked whether he could be assigned to a different work bench so that his other muscles could turn blue, while these two got some rest. His boss (he was an overseer) said, “O’kei,” tomorrow he would be transferred to a new machine. My buddy arrived at work the next day. His boss gave him a note to hand over to a different boss.
boss pointed to some doors, and told him that some people would be waiting for him there. My buddy went through these doors and wound up outside the factory gates. In the office, they had calculated what they owed him for that workday when he had shown the boss his muscles that had turned blue. They had held on to him until the end of the workday so that they wouldn’t have to disrupt the conveyor belt. They had sent him to the second boss so that there wouldn’t be any extraneous noise on the assembly line that might affect production. The boss was right: the “reason” for the two muscles turning blue lay in the muscles themselves and, therefore, the initiative lay with my buddy, therefore: free, individual relations! And this is even more so when there are currently millions of people out of work in the U.S.A. And, in general, the older the worker, the more he is worn out, the greater his chances of collapsing and falling down beneath the gates of the factory and of the dollar.

In the U.S.A., there’s a freedom-of-the-individual law: it states that if you bought on credit some item that costs, let’s say, a dollar, and you paid ninety-nine cents, but you didn’t pay the final one cent on time, then that item is taken away from you. But the ninety-nine cents remain to the advantage of the party that was wronged by the failure to receive payment for that one cent.

Neither of the Misters Ford, neither Henry nor Edsel, have anything to do with this law. They are Puritans. They don’t even smoke; they only invent and improve things. Henry Ford, as we know, doesn’t even trade or sell. He can’t even know about my second buddy, worker Y, a Ukrainian by birth. I and this buddy of mine – we were in the habit of sitting together in the open air in Detroit, at his apartment, having a smoke. And this buddy of mine would shake his head perplexedly, in the spirit of complacency, placidity, and mildness of temper that is a national trait of Ukrainians. All Ford employees had to own Ford automobiles. Henry Ford argued in favor of this policy, reasoning that his employees live comfortably and they should know the car that they’re working to produce. When my buddy went to work for Ford, he owned a Chevrolet. His boss told Y that he must sell the Chevrolet and buy a Ford. Henry Ford doesn’t trade or sell. My buddy’s boss directed him to a dealer he knew, a car salesman, who let my buddy purchase a Ford on an installment plan, taking his Chevrolet as a down payment. A second boss told my buddy that it’s preferable to have a Ford worker live in certain districts of town and in certain homes that have been built especially for Ford employees. Henry Ford has nothing to do with this; it’s not his fault. My buddy, who has a wife and two kids, got himself a three-room apartment on the grounds of the Ford auto plant. He took the apartment on an installment plan, of course, with the understanding that when he pays off the entire amount of the debt, he will become the owner. All of this took place at the end of 1929. In January 1931, Ford released a new model. In January 1931, my buddy’s first boss said that he had heard that my buddy was designated for a layoff (a financial crisis! a financial crisis!), but that he could stay on at the auto plant, they would petition on his behalf, if he were to get himself a new 1931 Ford. After scratching his head in the manner of a Ukrainian, my buddy took the new model, giving the car dealer his 1929 Ford as a down payment. I was in Detroit at the end of June. It was at the end of May that my buddy had been laid off.

In the middle of June, they took his 1931 Ford away from him (he couldn’t sell the automobile because it wasn’t completely paid off). They took it away from him for failing to make his next monthly loan payment. And at the end of June, I helped my buddy drag his household goods out of his cottage, for they had evicted him, again for failing to make his next monthly rent payment.
Shaking his head in the manner of a Ukrainian, sitting outside, under a small bush, in the quarters provided by our Lord God, my buddy was perplexed. He used to have three automobiles at his disposal, and now he didn’t have even a single one; he used to have an apartment, and now he had only the blue sky above. And why weren’t they taking away the radio, located near the bush, which had likewise been bought on an installment plan!? All that was left to him was his wife and their two young kids! . . .

My dear American individualists! On the Bowery, people walk around in shoes that have been taken off the feet of dead people! My dear American liberty! Is there really no possibility of building not only an emotional, but also a logical bridge between the empyreal-tonsorial “liberty” of skyscrapers that soar up beyond the clouds and the subterranean-tranquil work of hogs trained in betrayal in Chicago?!

My dear Nietzschean-dollar! What difference is there, in the grand scheme of things, between the millions of dollars that belong to the Chicago chairman of gangster trusts, the king of gangsters, Al Capone, and the skyscraperisms of the Empair [Empire]?! After all, isn’t Al . . . o’kei!?

When they discovered oil in California, the following episode occurred. Once upon a time there lived an Indian family. People came from beyond the mountains and offered to buy their desert lands from them. The father of this Indian family refused to leave the lands of his forefathers. Several days later, the family members were found with their throats slit. Only one girl remained alive. A month later, a cowboy appeared on the horizon. He rode up on his horse. He was a Spaniard, a handsome man. He asked for a drink of water, and then he rode off beyond the horizon. Three days later, he returned and again he asked for a drink of water, and again he rode off beyond the horizon. A month later, the Indian girl fell in love with the Spaniard, and the Spaniard fell in love with the Indian girl. They set off for town, in the direction of the sea, so that they could be married. They arrived at a certain office. The girl was illiterate. They told her to place Xs right here and right there, and then they signed the document for her. And at that moment, after all the Xs had been placed, they kicked the girl out of this certain office, using the gesture characteristic of an American sportsman – a boot to her back. What the girl had signed was not a marriage contract, but a deed of purchase for the sale of the oil-bearing lands. Who was it that slit the throats of the members of the Indian family? And who was it that kicked the girl in the back with the toecap of his boot as a sign of his love and affection for her? It wasn’t petroleum, by any chance now, was it . . . Oil?!

Above the desert lands of this Indian girl there now waves – an American flag!

It is entirely natural in all countries that people occasionally lose their minds, particularly in America. Russians who suffer from the malady of delusions of grandeur [mania-grandiosa] begin to introduce themselves as Peter the Great or Budenny, Frenchmen as Pope Pius or Napoleon, Germans as Beethoven, and Englishmen as Shakespeare, about whom no one knows anything. Americans who lose their mind introduce themselves as billionaires, as Rockefellers as moneybags.
In Europe, and in our country, the U.S.S.R., the concerts of all sorts of famous baritones, tenors, narrators, violinists, and pianists are always overcrowded. These concerts are broadcast over the radio; people fall in love with the performers: every music lover has his own favorites. In Europe, they write about these performers in the newspapers: how is their health doing? what work are they preparing to perform anew? Well, then, in America, one must assign mathematicians, physicists, designers, and engineers to this category of people. Their lectures are received as if they were concerts. They are beloved the way that tenors are beloved. Their speeches and formulae are broadcast over the radio. Every day on the schedule of radio broadcasts there is a program on mathematics. Mathematical formulae provide the material for sensational newspaper scoops. People draw the portraits of European mathematicians who are celebrities, just as we draw the portrait of Egon Petri. Einstein came to America as if he were a famous singer. He came here not as if he was simply travelling to a certain country. For he had truly flung his name to the masses in this way, when it became known that Einstein prefers sandals over firm shoes.

No matter how long the logical bridge is from mathematical concerts to the hunger of the unemployed, it is my mathematical cognition that led me to an awareness of so-called “technological” unemployment. Despite the prosperity (financial flourishing, the opposite of a financial crisis), there were from three to three and a half million unemployed workers in America during the very best years of the most recent period of prosperity. And this percentage grew with each successive year. These jobless workers were not jobless as a result of the financial crisis; they were instead jobless in a “technological” sense!

According to statistical calculations, during the very best years in America, for every twelve workers who were working, a thirteenth worker was not. And he was not working not because Americans are afraid of the number thirteen, no, not at all. Americans surprised the whole world by translating even mathematics and mechanics into a plan for emotional, aesthetic enjoyments. Americans have perfected the machines that replace people, that organize labor, and that reduce the number of jobs. Let us use some of our Soviet examples: Syas’, the paper giant, is constructed according to American principles – it produces veritable mountains of paper, but only a hundred people – people of the semi-engineering type – work there. At the Dnieper Dam project, by the time it will have been completed, about a hundred and twenty people will be working there, no more than that. They will be keeping watch over the correct operation of the machinery and performance of the water. Americans invent things. They have invented the mechanical milking of cows. How many human hands have been cast aside and now have to find work elsewhere? They have invented, truly invented, the “brain of a business man.” This is a little machine that works absolutely unerringly right after an accountant, the girls who do the calculations, and a cashier have all done their work. How many hundreds of thousands of people have been cast aside and now have to find work elsewhere!?? They have invented the teletypewriter (it’s a typewriter that sits on a table; on one side, there is a dial, like what they have at a pay telephone; a person spins the dial, dialing the number he needs and, after that, he writes that number down on his own typewriter; that same number will be printed as well on the other typewriter, which is standing behind the number that he has dialed; the teletypewriter is already replacing the telephone and the telegraph, but it does not crackle the way a telephone does, and it does not disturb the conversations). They have invented the same kind of giant
paper and pulp mill like the Syas’ mill that we have in the Soviet Union. On the threshold of the twentieth century, ninety-five percent of American machines ran on steam and by hand, and only five percent were run by electric motors. In 1919, electricity ran fifty-five percent of machines. In 1917, seventy-eight percent. In 1931, we must assume that an entire hundred percent of machines are now being run by electricity (although out of this hundred percent, many of them keep silent, for in 1931 factories and plants in America have stopped operating due to the financial crisis, but we will not talk about that right now). How many stokers and coal-heavers have had to search for new professions? How many people have been cast aside? Ask every tenth American worker, and he will tell you about the dozen professions he has tried: he was planning to begin his career in New York as a dress cutter, but he wound up working as a cab driver; he traded goods in a junk shop; he worked as a collier and a train conductor; he trafficked in contraband. Currently, he’s an elevator operator. He has been everything, but the main thing that he has done is search for work, in the certainty that tomorrow he will again be jobless.

The unemployment that has arisen on account of the improvement of machines and the invention of new machines, the invention of new techniques in the mass production of objects (using a die tool, for example, in lieu of a forge), the organization of labor anew, and the reduction of the manufacturing cost – at the expense of turning business enterprises into trusts – this kind of unemployment is called “technological.”

From the beginning of the century until 1925, the output from one worker in the automobile industry rose by one thousand two hundred and seventy percent. Americans were choked with automobiles.

The percent of “technological” unemployment currently depends upon the slightly more than ten million jobless workers who are considered unemployed not because of “technology,” but because of the financial crisis. In my opinion, whether a worker is unemployed due to technology or to the financial crisis, he equally wants something to eat; and, generally speaking, the invention of the term “technological unemployment” is an instance of phrase-mongering. Under a socialist system of government, there cannot be any unemployment. Under a capitalist system of government, even “technological” unemployment (what a term they have come up with!) drives people to the Bowery and dresses them in boots ripped off the feet of dead people.

Among the American commandments (on a par with the one that holds that every person can rise up, just like Abraham Lincoln did, from the modest hut of a wood-cutter to become a Rockefeller or a president), there is a commandment that says: “... the person who really wants to find work for himself will find it in America.”

Well, but what about “technological” unemployment? Is this, as well, an instance of American individualism? Is this not the same kind of reasoning that built a bridge, one that is much more grandiose than the Brooklyn Bridge, a bridge that crosses into American gangsterism on a supra-American scale?! After all, every American meets up every day with some gangsters he knows and he interacts with them. When the question of gangsterism is posed in this way, then it’s the reader – and not just me – who is invited to decide, whether it’s the White House or gangsters who are governing America?!
An understanding of the concerts of “technological” unemployment has let me know where the
growth of technology is heading. Currently, there are six times as many millionaires in America
as there were in 1914; in the course of two years – from 1927 to 1929 (before the crisis) – they
nearly doubled. The population of America stands at a hundred and twenty million people.
Income tax in America is collected from married people when they earn more than two and a
half thousand dollars a year, and from single people when they earn more than one thousand five
hundred dollars a year. So that out of a population of one hundred and twenty million people, in
1927, the very best year of all-American prosperity, income tax was paid by only
two and a half million people in all. About ninety-five percent of these people earned up to ten
thousand dollars a year, and only two hundred eighty-three people earned more than a million.
In 1929, the final year of prosperity for American capitalists (this year, moreover, became the
year of the financial crisis), five hundred and eleven people were “earning” more than a million
dollars a year; New York accounted for two hundred and eighty-one of these new millionaires;
eleven of them were “earning” more than five million dollars. This was in 1929, a year of
economic prosperity and of the financial crisis: five hundred and eleven of these millionaires
accounted for ten million jobless workers. As we know, in the capitalist mode of life, it’s
ownership of private property, not labor, that serves as the sources of well-being, considered in
terms of dollars. Thus, in this prosperity-filled year, a fraction of the property owners,
stockholders, and bond holders accounted for a fourth of America’s national revenue – eighteen
and a half billion dollars.

It turns out that the “technology” of hunger, which is being called “technological”
unemployment, has its opposite end in the pockets of millionaires – what a remarkable concert!
Stuart Chase,211 an American economist, who by our standards would be considered a Cadet,212
writes in a poetic way:

“Above all else, the owners have entrenched themselves as the dictators of
American life and habit. They have ousted the philosopher, teacher, statesman,
editor and preacher, as the spiritual leaders of the mass of men. They dominate
government, press, university, church, the arts. They sit secure on the apex of a
pecuniary economy. To them men’s eyes turn as once they turned to high altars, the
man on horseback, and the porticoes of the Academy. The gods have taken up their
quarters in the market place, an abode magnificent in gilt and marble, but hitherto
untried . . .”213

The shtandart – and the standart – they are galloping away!214

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Dear reader, when you come to New York, your friend will tell you that he has “constructed” a
party for you.215 You are a Soviet citizen, so you prepare yourself for listening to what other
people will say and you prepare some things to say yourself, diligently thinking up how best to
observe courtesy and how to include in your remarks two things that cannot be placed side by
side – your homeland and America, for you, as a Soviet citizen, are thinking, of course, about
socialism, but you must remember about “religious belief” in God, as the American consul in
Berlin had prescribed. So there is no use trying to prepare the remarks you will make. When
they “construct” a party for you, this means that guests will arrive at nine thirty, and that you will be invited to come by at six. Depending on your host’s income, you and he will have something to drink, and the two of you will decide which restaurant you’ll be going to for dinner – to a Mexican one or a Japanese one. Your friend will pay for your meal. You will return to your friend’s home after dinner. The remaining guests will begin to arrive. Several of them will greet you by shaking your hand. If the event is taking place during the summer, the men, after saying, Khello! (Hello), will remove their jackets and immediately get down to the more pressing business at hand – dancing the foxtrot until three o’clock in the morning to the accompaniment of the music playing on a gramophone or over the radio. No conversations of any kind will be expected. Depending on your friend’s income, people will be drinking alcohol. If there is no alcohol, then one doesn’t throw a party. By about three thirty in the morning, people will begin kicking up a storm as they head home to their respective homes and their respective eternities. If your friend’s home is a little more affluent, then the cocktailling and the foxtrotting will take place not under electric lighting but under the light of stearin candles of various colors and sizes. It’s only natural that the Soviet citizen either doesn’t dance the foxtrot at all or, if he does dance it, then what you wind up getting is not a fokstrot [foxtrot] – a lupine step – but a bertrot [beartrot] – an ursine step. Assiduously prepared speeches come apart at the seams and turn into a jumble as a result of the assiduousness of the merry floor-polishers who were invited to this party in honor of a Soviet citizen.

I attended few parties where there were speeches, but there were some nonetheless. Ray Long arranged a dinner in my honor at the Metropolitan Club. While I was browsing through the guest list, I noticed that after the name of each person there was a biography and a list of multi-volume collections of their works. These were the names of the leading American writers, names that were famous not only in America, but throughout the world. Women are not admitted into the Metropolitan Club. We arrived wearing tuxedoes. The walls and portières of the Metropolitan Club muffled the noise of the city. Candles were burning inside the Metropolitan Club, where an ambiance of peace and quiet moldered in the leather armchairs covered by pigskin. There were about forty of us in attendance at the dinner: the most famous American writers and those friends of mine who had accompanied me there. The guests gathered together over cocktails. The guests then were seated for the sacred rite of this dinner, a solemn ceremony complete with butlers stationed behind the backs of the chairs. The candles were honoring the majesty of this occasion. Ray Long delivered a speech, one that was solemn, like the Metropolitan Club itself. I spoke next. I had spent three days preparing my speech, with the same care and diligence that are applied when lancing a gum boil inside your mouth. I spoke about the fences that enclose national cultures, about the U.S.S.R., about the globe, about how the great honor that was being bestowed upon me by this dinner is not a distinction for me personally, but for that magnificent literature, magnificent and youthful, that the dawning of socialism and the thunderstorms of revolution have created. I spoke with particular enjoyment about youthfulness, for, in actuality, Louis Fischer, Joe and I were the only ones at this dinner who could be considered young, although only relatively speaking, of course. The remaining guests were in their fifties and sixties or older. Following me, it was Sinclair Lewis’s turn to speak. Lewis, the Nobel Prize laureate, is a tall, narrow-shouldered, grey-eyed, and ruddy-complexioned man. He looked around the room and found me with his gaze. Staring at me, he said: “I am not going to speak about the Soviet Union and about Pilnyak.” Then he fell silent.
The pause was majestic, just like the Metropolitan Club itself. Searching with his eyes, Sinclair Lewis found Theodore Dreiser.\textsuperscript{225}

“I am not able to say anything about the Soviet Union and about Pilnyak,” Lewis’s eyes, which were fastened upon Dreiser, became frightful, “because one of the guests who are present here this evening stole three thousand words from my wife,” said Lewis, and then he fell silent again.\textsuperscript{226}

This pause did not resemble the Metropolitan Club. Lewis’s eyes wandered down along the table. “Because a second person said that the Nobel Prize should have been given not to me, but instead to Dreiser, and this statement was printed in the newspapers,” Lewis said, and then he fell silent again.

Lewis’s eyes wandered toward a third person. The Metropolitan Club in no way resembled this pause. “Because a third person printed in a newspaper that I am simply a fool.”\textsuperscript{227}

Sinclair Lewis solemnly sat back down at his place at the table. The pause following his speech was much lengthier than the pauses during his conveying of information. That evening, after the dinner was over, in a private tête-à-tête, Dreiser gave Lewis a slap (or two) in the face. The slap in the face must have made a loud sound, because they wrote about it the next day in all the newspapers, they telegraphed about it to Europe and Japan, they reported it over the radio, and they provided commentary upon it at lectures. I was not present during the delivery of the slap, having left the club before this incident took place. The next day, I had to hide from reporters, consciously distancing myself from the publisiti surrounding the slap. But the benefit I derived from this slap was not negligible: in the states of Texas and Arizona, where, of course, no one knew anything not only about my writings, but even about the U.S.S.R., I explained about myself that I was the one at the dinner whom . . . and everyone understood everything sympathetically.

The day before I left for California, fate brought me into contact with the billionaire Mister Z.\textsuperscript{228}

I am consciously hiding his surname because it is as familiar as the names of Rockefeller\textsuperscript{229} or Morgan\textsuperscript{230} This man, his family, and his banks belong to the top ten names of American billionaires. If we take into consideration the fact that America now commands the capitalist world (and this is, in reality, the case), and that the dollar is in command in America, exulting with its national shtandart [banner], then this unnamed man is one of the top ten leaders in America, wealthier and more powerful than the King of England or the President of France. This man is old, dry, and feeble. I started talking with him about how I was leaving for California the next day and how on the way there I would be stopping off for a day in Chicago. Right away the mention of Chicago, as was always the case, launched a conversation about Al Capone, the Chicago king of gangsters. Being a bit mischievous, I said: “I would love to meet Capone.” And Mister Z, a man who was more powerful than the King of England, uttered obligingly, “I’ll arrange for you to meet him.”
Mister Z buzzed his secretary. In walked an incorporeal secretary, who understood Mister Z astrally, without any words being spoken. A half hour later, the secretary reported that he had telephoned to Chicago and Mister Capone will be busy on Monday (that was the day when I was going to be in Chicago). He will be busy with the election for the mayor of the city and, as a result, unfortunately, he cannot receive Mister Pilnyak on that day. If Mister Pilnyak could stay in Chicago for a day longer, however, Mister Capone would be at his disposal.

I didn’t get to see Capone, but this conversation about him is much more meaningful than any meeting with him would have been: the gangster wasn’t able to receive me because he was busy with the election, and the man who wanted me to meet him was – a legitimate billionaire!

Some Americans will tell you that everything I’ve written above doesn’t bear any relation to America. You need to search for America, they say, neither here nor there. So now, together with the reader, I intend to embark upon a search for America – onto untraveled expanses, onto obscure roads – in order to find America at last. I signed a contract with Hollywood, with M.G.M. So Joe and I set out for those untraveled expanses, leaving New York on the “Twentieth Century.” In this sense, the “Twentieth Century” serves as an introduction to Hollywood, an introduction that has been given to us by Hollywood.

The “Twentieth Century” is what they call the train we took, the same kind of conveyor belt as the highways filled with automobiles. Only the train is much dustier, since it has only two stops between the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean: one in Chicago, the other in Santa Fe. From New York to Chicago, the train runs on rails supported by four track beds. The train is fast-moving to the point of tiresomeness, tossing off a hundred and twenty kilometers an hour. The train runs through the dust and smoke caused by trains traveling in the opposite direction and by trains traveling in the same direction that overtake ours. The train takes on water while it is moving: at designated spots along the route, a trough has been built between the rails. It is half a kilometer in length and filled with water. The locomotive dips a metal bucket into the water, and the water by its own pressure flows into filter reservoirs. Passengers are paid a dollar for every minute that this train runs late. Each passenger in my railway car was given a separate compartment, equipped with a small sofa, an arm chair, a desk, a double-berth bed for sleeping at night, a closet, and a sink. In the train there were three railway cars that provide passengers with services: a vagon-observeishen [observation car] (made entirely of glass with a small terrace, where it was impossible to sit because of the dust), a restaurant car, and a parlor car. This last car was equipped with a knitting room for old women to knit jumpers, a smoking room, a telegraph-radio office, from which one can communicate with the outside world and to which telegrams arrive from the outside world, and a steam bath, where one can wash up and get one’s face shaved, one’s hair styled, and one’s shoes shined. This train was intended for high-caliber people. I was riding on this train at Hollywood’s expense. There are all the usual sounds in this train, except those of human speech: the Negroes who serve as attendants speak in whispers. The train is half empty. When traveling through cities, the train is roasting as it moves slowly along the streets. In the U.S.S.R., no matter where you are, when you are looking up at the sky, even in a blizzard, you can always see the Polar Star. But here, beyond
the windows of the train, even in a blizzard, advertisements with images of various girls and young people stare you in the face from all sides. These advertisements have been lined up above the sleeping berths, like the clowns on the roofs of our provincial fairs, with their Punch-and-Judy shows. I felt like changing my shirt collar every three hours, and rinsing the dust and ash from my mouth every minute.

We traveled in this manner from one ocean to the other, preserving the traditions and the ash of New York. We left New York for a snowstorm and the mountains of Pennsylvania. The snowstorm was like the kind we have back home in our country. The mountains in Pennsylvania—the Allegheny Mountains—are like our Valdai Hills. By the time one’s eye had dug its way through all the advertisements, terrain that resembles the land around Tver had started to settle comfortably beyond the cross ties. Besides advertisements and Tver-like terrain, our route from New York to Chicago was filled with massive heaps of factory housing, with the towers of coal mines, the charred ruins of buildings, and the undersized tiny houses inside the palisades surrounding them, tiny houses with pointed tile roofs. Chicago confirmed for me that Chicago and New York are one and the same thing, that they share the beautiful details of the same face: New York is the capitalist-financial center of the country, while Chicago is its capitalist-financial-industrial center. Chicago is likewise broken into two halves: into poverty—which is much greater than the poverty of the Bowery, with rags soiled in the dung of human waste products and with the unsanitary conditions of lice on the streets, roads, and canals, and in the naked mud of half-naked people, as in Shanghai,—and into luxury—the luxury of the embankments of Lake Michigan, which resembles a sea, clogged with yachts and hydroplanes, the luxury of the squares of universities and museums, of colossal places that are just as astonishing in their luxury as the other half is in its poverty. The non-mechanized aspect of the Chicago slaughterhouses—the hogs trained in betrayal—serves to trigger ruminations about capitalist culture, about plague broths. In the series of American bankruptcies and bank collapses that occurred in 1931, Chicago did not relinquish its decisive role: the municipality of Chicago declared bankruptcy. Word of this will be given to Al Capone, the Chicago gangster.

After Chicago, the train set off for the prairies, which had stuck fast in my memory from works of juvenile fiction and geographies. In terms of landscapes in the U.S.S.R., the prairies are Ukraine. We traveled across Missouri. We went by way of the state of Kansas. During the day, we had to remove our jackets and unbutton our vests American-style from the suffocating heat. About fifty years ago, Indians were still living in the state of Kansas, and a national war was being waged against them. Americans call it a war, but it should be called the extermination of the Indians. During the intervening fifty years, much water has flowed under the bridge. In February 1931, about five hundred farmers, both White men and Negroes together, armed with rifles, came to the state capital and demanded that they be given food, because they were starving. What makes this still more remarkable is the fact that this state is the country’s breadbasket for wheat. Even this year some farmers in this state have been heating their homes with wheat.

Beyond the prairies arose the Far West (the Wild West), the states of New Mexico and Arizona. The prairies, with their wind-powered water pump-houses and their towers of silage storage situated near tiny white houses, were tossed back, discarded by the one-hundred-and-
twenty-kilometers-per-hour swiftness of the “Twentieth Century” train. The train scaled the
mountains that are called either the Rocky Mountains or the Sierra Nevada Mountains. In any
case, the train traversed both the one and the other. And the landscape visible outside the
window became exactly the same as that in Central Asia, especially in the desert of the state of
Arizona: sand, lichens, sweltering heat, the absence of people. Occasionally, there are oases.
And near the oases, there are tiny houses made of clay, with flat roofs and windows inside the
yard. What is this? Turkey? Central Asia?! These tiny houses are houses of Mexican
architecture. It’s no accident that in the morning of that same day we were in the state of New
Mexico. Mexicans – Spaniards – Moors – Arabs – Turks – Central Asia. It all makes sense
now! Or, perhaps, there are Indians, too? After all, in Siberia they have found a tribe that, in
anthropological terms, resembles exactly the American Indians. Moreover, the roots of the
language of this Siberian tribe turned out to be the roots of the languages of several Indian
tribes. In any event, for an entire day we raced past Asiatic landscapes. Just before evening,
there arose on the horizon at that point in time a steep mountain pass in the snow. The train
quieted down and started to groan. Outside the windows, poles near the tracks measured the
height of the snow. It turned cold. The area all around us was overgrown with pine trees and
fir trees, which in the U.S.S.R. are called American pines and American firs. In places, it
looked primeval. Even on the roadway that ran alongside the railway bed, the automobile
conveyor belt was interrupted. Automobiles for a while crawled along in single file. Two
times or more, we saw some Indians; they live – they still live – in these states. Toward
evening, it turned very cold on the mountain pass and you could feel a ringing in your ears.
And on the mountain pass we saw some cowboys. It turns out that this is very prosaic: a kov-
boi – a “cow boy” (korovii mal’chik) – is a boy who works as a cowherd. In olden times, a
cowherd, who watches over and protects cows while riding on horseback, used to catch cattle
that were running wild and, with the help of a lasso and by shooting at his Indian neighbors, he
would get the feral cattle away from wild mustangs. But now all that he has left from the past
are his very broad trousers, his umbrella-shaped hat, and his double-barreled shotgun for
killing rabbits. I saw beneath one of the mountain crags in the forest of firs a wooden home: it
was exactly like the ones we have in the Archangelsk area. At night, we were freezing.

But in the morning, by dawn, we had descended from the mountains and were headed toward
the ocean in California. We were traveling past orange groves and avenues lined with palm
trees, lilac pepper trees, cactuses, and eucalyptus trees. The cactuses – which grow to the
height of three men – are unpleasant, they look like crocodiles. The bark of the eucalyptus
trees peels off, so that they look pathetic, evoking pity, like camels do. Beneath the palm trees
are located immaculately white, tiny houses – and tiny automobiles that have spent the night
parked opposite the entrances to these houses. Everything was in blossom. By the way, they
say that everything here blossoms all year round, the plants as well as the trees, both the ones
that I am familiar with and the ones that I had never seen before. This does not resemble New
York at all. One had to conclude that things had turned out well for the local population, the
sons of bitches. They had found all the good places and then taken them away for themselves:
first, the Spaniards stole them from the Indians, then the Americans stole them from the
Mexicans. We arrived in Los Angeles – in Archangelsk, if we were to translate the name of
this city into Russian. There were many Mexicans among the crowd of people on the streets.
People dressed in white and wearing sombreros were walking about. Outdoors, it smelled of
flowers, of the ocean, and of the indolence of southern lounging around. Except for the several
skyscrapers around the Biltmore Hotel, this is a large village that lies beneath palm and eucalyptus trees. A little later, I learned that Los Angeles is not a city, but actually twenty cities. From Los Angeles to Pasadena – where Upton Sinclair lives – is forty kilometers. To Hollywood, it is thirty kilometers. To where the “Jumpers” live, it is twenty. To Long Beach (the Coney Island of Los Angeles), it is forty-five. To Santa Monica, it is fifty.

I took up residence in Santa Monica. Outside the window of my room at the Miramar Hotel, there were, consequently, palm trees, a bluff, and the ocean. The palm trees were traced against the blue of the ocean. The birds in the garden were singing in such a way that I could anticipate the same suffering that Joe had experienced in connection with the rooster, the monsieur of the poultry ladies. At the ocean, near the wharfs, some of my namesakes – pelicans – were swimming around. They were three times the size of geese, with suitcases for food beneath their beaks. I call them my namesakes because once in Berlin, when I was in a dither at a bookstore and asked: “Where can I get a book by Pilnyak?” the saleswoman asked me to repeat my question: “A book by whom? By Pelikan?” It smelled of eucalyptus and roses in my hotel room.

Protected from the north by mountains, the cities of California were arranged to the right and to the left of me, lengthwise along the ocean. California – this is the land of oil, fruit orchards, the philistine, and Hollywood. The chasing-after-the-dollar philistine came here from the four corners of America. He built himself a cottage and a garage beneath the palms, and then embellished his abode with monuments in the form of an orange, in the form of a teapot, in the form of the bare feet of a movie star. And he lives beneath eternal sunshine, digesting food and visiting various divine prayer services, such as those of the “Jumpers,” of the Methodists, and of Aimée McPherson. The sun shines here three hundred and sixty days a year, and one can swim in the sea year round. The orange groves smell of oranges. The eucalyptus groves smell of eucalyptus oil. Besides the monument to the orange and the teapot, there is a monument on which was depicted a cow being milked. Oil – it was living on in those American traditions that were recounted in the story of the cowboy who kicked an Indian girl in the back with the toecap of his boot as a sign of his love and affection for her. Upton Sinclair recounts very many similar stories of this kind. California – the Wild West – got started, as we know, thanks to gold.

Hollywood – it differs completely from all the rest of California – is a two-storied town, just the same as Pasadena and Santa Monica are. But the architecture there is the kind that only Hollywood could think up. It is one continuous American flag!

Once in New York, in a park in the Bronx, during a torrential rain storm, yet nonetheless with smoke and soot in the air, we encountered a woman. I was driving with the journalist P, who speaks Russian. We were driving in a car. Near a bus stop, a woman, who seemed to be indifferent to the world around her, was standing in the rain without an umbrella. Her face was soaking wet. We invited the woman to get into our car, so that she could get some shelter from the rain. She got in. At that point, we saw that this woman’s face was wet not only because the rain had soaked her. The woman was crying. It was evident that her tears were of long
standing. This woman had forgotten about the tears. This woman, a purebred Yankee, was no more than about thirty years old. We started to talk openly and intimately, the way people talk who are meeting each other for the first and last time in their life. She started to talk hysterically. She told us all that she could tell. Her husband, a purebred Puritan just like her, had left her. They ran their own business. They weren’t very rich, but, thank God, they always had enough money to put a chicken on the table for dinner. And the makes and models of their automobiles never dropped lower than those of a Buick. They owned their own home. Her parents had given them money for the business in the form of a dowry. The husband was an honest man – he left her without taking a single cent of their money and without taking a single household item from their home. They had lived together splendidly for eight years. He would come home at five o’clock. At seven, they would eat dinner. In the evening, they would go to the movies. On Sundays, they would rest and relax. On Sundays, they would go to church. On Sundays, during the hour between breakfast and tea, they would go to bed together, sometimes once, sometimes twice, so this woman told us. For eight years, the days of their lives were happy, as if they were one person. And all of their days were identical, just like all of their Sundays. They did not miss a single talked-about motion picture. Neither the husband nor the wife ever once fell ill. She provided the family comfort by tending to their hearth and home. She knitted cardigan sweaters for her husband.

“And he left me. He left me, rejecting everything that we had together. He left me for another woman, one who smokes tobacco and drinks wine. Why did he leave me? Why did he leave me! He left me a week ago, and since that time my life has stopped. I can’t drive a car, because tears fill my eyes and obscure my vision. This entire week, I haven’t been to the movies a single time. I don’t drink or smoke, of course, for I’m a true Christian. I was an absolutely faithful wife to my husband. Why did he leave me?”

This woman then showed us the place where we should drop her off. It still had not stopped raining yet. The woman set off in the opposite direction from the one that she had indicated to us. And that was it. And there was nothing more. Kingman, Boston – the American traditions of Puritanism. My grandmother, who lived on the left bank of the Volga River!

As I said earlier, I had received a telegram: “Work in Hollywood at the M.G.M. studio.” Stop. “Contract for ten weeks.” Stop. “So-many dollars a week” . . .

A buddy of mine explained it to me: “And what if suddenly you were to write something for Fox or Paramount?! It’s better for them to pay you even in the event that you don’t write anything for them, than to have you write something for Fox.”

And so I came to Hollywood.

With very few exceptions, there are only two categories of people who live in Hollywood: either they are famous beauties, both male and female, or they are freaks of all kinds and types. They are either future, present-day, or past actors. I witnessed all this.
Hollywood is like gold mines. I also witnessed instances of this. For example, a film director was traveling by train from New York to Los Angeles, thinking about a new motion picture. The train was going past a small way station. A girl carrying a shopping bag from a store crossed the tracks. The film director got off the train at the next station and returned to that small way station. The film director didn’t know the name of the girl; he didn’t know where she lived. But a movie mogul is a movie mogul. He roused everyone at the small way station, creating quite a commotion. He found the girl: she was working as the maid for a lawyer. The movie mogul offered the girl an acting role in one of his pictures; he would pay her a thousand dollars a week on a ten-week contract. The girl acted in the picture; they handled publicity for her; the girl was happy. But there were no more pictures that would have fit her type and be right for her. So she never acted in another motion picture again. A second example – out of hundreds of them. A girl, after watching her fill of motion pictures, ran away from home to go to Hollywood and become an actress there. She ran away from the most depressing philistinism, prosaicness, and regularity to go find happiness.

Once, at the film studio where I was working, I watched a director carefully, following his actions closely. He was sitting in his office, smoking a cigar and intently examining a pile of photo albums, stacked up from the floor to the ceiling. These albums were filled with photographs of so-called ekstra [extras], that is, actors they had in stock, actors who were registered in Hollywood, but who weren’t working on a full-time basis. These were the same actors whose happiness had come and gone swiftly after acting in just one motion picture or else had just arrived in Hollywood in search of happiness. The film director was examining these photographs, which were marked with numbers, and he was writing down the numbers so that tomorrow the office could call these numbers for an audition and a final screening for the motion picture that the film director needed to finish casting. Then the office would hire the actors for a week, perhaps two. These numbers would be earning five dollars a day. I witnessed all of this.

I witnessed Hollywood celebrities, movie stars, who were earning five thousand dollars a week.

I did not witness the following, which is being shown in one of the theaters in New York, in a play dealing with Hollywood. One scene shows very dissolute, very intoxicated people at a public dance that appears informal and homey. Written above the stage is the inscription: “Hollywood, as it is presented to Americans.” The curtain comes down. The inscription above the stage changes; it now reads: “Hollywood, as it is in reality.” The curtain is raised and the scene on the stage is the same as it was in the first picture, only now in much larger dimensions. This I did not witness personally.

A certain American screen personality in Hollywood sent a letter to the editors of Moscow News. She wrote that there is a crisis in the American film industry, that she is sympathetic to the idea of a Five-Year Plan, and that she would like to go work in the U.S.S.R. And, therefore, she reports that her height is such-and-such, her weight is such-and-such, the color of her eyes and hair is such-and-such, her chest size is such-and-such, her hip size is such-and-such. And so on about her measurements. And nothing more than that. These facts about the color of an actor’s hair and eyes as well as their physical measurements were always written
down next to the photographs that were in the albums stacked up from the floor to the ceiling. The numbers written down on these photographs were arranged according to certain rubrics: brown-haired actors, blondes, brunettes; giants, midgets, freaks (by nationality types); acrobats, cowboys, chimney sweeps; those who are blind, those who are ill with lupus, those who are tattooed; specialists in football; specialists in Jewish, Catholic, Quaker, Methodist, or Orthodox liturgy; specialists in the naval affairs of England, the U.S.S.R., or Japan; understudies who resemble famous artists and great people; understudies for the Russian Tsar Nicholas II or the English King George. There were several actors who could double for this last pair.

In the contracts that actors sign with Hollywood film studios, facts about their measurements and the color of their hair are written down, and if any actress or actor gains a quarter of a kilogram of weight, this quarter of a kilogram increase provides grounds for termination of the contract. As a result, film celebrities, it would seem, have to live a life of fasting and prayer. That’s the way it is! . . . I knew an actress, a movie star, who constantly had a doctor by her side, who ate according to a strict schedule, who was bathed, massaged, and towed off according to a set routine. She was the mistress of a billionaire.

Hollywood people begin to be people when they earn five hundred dollars or more a week.

Up to a dozen of the largest American film factories – the major studio [studios], as they call them there – are concentrated together in Hollywood. The largest studios are M.G.M. (Metro-Goldwin-Mayer), Fox, and Paramount. And behind the fences of these studios, beneath a subtropical sky, one can walk past winters in Canadian and arctic villages, past French, English, German and even Russian villages, past oceans and ships, past fresh snowstorms in winter and past sandstorms in the desert, past enormous film sets, complete with scenery and props, where they are filming the epochs of the Crusades and the covenants of Christ, Chicago gangsters, the World War, automobile races, Mexican idylls, American Puritanism – everything that you wish. Past these places walk medieval knights, Chicago gangsters, American Puritans, Roman Catholic popes, pirates, Indians, Frenchmen, American pioneers, Laplanders – anyone you’d like.

Historical epochs, climatic and geographical particularities – all of this is gathered together behind the fences of the cinematic miracles and in the open air. And all of this streams out past the fences, making Hollywood a fantastic place, for an artistic anarchism provides an opportunity for the famous and glorious to drive around in their Rolls-Royces, dressed in their bathing suits, while an extra is wearing out the costumes used in motion pictures set in the Middle Ages.

They say that Paris has passed on to Hollywood its primacy and superiority in legislating fashions. This is hardly the case. In any event, the one who legislates fashions in Hollywood, the tailor for all the film companies, is the artistic-tailoring firm of Burns. This Burns experienced a fate that is truly Hollywoodian. In 1905, at the World’s Fair in St. Louis, he, Burns, exhibited ten Indians in outfits that he himself had designed, but that did not match closely those outfits that Indians were actually wearing in America. But his own outfits seemed to Burns to be the most Indian-looking, even more so than the actual ones. Burns took these ten savage, “most Indian-looking” outfits with him to Hollywood so that they could
be rented out, the same way that actors in Hollywood are rented out. From these ten Indian outfits began the millions of dollars that Burns would earn as a costume designer. If Burns, even to this day, sticks to these “most Indian-looking” principles, that only shows that he is a Hollywoodian and a full-blooded American. But they say that he can now get for you the overcoat of Wilhelm II, not merely an exact replica, but the real one taken directly off Wilhelm’s shoulders. If that is indeed the case, then he is both a Parisian and a supra-American.

I used to go visit these miracles behind the studio fences. In some studio facilities and storehouses, things would suddenly change their proportions. Toy ships and toy trains would be lying on shelves. On tables there would be tubs with oceans and mountain ridges in primeval forests, glaciers, and snow-covered peaks. On other tables there would be Verdun, and cannons with smoke would be peeking out from trenches. Standing on the floor in the corner would be the Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris, right next to Westminster Abbey. Hanging by wires from the ceiling would be squadrons of airplanes. These were all sets and scenery, behind which live actors were filmed, using the laws of perspective and confounding the viewer with them. The mountain ridges will confound the viewer with its snowy peaks and the vast expanses of its precipices. Storms will take place inside tubs of water, and dreadnoughts to the trepidation of the trembling viewer, will sink and perish.

During the summer of 1930, I saw in the Pamir Mountains how a certain Russian movie actress was being filmed in the role of a Tadzhik Komsomol member. She had to learn how to ride a horse Tadzhik-style, using a Tadzhik saddle. She trained for three weeks, injuring both of her legs as a result of being knocked off the horse. According to the script, she was supposed to gallop between mountain crags and above precipices with a child in her arms. She learned how to do it. She had fallen off the horse several times. At rodeo races in America, I saw how cowgirls galloped. And I also saw how a certain famous female movie star galloped behind a studio fence. Her horse was not a horse, but an electric toy the size of a horse. The horse did not move from the spot. The actress brandished her whip and rushed forward with her entire body while staying in place. It turns out that shooting the scene this way is much simpler than having a Russian movie actress galloping across the Pamir Mountains. The lens is open, let us assume, for only one fifth of the sequence that films the actress galloping in place. The next time, on the sequence that filmed the actress galloping in place, this one fifth part will be closed for the lens. So the lens for the remaining four fifths of the film will record only those terrifying mountains and precipices that are standing on the shelves and tables of the aforementioned studio facilities. A cinematographic instrument is standing there: a meter in front of it stands the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris and a meter behind it a pair of actors are kissing and caressing each other. What you will wind up getting on film are these two eccentrics kissing and caressing each other, but they are not a meter behind the cardboard version of the Notre Dame Cathedral. Instead they are inside one of the cathedral’s porticos, behind terrifying chimeras and beneath a clear sky of diaphanous clouds – one need not go to Paris, nor to the Pamir. And the Russian movie actress in the Pamir Mountains, in all likelihood, lost some weight. They probably would have fired her in Hollywood for losing both weight and width.
In other studio facilities behind the fences, an icy silence thrives, for they are shooting sound films there, at which time the sound of the ticking of a pocket watch is being recorded. The chemical laboratories behind the fences and the edits of montage sequences are truly alchemical.

They took me on a tour of these places and acquainted me with all sorts of famous film personalities. Meeting them rendered my companions sweet and affectionate. I watched these scenes like the ram at the slaughterhouse looks at new gates. They acquainted me with a dozen movie stars. One of them, a terribly famous actress, told me that I was the first person who, while I was being introduced to her, did not pay her the compliments that she is supposed to be given.

By the way, all these things behind the fences are shrouded in frightful mystery – the mysteries of competition and patent secrets. And one should not confuse the police, who are guarding the fences, with actors, who are dressed up in costumes of all epochs and ethnographies: in America, a person and an enterprise can hire for themselves their own private police force so that it can guard their fences. In the studio offices, when typists need to rewrite a script, each separate page of the script is given to one of the individual typists so that the typists will not know the contents of the entire script and will not be able to give away any secrets. During shooting, for these same reasons, the actors likewise do not know the contents of the entire script. The actors find out about their roles together with other viewers. For these same reasons, when an actor does not know his role and the director plays it for him, very little is required of the actor: he need merely shed quarter pounds of his weight. When M.G.M. was drawing up a contract with me, there was a point inserted into it whereby I was obligated to keep my work for them in the strictest secrecy, until such time as the film studio will find it necessary to reveal this secret for publisiti purposes.

The output of the American film industry is well known. Approximately fifty percent of its films are devoted to gangsters and cowboys. The rest are devoted to all the remaining sources of well-being and prosperity in America and in the world, where the triumph of virtue is obligatory, expressing itself preferably in a lawful marriage, where the ending should be soothing and moral, where the hero without fail should be no more than twenty-five years old, where the heroine should be no more than eighteen years old, where a nefarious villain and a noble criminal, preferably played by a comic actor, is an absolute must. Vices in American film are named categorically, with the Puritan standard taken as the measure for assessing vices. But the social perspectives are surely borrowed from Lydia Charskaya. Motion pictures are splendidly filmed, mounted, and edited. Cinematographic technique is at a very high level. Indians! Cowboys! Hollywood is located right in the Wild West, and Hollywood does not forget its forefathers, who determined its fate, beginning with the very first farmer in California, Johann Augustus Sutter. And, therefore, they produce up to two hundred films per year that are devoted to life in the Wild West and to the life of cowboys. These films are all the same. A noble cowboy loves the daughter of similarly noble cowboy, now an old man. But there is a villain, sometimes too, is a cowboy, some times he is an industrialist, some times he is a local merchant, who either intimidates the old man or endears himself to him with fraudulent acts of kindness. The story always ends with the kidnapping of the girl and with desperate chases on galloping horses, during which the young and noble cowboy outstrips
everyone else, by virtue of which he marries the girl, after having unraveled the villainy of his rival and having outrun all their horses.

America is the country with the largest number of universities. One does not need to ask students at these universities what department they are studying in, but rather what athletic team they are playing on. And films about students are as conventional as films about cowboys. A student falls in love with a flighty girl, she scorns him, he suffers. A sporting event takes place: he wins the contest, although no one expected this. The girl’s hand is in his hand, everything is o'kei! Vladimir Ivanovich Nemirovich-Danchenko has been in Hollywood, just like Eisenstein and me. He proposed making a movie about the Pugachev rebellion: a motion picture from the history of the insurrection of Volga Russians against the empire, a revolt headed by Emelyan Pugachev. Vladimir Ivanovich submitted a screenplay for approval, a sinopsis as they say there. The sinopsis was approved by the board of directors and just one modification was suggested. The board of directors found Pugachev’s death to be too gruesome an ending, so they insisted that Pugachev, instead of being sent to the executioner’s block, should meet with Catherine the Great. They would fall in love with each other and – o'kei! – get married. I don’t know whether this account of the episode corresponds with the truth; they told me this story in Hollywood. But this episode characterizes Hollywood’s traditions perfectly. I was witness to that.

It was a very good thing that I was in Hollywood, and not because this provides remarkable material about millions of dollars and poverty, about incredible careers and incredible falls from grace, about the dollar and passions. This is material that you cannot contrive. For only Hollywood has concocted such a social combination of pyrotechnics and art. And not because this city is more feverish than Monte Carlo in Monaco. Hollywood is a city of bigger – and no less mad – money than Monaco, a city of the passions of vanity, passions that are no less cruel than the passion of miserliness. After all, the bare foot of that same Hollywood movie star, whom I did not take pains to pay a compliment to, is sealed in memory for the ages in the cement sidewalk of one of the entrances to movie theaters in Los Angeles!

I am a writer, and my concerns are writerly ones.

The film industry – all of these wonders involving gangsters and Emelyan Pugachev’s wedding take place behind the fences, where the tropics and the arctic, the eros of ancient times and the Puritanism of contemporary times, are situated right next to each other, where hundreds of lions walk together with Russian White Guard generals – all of this in American parlance is called succinctly: muvi [“the movies”].

As we know, Hollywood – muvi – is the third leading industry in the United States. The subject matter of this industry, it goes without saying, is art. Art is created by the brain. The brain is the subject matter of industry. Art is created by talented people. The brain of talented people is the subject matter of industry. American industry advances by means of standards and norms, otherwise it cannot compete. The textile industry produces meters of cotton chintz. Ford hurls forth batches of cars from a conveyor system. The film industry is America’s third leading industry.
Writers exist, in part, to create stories. When I arrived in Hollywood, I was asked whether I needed an office. I didn’t quite understand what this was all about, and so I declined the offer. In my contract, it stated that my suggestions would come into effect once my supervisor, the assistant director, gives the “o’kei.” I echoed “o’kei” in reply, but all the same I became interested in the question: what exactly are writers’ offices?

Behind the fences of “the movies,” I had seen certain long, one-story buildings that looked like sheds, which were connected inside by long corridors, to the right and left of which ran tiny little rooms that resemble horse stalls: a chair, a table, another chair, and nothing else, besides a telephone. These enclosures are called offices. People – people who prefer to do nothing else but prop their feet up on desks, on window sills, on the backs of another chair – sit inside these enclosures from nine o’clock in the morning to five o’clock in the afternoon. Sometimes several of them will gather together and chat. Sometimes they will drink whiskey. These people with their feet lifted up in boredom and melancholy are writers. Writers who earn up to two hundred and fifty dollars a week are required to sit in these offices all the time. Writers who earn up to a thousand dollars a week only have to be here occasionally. Writers who earn more than a thousand dollars a week do not even have to come to Hollywood at all. In fact, it’s even better for the studios if they don’t come. There are one hundred and fifty writers working in each of these barracks-looking buildings. Each of the leading film studios has its own writers’ barracks of this sort.

Writers are agglomerated here not only from all across America but also from every corner of the world. Somewhere, in some small town, a writer has written a book, and this book has drawn attention to itself. And so the writer receives a brief telegram from Hollywood: “Work, live in Hollywood.” Stop. “So-many dollars a week.” Stop. “Give away rights to everything written for production in a movie to such-and-such film studio for five years.”

And that is all.

The Lord works in mysterious ways, the film studio reasons. A talented person will perhaps write something of the sort that, to our chagrin, will be exceptionally good. It would be better for us to buy him up now rather than to have to pay him three times as much afterwards. And it would be better if he were working with us rather than with our good neighbor, a competitor like Fox or Paramount or M.G.M. Yes, and, moreover, if he were working with us, he would receive a salary, so the curve of his talent would not bother us. Otherwise, there are some writers of the kind who will turn in something that is so anti-gangster that it makes you sick, but the audience is happy with it. Talents and names are measured by dollars. And it’s precisely because of this that it’s better not to be a high-priced writer in Hollywood. Take, for example, Theodore Dreiser. He was bought just like all the others. In the summer of 1931, a studio produced a film version of one of his stories under his name after making several alterations, changes similar in nature to the kind made to the ending of Nemirovich-Danchenko’s Pugachev Revolt. As far as the studio was concerned, the film version was made as well as it possibly could have been made. But Dreiser began legal proceedings against the studio. He demanded that, if the picture were not destroyed or if alterations were not made, his name be removed from it. Of course, it would have been better if Dreiser had not been in Hollywood and if he had not dropped in to take a look during the filming, the more so on
account of one bit of trouble in general, namely, the fact that Dreiser had lost his case in court. Because, after all, can one actually begin legal proceedings in court against the third largest industry in America?

Writers, it turns out, are invited to Hollywood not only to write and to think up stories. They are free to decide whether they wish to write or not to write. If they do wind up writing something, such-and-such a film studio will be adapting it for the screen at the discretion of, and in accord with the tastes of, the studio, as was the case with Dreiser. Writers who earn less than two hundred and fifty dollars a week will sometimes write things for a special extra charge and without their signature.

Special readers – who have not already been separated into horse stalls but have been gathered together in halls behind rows of tables – are split up into groups according to different national cultures: Anglo-Saxon, German, Normand, Romanesque, Slavic. They sit and read all the new books that have been published in the whole wide world. First, they read the book reviews, and then they read the books themselves. These readers determine which books are appropriate for turning into a film, and they write short synopses of the books (upon reading a new author, they decide whether or not it’s worth it to buy his work for future use). Their synopses (and their suggestions about book purchasing) go to the – we will call them this – department heads. The national department heads make their selections and transfer the synopses (and the purchasing suggestions) that have been picked to their chief. The chiefs, in turn, send their conclusions to the supervisors. The supervisors either say, or do not say, “o’kei.”

If a supervisor says, “o’kei,” then a film is born, and the machine of muvi [“the movies”] proceeds to make a picture. Practically nothing remains of what was originally written by the writer in his novel, story, or drama, just as was the case in the stories of Vladimir Ivanovich and Dreiser.

This is one path that is followed in the genesis of a film.

There is also a second path.

Every film studio has its own storytellers and its own writers, besides those from the barracks, who are held there in reserve, kept for later use.

These special storytellers sit there and combine – first one way, and then another – all sorts of story lines, and they think up how to make something play at the movies: from what kind of life, from what country, from what kind of existence will the characters come; moreover, this one here will be the villain, and about the hero and heroine, it is said that on average they are to be no older than twenty-two years of age. These special storytellers constitute a tried, tested, and approved race of people. They communicate their ideas directly to the supervisors, without any bureaucratic pyramids of readers.

When the supervisor has given his “o’kei” with respect to the story line, they then dress this story line in the blood of the motion picture’s meat, they hammer out a stori [story], as the
Americans say, and sinopsisy [synopses] – they work out a story line and they flesh it out with narrative events. It’s still not yet a screenplay or a script; it’s merely:

“. . . a charming young blond man enters the room. TANYA comes out to meet him. NIKOLAI greets TANYA and tells her about the danger that lies in store for MORGAN.”

The sounds and noises that accompany the film as it plays are not worked out here. The scenery is not yet specified here. The lines of dialogue that are assigned to the characters are not yet given here.

When the sinopsis is ready, writers are sometimes invited out of their horse stalls. Let’s say that writer so-and-so is familiar with the life of sailors at sea. They invite him out. They cryptically commission him to take a look at the synopsis and to immerse it into the maritime details of a ship, of the habits and customs of sailors, of the ethos of sea captains, of storms at sea and of dead calms. The writer returns to his horse stall, and he writes. This writer’s name will not appear in the picture’s credits. What the writer writes down will be corrected, touched up by a supervisor, by an artist, by a musician, again by a supervisor, and by another writer, a screenwriter who enjoys some celebrity and who is approved by moviegoers. This screenwriter, together with the film’s director, will rework all the materials that have been assembled for him. This screenwriter will translate these materials into the language of cinema. And this screenwriter will sign his name to the picture.

“. . . a charming young blond man enters the office of the director NIKOLAI. (The noise of a factory and the distant sound of sirens. A close-up of MORGAN’s face. A shot of a factory beyond the Venetian window.)

TANYA comes out to meet MORGAN.

(MORGAN smiles. TANYA’s eyes are stern, concerned, and at the same time loving. The noise of the factory subsides. The music of Beethoven can be heard. In the foreground, the faces of TANYA and MORGAN; in the background, Venetian windows and the factory.) MORGAN is happy.

NIKOLAI . . .” etc.

But this scenario will be refined and completed by others, by nameless others. The dialogues, in particular, are always written separately, by a special nameless screenwriter. In 1930, the M.G.M. film Big House [The Big House], which is devoted to American prison life, played on all the movie screens in the world. The writer who wrote this film was someone who had spent time in prison, so he didn’t sign his name to it. My supervisor, Al Lewin, revised this screenplay, and my co-author, Frances Marion – the American Lydia Charskaya – signed her name to it.
Thus, if there is writerly work that needs to be done on a motion picture in America, then either a writer writes it and does not leave his name on it or else he signs his name to it although he did not write it.

Writers, even though they reside inside the monastic cells of offices, are nonetheless writers whose fates contain something fateful in them. On my final night in Hollywood – during my farewell party – the marvelous writer R., a former sailor, a seaman, said to me:

“Y-you, Pilnyak, y-you have got to be kidding – American individualism! From nine o’clock in the morning to five o’clock in the afternoon, I sit in my office and I do the very same thing that I do at night when I am writing for myself and not for the film studio: that is, I subvert and debunk what I have written in my novels . . . Y-you, Pilnyak! . . . but at home all I have is a pen and a sheet of paper, yes, and a head that is tired out from the day. At the film studio, however, there is equipment, a typewriter, and millions of dollars. And millions of movie-goers, whom the movie will dupe with its motion pictures . . . Oh, y-you, Pilnyak! You don’t want to work with us any longer? You’re leaving? Hollywood pays me money! I’ll come to visit you in the Union of Soviets when my contract ends! . . .”

Later I will cite a second conversation that I had that night. But for now I will bear witness: I didn’t meet any people in Hollywood who would not have cursed muvi [“the movies”] – and I met with some genuine writers. And a word must be said here about what it is that Americans understand by that concept: a contract. The fate of worker X was recounted earlier: he is the man, a Russian by birth, who was working under conditions whereby they were able freely to ship him off, like some package, to the devil, they were able freely to throw him the hell out. This is what happens when there is no contract. When there is a contract, people rise up in revolt – from the grave, it would seem, from today’s perspective. But in America people rise up in revolt not from the grave, but precisely from the present moment. The idea of slavery rises up in revolt.

A contract! An actor or a writer – it makes no difference – signs a contract for five years. It’s always stipulated in the contract that the film company can break the contract at any time and can extend it, but the writer (or actor) doesn’t have this same right. It’s always stipulated in the contract that the film company can resell its rights; the actor, naturally (in the completely American sense of that word), doesn’t have this same right. It’s stipulated in the contract that the actor is invited to play such-and-such roles and he cannot refuse to fulfill those roles or others similar to them. A refusal on the actor’s part to abide by the terms of the contract results not only in the loss of his livelihood, his bread and butter, and of his career (for although in America there exists a law against trusts, a law that prohibits trusts, the company’s bosses are members of a film industry cartel). This refusal to abide by the terms of the contract also results in both the imposition of a financial penalty for breach of contract and, possibly, incarceration in debtor’s prison. This applies to movie stars, celebrity screenwriters, and unnamed scriptwriters.

And in Hollywood one can hear dozens of stories about wonderful contract schemes.
A writer under contract to such-and-such a film studio is already spoken for, he’s under their spell. He has written a story. His film studio cannot use this story for a screenplay. A neighboring film studio intends to use this story for one of its screenplays. A supervisor at this neighboring film studio doesn’t speak with any writers; instead he telegraphs the supervisor of the writer who is already spoken for:

“Khello! [Hello!]”
“Khello! [Hello!]”
“We’d like to produce a film version of such-and-such story!”
“But we’re also thinking about doing this!”
“Let us have the story!”
“Really, I’ll only do this out of my friendship with you!”
“How much are you asking?!”
“Forty-five thousand dollars!”
“Let us have it!”
“Really, a thousand, I’ll only do it out of my friendship with you!”

The friends agree upon thirty-five thousand dollars. The writer, just as before, receives his two hundred and fifty dollars from his film studio.

A writer – one who is equal to the task – is just a manuscript, and not a human being. And here is what happens with a human being:

“Khello! [Hello!]”
“Khello! [Hello!]”
“Would it be possible for us to borrow your star so-and-so for about two short weeks?!”
“But we’re planning to use her then!”
“Let us have her!”
“Really, I’ll only do it out of my friendship with you!”
“How much are you asking?!”

Writers and actors who are under contract, shall we say, surrender themselves up to being borrowed and lent out.

A young writer (or it could be a young actress or actor) entered into a contract three years ago for a salary of seventy-five dollars a week. He has started moving up in the world. He now has established a name. Yet he still receives his old salary of seventy-five dollars a week. The contract with him, for all we know, will be extended in two years.

An actor would occasionally like to be able to work at his role; he would like to be able to choose a role himself. But he is under contract, so a role is not picked by him, but by his supervisor.

Film studios likewise borrow and lend out directors.
But an actor can’t work at his role, nor can he choose a role himself, not only because others do his thinking for him. In the name of industry secrets, an actor is not even supposed to know the script. Previously, the best scenes from rodeos, from cowboys galloping on horseback, were chosen for the movies. Previously, cinema used to pick gymnasts like Douglas Fairbanks.\(^{273}\) Nowadays that is not even necessary: everything has been replaced by technical tricks. And no sort of Douglas Fairbanks can leap the way that a skewed perspective can.

Among those photo albums, which were stacked up on the floor of the office of my friend, the film director, and which reached up to the ceiling, there were albums filled with photos of film doubles: *ekstra* [extras] who looked like famous actors. A certain poor film studio borrows a celebrated actor for a week and films this celebrity in the most challenging locales. A film double finishes playing the remaining scenes for him. The celebrity actor receives three thousand dollars a week, while the *ekstra* receives sixty dollars. A certain wealthy film studio produces motion pictures where the heroine (a movie star, of course) must leap from a cliff into the water and crawl out of a burning building. In those locales where it’s expensive to do this with tricks, the double replaces the movie star, so that the movie star will not get wet, will not get upset, will not get burnt, and will not get a broken rib.

Male actors don’t count, for they are men. They have to make their careers themselves. And they don’t get to be called movie stars. As far as movie stars are concerned – stars in the true sense of that screen-acting word: that is, women – then it must be acknowledged that the overwhelming majority of them, with three or four exceptions (for example, Greta Garbo),\(^{274}\) created their fates not by means of their talents and not even by means of their beauty, but by the fact that they were either the wives of film directors and studio supervisors or else the mistresses of billionaires who were, besides, shareholders in the film company. Male actors who are truly talented (there are, of course, actors of this sort – Charlie Chaplin,\(^{275}\) for example, and the selfsame Douglas Fairbanks) do not confine themselves to the routine of the movies. Instead they organize their own film studios and work at their own risk and from their own fear. Some talented young people, *ekstras* who occasionally play in a number of scenes, serving as doubles for celebrity actors, are now banding together around the film journal *Experimental Cinema*,\(^{276}\) which is protesting against the traditions of the *muvi* [movies]. But one must be careful not to muddle perspectives: Chaplin is an exception to the rule, while the work of this new film journal is an exercise in Don Quixotism.

It is understandable why in New York a play is being staged where Hollywood is depicted both the way that it seems to Americans – even to Americans! – and the way that it is in reality. *Ekstras* will never become movie stars, because that isn’t profitable; *ekstras* can stand in for movie stars as doubles. Movie stars are needed to make films popular. Creating *publisiti* and making the viewer fall in love with a movie star – it’s more profitable this way. The goal is to make films profitable in every way. Besides, what director doesn’t like adding to his own salary the salary of his wife? And what director doesn’t like having a movie star on his arm? A moral lesson to the world?! Movie stars grow old; extras play their roles instead of them, under the names of the stars. *Ekstras* receive sixty dollars a week, as long as . . . as long as their fortune doesn’t change. Alex Gumberg,\(^{277}\) an experienced hand when it comes to how
things work in America\textsuperscript{278} and a friend of mine, was absolutely right when he gave me the following words of advice just as I was departing for Hollywood:

“Please, Boris, you must be as careful as possible with ekstras. Ekstras still might think that you’re a wealthy or powerful man in the movie business. There will be no end of scandals for you.”

While I was in Hollywood, I came to understand what this warning meant. In the U.S.S.R., we experienced a wave of alimony cases. For us, this was a mere wave on the Moscow River in comparison to the Pacific Oceanic waves of alimony cases in Hollywood! The whole point of these alimony cases is to provide paths to stargazing, because for an ekstra there is only one normal path to glory: to become the mistress or wife of a powerbroker in the film industry.\textsuperscript{279} There were two other paths: starvation or prostitution. For out of a hundred ekstras, only five percent worked during the period of financial crisis that followed the stock market crash of 1929. All of this is in the American conception of things. A contract is a daydream and: “... Y-you, Pilnyak, y-you’ve got to be kidding – American individualism! ...”

As far as I’m concerned, my dealings in Hollywood provide an extra illustration of what I’ve said above. I had a distinction that set me apart from the other people who were working there: I was a Soviet citizen. And it was stipulated in my contract that I had the right to tear up this contract at any time of the day or night. I consider what I’ve said above as an admiration of capitalism in its own eyes, and by means of what I’ve said above I illustrate American organization – both of labor and of industry. The muvi business is the third leading American industry. Who is the actual master of the muvi business: is it the supervisors? the board of directors? the shareholders? No, of course, not. The muvi business is a highly remarkable financial organization that never dreamed of undergoing a single tax inspection, for all the philistines of America (and of the world) pay a voluntary income tax to the muvi business every evening, every day, every week. The master of the muvi business is the spectator, the All-American philistine. The muvi business is an industry. Ford pleases customers with a conveyor belt of automobiles. The textile industry produces meters of cotton chintz. The muvi business produces feet of film. The talents of writers must confine themselves to these feet of film and keep within them. When supervisors give their o’kei, they are placing this o’kei upon the tastes of the philistine in order to please him. My traveling companion on the steamer, Mister Kotofson, the man who became a king from the intestines of pigs and sheep, is illiterate. He knows the technical aspects of intestines to perfection, he loves everything that is decent, and he wants to have the perfect technology of cinema, for he is intending to sleep peacefully, like Sinclair Lewis’s characters from \textit{Main-strit [Main Street]}.\textsuperscript{280}

And so they told me in New York that America is not to be found in New York. Well, what then: is America to be found in Hollywood!? I determined in Hollywood that both Hollywood and New York are one and the same beautiful features of a beautiful face!

If we were to leave the muvis, as such, out of consideration, and consider just the writers, to whose estate I belong, as such, and if we were to speak about the art of American individualism – these are old truths! – then we could say that art is active only when it creates new forms, new ideas, and new emotions, when it awakens people rather than lulls them to
sleep. For art will truly be art only when it is revolutionary, and art will truly be art only when it is created with conviction and dedication. Art is created in part by writers. In order for a writer to be able to work, he must believe in his work, in its necessity, in its significance. This, needless to say, is much more important than money. How many artistic works of genius were created in all kinds of garrets (both physical and psychical) and in hunger? A writer is like a bird: it’s easier for a bird to fly when the wind is blowing upon its chest and beneath its wings. And the genuine master of American talents in the movie business, measured in terms of feet of film, is Mister Capitalism, the Nietzschean dollar.

Upon my arrival in Hollywood, I went to see my supervisors. I watched the Napoleons from philistinism and the philistines from Napoleonism. I was told that I, “in my capacity as a Bolshevik,” as it was put to me verbatim, had been invited to Hollywood to Sovietize a film. They asked me whether I needed an office. They told me that in my position I would have a secretary-interpreter at my disposal. They granted me the right to send cables and radiograms to any of the corners of the world for information and documents. I could order from far and wide any books that I needed. I should have understood that once I was to have received such-and-such a number of these books, I would already be in the company of exploiters. I was told that a certain storyteller had thought up the idea of producing a pro-Soviet screenplay. Frances Marion and I were supposed to be the authors of the picture. George Hill would be the director, and Boris Inkster, a Russian national and Soviet citizen who had stayed behind when the Eisenstein group left town, would be the director’s assistant (and my assistant). Al Lewin would be my supervisor. Irving Thalberg, the head of M.G.M. and the husband of Norma Shearer, a man who receives a salary of a million dollars a year, a Hollywood Napoleon with arms crossed, would be producing the film. All the people whose names I have listed here were supposed to form a konferens [conference] – an advisory council attached to the film. Besides being an author of the film script, I was also supposed to act as a consultant during the making of the film, so that there would not be any of the incredibly fallacious representations about life in Russia that foreigners, in their ignorance, are apt to concoct.

What was meant by the concept “pro-Soviet” was the following. In 1931, America, as we know, did not have any diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. Those Americans who were against recognition of the Soviet Union were called “anti-Soviet,” while those who wanted to re-establish international diplomatic relations were called “pro-Soviet.” The Russian colony in America was divided in the same way. The majority of Russian emigrés who had arrived in the U.S. prior to the October Revolution were pro-Soviet, while those who had betrayed their motherland and fled from the October Revolution were “anti-Soviet.” As for me, I was simply Soviet.

And, again, as for me, it turned out that I didn’t have to be either a co-author with Frances Marion – who is widely celebrated in the screen-acting world – or a consultant attached to the film.

But for several days I did consult in connection with the film. Right up until the final night before my departure, however, we did not say a word, God forbid, about politics.
Even before my arrival, the basic features of the story line had already been – shall we say – thought through. And Frances Marion had already written an initial *sinopsis*, which I was supposed to spend some time working on in consultation with my co-workers and to rework it in terms of its correlation with the truth.

“... a charming young blond man enters the manager’s office...”

The content had been worked out by Madame Frances Charskaya in accordance with all the rules of America and Hollywood. The hero is an American engineer named Morgan. The heroine is the charming Tanya. The villain is the G.P.U. Comic relief is provided by a good-hearted funny man, the construction manager Nikolai, who is a worker by origin, a hero of the Five-Year Plan, and a communist. The action takes place in the U.S.S.R. Morgan is traveling to the U.S.S.R. to work there in order to “study the great principles of a planned economy so that afterwards, back in his homeland, he can apply the knowledge he has acquired there” (this is copied verbatim). Tanya (“a charming brunette!”) is being expelled from America – deported, as they say there – because she is a communist and because she led a workers strike in America. There is class-based animosity and antagonism between Tanya and the bourgeois Morgan, but “their eyes met and they love each other, without they themselves suspecting it” (this is copied verbatim). They are traveling on the same steamer, in separate classes of accommodation, of course. They sail past the Statue of Liberty. Tanya, from the lower deck, curses American liberty. Morgan, on the upper deck, whistles the national anthem of the United States. Once again their eyes meet. And so on. As soon as they cross the Soviet border, marvels begin to happen. Right away a spy is assigned to shadow Morgan (this spy later turns out to be the husband of Tanya’s sister, who is dying of consumption and dying from her husband’s infidelities). This spy and unfaithful husband right away falls in love with Tanya. He is, of course, an undercover Cheka official. Besides this one undercover Cheka official, however, there are also “overt” Cheka officials walking around in the U.S.S.R.: these men have black beards, they’re bedangled with bombs, and they’re dressed in felt boots, their eyes ablaze “like coals.” These overt Cheka officials arrest professors in broad daylight, for all to see, tearing them away from their wives, who die right there on the spot. There are no fewer marvels happening in Moscow. Skyscrapers are being erected there that are “taller than those in New York” (this is copied verbatim). Morgan is working on the construction of a factory named “Steel,” “which will be the largest one in the world.” Also working at the factory is the construction manager Nikolai (his part will be played by the comic actor so-and-so). He is a communist, a hero of the Five-Year Plan, and a former American worker who once worked with Morgan (although Morgan is no more than twenty-two years old). For the sake of some fresh air, Tanya takes her sister, who is dying of consumption, back with her to their hometown in the countryside, a village that just happens to be located right next to the construction site for “Steel.” In the village, there is fresh air as well as some large, clean peasant huts fancily decorated with Ukrainian embroidered towels (although the village is said to be located in the Urals). There are mountains of butter and eggs that are being eaten up by prosperous paysans who are flourishing. One revolutionary morning, some tanks drive through town, leveling the village down to the height of the surrounding land so that a collective farm can be constructed there from scratch. The local village priest has his beard shaved off. Tanya the communist is incensed by this. But a spy – her sister’s husband, who is an undercover Cheka official and a villain – has fallen in love
with Tanya. He tries to convince her that bigamy is not a vice, for under true communism a man will be able to have as many as twenty wives, and that Tanya, as a communist, should give herself up to him sexually right away. But now he suspects that Tanya loves Morgan. At this point he avenges himself against Morgan, tricking the latter into getting involved with the criminal underground. During this time, Tanya, together with the priest whose beard has been shaved off, spearheads a peasant revolt. The threat of reprisals by the G.P.U. hangs over the heads of both Tanya and Morgan. Neither Tanya nor Morgan suspects any of this, but Nikolai, the Red construction manager and communist, learns of this. He summons Tanya and Morgan to his office, and he advises them to flee from the U.S.S.R.! They flee. The G.P.U. pursues them. Audience members should be breathless from excitement: will they catch up with them? or will they not catch up with them?! This is exactly like the way it is in motion pictures about American Indians. They, of course, get away. As their steamer is sailing past the Statue of Liberty, the charming Tanya stretches out her happy arms towards it, greeting it joyfully, while Morgan sings the American national anthem (near that very same Liberty under whose skirt a prison was housed for many years).294 At this point, Tanya, in a completely natural American way, gives her heart and her hand, and all other such things, in marriage to Morgan, – the only thing missing is the American flag!

When I was asked at the konferens [conference] – after the sinopsis had been read very attentively – what I thought of it, I was completely frank and told them that this sinopsis seemed to me to be utter nonsense. To my surprise, no one was astonished at my contention. And no one was offended at my contention. We didn’t touch upon politics, God forbid – not in the presence of such pure art! – but I did give them lessons in political literacy for several hours on end. They all seemed to agree with me heartily. I told them that if a villain is obligatory, then it would be well to make Russian counter-revolution the villain. I recounted to them about saboteurs and about the Ramzin trial.295 Thalberg asked me to explain to him again what exactly sabotage is. He heard me out, and then he said: “O’kei, rather than the G.P.U., let’s have it be sabotage that will be the villain!”

I explained to him what the collective farm movement was all about. Thalberg heard me out, and then he said: “Uell [Well], we don’t need to have a peasant revolt: think up some sort of exciting scene, like an insurrection! Shchiur [Sure]!”

I told him that an American cannot flee from the U.S.S.R., because if he does flee, that means that he is a fool, and a fool cannot be a hero. And if he is a hero and not a fool, then he will not flee, because not a single American engineer has yet to flee from the U.S.S.R. “Uell” – this means: “so, hence, therefore.” “Shchiur” – this means: “enough!” “that will do!” Americans begin their sentences with these words when they want to be abstruse.

“Uell,” said Thalberg. “We need the escape as a gimmick. Think up some way that the escape can be plausible for the hero, because American audiences really like escapes.”

I told him that it would be possible for us to devise such a trick only when lemons begin to ripen in Greenland, but then Greenland would no longer be Greenland; instead, it would be Hollywood. And they had invited me to be an author and a consultant in a pro-Soviet film.
“Uell,” said Thalberg. “We are producing a film that is very much pro-Soviet, and we have invited you here as a Bolshevik. But it is essential that you think up an escape. Shchiur!”

It should be said here that I wanted to work on the picture, for I understood what an enormous significance film has in that selfsame America. And to make a motion picture in which there would be verisimilitude, even if only in seventy-five percent of it, this seemed to me – by my reckoning – to be a big deal. Upon my arrival in Hollywood, I had laid out my plan and explained it to the Board of Directors. My plan was simple. I said that the working conditions were only acceptable for me provided that they would give me the opportunity to preserve the historical perspectives. The U.S.S.R. is building socialism. The U.S.S.R. is being led by the Communist Party. These are historical facts, and there are historical perspectives to these facts. They said to me: “O’kei!” “Uell!” At that time, I already had a conception about Hollywood in general and, upon hearing the sinopsis of the story line, I was inclined to consider it more a matter of stupidity than of politics, the more so since it would not require any great pains on my part to save the G.P.U. from villainy and collective farms from peasant revolts.

For about two Hollywood nights, Joe and I didn’t sleep: we were trying to think up an escape, first one way and then another! We couldn’t get anything to work out with Morgan. Then we decided that Tanya would be the one who would flee, and Morgan, out of his love for her, would run after her. We expelled Tanya from the Party. First we arranged things so that Tanya had never been to America and that she was instead a Russian bourgeoisie, a translator, and so on. Then we tried leaving in the part about her initial stay in America. Nothing was working out! Nothing was working out with Nikolai either, for it was impossible to devise a scheme whereby a communist would help someone to flee the U.S.S.R. while still remaining a communist! We truly needed to think up, while sitting there in Hollywood, how to get oranges to grow in Greenland.

We were only able to think up one thing: the speech that I delivered at the next konferens.

Descartes once asserted the precept: “I think, therefore, I am.” And European philosophy struggled with that formula for a century and a half, confounding philosophy. For in accord with this formula, it was extraordinarily difficult to reconcile man with the cosmos and it was very easy to confirm the world not as a tangible reality, but as a mental representation. Philosophy struggled with that formula until such time as a man came forth and said that the root of the problem lies not in reconciling this formula with reality, but in the formula itself, for the formula needed to be recast into: “I exist, therefore, I am a part of nature.” For us, the escape we were trying to think up had turned into that very formula, “I think, therefore, I am.” It’s not worth it to concern oneself with Greenlandic explorations. It’s better not to think up a film scenario in Hollywood and then adjust Soviet reality to fit it. On the contrary, it’s better to adjust the screenplay to reality and omit the Greenlandic lemons of escapes. That’s what I told them.

“Uell,” they said to me, “but we want to produce a pro-Soviet film.”

“That’s precisely why I wasn’t able to sleep for a night and a half,” I answered.
“But a pro-Soviet film,” they said to me, “this means: let the Bolsheviks do at home whatever they wish to do, even if it means building socialism. We acknowledge the Five-Year Plan and your industrial construction. We are in favor of recognizing the Soviets and re-establishing diplomatic relations with them because it’s advantageous and profitable for us to conduct trade with the Bolsheviks. But what is taking place in Russia with the Bolsheviks does not befit us and would do no good for Americans. We need to show in this film that even American communists cannot live in the land of the Bolsheviks. All of this needs to be shown in the film that we intend to shoot.”

I heard him out, and I realized that this was no longer stupidity, but politics, although a very stupid brand of politics. I pulled out my contract, according to which, at any time of the day or night, I could tear up this very same contract. And, guilefully extracting my name out of Hollywood affairs, I said: “Gud-bai [Good-bye]!” “Do svidaniia [Good bye]!”

They had told me that I could send for books from anywhere in the world by letter or telegram and that I could think up whatever I took it into my head to think up, as long as it was related to cinema and it was pure art. They reminded me that I was privileged. And so they asked me in amazement: do you really not want to work? do you really not want to deviate, even by just half a percentage point, from historical accuracy, from that selfsame history whose perspective you stipulated as a condition for your work?

“No,” I said. “I am not a traitor.”

“Well, but for us here in America, to deceive history and, even more than that, to deceive the government, is considered good business!” It was Al Lewin who said this to me, and, I suppose, he was serious.

I spent my final night in Hollywood with Al Lewin. I had become friends with him, and not mainly because of my employment at the film studio. During the time I spent in Hollywood, Al Lewin’s friend, the young American poet, Charles Reznikoff, a very talented man, would come visit him and stay as a guest at his place. Reznikoff didn’t take the bait and end up caught on the golden hook of the movies. Instead he worked as a sales clerk at the counter of a millinery shop in New York. Reznikoff has written some nice collections of verse, which sell poorly because they contain good poetry. Al Lewin offered Reznikoff the opportunity to come out to California for a vacation. I witnessed how Al would buy up to twenty-five copies of one of Reznikoff’s poetry books and then, on the sly, without Reznikoff knowing it, he would give them away to some of his acquaintances as a gift. He was doing this to bolster sales and keep the book in print. Al found artistic perfection in the works of Marcel Proust, James Joyce, and the Russian writer, Nikolai Gogol, and he asked me about Boris Pasternak (a poet, by the way, who is now revered as the best living writer in the world today). Al was just about the only person in Hollywood who was mindful of the U.S.S.R. and genuinely wanted to find out things about it. Al had once been a literature professor. He invited me to stay at his home and offered me the use of his Packard. And, in all likelihood, he likewise buys up several copies of
my books at a time. He is a very short man, very weak physically, and he has attentive,
intelligent, slightly weary eyes. He is an intelligent and cultured person.

During my final night in Hollywood, some friends of mine gathered together to say goodbye to
me. And at the moment when the writer R. was saying to me: “Oh, y-you, Pilnyak! . . .
American individualism!” Al Lewin said to me:

“Don’t you want to yield half a percentage point to the movie business? But how
is the movie business going to yield half a percentage point to you? The trouble is
not the people, Bor, the trouble is the system!”

Al Lewin was absolutely right: the trouble is the system, not the people. Al Lewin is a good
person. I recounted earlier the story about a good American cowboy who showed his love for
an Indian girl by giving her a kick in the back with the toe of his boot. That took place in
California. I will now recount below how California once played the role of the drayman who
rescued the United States, pulling it out of the messy puddle of the financial crisis by means of
California gold. California and Hollywood remember the history of how California and the
Wild West were settled. Johann Augustus Sutter,297 this first California farmer, had a large
impact in shaping the destiny of America. He was born in Germany, lived in Switzerland, and
served in the palace guards in Paris until the July Revolution kicked him out of the guards.298
He set off for Africa as a merchant. He arrived in New York as an innkeeper. At first, he
searched for happiness. Then he started to search for peace and quiet. He set off with his
family for the Wild West in order to get away from people. From San Francisco, this pioneer –
with two other White people, with his family, and with several Indians – traveled in a boat
upstream along the Sacramento River, going to lands where no White people before him had
ever yet gone. He wanted to live there like a Robinson Crusoe.299 In accordance with the laws
governing wilderness areas, he submitted applications for these lands, and the lands started to
belong to him. He built a farm that he called New Helvetia,300 and that people in the
surrounding area called Fort Sutter. Sutter cleared the land, floating the timber downstream
along the Sacramento River, and started farming. He lived for ten years in these wild,
primitive environs, alone with his two comrades and his family members. He attained peace
and quiet. But on January 28, 1848, one of his comrades, James Marshal, found gold on his –
Sutter’s – lands. Gold! – the thing for the sake of which Europeans, generally speaking, set off
for America! Two weeks later, Sutter’s lands were turned into camps of prospectors; his lands
were thus cast into the mode of everyday life that Jack London has described in his novels.301
In half a year, all of the ragged poor in America had gathered on Sutter’s lands, creating
settlements that are nowadays called towns and that bear such old names as “Whiskey,”
“Mines of a Wild Yankee,” and “Port Wine.” New Helvetia turned out to be in the center of
the city of Sacramento, which is now the capital of California. But Sutter was a farmer and he
wanted to remain a farmer. Sutter turned to the courts with the demand that the authorities
drive off of his lands those uninvited people who had gathered there. The courts confirmed his
rights, but the courts were powerless. Sutter went to Washington for help, and that is the only
reason that Sutter remained alive. The prospectors dealt with the decree of the courts by means
of the laws that govern the wilderness and the “wild” West. All of Sutter’s properties were
burnt down to the ground. One of his sons shot himself in the head, another one was murdered,
and the third one ran off and disappeared without a trace. His daughter was raped and driven

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insane. Sergei Eisenstein, who, like me, was invited to Hollywood, in his case by the film studio Paramount Pictures, offered to produce a film about the life and fate of this first farmer in California. They rejected his offer. Then he proposed shooting a film version of Theodore Dreiser’s *An American Tragedy*. He had worked for a while with Dreiser on co-writing the screenplay for it. The contract with Eisenstein was torn up, and it was torn up in such a way that Eisenstein had only twenty-four hours to leave the United States.

There are many film plots in America!

Thus, the contention made by some Americans—that one needs to search for America neither here nor there – has come and gone. Devoting oneself to studying countries through the window of a railway car – even, and especially, a railway car like the “Twentieth Century” – is an enterprise that is unsatisfactory for a variety of reasons.  

I bought myself an automobile so that I could get across the country in it – from one ocean to the other – and see America up close and personal. I learned how to drive a car in Santa Monica beneath the palm trees. It became absolutely clear during the first few days of instruction, after suddenly bumping into some unexpected surprise and losing my bearings, not being able to figure out how to disengage the clutch with my left foot, that I started in the most desperate and reckless fashion with my right foot to press on the gas instead of the brakes. The automobile, in a completely natural way, changed from an automobile into a tank and drove precipitously into that very same unexpected surprise, which frightened me and which turned out to be a small garden fence. The tank ran over that fence and then through a second fence, defacing some commonplace flowerbeds. The tank miraculously came to a halt, stuck in the sand and hanging above a bluff that bordered on the ocean. This is how I learned American sangfroid and humor.

All the same, before leaving California, I decided to drive around and see all the sights. I saw places *in memoriam* of my fellow Russian countrymen.

I toured the ruins of Indian settlements and the Spanish missions (*mishens* in English). The Spanish conquered the Indians by means of these *mishens*. Each of these *mishens* – thick-walled and monastery-like in appearance – was a fortress that, without fail, contained an enormous wine cellar and a refectory that was no smaller in size. Spanish paintings devoted to the memory of local Indians from the past are preserved in some of the *mishens*. These paintings, in their unsophisticated lack of competence and taste when it comes to craftsmanship, are very realistic. In some of them the artist has depicted the conversion of native Indians to the Catholic faith: naked Indians are standing in the water, while a fat priest with a cross in his hand is standing over them on the river bank; behind the priest, Spanish soldiers armed with flintlock muskets are standing around majestically; and even farther in the background, hiding in some bushes, stood a cannon and horses, waiting for orders from the commanding officer. And that is how it was in reality. They corralled the Indians into converting to the Catholic faith by means of gunpowder. Well, lo and behold, in the sanctuary of one of these *mishens*, inside a closet behind the altar, I caught sight of a Russian samovar. It was absolutely an Orthodox Russian one, hand-crafted and made out of red copper. Judging by
all appearances, I would say that it was made some time around the seventeenth century. The presence of a Russian samovar inside a Catholic altar puzzled me, so I set off to make inquiries and to investigate the matter further. It turns out that in the seventeenth century there were Russians here. Reznov, a Cossack chieftain who commanded a Russian ship, was even getting ready to marry a certain native princess, but he didn’t dare do this without first getting permission by requesting the Tsar’s mercy. So he set off for home to get this mercy and he never returned back. The Spanish government, it turns out, had established a correspondence with Russian scribes on account of this Reznov. They had done this out of fear that Russian fishermen and Cossacks might seize California for themselves. The samovar had remained there ever since that time. The Spanish monarchs, who didn’t know the intended function of a samovar, were using it as a washbasin during the liturgy. So the mishens-fortresses, it turns out, were mainly built not against Indians, but against Russians. Russians in California! Russian “Jumpers!” Will wonders never cease?! Even if this kind of patriotism doesn’t contribute anything to my reputation!

I witnessed a rodeo and got to see some cowboys.

In olden times, that is to say, about ten years ago, they used to choose the best cowboys at these rodeos to play roles in their movies.

We were driving up to the mountains, and then down from the mountains, headed to the border of the state of Arizona. Down from the mountains, traveling as groups of families, cowboys had arrived, young and old alike, both male and female. Their horses – mustangs! – were standing at the hitching post. They were equine beauties that had come for the horse race. The cowboys were scrutinizing the horses. In the cattle-pens, bulls and cows were lowing. Women, many of them wearing cowboy jeans, with colorful shawls on their shoulders, were strolling around the racetrack, enjoying the festive, convivial atmosphere. Girls were double-checking the girth on the saddles of their horses. Everybody, from time to time, was eating hot dogs and drinking Coca-Cola. The chairman of the Cowboy Society of Sportsmen, a renowned cowboy and a no less renowned actor (but now already a former actor), was serving as the master of ceremony. His outfit was glittering and sparkling. From time to time, he would perform a trick roping act, throwing his spinning lasso out in front of himself, urging his horse on with his spurs, and then having his horse jump through the loop of his master’s lasso. Not a single muscle on the movie cowboy’s face would move.

The competition began. The first event was riding bareback on a wild bull. Some of the bulls were raging in stupefaction, jumping up into the air, scraping the ground with their horns, and kicking with their hooves. Others were lying down. There were, naturally, no bridles. The riders, if one can use that word for the people who were riding on bulls, were holding on solely with the help of their legs, maintaining their equilibrium by waving their arms in the air for balance. The winner was the one who would fall off the bull last. Then the very same thing would be repeated with horses that had not been saddle broken. Then there were races that involved riders who possessed all manner of dzhigit agility and dexterity. Girls as well were racing. Their agility and dexterity consisted in how well they, shall we say, carried the baton in relay races. After galloping a lap around the racetrack, each girl would jump off one horse at full speed and land on another one, and then she would speed off farther on that new mount.
One girl was lifted up off the ground and taken away to a hospital by ambulance. It’s remarkable how the girls were able to jump from one horse to another at a full gallop: a young female assistant would get the horse to speed up and then the girl rider, without breaking stride, would jump from one horse to another at the moment when the two horses were level with each other. The girl rider in pursuit would grab hold of the mane of the second horse, lie prone in the air for a moment, and then in another moment speed off farther, urging the horse on with her spurs. The girls did not have their hair cut short, so their locks fluttered in the wind. Following this event, there was a lasso competition. A cow – frightened and running – would be released from the cattle-pen. A cowboy, while sitting atop his horse, had to throw his lasso onto the cow and make it fall to the ground. Then he would jump down off his horse and tie the cow’s feet together. The winner was the one who did all of this in the fewest number of seconds. I must say that there were nonetheless fewer cowboys – and their horses and their herd of half-wild bulls and cows – than there were, let us put it this way, civilized spectators and their automobiles. The racetrack and the benches for spectators in the grandstands were nailed together hastily out of unhewn planks, but the restroom had running water and was equipped with a sewage system. And electric lights were hung over the racetrack for the nighttime enjoyment of the spectators. Some of the cowboys likewise arrived by automobile.

One cannot compare these cowboy entertainments with the Central Asian baiga, although they are perhaps not of Indian, but of Asian origin (the Spaniards were Moors). Cowboy outfits, which are sold at stores in cities, are manufactured in factories, just like Spanish saddles. The cowboy competitions are already halfway theater. It’s no accident that a cowboy film actor should be the one presiding at this event.

I also got to see people prospecting for gold. They are the descendants of those people who got California started, those who at one point in time – and not so very long ago – ruined the peace and quiet of Johann Augustus Sutter. It was precisely these prospectors for gold that I was going to see. Essentially, I didn’t see anything. A man who looked sullen and suspicious emerged out of a cave and announced drily that we had no business being there. He was wearing a blue work shirt. Dirt had eaten into the pores of his face and hands. He went back into the cave, glancing back at us suspiciously as he did so. I don’t know by what laws of refraction of the sun’s rays this happened, but his eyes shone like a blue spark, just as the eyes of a horse will do on occasion from the light of automobile headlights. His eyes shone with the sinister, sizzling light of the passion and parsimony – and the hunger – of a man who was terrified, despairing, and suspicious. That’s how it seemed to me. Next to the cave stood an old Ford automobile that was completely beat up. It could not have been worth more than twenty-five dollars. And it wasn’t clear whether this Ford was serving as a means of transportation or as a flophouse. On the car seat inside the Ford a kerosene stove was hissing.

Los Angeles, indeed, all of California, by Hollywood’s will and choosing, is adorned with monuments. The footprints of movie stars in the cement of sidewalks in front of movie theaters have a frontal view of the enormous oranges that turn out not to be oranges at all, but shops where orange juice is sold, and of the enormous teapots that turn out to be not teapots at all, but restaurants. This is at once art and monuments, advertisements and business, taken together and placed beneath palm, eucalyptus, and pepper trees.
At the very same time that Hollywood released me from my contract, that very same evening, without waiting for morning, we rolled up our sleeves, pulled white caps down onto our foreheads, and joined the conveyor belt of automotive highways to search for that selfsame America, the one that isn’t to be found either in New York or in Los Angeles. I have already recounted the story about highways. These highways took us onto their conveyor belt when we needed to sense that we were driving not along space, but along a standard, for everywhere, from one ocean to the other, nothing changed except nature. Everywhere there were one and the same filling stations, one and the same breakfasts and dinners, one and the same motels. The only things that changed were the landscapes and the particularities of climate. But they were not visible on account of the highways, they were screened off by the conveyor belt of traffic. We had a record-breaking day, when in a single day we traveled by automobile a distance equal to the distance between Moscow and Odessa.306

There were three of us traveling together: Joe, myself, and Isidore K., a Hollywood screen actor, a rolling stone, a person who had despaired of ever finding work in Hollywood, so he was helping us drive the car cross-country in exchange for free food and lodging. He was headed to New York, but he was prepared to go anywhere we wanted. He was a U.S. citizen. Isidore sang American hymns the whole way.307

So we traveled across all of America, from one ocean to the other, with stops in some southern states, the Gulf of Mexico, the state of Mississippi, and the city of New Orleans. On our automobile trip, I also got to see the Great Lakes, the Ford auto plant in Detroit, and Niagara Falls in Buffalo.

Two natural phenomena bowled me over. They were the kind of phenomena that I had never seen before and that made my travels across America complete: the cactus desert and Niagara Falls.

The cactus desert at the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, with its ghastly heat beneath a sweltering sun and its yellow sand, did not in any way resemble real, actual nature. It instead drew the fantastical picture in one’s imagination of a dead sea-bottom, where enormous and terrifying cactuses, as well as yucca and wild palm trees, appeared to be sea plants and reefs made out of sea creatures. The yucca tree has not just one leafy cap, but several of them. Suddenly, out of a naked trunk, stripped of its bark, there protrudes the kind of cap that sits upon a crown. There were various kinds of cactuses: thorny ones, yellow ones that looked like porcupines, smooth ones, green ones that looked like cucumbers, small ones, the size of a prairie dog, and enormous ones, the size of three adult Indians. Both the palm trees and the cactus trees stick out of the sand that creeps beneath them, just as if they had been accidentally and temporarily thrust into this sand. My automobile ran over a porcupine in the desert there. Once we saw a herd of wild prairie dogs behind some cactus trees. Both the porcupine and these prairie dogs looked like cactuses to us. The conveyor belt of a highway traverses this
I once read a booklet written by a fellow Russian countryman of mine, Pavel Svinin, titled *Essay on a Picturesque Journey to the Republic of North American Regions*. It was published with the permission of the censors in Saint Petersburg in 1815. This Pavel Svinin describes the charms of Niagara Falls, writing:

“...Amongst the savages who inhabited the lands surrounding Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, many strange and wondrous stories have been preserved about Niagara Falls... I will mention here one true adventure... Several *versts* upstream from the waterfall, an English Mariner from a certain warship was travelling along the river. Spotting a beautiful Indian maiden sleeping on the shore, he took it into his head to kidnap her. When the Indian maiden awoke, she decided to hide inside the boat on the shore that her husband was sleeping in. But before she could execute her plan, the Mariner succeeded in cutting the rope that attached the boat to a tree. In an instant, the boat was carried away by the current and soon got pulled into the rapids...”

The Americans have a certain place that is advertised in all of their magazines and on the posters in the waiting area at their railroad stations: the *Grend-Ken’on* [Grand Canyon], which translates into Russian as the “Large Ravine.” We made a four-hundred-kilometer detour in
order to visit this ravine, which at one time had been washed out and sculpted by the Colorado River. I wouldn’t have mentioned this ravine if it hadn’t been the threshold to the Zuni Indian tribe. The ravine really is very large, extending two kilometers in depth. Along its bottom flows the Colorado River. There are trees near the ravine that date from the Middle Ages. There are Americans who stay in a fancy hotel that is located beneath these medieval trees: these tourists have either already gone down to the bottom of the ravine on donkeys or they were planning to go down there. This ravine is noteworthy for its non-negotiability for tourists. If a two-kilometers-high mountain were to stand in the midst of a flat expanse, this would be just like all other mountains. But here the ravine is two kilometers deep, so that if one wishes to become aware of its depth or its height, one must descend to its bottom with the help of donkeys. The areas surrounding the Grend-Ken’on – wild, primitive areas – are still inhabited by Indians. At the edge of the Grend-Ken’on, there is an Indian wigwam located alongside the fancy hotel. The days and the hours when the Indians will be performing their war dances are posted on a handbill.

I didn’t go down to the bottom of the ravine on a donkey. Nor did I watch the Indian dances: they can be seen in Moscow by those who like to feast their eyes on Gypsies. But we did go visit the zoological garden of the Zuni tribe.

Christopher Columbus (a Jew by nationality, as several researchers maintain) reached the first American island on October 12, 1492 old style. In 1928, a certain Parisian citizen named R. M. Blank (with a hard sign at the end of his surname) published a Russian-language book in Paris titled America. In this book of his, America, Blank writes, with hard signs:

“Columbus stepped foot on this island immediately upon his arrival on its shores, on the morning of October 12th. The indigenous people were waiting for him on shore in a state of extreme excitation. They were certain that those who had come from beyond the horizon to visit them – from that place where ‘heaven comes together with the earth’ – were celestial beings . . . They prostrated themselves at the feet of Columbus and his retinue with a look of the most profound veneration and complete submission on their faces.”

This selfsame Blank writes:

“The following incident, which is noted by Herrera, a Spanish historian of the 16th century, in his Historia des las Indias, published in Madrid in 1601, is characteristic of the cruelty that accompanied Spanish colonization.

On the island of Cuba, a wise cacique by the name of Hatuey served as the head of an Indian tribe. He already had a quite clear conception about Spaniards based upon the stories that he had heard about them from his fellow tribesmen. So when news of the forthcoming visit to his principedom by Spaniards reached him, he convened all the elders of his tribe. He placed an enormous ingot of gold in the middle of the village square and then he turned toward the elders who had congregated there and addressed them with the following proclamation: ‘This here (GOLD!) is the god of the White people. Let us bow down before him, let us
express to him our veneration, and let us ask him to imbue the White people with a favorable attitude toward us.’

The Indians began to pray ardently and passionately to the ‘god of the White people,’ expressing to him their veneration by all available means: gifts, dances, songs, and so on.

But this god was inexorable, so as soon as the Spaniards arrived, the very first thing they did was to grab the cacique himself and subject him – for the greater glory of god – to the auto-da-fé.

It’s true that while this ill-fated man was writhing in agony on the bonfire, suffering the final convulsions that preceded his death, a Catholic pater did approach the bonfire and, lifting a cross up to the dying man, proposed to him that he accept Christianity so as to guarantee that he would enter the heavenly kingdom. But the Indian replied that if it is Christians that reign there, he would prefer to be a bit farther away . . . A horrible reply, a horrible judgment!”

An edifying reply! An edifying judgment!

We set off to visit the Zuni tribe. We had to turn off the highway and make a side trip. As soon as we turned off the highway, we found ourselves in the primitive state of impassable roads: we ended up on clayey soil and in deep ruts. It was as if we had ended up somewhere in – what do you know! don’t worry! – the Karakum desert. A thunderstorm began to pour rain down upon us, and our automobile started to crawl along like a cow on the ice, aiming in the direction of the ditches and not wishing to keep to the ruts. We drove in this way, from one ditch to another. Isidore even quit singing his hymns. Before setting off for the final oasis amidst these impassable roads, in a valley between the mountains where the Zuni live, we stopped off at the – I don’t quite know how to express this – white sated houses, equipped in American or European fashion with tennis courts, of the bureaucratic officials of the Indian Department. There we received permission from a bureaucratic official, not an Indian, of course, but an American, to drive through to where the Zuni Indians lived. The bureaucratic official advised us not to spend an overnight stay among the Zunis.

That day I witnessed a level of poverty in America that was no less terrifying than that of Turkish villages of 1920. The scenery was exactly the same as what one would find in Turkey: around the oasis there were houses that looked like resting spots, riders on undersized horses, mud, and unsanitary conditions. We introduced ourselves, and an Indian escorted us on a tour of the settlement. He was a man of about forty, with a long braid, who was wearing moccasins. He posed for a photograph with us, charging us seventy-five cents for this. There were no streets in the Zuni settlement. The houses were standing any which way. One could enter a house only after climbing up to the outside wall of the house by means of portable stairs made out of poles. There were no other entrances into these houses made out of clay. As a result, every house was its own small fortress. But the ovens for baking bread were located outside, beyond the walls of the houses. These ovens, if they were to be photographed close up, using the Hollywood tricks of shifting the perspective, could be made to look like Islamic
mosques or Kirgiz yurts. They are shaped like cupolas. In these ovens, they bake *maïse* cakes (*maïse* – sorghum – corn, these are all one and the same thing). We climbed into the houses by way of the portable stairs. Although the ovens used for baking cakes have just been described, in one house I did see an iron stove, a portable one, which is heated by coal. I also saw a sewing machine and a nickel-plated bed frame (the bed was without sheets, of course). Manufactured items were incidental, as in Turkish villages. In every house, there were women who were sitting on the floor weaving carpets, there was an irrigation ditch flowing in the corner, and there was also a hand-mill housed there. This is where they prepare corn flour, pulverizing corn by rubbing one stone against another. They treated me to bread and to cakes that were as thin as a sheet of writing paper. I bought a carpet for twelve dollars. The woman who sold it to me said that she had been working on it for three months. Besides seeing Indians riding on horses, I did, nonetheless, see several Indians riding in old makes of cars. Our companion, who had his picture taken with us for seventy-five cents but allowed his daughter to have her picture taken with us for fifty, this descendant of terrifying cannibals and fierce warriors called Hawk Claw,

And so in order to understand the majesty of the Americans’ Grand Canyon, one must descend to the American bottom of the Indians from the Zuni settlement, from their *kishlak*. Americans are absolutely right when they say that America is not only New York, or, alternatively, that America does not reside in New York. In America, there is enlightenment, liberty, and the notion that all people are equal before the law. And, therefore, Indians – these red-skinned people who were here in America, in all likelihood, for a millennium before the Americans arrived – are not considered Americans and are not citizens of the U.S.A. An Indian can only become a citizen of the U.S.A. if he is willing to register himself as such, just like a Pole who has arrived from Lodz. In those places where America was colonized by Northern Europeans – by Saxons, most of all – there are no Indians. They say that the Indians died out. It would be more correct, however, to say that they were excised, that they were massacred. In those places where America was colonized by Spaniards, the Indians remained pure-blooded or else formed an Indo-European mixture, such as the Mexicans, for example, did. Simply put, the Spaniards came to America (as R. M. Blank has recounted) to pillage and plunder. They came without women, counting on returning home after having pillaged and plundered. And they did pillage and plunder as much as they could. As required, they made the Indians into Christians. As far as temperament allowed, they raped Indian women. They were in a hurry, for before they happened upon the Indians they did not have much to keep them busy, neither them nor the Spanish kings, who were supported by the popes in Rome. And yet the Indians somehow managed to survive, acquiring Spanish blood through the Indian women who were raped. The English came to America differently: they came along with their families, they came in Puritan piety for the sake of life eternal. The English came with the unspoken compact to live well in every way possible. So in those places where there were Englishmen, there were no Indians. The good life of the English settlers turned out to be more fatal for the Indians than the violence and rape of the Spaniards. There were still some wars with the Indians in the last century, and if the Indians still remained anywhere, they lived in
quarantine, just as if they were in a zoological garden, in the name of American equality of every kind. Indians live like some sort of museum exhibits that lie on the bottom of Grand-Canyonesque contrasts, where things are the other way around. In any event, there is an Office of Indian Affairs in the U.S.A. that guards and protects Indians.

The Niagara Falls of American minds and wills is majestic.

Let us again recall Pavel Svinin:

“... Amongst the savages who inhabited the lands surrounding Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, many strange and wondrous stories have been preserved about Niagara Falls... I will mention here one true adventure... Several versts upstream from the waterfall, an English Mariner from a warship was travelling along the river. Spotting a beautiful Indian maiden sleeping on the shore, he took it into his head to kidnap her. When the Indian maiden awoke, she decided to hide inside the boat on the shore that her husband was sleeping in. But before she could execute her plan, the Mariner succeeded in cutting the rope that attached the boat to a tree. In an instant, the boat was carried away by the current and soon got pulled into the rapids...”

It was completely natural that the Indian should perish, battered and beaten by the waterfall. Look at how Pavel Svinin writes here in such a Karamzinian way! It turns out that the verb “to kidnap” can be used in the sense of “to rape,” and all of this together is “a strange and wondrous story,” just like “a true adventure.” It is by means of such “adventures” that the Indians have now been herded into menageries, where they are forced into performing in wild beast shows, dancing, like Gypsies, in confirmation of their exoticness.

I will continue the excerpt from Pavel Svirin:

“... The Indian was roused from his sleep by the rocking of the boat. He grabbed the oar and with surprising strength and skill he managed to turn it around. But his strength and skill were futile against the fury of the waves. Foreseeing his inescapable death, he laid down the oar with amazing sangfroid, wrapped himself up inside a leather pelt, and again lay down in the boat, which cascaded down into the abyss and disappeared forever!”

Truly, if there will be Christians living in the Christian heaven, as the wise cacique Hatuey remarked at the bonfire, then it would be better not to enter that paradise... Stop! Don’t go!

I heard a legend about the Indians in America from several political radicals, a legend, it would seem, that is confirmed by the facts. The reader knows that a tenth part of the American population – the Negroes – were brought to America from Africa. Apparently, the idea arose: why travel across the ocean to get slaves, when it’s possible to turn Indians into slaves!? The radicals claimed that the Indians did not become slaves, did not submit to the White man, did not surrender to him their freedom, not these Hawk Claws who died at Niagara Falls, wrapping themselves up in their leather pelts with “amazing sangfroid.” It’s a legend, to be sure, that
follows in the tradition of Mayne Reid. But in what way and under what circumstances do the Indians now find themselves living in the beastly condition of performing in wild beast shows? And why are they not even American citizens!? The Indian Wars ended about fifty years ago. Much has been written about how they died out from natural causes and became extinct, just as did the Zyrian and the Samoyed peoples during the reigns of the Russian emperors. There are three numbers that are curious. It’s not entirely clear to me how the first number arose, but according to the logic of things it has been downplayed: in 1492, there were 846,000 Indians on lands that are presently part of the United States; in 1789, there remained 76,000 Indians; and by 1930 (when for the past century they were no longer slaughtering Indians as diligently), there were 340,541 of them.

It was necessary to descend to the bottom of the Grand Canyon in order to look at Americans from there through the eyes of the Indians. Niagara Falls is truly majestic! Indians resemble cactuses from the sea-bottom of the Arizona desert. If they are still living, they are living in a way that is as unreal as is the cactus desert at the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

America is “the country of a great democracy!” A historical fact all the same remains a fact: the Indians were not constitutional slaves. The Negroes are the ones who became slaves.

Who in the U.S.S.R. knows about the city of Dallas in South Texas (or Tekses)? About fifty years ago, there were about ten thousand people living in this small prairie town. About ten years ago, there were about a hundred and fifty thousand people living there. Today there are slightly less than three hundred thousand inhabitants. This city, which even people in America know little about, has a little more than seventy thousand automobiles, a little more than sixty-five thousand telephones, and a little more than sixty thousand electronic calculators. New construction in this city over the past ten years has cost a little more than three hundred and twenty million dollars. The banks in this city have four hundred million dollars in reserves at their disposal. During the final year of American prosperity, they had a production output valued at three hundred and thirty million dollars for the year and a wholesale trade turnover of one billion, six hundred and eighty million dollars. To the south, the southeast, and the east of this city, abutting the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean, lie the so-called Southern, Negro states. Directly north of Dallas lies the state of Oklahoma and its capital, Oklahoma City. Oklahoma City is already a famous city, having climbed up into the sky with its skyscrapers and billions of dollars. In geo-political terms, this city is much like our Dnepropetrovsk: there is steppe and grain alongside oil, coal, and industry. It’s a city of factories, mines, oil derricks, and workers. And to the north and northeast of Oklahoma, up to Chicago and over to New York, there is industry, industry, and more industry. About seventy years ago, in the days of the Civil War, these places were the watershed, the dividing line between the North and the South.

The state of Mississippi is entirely covered with subtropical thickets and factories. It lies upon a multitude of rivers and rivulets overgrown with trees; it’s a place where people are almost not to be seen and where the Mississippi River flows majestically in its riverbed. Its forests – God knows what kinds of trees these are: their branches, which look like liana vines that have
become overgrown with gray beards of moss, stretch down to the ground and they get
entangled with – as well as they themselves entangle – everything that lies beneath them.\textsuperscript{332}

The state of Tennessee rises up from the Mississippi River onto hillocks. This is that very
remarkable state where several years ago a court ruled that man does not descend from the
ape.\textsuperscript{333} The court said in addition that to assert otherwise is a crime punishable by a prison
sentence.

New Orleans is a port that trades in cotton, cane sugar, and bananas. It occupies first place in
the world in the trade of these items. Cotton in America is being eaten up not by worms, but
by the financial crisis. At one time the city belonged to the French. This is the city to which
the Huguenots fled,\textsuperscript{334} and to which the enemies, and later the friends, of Napoleon fled.
American skyscrapers come crawling out from under French antiquity, blanketing and
deafening the narrow French back streets below, which are lined with trellises and jalousies.
The port lies upon the Mississippi River; it emits smoke, as do all ports. The residential back
streets are drowning in flowers and prostitution. The shops were tumbling down and
collapsing under the weight of bananas, apricots, cherries the size of walnuts, and other
obscure types of fruit that are unknown to me. It turns out, by the way, that bananas do grow
on trees, or – to express it more accurately – on logs.\textsuperscript{335} Rue Lafayette is overgrown with
skyscrapers and flooded with lights at least as much as New York is, so that red hot
\textit{niagaras}\textsuperscript{336} of burning light fall there and red hot female nudes (\textit{nues}) dance there.

Thus, we are in the South, in the land of Negroes. Both in Dallas and in Baton Rouge, and in
New Orleans, there are two sections on the streetcars – one for \textit{kolernye} [colored] people, and
the other for “White” people. Negroes work at picking cotton in the fields, which are made up
of small parcels of land in the midst of forests. I didn’t see any White people working in the
fields. Many times I did see White people overseeing the work of the Negroes and supervising
them. These White people were dressed all in white – in white helmets, in white gaiters – and
in the hands of each of them, there is a stick. In all of the Southern states, especially in the
state of Tennessee, the Ku-Klux-Klan\textsuperscript{337} and Judge Lynch’s court\textsuperscript{338} are still “working” to this
day.

The Ku-Klux-Klan. In the 1870s, after the war between the Northern States and the Southern
States, which was, in essence, a war of the Southern White man from Europe’s aristocratic-
agricultural class, which had been frightened by the European revolutions, against Northern
industry, which at that time had already come into being, a war, by the way, that was begun by
the Southerners, and not by the Northerners, and, therefore, that had not in any way arisen
under the slogan of liberating the Negroes from slavery, after this Civil War, the defeated
Southern States organized a secret society to wage battle against the Negroes. That secret
society was called the Ku-Klux-Klan. The members of this society were slave owners. If I
may be so bold as to say, this society, which was considered to be, as is befitting, a semi-
mystical and clandestine one, concerned itself largely with “nonsense,” as certain historians
attest, such as frightening Negroes at midnight with white hooded smocks. At the same time,
this “nonsense” sometimes turned out to be the murders of Negro social activists. The
“society” set as its goal proving the remarkable truth that White people were superior to Black
people. The Ku-Klux-Klan had lived itself out and would have died out completely by the mid
1890s, but in 1920, with the beginning of the agricultural crisis, the Ku-Klux-Klan was resurrected. This took place in the midst of very bombastic *publìsiti*, at a time when the hooded smocks of Ku-Klux-Klan members were on display at all of the clothing stores and when commission agents were driving around cities and towns advertising clearance sales of Ku-Klux-Klan membership cards. Nowadays, the Ku-Klux-Klan is no longer a semi-mystical organization, but simply a fascist one that exists for the confirmation not only of “White” superiority over the Negroes, but also for White Guard superiority more generally, concerning itself with the denial of rights for all those who were “non-Whites.”

Lynch’s court. This is a court without a trial, a court without justice.³⁴⁰ This is an instance of mob rule³⁴¹ that never gets to court, because the police take part in these instances of mob rule. They find a murdered person (or persons), but it turns out that there is no murderer. Lynch’s court “judges” only Negroes. The standard reason for holding a trial is the assertion made by a White person, with no evidence or proof required, that the Negro person so-and-so seems to have made an attempt upon the honor of this White person’s great-aunt or first cousin once removed. At that point, the Negro is beaten up by a crowd. This is Lynch’s court. Then they place the Negro on the electric chair. This is the court of the city of Scottsboro.³⁴² As is clear from reading the newspaper accounts, one can try in court not only the Negro who “seems” to have made this attempt upon a White woman’s honor, but also this Negro’s Black neighbor instead of him. By the way, as far as the attempt upon a woman’s “honor” is concerned, every White male in America who is prone to debauchery has possessed and enjoyed a female Negro’s “honor” for two dollars. Negro males possess and enjoy the “honor” of American White women only in Paris. From the days following the war, the business of providing sexual services has become the custom there, whereby White scoundrels employ Negro men for the purpose of male prostitution. These Negro men attend to the sexual needs of American ladies who are staying at the Ritz Hotel in Paris.³⁴³ These American Negro men are hired because they can speak English.

American schools and universities for White people only are located in gardens, in the light, in the sun. A grade school is invariably the best building in the community. A university is not a university but a monastic retreat for learning. What equipment they have! What academic resources! This, of course, does not impede the tradition whereby one must ask a student not what department he is studying in and so on.³⁴⁵ So I was once at an agricultural college in one of the Southern states. This college was for White people only. What classrooms they had! What a library! The labs, the dining hall, the gym! What experimental fields!

We were being escorted on our tour by two professors. These two professors set off with us to visit a neighboring farm, one that was being cultivated by *kroppery* [sharecroppers], by Negroes who were tenant farmers.

On our drive out to this farm, we approached a manor house amid the trees. Located in the thick bushes of a garden, this house looked like a French-style chateau. The owner, sitting under an umbrella on the terrace, was rocking back and forth in a rocking chair, which is an American invention. He was smoking a cigar. A good-natured and hefty man, he put on a white helmet and set off with us on a tour of the farm.
He explained to us that he owns a thousand acres of land, but there is a crisis in nature, and cotton is not providing any profit, so he intends to change the principles of his farming. Rather than growing cotton, he is planning to develop a farm for breeding chickens and rabbits. But for the present, while the crisis is still just a crisis, he is going to continue planting cotton, for he has twenty families of Negro sharecroppers working for him. They are living on his land and in his houses. They receive from him a mule, cotton seeds, a plow, and acres of land. They till the soil, sow the seeds, harvest the crops, and give the owner two thirds of the harvest. The owner-daddy does not trouble the Negroes with having to sell their third of the harvest: he sells it for them. He does this with care and with an open heart.

The owner-daddy informed us that sometimes he strolls past the fields, like he was doing now with us, so that he could check to see whether the Negroes are working hard. I recalled the sensations I had experienced during those moments when I saw overseers in the fields.

And the Negroes – do they work! Children from the age of five start picking cotton in the fields. The women, out of well-meaning, friendly motives on their part, wash Daddy’s laundry in the kitchen and cut the flowers in his garden. Daddy is a corpulent man with an obviously stocky physique. I requested that he take us to see the hamlet where the Negroes lived. Daddy eagerly agreed. The two professors got embarrassed and started assuring us that there was really nothing for us to see there: they were Negroes, they said, so of course it was very dirty and turbid there.

We got into the cars and drove past the cotton fields. When we arrived, we stopped near some sort of wooden shack that turned out to be a Negro’s house, truly a “cabin.”346 The “cabin” was made out of plywood. Instead of windows, there were cardboard boxes of various colors stuck into the outside wall. Opposite the house was a clay tub with water in it. A smoke stack had been attached to the outside wall of the house. Above the house drooped the branches of a marvelous tree that was unfamiliar to me.

A very aged and deaf old woman came out to meet us. Daddy started giving her orders with the tone of voice of a deity.

The two professors moved off to the side. The old woman stood there obediently, not saying anything to contradict him. The owner wished to go inside his own “house,” one that he himself owned. We went inside.

The “cabin” was divided into two boxes. Both boxes were bedrooms with beds inside them but without any kind of linens for the bedding. In one of the boxes, on a dirt floor, there was the hollow of a hearth whose stove pipe receded into the wall.

I asked how many people lived here. Daddy reported that five adults, two families, lived there.

I requested that he show us some other houses. Daddy advised against our doing that, saying ingenuously that it was hot and that all the houses were of the same type as this one. Cracks in the walls of the house were puttied over with clay. The clay was made out of mud and soot. The old woman was dressed in truly tattered rags. Daddy invited us to return to his house to
drink some whiskey and soda. A financial crisis, he says, is a financial crisis, but whiskey for
dear guests is always at hand in his home.

After taking our final leave of the stocky Daddy, we drove on farther.

I called forth in the two professors their instincts for true erudition and scholarship. They told
me that 60 to 70 percent of the Black sharecroppers live exactly this same way and that last
winter many of the sharecroppers died of starvation. The young professor lapsed into a
philosophical mood. The Negroes themselves are guilty, he says, for their swinish existence.
They, he says, are almost not even human beings. The Negroes, he says, find all of this to be
normal, and it all occurs due to their lack of diligence. This is a racial characteristic of theirs,
the fact that they are only half-human.

That same day, we visited a Negro school with these same two professors. Once again, there
was a plywood box leading into one single room, which was filled with antediluvian desks that
had preserved on them many generations of inscriptions made by the pen knives of schoolboys.
Besides the desks, there was – either in the classroom itself or in the plywood box leading into
it – a table for the teacher, an empty bookcase, and a Russian potbelly stove\textsuperscript{347} from the years
of War Communism,\textsuperscript{348} which is used for heating during the winter months. These items were
located either in the classroom or in the plywood box that led to it. A colorful bouquet of
flowers was glowing on the teacher’s desk. The little kids stood up in front of us in silence.

There were fifty-nine of these little kids being taught here, kids of all ages together, in this one
classroom- plywood box. The one person who was teaching all of them, and who taught all the
class levels at the same time, was a woman, a Negro woman, of course. The teacher was
wearing torn stockings on her legs. The teacher’s eyes were frightened. This teacher had
received a higher education.

We expressed our gratitude and said goodbye to the two professors who had shown us the
remarkably well equipped agricultural institute.

I had visited another American school for Negroes near New Orleans. We had been met there
by a Negro teacher. I stretched out my hand to him. The teacher was at a loss as to what to do.
He was about to pull back his hand, but then he tightly and nearly hysterically squeezed my
hand with both of his. This was the first time in his life that a White man had stretched out his
hand to shake hands with him, a Negro teacher!

I came down with malaria while I was in the Southern states. It happened one evening when I
started feeling chilly, feverish, and asthmatic in the subtropical climate. There are no periods
of twilight in the subtropics: day changes immediately into night there. In those Mississippi
woods, perceptions of the cosmos get muddled because, on the ground, stars appear to be
larger than they are up in the sky, even in the subtropics. On the ground, in the fields between
the trees, stars occasionally begin to resemble a cosmic blizzard with cosmic collisions: stars
would fly around by the billions. These stars were actually nighttime insects that were flying
around, luminescent like stars. We were driving along a remote, desolate country road.
Isidore was doing the driving. Isidore said that we were running out of gas, so we turned off
the road and headed to a small Negro settlement that was tucked away under some trees. Negro shacks stood there in the dark. Admixed to the stars in the sky, to the stars beneath the trees, were the red dots of light coming from hearths. My arms and legs were aching from fever. The smells of the subtropics were splitting my skull, making my head ache. On the ground, the stars were muddling my perceptions of the cosmos. All night, all night long, we sat there on a small log in this Negro hamlet. All night long we listened to Negroes singing as a choir. I fancy that I have never heard anything better. This singing was coming from those same Negroes to whom White people do not extend their hands and whom White people protect and defend by means of the Ku-Klux-Klan, but whose music, which has been profaned and degraded by taverns, whiskey, and prostitution, White people claim as their own national music. In Russia, there is a poet whose fate preordains the fate of all Russian literature. The name of this poet is Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin.\[349\] Non-Russian literatures scarcely know Pushkin, this Russian genius. Unlike Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, he has not entered into universal, worldwide art. In that Negro school that the two professors from the agricultural college had taken me to visit, I saw on the wall a portrait of Alexander Sergeyevich. Two peoples in the world honor and revere Pushkin as their native genius: Russians and Negroes. And Negroes honor and revere Pushkin rightfully: I was witness to the singing that night, so I can vouch for that. But if Pushkin were alive today and if he were now to come to America, people would not shake his hand because a person who has a Negro as a grandfather is not, by American notions, a human being!

Political radicals from New York, who honor and revere the legend about the love of freedom among Indians and who are faithful to the precepts of Abraham Lincoln, send those people who wish to see the ugly, shameful attitudes that Americans have toward Negroes to visit the South. They do this in vain, for there is no less ugliness and shamefulness in New York. While I was in New York, specifically at the Hotel St. Moritz, some communist journalists stopped by to see me. Amongst them, there was a Negro journalist. The hotel administration refused to allow him to see me. I started to raise a ruckus, threatening to leave the hotel immediately. The administration explained that it was not them, they said, that was against it. This was not allowed, they said, because no guest would want to stay in the hotel. This Negro journalist made his way to my hotel room by taking the back elevator.\[350\] After I had moved to a private residence in New York and I started to make some Negro friends, these new friends of mine – they were writers and artists – would not come by to see me because they ran the risk of not being allowed to take the elevator in a “White” building. And I was powerless to do anything about it.

What a talented, emotional people Negroes are! Negroes are distinguished from Americans, of course, by their emotionality. And it is absolutely true that the main American deity and Nietzschean – the almighty dollar – is not worth a plug nickel as far as Negroes are concerned. Many times Negroes have placed their fates on the scales of American history. Negroes were brought to this country by Americans for the first time in 1619. A painting that depicts this episode is preserved in Philadelphia. It hangs in the museum at Carpenters’ Hall.\[351\] Carpenters’ Hall is the building in which George Washington, on July 4, 1776, declared the independence of the United States. Negroes were brought to this country in exchange for rum. In 1713, the English Queen Anne announced her monopoly over the slave trade. By this time, the state of Virginia was itself already engaged in slave breeding. The decree about the
queen’s monopoly was one of the flies in the ointment of the English kingdom (not the decisive flies, but flies nonetheless), prompting the Americans to secede from England. The American historian and political scientist, President Woodrow Wilson, maintained that America did not know feudal and gentry culture, having begun its existence straight away as a bourgeois democracy. Graphic proof of this is provided by the slave breeding that was set up scientifically and capitalistically, and that was rationalized, as hog breeding farms and the hog slaughterhouses in Chicago, for example, are now being rationalized. The science of slave breeding was worked out scientifically. It adapted itself to reality on the latifundia of the English nobles who fled from England during the time of Cromwell’s revolution and of the French Huguenots who, in their turn, likewise demonstrated graphically the absence of feudalism in America. The political historian and president, Woodrow Wilson, recounted how the war between the Northern States and the Southern States, which had begun formally due to the violation of the principles of the unity of the states, was essentially a war for the emancipation of the Negroes. Therefore, the historical information of a factual kind is as follows: the war was begun not by the Northern States but by the Southern States, which fired upon Fort Sumter; Fort Sumter was shelled on April 12, 1861, and it was only after two years of the Civil War, beginning on January 1, 1863, that the owning of Negroes was abolished by President Abraham Lincoln; the war was concluded in 1864 with the victory of the Northerners, when the Commander-in-Chief of the Southern Armies, General Lee, was defeated for the first time, and when the fortified city of Vicksburg, one of the citadels of the South, surrendered to the North – at that time there was a very broad wave of insurgency at the rear of the Northern armies, begun in New York, on the home front, a wave of rebellions and protests against the North took place, demonstrations that expressed sympathy for the South – in New York, in particular, military commissions fulminated against Negroes and hunted them down, as if they were wild dogs, burning down entire blocks of slave quarters. These are the facts. In this war, the capitalism and industry of the North were fighting against the feudalism of the South.

Woodrow Wilson, the historian, wrote:

“... It was a singular and noteworthy thing, the while, how little the quiet labor of the negroes was disturbed by the troubles of the time and by the absence of their masters. No rumor of the emancipation proclamation seemed to reach the southern country-sides. No sign of the revolution that was at hand showed itself upon the surface of southern life. Gentlewomen presided still with unquestioned authority upon the secluded plantations, – their husbands, brothers, sons, men and youths alike, gone to the front. Great gangs of cheery negroes worked in the fields, planted and reaped and garnered and did their lonely mistresses’ bidding in all things without restlessness, with quiet industry, with show of faithful affection even. No distemper touched them; no breath of violence or revolt stirred amongst them. There was, it seemed, no wrong they fretted under or wished to see righted.”

Strangely enough, this American historian and president does not know – and yet I, a foreigner, do know – that the Negroes of the South turned to Abraham Lincoln and petitioned him to accept them into the army. But the president rejected their petition “with moral horror,” as was
reported in the newspapers at the time. How did this historian manage to forget that the officers on the command staff of the Northern armies treated Negroes no better than Southerners did, and that in the citadel of the North, in New York, as we just said, there was a pogrom launched against Negroes? How is it that facts that are known to me are not known to an American historian? The fact, for instance, that Negroes nonetheless had a hand in the action, such as the destruction of the Southern cities of Buford and Nashville by Negroes? And, moreover, that Negroes, in their turn, were likewise annihilated, just as these cities had been? The historian Woodrow Wilson would have been right if he had maintained that Negroes were not given the right to take part in the war, because even the freedom-loving President Abraham Lincoln suppressed this right “with moral horror.” And the historian would have been right if he had said, on the other hand, that Negroes did not take part in the war because they were kicked and beaten to the point where they were treated no better than dogs, truly no better than watchdogs in a courtyard.

From the days of the Civil War to the year 1931, slightly less than seventy years have passed, seventy years that Negroes have been protected and defended by the Ku-Klux-Klan. And I met a Negro teacher, for whom I was the first non-Negro to shake his hand. Americans from the Ku-Klux-Klan will maintain that Negroes, in general, are not human beings. Americans even in New York grant Negroes a semi-canine standing in society. Seventy years ago, Negroes were emancipated from slavery the same way that a proprietor would chase a dog out of his courtyard. I have already recounted how the mass of Negroes live. Negroes were emancipated with a rate of illiteracy of one hundred percent.

During the past seventy years, Negroes, even sharecroppers in the South, were able to create their own intelligentsia, literature, and theatre, and produce their own lawyers, doctors, and engineers. White people did nothing for Negroes! Pushkin, if he were alive today and if he were now to come to New York, White people there would not shake his hand. That night, when I listened to the Negro songs, and when on the ground there was a blizzard of stars and the ground smelled of the sub tropics, nights like that endured and were transported to New York, to Harlem, to that strange and wondrous city of Negroes inside New York City. It’s a city that comes to life at night, and it’s hard to understand when it sleeps, what with all the music, merriment, laughter, singing, and dancing. I don’t know whether it’s by way of race or history, whether it’s on the basis of societal laws or biological ones, but Negroes really do possess some salient differences from White Americans. I would say that they are different in terms of their humanitarian gifts and natural endowments. Every Negro is, first of all, musical. The main American deity and Nietzschean – the almighty dollar – is in no way dearer and more precious to a Negro than an hour of good music, the well-thumbed pages of a Negro magazine, a good dance, a good conversation with a friend. That’s how it is for a Negro, and this is incomprehensible for a White American. And Harlem is not yet as multi-storied as the rest of New York, nor is it as flooded with light along its side streets: it sings, it laughs, it makes merry, it smokes cigarettes.

I used to go visit a young dramatist, named Regina Andrews. Her play was being staged at one of the Harlem theaters. Her husband was a lawyer. Despite the fact that her plays were being staged in Harlem (her plays were performed in a new innovative theater there), she nonetheless worked daun-taun [downtown], that is, in New York City, the city of White
people, as a librarian. When I went to visit her for the first time, she, her husband, and some of their friends were playing catch near the apartment building where they lived. They were standing there as a quadrangle, throwing a baseball around to each other. Whenever I used to come by to see them, I felt the whole time that the traditions of Russian students prior to 1905 were being repeated. People ended up sitting on tables and squatting in front of doors because of the crowdedness and their lack of standoffishness. And their conversations were truly student-like. What a cheerful, affable, comradely people Negroes are! And what a carefree people, because this one forgot something, that one was late, another one had just spent two days at a friend’s house, where he got so carried away by a book he was reading that he laid aside everything else in the world on account of it. This was a circle of friends that included only three of us “White” people. I am ashamed to say that these Negro friends of mine never came to my place to see me. We always met either in Harlem or in Greenwich Village at the home of Ellen Weiner, a journalist. At Weiner’s salon, there were times when we wouldn’t find the mistress at home, but we would find Walter and Thomas there. They were two inseparable friends, one an actor, the other a poet, both of them Negroes. And they always had books and journals with them (they were innovators, they were Mayakovsky and Meyerhold in their younger years!). And the things they were concerned with: we must digest James Joyce and assimilate him in Negro literature; we must destroy our enemy so-and-so, who wrote at once a pamphlet and a manifesto in his journal of art and literature; we must clarify our point of view in relation to this young poet of ours, so-and-so, who transports Marcel Proust’s principle of “primitive sensations” into the domain of poetry and who wants to be at once a poet and a revolutionary. To be a revolutionary means to be a communist. To be a communist means, in part, to work out a moral philosophy, to work out the principles and the rules of behavior as well as the rules that should govern one’s attitude toward people. These two friends would spend hours trying to resolve the question whether under communism – when communism will have spread across the entire world – will there remain at that time or will there not remain scoundrels? There were so many interesting things they would concern themselves with! But if you happened to be in Harlem, somewhere in a basement or in a courtyard, in a small, open-air restaurant, why wouldn’t you, in that case, dance to your heart’s content and sing a little!? And why wouldn’t you later leave for home with ten other people crammed into a car that was a four-seater?

The grandfathers of Regina Andrews, Walter, and Thomas were slaves. White people even now do not shake their hands. Negroes have many times laid their fates on the scales of American history. The Negro intelligentsia seems to me to be an intelligentsia that has not an American basis, but a European one. But if this intelligentsia were to turn out to be not a Negro one, but a . . . in the city of Dallas, there are so many electronic calculators, so many telephones and automobiles. Negroes work in the factories in the city of Dallas and sharecroppers live on the plantations that surround the city of Dallas . . . ten percent of all American workers are Negroes. It’s completely natural that “a White person does white work, and a Black person does black work” (Mayakovsky).

Once, in 1928, the League of Negro Workers in the city of Milwaukee invited the Milwaukee chapter of the Socialist Party to its conference for the creation of a united front. The “socialists” declined the invitation, informing the League of Negro Workers that the Negro movement is not a labor movement, but a racial one.
In New York, if you wish to find some American rare book or some art supplies, you’ll find them in shops that are appropriate for this. In Greenwich Village, they will show you Indian carpets and Indian vases. If you get interested in American national dance or American national music, they will show you the foxtrot and jazz, they will show you saxophones, ukuleles, and banjos.

And so, America is a “great” “democracy,” a country of equality for different nationalities. America is enlightenment and law! . . .

From the gold wash plants in the Rocky Mountains (which are now silent) – from the town of Kingman in those same mountains, across the prairie states (where there is grain, grain, and more grain, where there are grain elevators on the horizon, grain silos, windmills, water towers, farm machinery of incredible constructions and designs, long-eared mules, and steppe that stretches like a tablecloth), through the cities of Albuquerque, Dallas, and Rutledge, from the city of Baton Rouge through Washington to Boston, to the farthest northeast point in the U.S.A. – I witnessed the same thing throughout all of America. It was there in California and in the state of Utah. It was there in the state of Michigan, near the Great Lakes. It was there in the state of Florida. It was there in the state of Connecticut. It is more than just the national flag, which, as we know, consists of stars and stripes made out of madras material. It exists beneath the American flag. It is, evidently, stronger than all of America’s automotive and other locomotive forces taken together. It is: the p-h-i-l-i-s-t-i-n-e!

I realized this while I was staying in the town of Kingman, Arizona, which is located in the Wild West, in the Black Mountains in those selfsame gold-and-silver-wash places that are enveloped by the romanticism of novels about gold digging, about wild mustangs and cowboys. We made an overnight stop in that town, staying in a motel named Kommershel [Commercial], where I wrote on my typewriter. I moved the beds aside, then I sat down on one of them, and set my typewriter down on the other one. In this town, there are only two streets in all, each of them intersecting the other crosswise. Life takes place at this intersection. The restaurant in town is maintained by a Chinese man who reprised in America the anecdote told by Aleksei Tolstoy:373

“What do you serve here?”
“We serve everything here!”
“Do you serve such-and-such here?”
“That we do not serve.”
“So what do you serve here?”
“We serve everything here!”
“Do you serve such-and-such here?”
“That we do not serve.”
And so on and so forth, ad infinitum, until he gets to beef steaks. The largest building in town – the movie house – is located at this intersection. Across from the movie house, there is a drugstore. Postcards, sewing machines, and refrigerators are displayed in its store window. Out on the street, there is not a single horse, but there are some automobiles parked opposite the palisades, and some evening-time companions are having a conversation on a bench near the gates. Near the movie house, there is a crowd of about a dozen and a half people of all ages, standing mainly in pairs. They are listening to the outpourings of screen actors that can be heard out on the street, for the movie is a talkie. But beyond this, everything is deathly silent, both the town itself and my motel, as well as the mountains all around. Conversations around the palisades can be heard until ten o’clock at night. After ten, everything, along with the movie house, totally dies down. I walked down a back street from my motel to the movie house and made some discoveries. In the store window of the drugstore, in addition to the refrigerators and postcards, pendants for watches were also displayed. I bought myself a pendant and a postcard. On this postcard, there was a color photograph of a young man with a mustache whose eyes are lifted upwards. He’s sitting at a table, dressed in a colored suit that had been sewn by a tailor of average skill. This colorized young man from the postcard is smoking, and out of the colorized smoke of his cigarette there arise female features and a female head. The young man was looking into the lens of the camera. This postcard was called \textit{amor mio} – “my love.” I admired this postcard for a long time and examined most attentively the pendant, the horseshoe of family happiness. Goodness gracious! – Looking at those pendants, why, I knew what kind of soup was being served in that house behind the palisade, and in that other house over there, the one without any palisade! – Goodness gracious! – Why, I have known all this for a very long time! – Why, this isn’t the town of Kingman in America, but rather the town of Katrinenshtadt beyond the Volga River, the town of German colonists in the Volga region from the days before the Revolution, from the days of my childhood! – Why, this is Baronsk (also called Katrinenshtadt), the birthplace of my father, where in 1931 my grandmother, Frau Anna Vogau, a full-blooded German woman, died. She was about as much a Russian as she was an American! My ancestors – who were Germans – came to Russia, to the Trans-Volga region, during the reign of Catherine the Great, following the Seven Years War in Germany. They came to Russia at the same time, following the Seven Years War, when waves of Europeans were leaving Europe to come to America. I looked at the pendants in the store window of the drugstore in the town of Kingman, these were the same pendants that I had seen in my childhood, in Karle’s store in Katrinenshtadt. And I knew that tomorrow, at six-thirty in the morning, the thin-voiced bell on the church steeple would sound, and the entire colony would sit down at table in their homes to be fed. Papa John would give his son Jack a pendant for his watch as a Christmas gift. And that last week the judge’s sister-in-law had a bout of diarrhea because she had drunk a glass of cold milk right after eating some banana compote! . . . At twelve o’clock the cathedral bell would chime noon, and the entire colony would sit down for dinner at twelve fifteen. And the wheel-wright’s wife would announce to her husband that the mayor’s wife had bought herself two chickens today. And the mayor’s wife would tell her husband in secret that the manufacturer Theodore Becker was seen once again in the movie house with the wife of the office manager at the bank – no good will come of that! . . . At six-thirty in the evening the cathedral bell, with its thin-voiced peal, will proclaim that it is evening time. The entire colony will be eating supper. And after supper the wheel-wright will go to the gates of the cooper’s house to smoke a pipe of rest and relaxation and to chat with him a little about how things are.
going badly with him. The mayor’s wife will stop her car for a minute across from the windows of the home of the office manager at the bank and discuss with his wife yesterday’s motion picture, adding quite unexpectedly that, as a result of the financial crisis, manufacturer Becker’s business affairs, it seems, are not going very well, and that Mister Becker himself, by the way, is very good-looking, and might not the missus, the wife of the office manager at the bank, stop by the day after tomorrow for five o’clock tea when the manufacturer Becker will be there?

The philistine, the shallow middle-class Babbitt, the petit bourgeois! He is the one who has taken a seat and settled himself down comfortably behind the stereotypes of American well-being and behind the American flag, which consists of stars and stripes made out of a type of madras material. This philistine, he is everywhere – in California, in Utah, in Oklahoma, in Richmond, in the Bronx and Brooklyn, in Boston. He is the one who has written witticisms on the welcome signs that greet motorists when they are entering a city or town, witticisms such as the following one, written on the welcome sign for one of the towns in Texas:

“Welcome! If you wish to discover the charms of our town, you will abide by all our speed limits and driving regulations! If you wish to become acquainted with the shortcomings of our jail, you will violate our speed limits and driving regulations!

The Mayor’s Office”

He is the one who brought us into contact with the woman in the Bronx park, the woman who was puzzled why her husband had left her, even though she never drank or smoked and even though she was a true and faithful Christian woman. He is the one – the philistine, the shallow middle-class Babbitt, the petit bourgeois, the consumer of the products of the American film industry, the third leading industry in America, with regard to which people quip that if the American worker wouldn’t have had the extra ten cents he needed to go to the movies, then there would already have been socialism in America a long time ago and there would not have been any gangsterism.

The philistine! The shallow, middle-class Babbitt! – yes, he makes up the largest part of the America that I found in my search for America, a search that I undertook at the prompting of those who told me that New York is not America. He makes up the largest part of the America of all sorts of middl’i [middles] and meinstrity [main streets] and golden means – the America of the shallow, middle-class Babbitt, who knows what is for supper at his neighbor’s house, who reads (or at least maintains that he reads) the Bible every day. It’s no accident that across all of America, that within all of America, there is not a single hotel room where a Bible is not sitting inside the night stand! This is the America of the petty, small-minded transgressor, the petty, small-minded swindler, who reads the Bible and the commandments of American pioneering. This is the America of the pater familias, dressed in a pull-over sweater knitted for him by his eldest daughter, the America of that father’s son with his pendant watches. The philistine! The shallow, middle-class Babbitt! – Sinclair Lewis depicted him ingeniously, this American philistine. He is an international phenomenon, this shallow, middle-class Babbitt. The Soviet reader knows all about him from the enormous amount of European literature that
has spilled its ink in describing this petty, philistine *vobla*. This shallow, middle-class Babbitt is terrifying: he has been made a fool, duped by the barber shops and hair salons of God into fitting the convenient, familiar pattern of the *vobla*, the pattern of stereotypes and clichés, of half-baked knowledge, of petty satiety, of petty instincts, of petty contentment. And this petty philistine is himself terrified, for beyond the *vobla*-esque barber shops and hair salons of stereotypes and clichés, he is all alone, he is lonely in this enormous country of loneliness, this enormous country of the “individualistic” anarchy of conveyor belts called America.

This shallow, middle-class Babbitt is protected and defended by the stereotypes and clichés of American “democracy,” by legends about individual freedom, by dreams of becoming a millionaire, by the fear and courage of loneliness, by the notion of health and well-being as having a full stomach.

The periodical *Liberty*, the leading weekly magazine in America, which is published in New York, once pulled a stunt when it wanted to find out what American honesty was really like. The editors sent out letters in a hundred envelopes, each with five dollars inside, to different kinds of Americans: five to congressmen, five to bishops, five to manufacturers, five to shopkeepers, farmers, workers, and so on. Along with the editors, I would now consciously place workers in last place. All of this was being done in a conspiratorial way. The letters were delivered to exact addresses. The congressmen received these letters directly into their own hands, without their secretaries knowing. Each letter was composed in such a way that the person who received it evidently saw that there were dollars inside the envelope and saw that the letter and the dollars had been sent to him by mistake. In each letter there was a return address provided to which one could send these dollars back. To the congressmen, in particular, it was written: “Highly respected so-and-so” – his full name was written here – “last week you helped me, a poor man, pay for automotive repairs on the highway, and therefore I am returning to you . . .” and so on. The congressmen on that very date were at work, running the government. The editors intended to examine the nature of American honesty by tracking the return of these incorrectly sent five dollars and entering the results on the pages of their magazine. Not a word about these dollar bills having purportedly been sent by mistake to the wrong person appeared ahead of time on the pages of *Liberty*. Out of these one hundred people, only three returned their five dollars. They were two workers and one provincial small shopkeeper. In the order of American honesty, workers turned out to be . . . in last place!

In my trek across America, it was only natural that I would be called upon to visit several dozen post offices and telegraph offices. The telegraph service in America is a private enterprise, with two companies competing against each other. But the problem is not the telegraph service, with whose help, by means of a telegram, one can send flowers and neckties from Los Angeles to New York to esteemed ladies or to respected parents as holiday gifts. What is being sent cross country by the telegraph service in such instances are not neckties, of course, and not flowers, but photographs of them. The thing is that in every post office there is a window where the photographs are displayed – in full-face and in profile – of those people whom the federal police, as well as the state police, are trying to catch. And beneath each photograph there is an inscription stating that a reward of a certain amount of dollars, ranging
from the hundreds to the thousands, depending on the nature of the crimes committed by the suspects that the police are looking for, will be given to the person who catches them.

In my trek across America, naturally enough, I saw a multitude of provincial cities. They were all built according to a certain standard. In the center of the city – the business part – there were two or three very tall buildings, auto supply stores, movie houses, banks, gasoline suffocation, noise, and congestion. This part of the city is called the business section. All around this section of the city there are two-story cottages, adorned with flower beds and resting beneath shady trees, with verandas facing the street and with swings on a footpath. These cottages are designed with all the philistine, shall we say, coziness of a stencil.

So we arrived at a certain craggy locale, called New York, where skyscrapers protrude into the sky with their crags. We find examples of such places in nature in Siberia, where the earth bulges out with deposits that contain within themselves helium, uranium, and radium salts. Nothing lives there – not a single blade of grass, not a single animal, not a single bird. They have all been killed off by the alpha-beta-gamma rays of radium. The snow melts there in the winter; there is death there. Indeed, just imagine for a minute that human life has left New York. New York, however, would live on in the very same way that it lives when human beings are there – there is not a single animal, not a single wolf, that would go to this craggy locale, craggy and pitted with caves that are so large that they continue beneath the Hudson River. No animal would go to this locale, one that has suffocated from gas, a locale without a single blade of grass on the concrete and iron. It would be terrifying for a wolf on these rocks. The wolf would find it stifling and hard to breathe from the gas and coal suffocation. The nerves of the wolf would be frayed from the rumble of the city and from the millions of those radio waves, both long and short ones, that permeate and enmesh the city, enmeshing it with advertising, with music, with the speeches of President Hoover about prosperity.

The wolf, for all we know, would contract a case of bear’s disease from all the things that are taking place in this craggy, unnatural locale, which is situated on the Indian island of Manhattan!

We must assume that the wolf would run for his life, fleeing from this locale at breakneck speed, from one end of America to the other. He would race across Canada in one fell swoop. He would turn up exhausted, with his tongue hanging down below his ear, in Alaska. But in Alaska the wolf would find the common life and native customs depicted by Jack London and improved upon by O. Henry.

One evening in New York, Joe and I were driving down Sixth Avenue. We were planning to go to Greenwich Village, to the New York City block of antique shops, art, and bohemianism, to meet with Michael Gold. I was driving the car in accordance with all the American rules of the road. I was going at the normal speed, proceeding at green lights. Sixth Avenue – this very horrible street of suffocation by gas fumes – is, as we know, a two-story street. An elevated train speeds along the second story. The second story rests upon the first story, which supports it by means of a row of columns. People must cross streets in New York only at corners and only with a green light. Out from behind a column, by no means at the
corner, a woman walked out into the traffic, two steps away from the headlights of my car. She was walking against a red light. I honked the horn. But the woman didn’t hear it. All of this happened instantaneously. I jumped out of my car and hurried over to help the woman. I drove her to the hospital. Her right arm and collarbone were broken. Her face had struck against the headlight, and glass from the headlight had torn her face to shreds. The woman was sixty-eight years old, and she was deaf. She had not heard my horn. This was just my luck! I had survived the Imperialist War, the October Revolution, and the Civil War. I had traveled all over the northern hemisphere of the globe without causing anyone to have as much as a black eye, and now here, on Sixth Avenue . . .

The doctor, who was applying dressings to the woman’s wounds and examining her injuries, would come out every two minutes and announce:

“Her collarbone is broken.”
“Her right arm is broken.”
“They just took x-rays of her cranium: her skull is not broken.”
“Now we’re examining her legs.”

The doctor reported that he loved such-and-such brand of cigars, so I sent for cigars. When I was leaving, together with the policemen, to go to the police station, the doctor held his hand, smeared with blood, up to my eyes and started quickly rubbing his thumb against his index finger, middle finger, and ring finger. I gave him some money. The policemen were outraged at this.

At the police station they investigated my eksident [accident], as they say there apropos of automobile collisions. They returned to me my motor vehicle documents, and they said, as I already reported earlier,389 in a truly American way:

“Mister Pilnyak ran over the lady while following all the traffic regulations. The lady is the guilty party in this eksident. And, therefore, Mister Pilnyak can demand restitution from the lady for the cost for repair of the headlight that was shattered when it struck against her head.”

They let me off without any punishment and with playful jokes. One of the policemen asked me to drive him back to his post and got up on the running board of the car. When we were saying good-bye, he made the very same gesture with his fingers in front of my nose that the doctor had made.

I learned how to drive an automobile mainly during my trek across America. But I had received my laisens [license] – a document giving me the right to drive a car – in New York. When I was getting ready to acquire this document, I asked how this is done. Experts in this matter asked me in turn: do I really want to take an exam or do I want to receive the document without an exam? The building for the offices of local government in the city of New York – siti-kholl [city hall] – is a majestic building with many entrances. And these entrances are supported by columns in the Hellenic traditions, just as they are supported by the traditions not of the Republican Party of Hoover, but of the Democratic Party. And so right there, located
directly across from the entrance that one needed to take to get into the department where people receive licenses – stretching from one corner to the other – is a cheerful little shop. It was both a driving school and a photo shop, where in five minutes one could get their photograph for their driver’s license. This cheerful little shop is also an office where one can take care of all sorts of motor vehicle and licensing matters. You can come to this little shop and drink a Coca-Cola there, weigh yourself, measure your height, test your eyesight, fill out forms, get your photograph taken, pay twenty-five dollars, go back to your home and receive there by mail, without taking any exam and without making any trip to city hall, motor vehicle documents certifying that you are a *driver*, that is, a driver, even though you might not even know how to drive an automobile. I went to this little shop out of curiosity and to witness all that I have just described above. But I didn’t find it necessary to pay twenty-five dollars, so therefore I took the driving exam, paying a bribe of only five dollars in all, the same five dollars that every American pays. By virtue of its massive scale, this five-dollar bribe changed from being a bribe to being a tip for the driving examiner.

That evening when I ran over the woman, we never did make it to Greenwich Village. And that’s where American writers drink vodka. In America, *prokhibishen* [prohibition] – the dry law – isn’t the kind of law to trifle with. It’s the kind of law that has been inserted into the commandments of the American Constitution. Therefore, on at least two occasions, I, a foreigner, finding myself in some unfamiliar place, had to turn to a policeman and explain to him, more with gestures than with words, that my friends and I needed to have a drink. In all of these instances, the policemen would answer in the same way:

“*O’kei, boi* [boy]! *O’kei,* buddy! It’s really very simple. You go around the corner to the second stoop. You tell them that police officer Charlie sent you! *Shchiur* [Sure]!”

The brother of one of my journalist friends, an expatriate from a western province of tsarist Russia, was going to open a kosher Jewish restaurant in New York with various stuffed pikes and exsanguinated chickens, and without alcohol. In a month, this restaurant owner had to take out a gangster-bootlegger license for the sale of alcohol: various inspections and police visits wore him down with their fines, evidently for his refusal to serve alcohol. For the non-American reader, this last sentence of mine will most likely seem to be delirious. It really is delirious, but it is nonetheless a fact! The man had acted in accordance with the laws and the police, who are responsible for upholding the laws, forced him to violate these laws. That is a fact, an American fact.

Things of this order are things that show the sweeping scope in America. We spoke earlier about the variety of American restaurants and pointed out that there were two reasons, in addition to the desire for satiety, for this diversity: nationality and alcohol. We are now speaking about the second reason, alcohol. Actually, the variety of restaurants in America is incredible and is in no way standardized: Mexican bars with tequila, Italian ones with Chianti, French ones with Bordeaux, Japanese ones with *saké*, Swedish ones with rum, Chinese ones with *huangjiu*, English ones with gin and whiskey, Russian ones with vodka, German ones with beer – they range from the luxurious lifestyle of billionaires to the dire poverty of dockside haunts. In some places, heavy drinkers sit in old walnut stalls of German traditions.
In other places, following Italian and Hispanic traditions, they drink out of casks and sit on top of casks. These types of establishments are called spik izi [speakeasies] (“speak in a low voice”), but people can make noise inside them to the degree of the amount of alcohol that has been consumed. This is within the continental United States, but on the seas surrounding America – twelve miles off America’s shores – an entire nation within the nation has sprouted up. The waters of seas and oceans, as we know, are neutral. Beyond the borders of a twenty-mile zone, international laws – or no laws at all – are in effect on the high seas. And a multicolored garland of ships has laid anchor twenty miles off America’s shores. These ships have been converted into floating drinking establishments, where people drink, play cards, and enjoy themselves by paying cash for sexual coitus. Canada, which lies beyond the rivers and lakes opposite Niagara Falls, opposite Detroit and Chicago, is likewise encircled by garlands of restaurants. Every evening, automobiles speed out of Los Angeles heading over to Mexico, to the Mexican border. The small Mexican village of Tijuana was simply a small poverty-stricken village. It has remained that. But right next to it, and under its name, humps of restaurants have sprung up, humps and graves.

The bizness [business] of the grandiose, sweeping scope of America!

Several of the phrases used above – such as “gangster-bootlegger license” – were used with complete accuracy, without attempting to generate any kinds of images, shapes, or forms. It’s a very complicated system, this nation within a nation, these armies of people, with their own flotillas, their own kings, their own soldiers, their own machine guns and cannons.

I recounted earlier how the banker, Mister Z, wanted to introduce me to Al Capone. Al Capone was not able to receive me on the day when I was in Chicago because he was busy with the elections.

Al Capone is a gangster king. He gives interviews to journalists, during which he points out how his surname ought to be pronounced – Capon, and not Caponè or Caponi, for the “e” at the end of his surname is a silent “e.” In one of his final interviews, he spoke out against communism in the U.S.S.R., calling upon his followers to do the same. He drove around Chicago in an armor-plated automobile, escorted by motorcyclists guarding him. If he needed to do away with some undesirable people who were not welcome to him, his good fellows would kill them not with the help of antiquated revolvers but with machine guns. Al Capone once had some people shot in this manner (human life for Al Capone’s good fellows is valued from twenty-five dollars and up), Al Capone once had six people shot who had been insubordinate to him. He had all six of them shot at once, during daylight hours, in a garage on one of the most populated streets of the city. The gunmen, moreover, were dressed in police uniforms, and it’s not known even now whether the gunmen were disguised in police uniforms or were rightfully wearing the police uniforms. The life of a human being is valued from twenty-five dollars and up, but when Al Capone accidentally wounds some innocent bystanders, with a stray bullet from a machine gun, he sends some money to their heirs, from a thousand to ten thousand dollars, and he sends a wreath of flowers for their grave. Al Capone lives and works exactly the same way that this is shown in Hollywood gangster films. Al Capone had them lay a pipe beneath Lake Michigan; he had them install some kind of canalization system that, by means of a conveyer belt, would transfer whiskey from Canada to
Al Capone would hand pick the governors of the state of Illinois and the mayors of the city of Chicago. Al Capone didn’t attend the receptions hosted by the president, but his friend and henchman, Mister William Thompson, the mayor of the city of Chicago, nicknamed “Big Bill,” used to go visit the president as his guest at the White House.

Al Capone made a mistake by not receiving me that day: at those elections, Al Capone’s henchman, William Thompson, nicknamed “Big Bill,” lost. A different gangster won. Al Capone punished Chicago most severely: he drove the government of the city of Chicago into bankruptcy. At that point, the Chicago authorities brought Al Capone to trial. But the Chicago court did not dare to bring Al Capone to trial in his capacity as a gangster. Capone was instead brought to trial in his capacity as a rentier, as a person living on income from property or investments who had not paid his income tax. What Al Capone had received his income from – that question did not interest the court. They declared that he owed millions. Al Capone came to trial in the role of a poor sheep that had suffered injury. Journalists covered the trial, sending out telegrams and news reports over the radio. Newspapers reported that Mister Capone had himself acknowledged that he was guilty of not paying his income tax. But he didn’t abandon his business matters. A former friend of Al Capone, the gangster Jack Diamond, nicknamed “Long Legs,” lived in New York. Diamond controlled the beer trust of the Eastern states. Diamond had been tried in court for murder twenty-eight times, and twenty-eight times he had been acquitted. Several years earlier, Al Capone had announced to the world that Diamond, nicknamed “Long Legs,” had not given back to Al Capone the seventy-five thousand dollars that the latter had given him for a trip to Monte Carlo. Some unidentified people shot Diamond. This assassination attempt had taken place inside a very fashionable New York hotel. Diamond was wounded, but he survived the assassination attempt, and he refused to identify the men who had shot him. Just like in the movies. The gunmen who had shot him were never found. In December 1931, Diamond was tried in court for the umpteenth time. The trial took place in Albany, the capital of the state of New York. The state’s Republican court for the umpteenth time acquitted Diamond, nicknamed “Long Legs.” Diamond’s friends “organized” a banquet in his honor on the night following the trial. At five o’clock in the morning, six men burst into the hotel room where the gangsters were holding their banquet. Four of them shot at Diamond. Diamond, nicknamed “Long Legs,” was murdered. According to the information provided by experts, Diamond was murdered by Al Capone’s good fellows. Al Capone has not yet provided any confirmation of this statement.

Charles Lindbergh, the famous pilot, the American hero who flew across the Atlantic Ocean, lives in the city of Hopewell, New Jersey. He is married to the daughter of Senator Morrow, the recent conqueror of Mexico. A son was born to the Lindberghs, their first child. In March 1932, this year-and-a-half-old child was kidnapped. The kidnappers sent the parents a letter demanding a fifty-thousand-dollar ransom. Lindbergh was a national hero. He reported his son’s kidnapping to the police. The newspapers began to reverberate with this sensational news item. A session of the president’s cabinet was called in connection with this event. But the child had disappeared. Lindbergh, who refused to pay the fifty-thousand-dollar ransom, published a statement in the newspapers, indicating that he would be willing to pay a one-hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar ransom if they returned the child to him. The cabinet held its meeting. The newspapers went on a rampage. The police were ready to drop from
exhaustion. But the child was still nowhere to be found. Al Capone published a statement in the newspapers, indicating, first of all, that he would give two-hundred-thousand dollars to the person who found the child, and, secondly, that if they would authorize him to do so, he would undertake finding the child himself.402

Al Capone was a big man! He held in his hands a monopoly over the sale and distribution of alcohol in the Midwest. He had at his beck and call dozens of seedy taverns and seedy brothels.403 Not only did Al Capone once wield all of this power, but – judging by his dealings with Jack Diamond and Charles Lindbergh – he continues to wield that power even today, despite the court proceedings that he has undergone. Al Capone is not alone. He’s merely fond of the limelight. A monument, however, has not yet been erected in his honor. In Detroit, a monument to Mister Scott has been erected,404 a monument that is no less instructive than the automotive plants of Ford, Packard, and the “General-Motors-Company.” This monument stands in close proximity to a monument to Schiller.405 Above this monument flutters an American flag. Mister Scott was a butleger [bootlegger] and the proprietor of a series of seedy dives. From the long hours worked by his prostitutes, who plopped themselves down and sat on the knees of his male guests, one after another, and from the glasses of whiskey that he sold to these male guests, Mister Scott salted away millions of dollars. When he was dying, he bequeathed to the city of Detroit a million dollars on condition that part of this money be spent on a monument that perpetuates the memory of Mister Scott. The monument to Mister Scott was erected. Above this monument flies an American flag. Al Capone doesn’t yet have a monument erected to him.

K., an investigator into American gangster matters, writes that the issue about repealing the “dry” law is raised in America at every new election, at every opening session of the state and federal congresses. The dry law has penetrated America, from top to bottom, lengthwise and widthwise, with gangsterism. The investigator K. writes, in a lyrical way, of course:

“The dry law has been existence for 11 years. During this time, some very powerful organizations have come into being. These organizations hold in their hands the mainsprings that regulate the movement of separate influential groups amongst Democrats as well as Republicans. Unlimited financial resources, the possibility of advancing one’s own people into important municipal and federal posts, a system of unpunished murders – this is what these organizations have at their disposal. We are talking about bootleggers.”

Thus writes the researcher K. He likewise provides an explanation for why the dry law has not been repealed. He states:

“From the moment the dry law was first introduced, murderers, burglars, and ‘politicians’ have crossed over and entered into the contraband commerce in alcoholic beverages. Hundreds of thousands of people are engaged in this business. America pays taxes to them. America maintains them in truly royal luxury. If the dry law were to be repealed, then within 24 hours this army of the unemployed, that is, these gangsters themselves and a part of the cadres of policemen, would occupy themselves with their basic craft, which they partially
abandoned during the time of bootlegging. Safes would be opened. A radical repeal of the dry law carries with it the specter of murders and robberies.”

This is just like in a Hollywood movie, where virtue absolutely must prevail!

There is a multitude of examples and stories that I could relate to you. Gangsters and municipalities live in concord and collaboration. Al Lewin was right when he said to me that deceiving history and authority is a business and, according to American notions, a moral thing. By the way, history here is not deceived. In New York, in particular, gangsters engage in gangsterism beginning only from 14th Street and up. On the lower-numbered streets, including Fourteenth, one can live peacefully: banks are located there. Or do they engage in robbery and gangsterism there as well?

This happens in New York, in particular. When I arrived in New York, on the same day of my arrival, they found a murdered woman in Central Park with a rope around her neck. Twenty-four hours before her death, this woman had testified before an investigative commission that had come from Washington. She pointed out individuals and an organization that consisted of judges, policemen, and gangsters who were running a bizness [business], carrying it out by means of puritanical American laws about marriage and morality. This was done by several means. Occasionally a formality, a pro forma, was observed and adhered to. That is to say, by analogy with the betrayals perpetrated by the Chicago slaughterhouse hogs, some scoundrel would begin to court a woman, arranging a series of rendezvous, pressing her to come over to his place and going over to her place to visit her. At the moment when the woman, presumably, was making love to him, the police vice squad would suddenly appear. And there would either be a trial, a scandal, a disgraced name, or – you must pay us some money! This is not found in American movies, but it is to be found in American reality: there are private police and private investigators, as well as espionage offices, that are working not only for America. The most important of them are Burns and Pinkerton. Sometimes the lovers have been tracked down by this police force, once again their vice squad, and, once again, there was either a trial or cash payments. And sometimes they simply demanded money. Sometimes the women didn’t have any money. Sometimes the women weren’t guilty of anything, not even adultery. Sometimes they tried them in court. They would publish reports about this in the newspapers. They charged the women with prostitution, and those women who were guilty only of adultery or who were not even guilty of that, they sent to prisons, to correctional facilities. The woman with the rope around her neck whose body they found on the day of my arrival, she had come – to court, no less! – to recount about how she, who was not guilty of anything, had sat in prison for three years. The court postponed her questioning until the following day. That night she was murdered. This was in New York.

Banker Z, who has power equal to that of an English monarch, is in telephone communication with Capone. Capone had “handpicked” his friend, Mister William Thompson, nicknamed “Big Bill,” to serve as the mayor of Chicago. The Chicago manufacturers and merchants invited Al Capone into a partnership with them. A certain Mister Becker, the owner of several dry cleaning and dyeing establishments in Chicago, who had invited Capone to enter into a partnership with him, joked with journalists that he had “hired a devil to get rid of some devils.” In what way does Al Capone, the chairman of a trust of gangsters, differ from other
chairmen of trusts! If after signing a contract with Al Capone, Mister Becker, a painter and dyer, said to journalists during an interview: “Now I no longer need neither a public prosecutor, nor the police, nor any association of entrepreneurs. I now have the best protection in the world!”

For Al Capone, big bizness [big business] is a big deal! He needs to collect tribute from subordinates and to execute insubordinates. He needs to manage his industry, such an enormous industry as the production of alcohol, which involves factories, plants, conveyors, rationalization and standardization. He needs to attend to the correct distribution of his merchandise. The rationalization of prostitution, making it a more efficient enterprise, is by now a subsidiary business.

There truly are so many businesses! We shouldn’t think that Chicago differs in any way from New York or Los Angeles. And we shouldn’t think that all businesses restrict themselves to only vodka and prostitution. In Chicago, just like in New York and Los Angeles, there are people working there in addition to bootleggers and vodka merchants; they are, let’s say, raketiry [racketeers], who are engaged in an illegal industry that is called racketeering.411

A free and independent American businessman, living in New York below 14th Street, is planning to open a dairy shop412 on the corner of, let’s say, 27th Street and Second Avenue, so that he can sell to his customer exactly the same milk that is dispatched directly from the cow’s udder into the mouth of the customer without touching human hands. There is a 27th Street and a Second Avenue in Chicago, and in Santa Fe, and in Pittsburgh. This businessman is planning to open a dairy shop, or a baker’s shop, or any kind of shop in general. One would have to think, in keeping with the tradition of things, that the businessman would first of all go to the local government office to apply for a permit. But this isn’t the case. First of all, he must go to the district gangster, to the racketeer. He, a businessman, must receive permission from the district gangster. The district gangster, the racketeer, must decide whether it’s advisable and advantageous – or inadvisable and disadvantageous – to open up a dairy shop here. All district shops are registered with the district gangster, and when he originally gave permission to a dairy shop that has now opened in his district, he took it upon himself to attend to the elimination of dairy competition in his district. It behooves the district gangster to ascertain how much the new dairy shop intends to pay him. And it behooves him to weigh whether it’s worth closing the shop of the current merchant after having granted rights to this new one or whether it’s not worth giving permission to this new merchant.

I was half a witness to the business affairs of district racketeers. With permission from a racketeer, a parking garage was built in our neighborhood in New York. During the summer months, Americans have the custom of leaving their cars out on the streets at the entrances to their buildings. It was summertime, so the newly constructed garage lay empty. The owner of the garage sent out an announcement about the opening of the garage throughout his district. The garage continued to lay empty. At that point, the district racketeer who had sanctioned the construction of the garage jumped into action. Every night, all the tire tubes inside the wheels of the automobiles parked out on the streets were punctured. The owner of the garage sent out a second round of announcements. The garage wound up being overfilled.
A similar thing happened with the dairy merchants. When it was suggested that the current dairy merchant should close down his business, in view of the fact that the license in this district had been transferred over to a new dairy merchant, this current dairy merchant had to clear out of his place quickly because instead of his car’s tire tubes, it was his own ribs that would be punctured.

State authorities publish ordinances in regard to racketeering and create special courts. Quite naturally, it’s Chicago that occupies first place. Chicago created a racketeering court. The functions of this court are indicated in a special act. These functions are edifying. The court tries cases for:

1. the destruction of a citizen’s property by means of an explosion
2. the infliction of injury to people as a result of an explosion
3. the premeditated sabotage of homes
4. the collection of money in the form of fines
5. the throwing of bombs
6. conspiratorial acts with the aim of producing the illegal acts of boycott or blackmail
7. the production or sale of explosive substances
8. the abduction of a person with the aim of receiving a ransom
9. the intimidation of employees and workers

Just like in a Hollywood movie! The investigator into American gangster operations, investigator K., who has hidden his identity behind the pseudonym of a single letter, writes:

“At the time of municipal, state, and federal elections, these (racketeering) gangs perform ‘political-governmental’ functions. These gangs take upon themselves concerns about the mass electorate. Petty merchants, drivers, employees at soda shops and drugstores, the little guys in the big city, they are the ones who pay tribute to the gang. Are they about to refuse the gang in the small favor they are being asked to do: to vote for such-and-such a Republican or such-and-such a Democrat!?"

Everything happens absolutely the same way as it does in a Hollywood movie. The tire tubes inside the wheels of automobiles, by order of the racketeer, are punctured by boys in the district at the price of a penny per puncture. These boys have watched enough motion pictures about gangster life and Indian life. And they have heard enough stories about the private activity of private detectives in the offices of Burns and Pinkerton. And no longer as half a witness, but now with my very own ears, I heard the life story of the young communist journalist, T. He grew up on these same New York-Detroit-Oklahoma-American streets. The boys in their districts, on their bloki [blocks], as districts are called in America, these boys were strictly organized into “cowboys and Indians” bands of gangsters. They had their own field of racketeering. They stole, in an organized way, oranges from hawker trays. The boys – especially the Italian and Hispanic ones – carried knives underneath their shirts, near their hearts, keeping them sharp for future use. They would complete the tasks assigned to them by their chiefs, such as puncturing the tire tubes inside the wheels of automobiles. Each block waged war with its neighboring blocks. And coalitions among blocks occurred, just as did
coalitions among Indian tribes, when several blocks unified occasionally for various major assignments, such as theft during the parades on Independence Day and knocking straw hats off the heads of onlookers on August 16th.\textsuperscript{413} Children always walked to school in brigades so that they would not get beaten up walking singly. And the knives that they hid in their bosom saw the light of day when the boys reached age fourteen. My young friend T. was the only one in his class who finished college and became a communist. The rest of his classmates didn’t make it to college. One of his classmates died, executed in the electric chair. Half of his comrades became professional gangsters, bootleggers, and racketeers. They didn’t fall out of the American laws of cinema and of Al Capone. My friend T. joked while he was telling me his life story. He said that if his childhood friends had not had the extra pennies they needed to go to the movies, he would not have been the only one out of them who wound up in the Communist Party.

The investigator K. writes about the courtesy of voting for Republican so-and-so. I have to add that several banks and enterprises use gangster bands instead of the police to guard their assets. I have the honor to report that gangster bands take part in political life, not only ordering how – and not otherwise – to vote, but also in other ways. For example, we know of incidents where not only the Democratic Party and Republican Party, but also the American Federation of Labor,\textsuperscript{414} hired gangsters to beat up people attending communist demonstrations. The Republican Party and the Democratic Party, using the fists of gangsters, regularly beat up each other as a matter of traditions. We must remember what was written many pages earlier, when we were speaking about “technological” concerts and unemployment: a bridge is being constructed there, a bridge much more grandiose than the Brooklyn Bridge – a bridge from “technological” individualism to gangsterism.

I didn’t see a single hotel in America, not a single hotel room – first of all, a hotel room with the number thirteen, and, second of all, a hotel room with a different number – in which there was not a Bible sitting there.\textsuperscript{415} Even if the bathroom might not always have one, there was absolutely always a Bible sitting next to the telephone book. And it’s completely natural for Americans that the conventions of the Republican Party in America, the party that has placed Herbert Hoover\textsuperscript{416} in the White House as the current president, begin with prayers to the Lord God. They prefer that their conventions be opened by Methodist bishops, and then fathers\textsuperscript{417} from the Episcopalian Church and the Roman Catholic Church recite prayers. And the convention closes with a prayer of supplication by a Jewish rabbi.

Al Capone! – racketeers! – it would be a mistake to fail to mention the affairs of President Harding!\textsuperscript{418} The current president, however, President Herbert Hoover, was here during the Harding administration. He was here, in this country of merchants and tradesmen, serving as the Secretary of Commerce, serving as the far-right, right-hand man of President Harding, just as Harry Guzik\textsuperscript{419} served as the right-hand man of Al Capone during the reign of Al Capone. It’s not known for sure whether Harding died from a cold or was poisoned, or whether he poisoned himself. Matters involving Harding are only half-known. But out of all these half-known things, the following – which was determined by the courts and fouled up by the courts – is known.
Edwin Denby, the Secretary of the Navy, and Albert Fall, the Secretary of the Interior, (former President Harding and current President Hoover, who was serving as Secretary of Commerce at the time, have nothing to do with any of this!) leased the oil-rich land at Teapot Dome in the state of Wyoming and at Elk Hills in the state of California to the oil men Harry Sinclair and Edward Doheny. Denby and Fall also placed into commission the land that had been held in reserve for the government to meet the needs of the navy. Attorney General Daugherty, an active and veteran anti-communist, was helping Secretary Fall and Secretary Denby. The Standard Oil Company was also helping Sinclair and Doheny. Beneath these oil fields and to the side of these oil fields, there arose the fictional – that is to say, it didn’t exist in reality – joint-stock oil company, Continental Trading Company. Three million dollars were dispersed among members of the government by this “company.” Two hundred and thirty-three thousand dollars in stocks were found in Fall’s possession. These had been paid to him for a summer home that he had sold. One of Harding’s cabinet ministers, William Hays, the Postmaster General, received only seventy-five thousand dollars, and that money was not intended for him himself, but to be handed over to the Republican Party. This same Hays (the mail!) delivered a package of stocks to Harding’s Treasury Secretary, Andrew Mellon, a billionaire and the leader of the Republican Party. This package of stocks was likewise to be deposited, in Mellon’s name, into the coffers of the Republican Party. (It must be said about William Hays that, after he resigned from office, he went to go work in the film industry, in the capacity, so to speak, of a “moral” dictator, where he continues to work to this day.) One million, six hundred thousand dollars were deposited into the coffers of the Republican Party, in addition to the packages intended for the Treasury Department and the Republican Party. Harding’s name, the name of the president, is sacred. The president, like God, can’t make a mistake! As a result of all these unpleasant developments, Harding either died of a cold or poisoned himself, or was poisoned by others. Herbert Hoover, the current president, was the Secretary of Commerce in the Harding administration. He, like Harding, had nothing to do with any of this . . .

Court proceedings were scheduled. It was incumbent upon this court to investigate the entire matter and to get to the bottom of it, “by and large.” The court has still not finished its investigation. The Supreme Court, in a fit of temper, nullified the contract for the oil fields, calling the transaction “fraudulent and corrupt.” This was a preliminary measure. The court has still not gotten to the bottom of this entire matter, “by and large.” Such-and-such an American court of law acquitted Fall and Doheny of some particular charges. This acquittal was reversed, however, for it was established, through the office of the aforementioned private detective William Burns, that some jurors had been bribed. But Sinclair wasn’t a cabinet secretary. Sinclair was a capitalist. And Sinclair – by this same Republican court of law as well as all the other courts of law – was acquitted!

Herbert Hoover – he had nothing to do with any of this! Not only was he not mixed up with these matters. He didn’t even know anything about them. Not once, not in one single speech, not in one single public appearance, did he ever say a single word about these matters! He, too, apparently, doesn’t know that the investigation into this case has still not yet been concluded, despite the fact that it’s an old case of long standing, despite the swiftness and fairness of American courts, and despite the fact that this case had to be investigated under his administration, under his aegis!
The “White House” – it’s the same kind of industrial-capitalist enterprise as all the other ones in America. The master of America – and its main Nietzschean – is the dollar. The budget of the “White House” is seven billion dollars. The gangster-racketeer-bootlegger budget is nine billion dollars. Who is the master here? It would seem to be the gangsters, since they are wealthier. But this isn’t the case. The true master is the dollar, which, as we know, is odor free. The “White House” in America is the same type of industry as all the other ones in America. And, to boot, it still doesn’t have any fresh new policies. Out of the ten Americans that I asked, nine answered:

“Uell [Well], politics! That’s a dirty business! I’m not interested in it. Shchiur [Sure], the bosses who get involved in politics get involved in it not out of the sheer goodness of their hearts. Don’t speak to me about their honesty! Shchiur!”

American newspapers differ from European ones. European newspapers prefer to be the newspapers of different political parties and to be supported by these parties. American newspapers are the newspapers of industrial enterprises and they’re supported by these enterprises. For a newspaper that’s published on the funds provided by the rubber industry, what’s most important, above all else, is that automobile tires and galoshes are being sold. For the press that’s supported by the “General Motors Company,” it’s essential to get Ford to submit to its will. The press that’s supported by J. P. Morgan has to strengthen Morgan’s business interests against those of Rockefeller; the press supported by Rockefeller needs to do the same against Morgan’s business interests. As far as politics and political parties are concerned, political parties and politics are much less businesses than are rubber, automobiles, steel, banks, and so on. Both Morgan and Rockefeller give money in support of both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, both of them at the same time, for these two parties are in charge of politics in the United States. The “Ford Motor Company” feuds so much with the “General Motors Company” that Ford gives money only to the Republican Party, and General Motors gives money only to the Democratic Party.

Politics is a bad business.

At one time there used to be a distinction to be made between the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. During the years of the Civil War between the North and the South, the party of the Republicans worked with the Northerners, while the party of the Democrats worked with the Southerners. It became firmly established that the Republican Party was the party of northern industrialists, and the Democratic Party was the party of financial capital; that it was this way in the past, and it’s this way even now; that in New York, in the financial center of the country, the party of the Democrats is in command. Between two evils, it’s not worth choosing. For all intents and purposes, these two parties, even during the years of the Civil War, differed not in terms of their social identity, but tactically and territorially. This didn’t prevent those selfsame Republicans, in the days of the final military victories of the North over the South, as we mentioned already, from inciting a rebellion against the Northerners in defense of the “democratic” South. Nowadays these two political parties – these two
competing trusts – are the trusts that are in charge of American politics and that don’t differ from each other even in their tactics. These two political parties are trusts that have constructed their programs upon the derogation of the programs of their competitors, upon the blunders of their competitors, upon political maneuvering, upon territorial traditions, upon capitalist competition. These trusts aren’t especially businesslike: the Rockefellers and the Morgans have both of these political parties depending upon them for financial support. The highly respected Mister Kotofson, the man whose daughter in the past had a sty on her eyelid and in the future has a career as a writer, would say, just like the other eight out of ten people along with him: “‘Uell [Well], politics! It’s a dirty business! I’m not interested in it! Shchiur! [Sure!]’”

American newspapers are concerned about “rubber” (is this by chance!?), and in every issue of the newspapers the reader finds that four times as much space is devoted there to sports than to politics, domestic politics along with international politics, not to mention how much space is devoted to rubber!435

In Washington, there are intermediary offices (without signboards, of course!) that buy and sell, through both retail and wholesale trade, senators, members of Congress, Republicans and Democrats, government officials, and judges. On those days that are free from election campaigning, the staffs of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party are occupied with one single thing: the allocation of posts and appointments among the members of their respective parties. This is done for the sake of defending the three foundational pillars of American democracy: the Bible, the Constitution, and the American flag. In no way are any political convictions demanded from the member of a party. What is demanded is that he regularly register himself as a member and – as per the formulation of Senator Penrose437 – that he “stand behind his own scoundrel.” According to American notions, one is supposed to see in a political party not any principles or any program, but rather the source of one’s existence. For members of a political party, that party is always clothed in the tangible forms of food, clothing, and a bank account.

All presidents devote the largest part of their time and efforts not to governmental matters, but rather to the organization of their political party in all 48 of the united states. Four-fifths of a president’s time is occupied with discussing appointments, beginning with appointing personnel at the fourth-class level in the post office and ending with appointing members to his cabinet.

There’s a book written by the American journalist, Franklin Kent, a man who is by no means a revolutionary. His book is titled Political Behavior.438 This book ought to be regarded as a textbook and reference manual for the bourgeois politicians who are now in charge of America.

The book Kent has written is, as one would expect, broken down into chapters whose titles are laconic in a characteristically American way: “Live Up to the Law and Be Licked,” “You Must Play the Game with the Gang,” “It Does Not Pay to Buck the Business Interests,” “When the Water Reaches the Upper Decks, Follow the Rats,” “Prosperity Absorbs All Criticism,” “Corruption Is Not Really a Party Liability,” “The Floaters Hold the Real Power,” “Give Them Hokum,” and so on.
Kent considers party leaders to be a group of people that consists

“of precinct and ward executives, committeemen or captains and literally legions of small job holders who constitute the governmental machines, municipal, state and national.”

In the chapter titled “Fat Cats,” Kent informs us that the normal, natural path to an elected office is by belonging to a political party:

“. . . the only key to which is in the hands of the machine. In other words, the initial step is to induce the organization – by which is meant the leader or leaders of the local machine – to take you up.”

Kent illustrates this fact with the example of the party fortunes of President Coolidge and President Hoover. He says about Coolidge that “at no time and on no occasion has he gone contrary to the organization.”

Kent illustrates this fact with matters of a different order, with the fact that

“. . . one member of Congress, a rich man from an Eastern state now serving already his seventh or eight term in the House, regularly and of course secretly turns over the amount of his salary – $10,000 dollars a year – to the machine boss in the city in which he lives. That is all he ever has to do. He never has to bother about his nomination.”

The fate of this congressman leads Kent to provide information about “fat cats.” “Politics,” as we have said, is not considered a big honor in America. “Politics is a dirty game and I don’t want anything to do with it.”

Being a merchant of enamel ware or producing sausage at a meat packing plant is no less honorable than being elected – depending on one’s rank and grade – to municipal, state, and federal positions. But on occasion there emerge some wealthy oddballs who get the itch to receive the honors of being elected mayor or governor.

“Such men are known in political circles as ‘Fat Cats.’” “These capitalists have what the organization needs – money to finance the campaign.” “They are as welcome to the organization as flowers in May.”

Kent informs us:

“Up to date no ‘Fat Cat’ has as yet landed the Presidency, though in 1920 and again in 1928 one or two of them got fairly close to a nomination. But they are common enough in Congress.”
In the chapter, “What Happened to The Candidate Who Would Be Courageous and Candid,” it is argued that there is no room in the American parliamentary system for a courageous and candid candidate. They fail everywhere. Kent supports his assertion, in part, by citing the example of Coolidge (earlier he spoke about President Hoover).

“From first to last in the campaign Mr. Coolidge said no syllable that could possibly offend Catholics or Ku Klux, wet or dry, crooked oil men or flaming patriot.”448 “He held rigidly to an advocacy of the obvious – economy, lower taxes, debt reduction, prosperity, peace, good will, the Bible, the flag, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights.”449

In the chapter, “Corruption Is Not Really a Party Liability,” he reports:

“. . . they [the people] regard the charges of crookedness coming from the outs against the ins as the natural thing to be expected, as part of the game. The disposition down in the precincts is to believe that of course the ins are grafting a little, but so will the outs when they get in – it is what they all do . . . As a matter of fact they [charges of corruption] are frequently a means of arousing public sympathy for the man attacked . . . What the average voter thinks is that the others are slicker but not more honest and the denunciation of the ‘poor guy’ who got caught does not do him any particular harm. On the contrary, he appeals to his constituents for a ‘vindication,’ talks about the ‘conspiracy to rob me of my good name’ and gets reelected by an increased majority. If they can’t reelect the ‘poor guy’ himself, if he happens to have gone to the penitentiary for instance – just to show their good will the voters turn in and elect his wife. The case of former Representative Langley of Kentucky, convicted of fraud, is an instance. While Mr. Langley was in the Federal Penitentiary, the voters of his district nominated and elected Mrs. Langley to his seat in the House of Representatives.”450

“The magnificent and amazing silence of the whole Republican party on the subject of the oil frauds, the utter absence from any of its regular leaders – Coolidge, Dawes,451 Hughes,452 Hoover, or any of the others – of a word of denunciation . . . certainly contributed tremendously toward obviating any political effect of their misdeeds.”453

In the chapter, “When the Water Reaches the Upper Decks, Follow the Rats,” he reports:

“What this somewhat cryptic saying means of course is that a man in politics is foolish to hold on to his convictions after they have become unpopular with the people.”454 “No successful politician – and no successful political party can afford to stand steadfast by their convictions – and none do.”455

The chapter, “It Does Not Pay to Buck the Business Interests,” by its very title, illustrates what its content is. The exhibit items that Kent dismantles and parses here are, of course, the exhibit items of the American philistine, and Kent is brief in his formulations:
“First – No attack on ‘plutocracy’ or ‘vast riches’ or ‘vested interests’ or ‘predatory wealth’ or ‘Wall Street’ or the ‘trusts’ or ‘giant combinations’ . . . is effective or popular . . . Second – if anyone – but particularly a woman – has a single share in a public utility corporation – she at once thinks her interests identical with the capitalistic class and secretly reacts against an attack on it.”\(^{456}\)

“We have become a nation of small stockholders and bond owners.”\(^{457}\)

“There are now upwards of five million holders of shares of public utility companies alone in the country.”\(^{458}\)

“Unquestionably it puts the small stockholder in the capitalist class, squeezes out of him all the socialistic and Bolshevistic virus.”\(^{459}\)

What I have just cited is one side of the coin concerning the all-American \textit{vobla},\(^\text{460}\) the philistine named the \textit{vobla} that has settled across all of the United States, the philistine that reminisces about American equality, about “cabins” from which presidents and millionaires emerge, about democracy and pioneer matters. Kent doesn’t write about the other side of the coin, which is that “business circles” are the masters of the country, consequently, “don’t touch” them. Kent doesn’t write about this even though it’s obvious from his book, especially from the following chapters.

In the chapter, “‘Current Expenses’ or ‘You Can’t Win on a Shoe String,’” Kent gently reports:

“No President has ever been chosen in this country whose campaign was not sufficiently well financed to take care of ‘current expenses.’”\(^{461}\)

“Now by ‘venal vote’ I do not so much mean the voters who can be bought directly with a two- or a five-dollar bill . . .”\(^{462}\)

“It should be explained here that the before and frequently used phrase ‘current expenses’ does not refer to what are known as the legitimate expenses of a campaign – not for example to the expenses for meetings, music, advertising, headquarters, posters, propaganda, publicity, payroll, stamps, stationery. It does not even refer to the secret deals involving money made in every state . . . deals for example that secure the support of various foreign language newspapers.”\(^{463}\)

“‘Current expenses’ are what is spent on election day.”\(^{464}\)

“The Floaters Hold the Real Power,” Kent reports in the chapter by that title.

“He [the candidate] may have made a magnificent campaign. He may have fed the people supremely fine hokum and given a show that won their hearts – but if on election day his funds [‘current expenses’] are conspicuous for their absence he will be licked with a certainty and precision only averted by the rare political miracle of an understanding and aroused electorate.”\(^{465}\)
“Now then to get down to the cold facts of the ‘current expenses’ proposition – in every one of these 150,000 precincts of approximately 400 voters each, there are to be found always available on election day anywhere from ten to twenty men, and now occasionally a woman or two – whose chief idea about an election day is that it is an opportunity to make a little easy money. In the old days they were known as ‘floaters’ and were – most of them – ‘sellers.’ In recent years they have become runners, or workers, or watchers, or messengers, according to the sectional terminology . . . Some of them have a real party affiliation; others do not care which party they work with so long as they get paid . . . The Democratic workers naturally look to the Democratic precinct executive for employment on election day; the Republican workers look to the Republican executive.”

“Says the precinct executive making the deal – ‘All right, $10 for the day, Johnson, but you be out in the precinct by six o’clock and be sure and get every one of them Johnsons in early.’ All the worker has to do to earn his $10 is to deliver his own family.”

The twentieth chapter of Kent’s book is titled “Live Up to the Law and Be Licked.” There’s no need to provide any commentary on this chapter in view of the clarity of its title and because the verity of this statement follows intuitively from what has been said above. In the chapter, “The Poison Squads,” Kent talks about the principles and practices of slander used by the American political parties, both the Republicans and the Democrats. Kent makes a slip of the tongue when he uses a phrase that encapsulates what his work is saying:

“Purity in politics is an impractical dream . . . [Politics] is a game . . . with an almost uncountable number of prizes ranging from the most powerful and important office in the world – the Presidency – to the $2 bill eagerly sought by the venal voter on election day.”

In order to liven up the story of American politics, we should provide some graphic illustrations here.

The first illustration. It illustrates khokum [hokum], that is, the nonsense of every kind that entertains voters and that establishes warm, cordial relations between a candidate and the voters.

“Stalking into a crowded hall, Mr. Hill would walk to the table on the stage where, under his instructions, a pitcher of water and a glass had been placed. Picking up the pitcher he would start to pour himself a drink. Suddenly and dramatically he would throw the water out the window or dash the glass on the floor. ‘What's this?’ he would shout. ‘Water? We don't want water in this district, we want beer, and, boys, if you send John Philip Hill to Congress he'll get it for you.’ Then he would grab an American flag (also planted), the band would strike up and the crowd go crazy.”
“It was a durn hard blow on the Saturday before election when instead of getting $120 for my precinct from the district leader I got $30. I knew then that things were not going to be so good but I did not know the worst. On election day before nine o’clock I knew we were beat and beat bad. There were a dozen fellows in that precinct, all Democrats, who in every election I put on at anywhere from $2 to $10 each. Usually they showed up around the polling place around six o’clock. This time it was nine o’clock before I could find one of them. Then I found one and he was good and drunk, and I got the truth. He had $25 of Republican money in his pocket. So did every other of my dozen workers in the precinct – only one or two of ’em had $50. They never had seen such money. Neither had I . . . nobody could buck the kind of money they had that day. They could have put over a yellow dog against the Apostle Paul.”

Mister Kotofson is right:

“Uell [Well], politics! That’s a dirty business! Don’t talk to me about their honesty! The bosses who get involved in politics get involved in it not out of the goodness of their hearts. Schiur! [Sure!]”

I, too, am right, when I assert that presidents are elected with bribes, which is equivalent to the assertion that the White House disseminates funds by means of gangsters. The work of the American political parties that are currently in charge consists in one thing and one thing only – the running of election campaigns. That is what they do actually. What is next for the parties is to begin enjoying life, getting some rest and relaxation. They allocate posts among their members, and these pieces of the proverbial pie are not in any way meager morsels or Lenten fare, like the oil fields of Teapot-Dome. We’re talking about the activity of the two parties – the Republicans and the Democrats – the political parties of American capitalists, industrialists, and the vobla of the philistine: it follows that we must judge these selfsame capitalists, industrialists, and the philistine vobla in accordance with the parties. And these American political parties are not really parties, but rather trusts that differ from actual trusts, such as, let’s say, the textile industry, only in the sense that the textile industry produces dry goods and has textile factories, while here there is the power wielded by people, ranging from the mayor (or the judge) of the town of Kingman to the president from the city of Washington. These trusts are not specifically businesses: being a factory owner and a billionaire is more honorable than being a Congressman. Gangsters on the order of Harry Sinclair and Al Capone interweave their business dealings with the White House. Racketeers (and Al Capone) are concerned with elections of all sorts. Trading in alcohol, gangsters-bootleggers have a larger budget than the White House does. Before he goes to the mayor’s office, to the legal authorities, the philistine goes to the district gangster. There is a Russian anecdote from the tsarist era . . .

“Oh the Saturday before Easter, following the pogroms against Jews and intellectuals in 1905, Ivan Faddeyevich, a merchant of the third guild in the city of Moscow, took a quick steam bath in the banya [bathhouse], took communion,
and drank some rowanberry vodka right before matins. Then he tiptoed into his bedroom, looked inside the cupboard and under the bed – is there anybody hiding in the room? – locked the door, and then began to examine his physiognomy attentively in the mirror: his beard, nose, and eyes. Finally, he whispered to himself in the mirror: ‘Ivan Faddeyevich!’ he whispered. ‘You and I are alone. It’s just the two of us here. Confess before Holy Easter, as you would to a priest during confession, that one of us is working for the secret police! . . .”

For all we know, this anecdote might well be applied to Americans as well. Thus, on the eve of Independence Day, an American citizen in his fifteenth-floor apartment, after having gotten drunk on whiskey, secured the doors and turned off the radio and refrigerator, so that nobody would bother him. Then he went into the bathroom and asked himself in the mirror:

“Well, John! You and I are all alone here.474 Between you, me, and these four walls, confess on the eve of Independence Day: am I a gangster or not?!”

Earlier I told the story about how once, in a Bronx park, we – the journalist P. and I – encountered a woman in tears whose husband had left her for a woman who drank wine, whereas she, the wife we encountered, was a faithful Christian and a faithful wife. A week following this encounter, on the morning of a holiday, I went to go see P. a little earlier than usual in order to make sure that I found him at home. He lived alone. It took him a while to unlock the door for me and he was a little embarrassed when he opened it. In the dining room, there remained two place settings from last evening’s dinner, and in the study a woman’s hat and some kind of toiletry article were lying there. They, too, obviously remained there from last evening. The fact that I was the one who had come to see him evidently calmed P. down. With a gesture, he informed me about what had happened. I wanted to leave. He said that there was no need to do that. He left for a minute to go into the bedroom. A minute later there came out of the bedroom behind him the very same woman whom we had encountered in the rain in the Bronx park. When she saw me, a sad look came over her face. I offered her a cigarette. She declined with all the puritanical rigor she could muster. Suddenly her eyes welled up with tears, and she began to speak, saying that she should tell me about the most recent events in her life.

“Since my husband left me, I don’t know anything about his whereabouts. He left, rejecting everything. He left me for a woman who smokes tobacco and drinks wine. Why did he leave me! – He left me, and since then my life has stopped. And I am – as God is my witness! – a faithful Christian. I am a faithful wife. And, of course, I don’t smoke, and I don’t drink.”

I looked at the toiletry article that had been left on the couch and at the two unfinished drinks that were standing next to a half-empty liter of liquor on a stool near the couch. The woman intercepted my look. With what was, most likely, blessed simplicity – o sancta simplicitas – she sat down on the couch, right on top of her toilet articles.
“And what about your husband?” I asked.

“Ah, God sees how I am waiting for him!” she said, lifting her eyes up to the heavens.

Presidents – gangsters – the doctor and the policeman who were standing next to that lady from whom I could have received reimbursement for the cost of replacing the headlight on my automobile that had been broken by striking her in the head. Hypocrisy! Dissimulation!

31

In America there are some economists and historians who maintain that the dry law has helped a lot to create the American *prosperiti* [prosperity] of recent years. It would seem that this line of reasoning proceeds from the fact of sobriety, which raised the productivity of labor. But economists reason differently. The emergence of the organized smuggling of alcohol, with its billions of transactions, with its hundreds of thousands of workers, employed both directly and indirectly, it’s precisely this smuggling – in other words, gangsterism – that has done a multitude of things that contribute to the flourishing of commerce and industry, and thus to American *prosperiti*. Economists suggest that we remember here about the increased demand for motor boats, about the jute used for making bags, about forests, about bottles, about the printing of pharmaceutical labels, this in addition to those people who are themselves producing, standardizing, rationalizing, selling, and drinking alcohol. Economists of this order disapprove of the argument that, after alcohol was prohibited, the nation started to drink less and to work better, the more so since medical science has still not resolved the question of what has a better and more productive influence on the performance capability of workers: genuine alcohol or the surrogates that send heavy drinkers to the afterworld?

As far as the periods of American *prosperiti* in general are concerned, of which there were five in all, including the period between 1922 and October of 1929, some American economists propose things that are no less unusual than “prohibition” as the main reasons for these periods of *prosperiti*.475

The first period of *prosperiti* began in 1825. Up until that time, America was simply a village with cities that resembled villages. America lived in a state of Quaker-Puritanical well-being.

Then it came to light that a multitude of new people had crossed the Allegheny Mountains, people who had come to America in large numbers from Europe after the storms of the French Revolution and the routs of the Napoleonic Wars. As these people crossed the mountains into the Midwest, they dragged behind themselves the first factories and plants. The cotton-refining machine, which Eli Whitney476 had invented many years earlier, only now sprouted into factory buildings. Axes at construction sites hammered away across the country. In that year, 1825, the world had already recovered from the Napoleonic Wars, world trade had come alive, American cotton had set off for Europe, and European machines had set off for America. This period of *prosperiti* ended in 1837, when the axes quieted down and crowds of starving people were ready to rush off to any place, even to the ends of the earth.477
The ends of the earth turned out to be California gold. This was the second period of *prosperiti*. It began in 1849 and it lived on until 1857. It was made by people wearing horsehair collars instead of beards, people who washed gold in iron hand basins, the same people who destroyed Fort Sutter and who built towns with such names as Whiskey, Wild Yankee Mines, Port Wine, and Sacramento. Railways — *chemins de fer* — set off in pursuit of the iron hand basins used by these prospectors for gold. People who were not so bold preferred to plow the earth with horse-drawn plows and to reap the harvest with croppers rather than take risks on gold and sell their harvests to gold-diggers for triple the price. This period of *prosperiti* lasted eight years. The country fumed with the smoke of factories producing agricultural equipment. The locomotives of the railways and the engines of the factories were fed by coal mines. This period of *prosperiti* gave birth to the preconditions for the Civil War. The year 1857 exploded with bank collapses. The California gold ran dry.

Fates were decided by the Civil War. The fates decided by the Civil War are well known. A new era of *prosperiti*, the third one, began in 1879. It lived for 14 years: it passed away in 1893. The financial crisis of 1857, together with the years of the Civil War and the post-war crisis that followed, lasted 22 years. Two years before the beginning of this third period of *prosperiti*, a certain Pastor Ruperti noted down for posterity:

> “New York’s present social condition presents least of all a cheerful picture. The absence of work summons a growing poverty and increases the frequency of crime. The number of people who are out of work has never been as great as it is now, and the prospects have never been sadder. Poverty of this sort exists in all of the Eastern States. The judge in one large city in Massachusetts found recently that the municipal jails were not sufficient. He sent a telegram to all of the state’s prison officials, requesting the allocation of more space, but from all of them he received the same response: everywhere their own jails are filled to overflowing! Everywhere there abound vagabonds who are begging for alms. Accordingly, work shops are empty, while houses of correction are full. And meanwhile every month foreigners are coming here by the thousands, the greater part of them without any money, without any knowledge of the language, without any friends. The terrible ‘Tombs’ – New York’s municipal prison – is filled to overflowing. If one takes into account, furthermore, the demoralization of our civil servants, which is increasing more and more, then our current social life does not present anything comforting. The political parties are raising very serious accusations against each other, and if one of them removes the other from office, then it is only in order to squeeze more out of the government sponge than their predecessors did.”

But it was these thousands of foreigners, without knowledge of the language, without friends, and without money, who had left Europe for the sake of its seventy years of labor problems, they are the ones that created the third era of *prosperiti*. These people were the ones that populated America as far as the Pacific Ocean. These people are the ones that consigned outdated American handicraft and craftsmanship to oblivion and gave industry up to machines. At that moment, when thousands of settlers hunkered down into the peacefulness and tranquility – the “pacific” nature – of the Pacific, the factories and plants suddenly grew
silent, the banks started to vulcanize, and unshaven, starving people set off to walk all across
the country.

And once again gold saved the economy in some godforsaken place, in Alaska. The unshaven,
starving heroes of Jack London482 and Johann-August Sutter483 saved the economy. From this
gold, the emaciated trusts, which had become unproductive, started to swell up anew and
expand. From this gold, the country was lit up with electricity, entangled in its copper wires.
Warning sirens started to sound at copper-ore mines and at steel mills. Newer and newer
railroad tracks appeared. Skyscrapers rose up beyond dozens of floors. This fourth era of
prosperiti began in 1898. The twentieth century was met by it. It lived for nine years: it
passed away in 1907, when one foul day the country awoke feeling very heavily hung over.

Thus, consequently, out of the four periods of prosperiti, two were created by settlers and two
were created by gold. And thus, consequently, if we follow the logic of the assertion that
prokhibishen [prohibition] was one of the reasons for the final period of prosperiti, we must
agree that the preceding four periods of prosperiti were an accident! By dint of this unusual
conclusion, which is in no way my own personal conclusion, we can come to agree that all of
America is nothing more than an accident. Yet I took away just such an assertion from an
American scholar and radical. And it’s no longer an accident because Americans, even
American scholars, in their dollar Nietzscheanism of “parliamentarianism” and “democracy,”
of which we spoke earlier, actually do feel as if they are living accidentally, living in some
contingency. This is precisely why Stuart Chase,484 a radical, what we in Russia would call a
Cadet,485 a commentator on current events who disavows prokhibishen as one of the reasons
for prosperiti, considers the automobile to be the main reason for prosperiti.

Chase asks:

“What forces have been gathering since 1921 to make this commercial prosperity
the very sizeable thing that it is?”

Chase answers his own question:

“To my mind, the largest single force has been the motor car. The automobile
was something which people really wanted with a desire that amounted to a
passion. The effect was two-fold. It stimulated business, and it suffused the
country with the visible appearance of a prosperity in which everybody seemed to
share. Other prosperous periods have been stimulated by foreign trade, or by the
seeping of gold into the community. But this particular period was stimulated by
a large, active, noisy, and inescapable article visible on every road. You could
see, hear, smell the monster for miles. (Some 25,000 unfortunates are touched by
it each year, never to breathe again.) Something in the nature of 500 millions of
horsepower was given over to the ultimate consumer in a remarkably short space
of time – the biggest single block of power, by many fold, which the world has
ever delivered . . .”
“When Henry Ford and the installment contract brought the cost of the automobile down to negotiable terms, it became something that people were willing to work for, save for, strive for.”

“It promised three great gifts dear to the human heart: romantic adventure, social standing, and the joy of rushing through the air (the urge upon which operators of roller coasters and shoot-the-chutes thrive). A car! My car!! Is there a mathematician with a slide rule long enough to compute the total emotional force which these two phrases have touched off in the last decade?”

“A definite physical elation, which is so universal as to be counted as a biological norm, comes from skimming along at 30 to 40 miles an hour. Neither does this thrill die as one matures. Adults enjoy it possibly even more than children. Without exception, the motor car is the most thrilling toy which homo sapiens has ever had to play with . . . The thrill can be enhanced, furthermore, by shiny paint; bright nickel; little metal cups on cords, which, when pulled from a dash board, glow red hot; by tiny arrows moving against lighted dials; by wicked looking lines; by horns tuned to paralyze pedestrians; by gloriously overstuffed tires. The fact that many of these accessories serve no useful function only adds to the joy of conspicuous consumption. The demand for them is colossal, and thus, beside a booming motor car industry, we have a booming motor car accessory industry. To maintain the thrill – particularly after the novelty has worn off – ever greater speeds are required. Higher speeds mean better roads. Who shall say how much of the billion or so a year we spend for highways is the result of work-a-day transportation, and how much the result of a demand to have a steeper shoot-the-chutes?”

“Once the game has begun in earnest, the whole phenomenon of competitive social standards enters – backed to the limit by aggressive salesmanship on the part of the automobile manufacturer. The make, cost and model of one’s motor car become one’s heraldic symbol of position in the community. A carpenter with a Cadillac is as good as a banker with a Cadillac. If the carpenter sports a Lincoln, the banker must take second place. The innate thrill has forced us to purchase a car. Having got it, there is no choice but to take our position in the new hierarchy of values – a model T at the bottom, a Rolls-Royce at the top. Life becomes a determined movement away from the first, up to the last. If we falter for so much as one annual model, what will the Joneses say? To a man we sign the new installment contract . . .”

“Lastly, and equally important, the automobile, beside the elation of sheer speed, and its power to determine social position, promises romance, adventure, and escape from the monotony which all too often characterizes modern life. Over the hills and far away, an engine throbbing at our door-step, and North America lies in the hollow of our hands! Mountain, canyon . . . Fifteen years ago, if one could negotiate the roads, he was indeed an explorer in a new world. He did leave his past behind; shake the dust of his city from his shoes . . .”
And Chase, of his own accord, interrupts himself here, exclaiming:

“Alas, it is not so true to-day. With 25 million cars upon the roads, the city has spilled over a thousand highways into the country . . . Once we could find escape with a motor car. Now how shall we escape from the line which creeps, fender to fender, North, South, East and West?!487

Truly, there is no way to break free from the conveyor belt of American roads! And, truly, to drive along the conveyor belts of American roads is no less exhausting than to work on the conveyor line at the Ford auto plant! The gentleman who thought up what to do with the millions of wealthy American fools was right when he asserted that Americans have been suffocated by automobiles and that the automobile has become penal servitude for Americans. I can attest from my own personal experience that if you were to ask a thousand Americans who are driving around at nine o’clock in the evening – where are they going? on what business? – nine hundred out of these one thousand individualists would be at a loss and would not be able to answer your question. They are going in order to go, they have crawled onto the conveyor belt of roads, they are holding on to the steering wheel and – they are driving. There is no need to sit still, if you have a car! Chase is wrong, however, when he says that with twenty-five million cars on the roads, the city has spilled over onto the fields in the countryside: it’s not the city that has spilled over, but rather the factory, suffocated by gas exhaust, stupefied by the intense stress of the conveyor belt, handcuffed by traffic regulations. The writer Floyd Dell488 told me that he no longer owns a car. He once had a car, an excellent one, a remarkable one. He drove it for two years, and for two years he didn’t write anything. He observed that all across America there are one and the same motels, one and the same roads, one and the same stupefaction while driving. So he gave up driving. He prefers to get around by subway and taxi when he needs to go somewhere. He sat at his desk and got down to writing novels again.

I quoted Chase so that I could talk about the reasons for the most recent period of prosperiti.

In the summer of 1931, a financial crisis swept across America. It was the most terrible crisis out of all the earlier ones. It arose after the fifth era of prosperiti. Numerous times I have heard the following conversations:

“America! The genius of America! Ford! The genius of Ford! Did you know that Ford’s system is now being applied everywhere – in restaurants, even in the shops of small vendors, even for those who stroll around in parks. This is the eternal search for new forms and innovations. This is a grandiose laboratory. Everything here is discounted and everything here is regulated. The automobile – and Ford, most of all – created the last period of prosperiti. Some oddballs wanted to outsmart Ford. They wanted to support prosperiti by tossing radios and refrigerators to the masses. Can these items really take the place of an automobile!? But Ford will create a new period of prosperiti. Ford writes that we are still not making sufficient use of rubber. He believes that we don’t need to pave the roads with asphalt, but should instead make them out of rubber. But if rubber doesn’t help, then Ford will think up something else. He’ll start producing
inexpensive airplanes that will cost the same as his automobiles. He’ll start producing them by the millions. They’ll be equipped with a second propeller on the back. With the help of that second propeller, they’ll be able to ascend and descend without having to make any take-off run. Every rooftop will be an aero-station. Distances will disappear. America will ascend upward into the air! . . . If Ford isn’t the one who does it, this, in any event, is the way things will be done. We must, we absolutely must think up something that would be the equivalent of the automobile or the gold of the Klondike! Then a new period of \textit{prosperity} will begin.”

For the time being, America has not yet ascended upward into the air. I quoted Chase in order to give this American economist the opportunity to speak about \textit{prosperity}, but it ended up that I characterized the views of an American on the automobile.

Both conclusions are significant.

The American philistine in the legends about Puritanism and parliamentarianism, in the loneliness of American democracy, in the hypocrisy, in the woodcutter’s cabins, in the clichés and stereotypes – he considers all of this: an ac-ci-dent!

And the American philistine in the loneliness of democracy, in the conveyor belts of highways, in the clichés and stereotypes – in the dollar, in the dollar – wants to break-free-from these clichés and stereotypes!

The word – \textit{o’kei} – was not created accidently by Americans; it was not created only according to the legend about its origins in illiteracy. Americans are competitive sportsmen. The Americans have a saying “keep smiling” – \textit{khrani ulybku}. American traditions require that an American is always smiling and is always cheerful. And this is absolutely true: an American was ruined on the stock market – \textit{o’kei}; an American smashed up his automobile – \textit{o’kei}; an American injured his cheekbone while playing football – \textit{o’kei}; an American was robbed by gangsters – \textit{o’kei}! Truly, this is the way it is, and it’s this way because everything is accidental.

I saw once how Americans wanted to break free from clichés and stereotypes in a truly American way. This took place in May 1931.

We were driving from Dallas en route to Baton Rouge, to the Mississippi River. After Dallas, we started seeing subtropical forests and Negro plantations, some of those several places in America that are empty and barren because this corner of America has, for all intents and purposes, been half-forsaken since the days of the Civil War. The day was scorching hot, we were weary, and so when evening time arrived we weren’t taken aback very much by the fact that the village where we would be spending the night – Mineola – was packed with people and automobiles, which was unusual for a semi-desert area like this. What surprised me was the night.
I was awakened at an ungodly hour by noises in the motel. It seemed like no one was asleep in the motel; they were instead walking down the corridors, slamming doors. People were talking loudly below the windows. Along the highway, automobiles were whizzing past every second, traveling at speeds reaching a hundred kilometers an hour. Out of the darkness, headlights flashed, hissing as they cleaved the air and then disappearing into the darkness. Automobiles were going only in one direction. The number of automobiles at the entrance to the motel tripled during the hours when I was sleeping. There obviously were not enough rooms in the motel since some people were sleeping outdoors in the open air, both inside cars and next to cars. The restaurant at the motel was on the first floor, and the drugstore across from it was open. From all indications, some people inside the drugstore were drinking heavily. I smoked a cigarette at my window, lay down in bed, and fell asleep.

When I awoke, the motel was empty. This was early in the morning. There were no cars around the motel. But there were cars whizzing past the motel at the maximum speed limit, all of them headed in one direction, thousands of cars, bumper to bumper. The license plates indicated that the cars were coming from all different states, from the farthest as well as the nearest, from North Dakota, from Vermont, California and Florida, even from Canada. The cars were all makes and models: Lincolns, Fords, Nashes, Chevrolets, Chryslers, Packards, Cords, Rolls Royces, Buicks. That is to say, people of all different social breeds were speeding past. The cars were truly speeding along, like the cats in those anecdotes whose butts are smeared with turpentine.

We joined the conveyor belt. The traffic rush was crazy. But it didn’t last long.

Cars were stopping between the small towns of Gladewater and Lakeview. The roads were completely filled with cars. Cars were not setting out along the roads. Only some heavily loaded trucks, which were filled to overflowing with all sorts of goods and chattels, were crawling along. Cars were getting off the roads and driving onto the fields of plantations. The plantations were all trampled down. The cars, which had lined up in rows, turned the plantations into sites for bivouacking. The plantations were shining from the polish of the automobiles, glistening from the tents, and emitting smoke from the primus stoves. Above the plantations, American flags were protruding. Thousands of automobiles were getting settled in at the plantations in order for people to live there.

Oil had been found in these places. It wasn’t known for sure whether there was or wasn’t any oil here. But the joint-stock companies were already cropping up. But the lands that belonged to the Negroes were already being bought up, resold, and then resold again; they were rising in price, then falling, and then leaping up again. A person who today would pay, let’s say, a dollar for it, tomorrow could get a hundred dollars for it. A person who has spent a hundred dollars maybe will become a millionaire in a year; then again, maybe he’ll be completely ruined financially. But people were coming here to buy, to sell – to get rich! to get rich! – to become millionaires! They were coming here to buy tracts of lands and shares of stock, half shares of stocks, quarter shares of stocks, to make out of one dollar millions of dollars! Temperate, self-restrained people were coming here to build a restaurant or to open a motel. Negroes had been driven away from here – they had run away from the White people. However, I did see one of them at the stock exchange. He was wearing a bowler hat and a
morning coat, despite the sweltering heat. He was selling his tract of land. There was fear written all over his face.

We stopped our car in a cornfield and walked on foot to Gladewater . . . Engineers were drilling the earth for all to see. People’s faces, the faces of those who came here in large numbers to become millionaires, their faces reflected only two feelings: fear and parsimony. It was clear, and there was no need to conceal it, that somebody was swindling somebody else. Urgently, on trucks, they were carrying benchmarks – for motels, cottages, offices, restaurants – and, urgently, they were stacking them up. The stock market was set up in the open air, near a broken fence. On some overturned land around the stock market, merry-go-rounds, a circus, a shooting gallery, an amusement park, and prostitution – mainly Negro prostitution – were springing up. Urgently, trenches were being dug for foundations, for water run-off, for new roads. Urgently, gas, electricity, and telephone service were being installed for these new places. Radio antennas that rose up into the sky were being installed. People kept arriving, assembling here with their families, with their homes, with their household goods and chattels. Urgently, an enormous site of sedentariness was springing up. Trenches and roadside villages were laden with vans that served as living quarters. The Negro villages had emptied out. People were assembling here in order urgently to become millionaires. By all appearances, people were coming here after having sold off everything they owned at the places where they had been living previously. Perhaps they will be ruined financially, perhaps they will make millions! The expressions on the faces of these people were frightful. These people were insane and they were clearly hypnotized. These people were not hearing or noticing one another. And yet amidst these people there were some very calm and serene people who knew everything. They were the aboriginals in such matters. They were as calm and serene as prostitutes. This is the way it was, presumably, in Sutter’s New Helvetia495 and in Alaska496 in their day. Here, presumably, is where the California and Klondike affairs took place. Our own Isidore succumbed to the same fever as the rest of them: he suggested that we sell the automobile right away and buy some shares of stock. He had to be persuaded to come with us and not remain there. A blinding sun was shining. Staid engineers were puttering around near two or three oil derricks that were pumping some oil samples out of the ground. Oil! – the dollar! – millions! – “liberty!” A very bright and very hot sun was shining. The faces that I saw on the Negroes at the trampled plantations near the small town of Gladewater, these faces were contorted by frightful expressions of fear, hopes, and parsimony – and decisiveness, of course, and valor, of course! To be financially ruined or to make millions! . . . O’kei! . . . We must ask the reader to reread the works of Jack London.497

And at a distance of a hundred versts498 away from these future millions – there is the silence of the fields, the subtropical forests near the Mississippi River, and the labor of Negroes in their penal servitude.

And I recall the first days of my American stupefaction:499

“. . . more! more! more! ten cents for a spoon, a notebook, a handkerchief, a pair of socks, a pen, a cup, a glass, a toothbrush, and so on, and so on, and so forth – and a mechanical fortune-telling device! drink more! eat more! go blind from reading advertisements! asphyxiate from the gas fumes! get crushed by
automobiles, radios, and refrigerators! and the city, together with the people who inhabit it, has reared up on its hind legs, has lost its mind, has crawled under the ground, has climbed up on the cliffs of houses, it howls, it grumbles, it gasps, it wheezes, having made a muddle of all sorts of outlooks and perspectives because – more! more! more! ten cents for a cute little shirt collar!"

What’s the deal? Why is there such a lack of taste!? Why – in addition to everything else – is there such a catastrophic lack of taste!? A lack of taste in conveniences, a lack of taste in pleasures, a lack of taste in reveries and honor? Isn’t it possible that it’s because all of these things are the ideals of Mister Kotofson, who lives well in every way possible, who wishes to live well in every material way possible, who knows his intestines business perfectly well and doesn’t know how to read!? After all, this is almost infantile – everything always has to be the largest: the largest steamer, the largest skyscraper, the largest canyon, the largest hydroelectric power plant, the largest circulation of newspapers, the largest number of cigars smoked, the largest number of automobiles produced – automobiles, automobiles, automobiles, automobiles, to the point of delirium – the largest, the largest, the largest! And ten cents for a cute little shirt collar. The fate of the billionaire Woolworth,500 the one who built a large number of his ten-cent and twenty-cent stores all across America, is well known. His fate is an American one, it’s one success story out of millions of failures. As a young boy, Woolworth worked for a newspaper as a “gofer.” While out running his errands, he would admire the store windows he saw. He would daydream: how nice it would be to buy a little book like this one here or a necktie like that one there, how remarkable it would be if his dimes would be enough for him to buy all that he wanted. He quit his job as an errand boy at the newspaper and set off with a hawker tray on which every item cost ten cents. This turned him, Woolworth, into a hero for young boys. Woolworth opened a kiosk. Now Woolworth is a billionaire who owns not only stores across the entire country, but also a multitude of factories and plants that produce the standard ten-cent and twenty-cent items sold in them. It’s said about Woolworth that he realized his “childhood dream.” Woolworth tells us that all of his successes were built upon his recollections of the envy he felt during his childhood. Nowadays, it’s no longer just children who are buying items at his stores. Those who sing the praises of Woolworth’s “childhood dream” canonize Woolworth, numbering him among the American saints. But Woolworth, it seems, was right when he took into consideration only our infantile instincts. More! more! more! and – just ten cents! – Across all of America – on the peaks of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, in the deserts of Colorado, on the Great Lakes, on the seas and the islands – protrude billboards and posters advertising “Coca-Cola,” the patented American fruit drink, which has a sufficiently lousy, but sweet, taste. This fruit drink, which was invented by some pharmacist, is being drunk on all of America’s highways – at five cents a bottle – and the pharmacist who invented it became a millionaire.501 All across all of the United States, and even in China, and even in Tierra del Fuego, the American chocolate-covered ice-cream bar, “Eskimo Pie” (eskimo-pai), is being sold. Covered by chocolate in a patented way, it is remarkable for the fact it does not melt in any kind of heat. It can be held out in the sun for weeks and it can be exported to China. The ice cream inside it is extraordinarily foul-tasting, but it does not melt, a bar for just five cents, and the Russian Jew,502 who invented this ice-cream bar is now a big millionaire! more! more! more! and – it doesn’t even cost ten cents, but just five!
Once I was traveling in a Russian suburban train. A healthy young woman with a milky-white complexion took a bundle out of her little basket, unwrapped it, and started eating bacon fat with some bread. The man who was sitting across from her was, presumably, rather hungry. He made a grunting sound that expressed contentment. The young woman was chewing her food indifferently. The man said sardonically, to console himself: “Just think: what a childhood dream it is to eat inside a railway car!”

Yes, it truly is a “childhood dream!”

Various magazines in America have proposed that I, in keeping with my status as a writer, should write stories for them. In America, there is a standard for belles-lettres, for works of imaginative literature: a novel should be no less than ten sheets long, and a story no more than four sheets long. I didn’t have the leisure time available to write stories anew for Americans, despite the fact that the going rate for stories up to four sheets long ranged from a hundred dollars to two thousand five hundred dollars. I offered to look over the stories that I had written earlier and select the most appropriate one. I have in my possession a letter from the editorial board of one of the American magazines (it has a circulation of two million readers), in which they inform me that not a single one of my stories is appropriate, in light of the fact that my fictional characters are either elderly people or middle-aged people, and the magazine only publishes works about people who are no older than the twenty to twenty-five-year-old range. This assessment of my writing was the only one that was used to determine my fate.

Doesn’t the contention arise here, that America doesn’t have any traditions except one – the tradition of youth?

And – automobiles, automobiles, automobiles – to the point of delirium!

Coney Island brought me into contact with a certain American. I was walking along with several of my fellow Russian compatriots, and we were conversing in Russian. Just ahead of us stood an extraordinarily short man, whose body was shaped like a top, with an enormous cigar in his mouth. He was dressed in a handsome suit. He was a bit tipsy. He squinted his eyes, looking as if he had broken loose from the works of the German artist, George Grosz, and said cunningly, in Russian, with a German accent: “Well, whot do you says – Ame-rish-ka! . . . – o’kei! . . .”

This was very unexpected and very funny. We burst out laughing.

“I says – Ame-rish-ka!” he said contemptuously, and then added calmly and threateningly: – o’kei! . . .”

It happened, by chance, that our cars were parked right next to each other, so we met for a second time. He took a flask out of his back pocket. It was a special bootlegger kind of flask that fits inside one’s trousers, the kind that a very significant percentage of Americans carry around with them. He offered us some whiskey. It turned out that he was a German national, not the last man of this kind in New York, and he was specifically a construction worker who did some kind of plumbing work involving sewerage systems. He informed us about this right
away. He was sitting on the hood of his car, waiting for someone. On the rear bumper of his car was a placard that read: “Go ahead and bump into me, fella; don’t you know that there’s still room in hell for a guy like you?!” He was drinking out of his trouser flask and kept saying: “I says – A-me-rish-ka, U.S.! . . . an accursed country – the New World, o’kei!”

He was fulfilling an American tradition – “keep smiling” – he was retaining his smile. Where did he learn how to speak Russian? We couldn’t get a reasonable answer to that question from him.

32

Legends about Ford circulate all around the world. Ford automobiles circulate all around the world. This book, O’kei: An American Novel, is similarly saturated with Ford. Ford has been described no less than Shakespeare. Ford laid down one of the cornerstones of the last period of American prosperiti. Ford, as was mentioned earlier, spilled over from his automobile plants. He even spilled over into automated dining halls. And he spilled over, by means of conveyor belts, all across America’s highways and factories.

I visited Ford’s automotive plant. It’s actually boring to write about Ford, since so much has already been written about him. And he, like every sort of god, including the American one, only loses his luster from advertising. But Ford is the American God-the-Savior. Divine matters are not my business. Nonetheless, I will now write about Ford.

Ford has published a number of books under his own name, books that have circulated around the world in their capacity as technical gospels of the Puritan leaven. It turns out that these books were not written by Ford. For me, as a writer, there is nothing more vile than to sign one’s name to something that one didn’t write. But that’s not the point. The point is that Ford once took to court the newspaper, The Chicago Tribune, which had reproached Ford for his, shall we say, lack of education and culture. Ford came to court to have his education and culture restored by the court. The court case turned out such that Ford was forced to admit that he had not written his books, even the ones about “his life and his business dealings.” Ford turned out to be “uneducated” and “uncultured” all around.504 After the legal proceedings had concluded, the newspaper organized a contest among eight-year-old American children in which the contestants had to answer those questions that Ford hadn’t been able to answer in court or that he answered stupidly. The children answered much better than Ford those questions that touched upon American notions of being “educated” and “cultured.” Ford, in his responses to these questions, did not stray very far from the kinds of responses that would have been given by Mister Kotofson.

Ford is a Puritan.505 He doesn’t cheat on his wife and he doesn’t smoke. He’s in favor of the dry law. The main Ford automotive plants are located in Ford’s hometown, in the small town of Dearborn, several kilometers from Detroit, in the state of Michigan, on the banks of the Rouge River, that is, the Red River.506 What Ford owns there are truly latifundia.507 Ford himself lives beyond the gates of the plant, in the peace and quiet provided by guards and parks, to which no one is allowed entry, so that one journalist, who desperately needed to see Ford, had to swim across the river in secret, carrying his photo equipment with him, in order to
get to his place. And before he could descend upon Ford, he had to dry off in some bushes. Living in seclusion, shrouded in mystery, Ford shows up at his automotive plant only once a year, appearing in the midst of his employees, in the name of American democratism, at which time these employees can clap Ford on the shoulder – in the name of this selfsame democratism – and greet him: *khello, Genri!* [Hello, Henry!]. Besides his automotive plants and the places used for his own personal residence, Ford has established airdromes, a museum, hotels, and, in particular, a public park named, by a twist of fate, Rouge (that is, Red) Park. Smoking is prohibited not only at the Ford plants, in their warehouses, and on their grounds, not only at Ford’s personal residences, not only in his offices, museums, and airdromes, but even at Rouge Park. This prohibition is not a fire prevention safety measure, but a humanitarian measure. It’s for health reasons that Ford doesn’t smoke. Ford is opposed to tobacco. Once you find yourself on Ford property, in that case, for the sake of your health, don’t smoke!

Ford is a humanitarian! In the hospitals at Ford plants, the employees pay a fee for medical treatment. But Ford is a philosopher! And so in the hospitals at Ford plants, work – a continuation of factory work – is incorporated: payment for this work is given in the form of a reduction in the cost of the medical treatment. Boards that simulate work benches are fitted onto the bunks of the patients, and the patients screw nuts onto bolts or they tighten the screws on these bolts. Ford introduced this work for philosophical reasons, of course, in order that the patients may earn some money and kill time in a moral way, improving their sleep and their appetite, and thus getting healthy again more quickly.

The Puritan Ford is in favor of the dry law. Ford pays out the salaries to his workers by means of paychecks. The paychecks are placed inside envelopes. Ford finds this to be the best method. From time to time, some of Ford’s agents will make an appearance at the workers’ quarters and ask that the workers show them their checkbooks. This happens especially often with those workers who are single. The agent will ask them to tell how and where their pay has been spent. The agent wants to make sure that the worker’s money has not been wasted on alcohol and prostitutes. If it’s ascertained that during the past week a worker drank a toast to the health of Mister Ford, or if it’s ascertained that a love-stricken worker gave his sweetheart, as a gift, a ticket to the movies as well as a bouquet of flowers (this, I dare say, is, after all, also an act of prostitution), and that he went to the expense of taking a trip with her to Niagara Falls, if the agents of Ford’s morality ascertain that something such as this has happened, then the worker won’t receive his next envelope with a paycheck inside it and he’ll be fired, in accord with the principle of being sent off to the ends of the earth, as was said earlier. Ford can’t allow debauchery and drunkenness to take place on his property. Ford is in favor of Puritanical morality!

And if exile to the ends of the earth is being mentioned, then we should also recall here the fate of my Ukrainian buddy, the worker who, after being evicted from his apartment at the Ford plant, was left without a roof over his head and was perplexed, wondering how it was that he used to have three automobiles, and now he didn’t have any?

Ford is a moral economist. And Ford doesn’t acknowledge Wall Street, just as he himself doesn’t engage in commerce, but invents. Ford doesn’t acknowledge the American banking
system. He doesn’t borrow or lend money at interest, considering this to be anti-Puritanical. (This is very significant. American banks – the kings of the capitalist world, the masters of the globe – can do nothing with their American compatriot, with Henry Ford. Really, isn’t this a remarkable example of American “chance” and “contingency”?! Ford’s billions of dollars are invested in his enterprises, but whatever liquid assets Ford does possess, he presumably keeps them salted away in a money-box somewhere, since he doesn’t deposit them in banks. Ford is too “moral,” right down to his non-smoking and his forced inculcation of morality. But on occasion even Ford lacks liquidity. This was the case when he changed over from the model T to the model A. As was said earlier, Ford doesn’t trade, he only invents, perfects, philosophizes, and produces. Ford’s car dealers, who are dispersed across all the states, do all his trading for him. When Ford was changing over to the model A and he didn’t have any ready cash on hand, he turned to each of these car dealers with the request that they give him a thousand dollars to be counted toward every car that was delivered to them. The dealers, of course, gave him the money. Ford managed to get around having to go to the banks. It wasn’t Ford himself who thought up this scheme with the dealers. The one who suggested to Ford this scheme with the dealers was dismissed forthwith by Ford from his employment.

Ford only produces. We must do justice to Ford: his automotive plant in Dearborn is not just a thing anymore, but a reality, and a reality that is inimitable and astonishing, a reality that is much more complex and at the same time much more simplified than the American conveyor belts of highways. The chimney stacks of the Khailend park [Highland Park] automotive plant, the main Ford plant, don’t have a single soot stain on them. Their paint job is touched up every night and they are as white as snow, like Ford’s gray hair and his shirt collars. The plant’s buildings beyond the fences stand kilometers apart from one another, so that it’s impossible to pass by all of them on foot. The squares between the buildings have been converted into lawns of green grass that are being watered every second by a sprinkler system. There is no place anywhere like this one, where ten steps (measured by my steps) away from the mouth of a blast furnace, a grass lawn turns green. Five of these blast furnaces have been placed opposite this lawn with all the multi-storied complexity of the blast furnace equipment. In addition to the automobiles and busses that drive across the plant’s fields (those fields that run between the shops), there are trains with “Bolshevik” locomotives that travel there as well. These locomotives had been ordered for Russia when Kerensky was in power, but they were not accepted by the Soviet government, so Ford bought them up and named them “Bolsheviks.” These locomotives, as is obvious from what has just been said about them, have been in existence for the same period of time as the Soviet government has been in power in the U.S.S.R. The engine-drivers ride on these locomotives wearing white gloves and white uniform coats. And the “Bolsheviks,” that is, the locomotives, shine just as if they had been delivered only this morning from the assembly shop.

At the Ford automotive plant, one can wear white gloves without smearing them not only on the lawns of green grass and on the locomotives; one can walk through the entire factory without smearing them. Ford loves cleanliness and purity just as much as he loves Puritan morality! And at the Ford automotive plant everything is conveyorized.

What, one would think, could be more slovenly and dirty than foundries, especially those in which cars are born? Ford engineers, without fail, carry chronometers around with them.
Every minute, every second, the engineers are checking the furnace charge, its certificates, its invoices, its chemical composition. In the foundry, there is cleanliness, a cleanliness that sparkles the way that tile and steel can sparkle. Even the floor, which is covered with iron sheets, has been polished and rosined. The workers, who have been split up according to their specializations, are stationed at places that have been Taylored for them. The engineers have checked the furnace for the new charging. The chronometers that the engineers carry around with them are absolutely precise. The furnaces shudder and groan with the feverish shakes of liquefied metal. The thermometer shows 1700 degrees of heating at the order of the chronometer in the hand of the engineer. And at that point the signal to commence work is given. The workers move at the command of the cranes. The white, boiling hot, conveyorized steel flows into conveyorized ladles. At the command of the conveyorized cranes, in sync with the chronometer held in the hand of an engineer, the ladles carry the steel over to some ingot molds, and at the command of those same cranes the steel is poured into the ingot molds. The furnaces take the new furnace charge. During this time, the molten steel is turned into disks, piston rings and piston pins, into car parts, and the workers calculate the residual waste matter. In the mole-like movements of the ingot molds, the future parts of Ford automobiles cool down. Once they have cooled off, the conveyor pulls these parts out of the ingot molds at the will of the chronometer in the hand of the engineer. The conveyor of cranes carries them off and delivers them onto the platforms for the trains conveyed by the locomotives called “Bolsheviks.” The furnaces swell up from the temperature of the new furnace charge. And at this point a celestial thunder storm occurs inside the shop: the ceilings, the walls, and the air inside the shop are given a shower by dozens of hoses, a mechanical rain pours down upon the shop, and vacuum cleaners howl like celestial thunder storms, devouring the dust and the air. In the shop, it’s light and airy, just as it is in May following a thunder storm. Henry Ford, if he were to take it into his head to do so, could touch the shop without smearing his white gloves. The molding sand is prepared anew. The chronometer in the hand of the engineer keeps time as they proceed to a new casting at the foundry. The conveyor rail has concluded its work. The engineer checks the invoices and certificates of the newly conveyed furnace charge. A new smelting begins.

Everything has been Taylorized, everything has been mechanized, everything has been conveyorized, even here, in the foundry, where cars are born. The worker does not pass here for a human being, but is instead reduced to a component part of the machine and of time. Everything is measured in terms of minutes and seconds. One of the Ford journalists has come up with the formulation – and Ford claims it as his own assertion – that there is a very substantial difference between a loss of material, a loss of human labor, and a loss of time, because material and spent labor (the labor expended if not by one worker, then by another one?) can be recovered, but it is impossible to recover time.

Cars are born in the foundry.

Out of the “final assembly line” – out of the final conveyor belt – emerge prêt-à-porter cars. In this automotive plant, a new car is born every five seconds. For all we know, this is no longer just an automotive plant, but a temple of “science and technology” that borders on sorcery. The birth of automobiles here can be observed without worrying oneself at all about the cleanliness of white gloves. The conveyor belt is a quarter of a kilometer in length. At the
beginning of the conveyor belt, the chassis of an automobile emerges, cranes from below convey wheels, cranes from above convey an engine and a radiator, cranes from the side lower the body of the automobile onto the chassis. The conveyor belt creeps forward like a boa constrictor, a quarter of a kilometer in length. When five meters remain until the end of the conveyor belt is reached, gas and water are poured into the engine’s gas tank and water tank. An inspector sits down inside the automobile, fires up the engine, honks the horn, and the newly born automobile escapes from the conveyor belt and runs off to the storage depots and onto the railway platforms. In this automotive plant, it’s always light. In this automotive plant, the sound of the electrical switches that bolt cars together and the hissing of the electrical air-brushes that paint the cars seem like music to one’s ears. In this automotive plant, there are few workers, and almost no engineers with their chronometers in hand are to be seen. Here machines give birth to machines. On the wall along the conveyor belt in this automotive plant, a suspended gallery has been installed overhead, whence, as in ancient monasteries, one can in solitude offer up prayers of adoration à propos the birth of a car. Visitors here, however, including even the American ones, don’t offer up prayers and they’re not astonished by what they see. At other Ford automotive plants, tourists who are a bit more affluent and prosperous can take a look at things in comfort: they can do it while sitting inside the automobiles that convey tourists around the various assembly shops at the plant. At the automotive plant in Dearborn, tourists have to stand on the suspended gallery. While standing there and while witnessing the birth of a car, truly, all sorts of absurd thoughts come into one’s head. And, truly, many Americans there begin to exclaim:

“America! The genius of America! Ford! The genius of Ford! After all, all of this is the very birth of a car by means of a conveyor belt. This is now being applied everywhere, even in restaurants, even by a dairy merchant! . . .”

At this automotive plant, one truly must wear white gloves.

Ford buys up his old automobiles, those that have broken down for good. I’ve seen how these automobiles die. A steamer arrived on the Rouge River loaded with such old-timers. Hoisting cranes grabbed these automobiles behind the chassis elbow with their hooks, lifted them up into the air, and then carried them through the air to a mashing press. This press, which in all likelihood weighs no less than a thousand tons, descends upon these old-timers. The old-timers shudder and twitch. In a minute, these old-timers are turned into a neatly compacted block of pressed iron and steel. The automobile has died. Cranes stack these blocks in piles on the railway platforms. Cranes drag new corpses to their death. The death of automobiles here is not as conveyorized as is their birth. And death is more sinister than birth.

The factory shops at the Ford automotive plant are located kilometers away from one another. But the people in the shops stand shoulder to shoulder, elbow to elbow, next to each other. This is required by the conveyor belt, where work is produced – to put it more precisely, where work is set into motion. People stand elbow to elbow here so that they can manage behind the conveyor belt to take the work from under the elbow of one’s neighbor on the left and pass it on under the elbow of one’s neighbor on the right, and so that they can manage between these two elbows to complete the task that has been assigned to the given worker. The conveyor belt is calculated according to the Ford truism about how it’s only time that is irrecoverable.
knew one worker who was bald on one side of his head, the left side. He was an elderly Ford employee. He worked in the motor assembly shop. A conveyor chain with spare parts passed by him above his work station. From time to time he would get lost in thought, lift his head, and straighten his back, and the spare parts that were passing by on the conveyor chain above his head would strike him on the left side of his head. Time removed the hair from the half of his head that was being struck. The work station of this worker could have been moved over a little, but that would have slowed down the movement of the conveyor belt for a quarter of a second. In this same temple where cars are born, I saw several workers who were moving on roller skates across the clean floor next to the conveyor belt. These roller skates were their own invention. It was the responsibility of these workers at their work station beneath the conveyor belt to screw on the automotive parts below the wheels. This screw fastening task was accomplished, of course, by electrical switches. But in order to make one’s way to the parts that needed to be screwed on, the workers in several instances had to get hunched over and doubled up in such a way that their knees wound up being pressed up against their armpits. Thus, these workers work eight hours with their knees placed on each side of their chest in order to move along the stationary floor behind the conveyor belt. It would seem that one could lift the conveyor belt at this spot or else hollow out a small depression in the floor for these workers, but – that would require time, which does not get repeated or recovered! One could cite dozens of such examples. Two examples are enough.

Two examples are enough because they all drown in the following reports. At the Ford automotive plants, there are no changing rooms for the workers. The workers dump their clothes just anywhere. At the Ford automotive plants, there are no dining halls for the workers. During the lunch break, mobile food kiosks enter the shops with sandwiches, with coffee in paper cups, and with bouillon in similar cups of this sort. After waiting in line for a while, the workers proceed to eat their lunches while squatting on their haunches or simply sitting on the floor of their shops. I’ve already spoken about how the workers cannot smoke during work breaks, neither inside the shops nor even outdoors in the open air. The cleanliness in Ford’s shops is absolute, right down to the white gloves.

I’ve already spoken about Ford’s concerns that workers not smoke, not drink, and not lead a dissolute life, as evidenced by Ford’s agents inspecting the check books of his workers. I’ve already spoken about how Ford schools his workers so diligently in industriousness that they work for him even while they are recuperating in the hospital.

I’ve already spoken about how Ford himself doesn’t engage in commerce and doesn’t even turn to banks for cash, but instead proselytizes Puritanism, philosophizes, invents, and manufactures. Ford is the American God-the-Savior. It’s not worth writing about him because the lord gods already have enough advertising and, besides, they lose their luster from too much advertising. In my childhood, I used to know a certain Russian feudal lord named Arsenty Ivanovich Morozov. He was the owner of the Bogorodsky-Glukhovsky Textile Mill in the city of Bogorodsk, now Noginsk. At that time, I was enrolled in the Bogorodsky non-classical secondary school (Realschule), which had been established on funds provided by Arsenty Ivanovich. Arsenty Ivanovich, who both owned and managed this enormous textile mill, had a certain attitude toward, and relationship with, us young boys. Besides his factory concerns, he also took care of the local Old Believers, serving as the church elder for the
The Old Believer church was located in the forest, apart from the town. Arsenty Ivanovich always went to his temple of God on horseback, with a whip in hand. A bag was tied to his saddle. If Arsenty Ivanovich saw on the road any stray twine or a lost calkin, he would climb down from his horse, pick up the twine or calkin, and hide them inside his bag. We young boys would be on the lookout for these trips by Arsenty Ivanovich. Some of us knew how to bow unto Arsenty Ivanovich so well that he would return our bow, ask us who our parents were, and give us a ten-kopeck coin for candy. But the most beneficial and profitable thing to do was not to bow unto him. In those instances, Arsenty Ivanovich would swoop down like a black kite; in those instances, he would dash after the discourteous lout with his whip; in those instances, he would chase after the discourteous lout for about a hundred paces. But, without fail, he would always stop his horse, wheel him around, ride up to the discourteous lout, and silently slip him a one-ruble bank note. Arsenty Ivanovich’s textile mill was very well supplied. Arsenty Ivanovich was a slave driver who was great at making his workers break out in sweat. But, for all that, he blessed the firstborn child for half the residents of Bogorodsk . . . Arsenty Ivanovich Ford has so much literature of this sort written about him that it’s even boring to write about him. What provides me with some consolation is the fact that Arsenty Ivanovich Ford will not be able to sign his name to the things that I’m writing about him, like he has done in the case of my professional colleagues. The writer Arsenty Ivanovich Ford once wrote a book, titled The Jews, a very vile and very stupid piece of Black Hundreds anti-Semitism, and the “writer” himself subsequently bought up all the copies of this book off the market.

Arsenty Ivanovich Ford, it turns out, is a feudal lord and a Puritan (like the Old Believers). And, like all feudal lords, he is an ignoramus and a petty tyrant. And, like all ignoramuses, he is a “philosopher.” It turns out that Arsenty Ivanovich Ford – a philistine, an ignoramus, a semi-literate man – is not to be separated out in any way from the American laws of Woolworth, Coca-Cola, Eskimo Pies, and Mister Kotofson.

The difference between Arsenty Ivanovich Morozov and Arsenty Ivanovich Ford was merely an individual one. Arsenty Ivanovich Morozov would on occasion even give us young boys one-ruble bank notes. Arsenty Ivanovich Ford is famous for his parsimony, which is illustrated by the following Detroit anecdote. Ford, they say, died and appeared before the apostles Peter, Paul, and the other gate keepers of paradise. They, as was befitting, began asking him about his good deeds: what, they ask, did you do while you were on earth? Ford informed the apostles about his production of automobiles. The apostles asked: “Yes, but what charitable deeds did you perform? To whom did you give alms? Did you, like Mister Scott, the bootlegger, leave money to the residents of Detroit for memorials?”

Ford rummaged about in his memory and recalled only one episode, when he gave a shoe-shine boy a nickel tip. He recounted this episode to the apostles. The apostles left to go confer with Jesus Christ and then returned to issue this resolution: Ford’s charity was deemed to be unsatisfactory, his nickel was to be returned to him, and he was to be sent to eternal damnation in hell!

But Ford is the last democratic feudal lord of America, because:
“... more! more! more! ten cents for a spoon, a notebook, a handkerchief, a pair of socks! three-hundred-and-fifty-dollars for a Ford! more! more! more! – American periods of prosperiti! ...”

For the Ford model A automobile – the “lux” model, the cabriolet kupe-konvertabel [coupe-convertible] that was issued in 1931 – a green stripe was drawn on the black vehicle body. Why is there such a lack of taste in the material well-being of philistines?!

I visited the Ford automotive plant in Dearborn. For ten days, I wore the Ford lapel pin of an engineer, for which I paid five (or ten – I don’t remember) dollars and which provided me with the opportunity to stroll around the Fordian manifestations of cleanliness and Puritanism while suffering from the ban on smoking. The “General Motors Company” is beating Ford because that company has rejected Fordian “Puritanism.” During the evenings that I spent in the city of Dearborn, while staying at the Dearborn Motel, a lousy little motel that, like all the other motels in Dearborn, has upon itself the selfsame green stripe of a lack of taste from the Ford vehicle bodies, during these evenings some of my fellow Russian compatriots – comrades and worker friends – used to come by to visit me. I listened to their stories about “exile to the ends of the earth” and about the three automobiles. They drove me into Detroit to show me the monument to Mister Scott, the proprietor of a series of dives, above which flies the American flag and which has been placed next to the statue of Schiller. My comrades were workers who were planning to go to the U.S.S.R. to work at the Nizhny Novgorod automotive plant ... this is how we used to talk, this is how we used to talk over there in Dearborn about the U.S.S.R.!

On July 1, 1931, the Ford automotive plants stopped production – on orders as a result of the financial crisis. A hundred and thirty thousand workers left to take a break from their jobs and get outdoors for a while.

On the anniversary of the October Revolution in 1931, the communist Betsy Ross, the great-great-granddaughter of the first Betsy Ross, the American citizeness, gave a red banner, a communist banner sewn with her own hands, to the Detroit chapter of the Communist Party.

... All the time I would dream the same dream, all the time I wanted to reenact, through my imagination and my knowledge, scenes from those sailing ships that were bringing the pioneers to America, such as Cabot, such as the people sitting at table in the mess room in the light of smoky oil lamps, people who had grown beards, because they were coming to America with one desire: to live well, to live well in every possible way, each according to his own understanding of what “well” means. And they were coming to America from all corners of the world, fleeing from persecution at the hands of the European authorities at the time, from starvation: sectarians, bandits, adventurists, dreamers... 

I didn’t get to see this dream. Time has incarnated the good life into dollars. Time had established the rules of the pioneers: do what you want, do it how you want to do it, just as long as you succeeded and prospered.

But time had also done what I have written above.
Nonetheless, America – a country that occupies only 6.5 percent of the earth’s surface and has only 7.2 percent of the earth’s population – is the wealthiest country in the world, the capitalist master of the globe.

This country – this country that participated in the world economy (before the financial crisis) – possesses:

- 90 percent of all the automobiles produced in the world
- 70 percent of the oil extracted in the world
- 57.1 percent of the metalworking industry of the world
- 50 percent of the metallurgical industry of the world
- 47 percent of the chemical industry of the world

And so on, and so on, and so forth. It’s in first place everywhere. Half of all the institutions of higher learning in the world are in America. America, this six and a half percent of the earth’s surface, consumes exactly as much electric energy as do all the remaining countries in the world combined. One extraordinary morning, all of America could get into an automobile – all of it down to the last person – and all of America could start driving somewhere. For this, it’s not necessary to raise those cars that have been flattened out by Ford or those that are wallowing in ditches by the side of highways for the edification of posterity. More than half – three fifths – of all the telephones in the world are to be found in America. During the time when Joe and I were on our trip to California, when the apartment in New York stood empty, we forgot to send in the payment for the telephone, and so they shut off our telephone service. When we returned to New York, we subscribed anew for service. An electrician came out with a new telephone. He removed the old one and put it in the corner, then he installed the new one in its place. I became a bit puzzled: why did we need a new telephone since it was exactly the same as the old one? And why was the old one placed in the corner? The electrician said:

“Do with it whatever you’d like. The cost of the telephone is included in the payment for the telephone service. It’s more expensive for the telephone company to collect all the old telephones that were shut off than to leave them with the former subscribers.”

At the editorial offices of that same journal where my stories were not published due to the old age of my characters, they have their own chemical engineering laboratory. I went to visit it. This is truly an enormous white laboratory. It’s divided into sections, where up to a hundred chemists and technologists, all of them wearing white lab coats, do their work. In one section, they conduct research into the technology of woolen, silk, and synthetic fibers, into the technology of the suits of such-and-such a firm. In another section, they conduct research into the chemical composition of the candy, cookies, and dried fruits of such-and-such companies. In a third section, they conduct research into the toughness of the rubber in the tires of such-and-such companies and in other products made out of rubber. The point is that this journal, in its own laboratory, analyzes all of the consumer goods for which it runs advertisements.
After each story, article, and note in the magazine *Liberti* [Liberty],\(^\text{528}\) which has not set the standard for American honesty, they write down: “3 min. 17 seconds,” “67 seconds,” “5 min. 2 seconds,” – that is, they write down how many minutes and seconds a reader should have to spend to read the poems, narratives, or *stori* [stories] that are being offered to him.

On the trampled down Negro fields between the towns of Gladewater and Lakeview,\(^\text{529}\) where either there will be oil or there won’t be oil, the first order of business was to lay down water and sewage pipes, as well as gas, electric, and telephone lines. Temporary housing was being brought in for the time being. Permanent homes will be erected there once it has been planned out exactly where, upon the trampled down corn and cotton fields, to place East, West, First, Second, and other *strity* and *aveniu* (in Russian, we would call them “streets” and “avenues”) and once gas, telephone, electricity, a water main, and a sewage system have been installed and the streets have been paved with asphalt. Preparations of this sort for future towns, where there are no houses and no people, but there are asphalt streets, plumbing, and gas lines that have been planned out, I saw not only in the stretch between Gladewater and Lakeview, but also in California and in the state of Michigan (not far from the Ford automotive plant there), and near New York.

It was recounted earlier how some cows live with a radio nearby and are milked by means of a machine.

And so on, and so on, and so forth.

But the point is not only the numbers and the statistics; the point is the tempos.

I am taking the following bits of information haphazardly from various reference manuals.

The *Dzhenerel-Motor-kompani* [General Motors Company] automotive plant in Pontiac.\(^\text{530}\) At this plant, the automobile models Oakland and Pontiac are produced. The assembly shops at the plant occupy a floor space of 150 thousands square meters. The plant is designed to produce one thousand two hundred automobiles per day. In just six months, from the time when the first engineers and workers originally came to these open, undeveloped spaces, in just six months, the plant was put into day-to-day operation, producing automobiles.

The glass factory in Lancaster.\(^\text{531}\) It burned down to the ground. Five days after the fire, the company concluded an agreement on the construction of a new factory. Four days later, the builders got down to work. Thirty working days later, the factory was put into operation.

The hydro-electric power station at Konovigo.\(^\text{532}\) The second most powerful hydro-electric power station in America after Niagara Falls. A capacity of 378,000 horsepower. The water falls from a height of twenty-seven meters. The town of Konovigo no longer exists. In its place lies an island that measures thirty-five square kilometers. The width of the dam measures around one and a half kilometers. Seven turbines with a capacity of fifty-four thousand horsepower each. A water flow rate of about a hundred and seventy cubic meters per second. The construction of the dam required the excavation of about three hundred and thirty thousand cubic meters of solid rock and about a hundred and sixty thousand cubic meters of
sand and clay. A railroad bridge and a railroad branch line were built. At the peak of the construction, there were five thousand three hundred workers employed. All of the construction, from beginning to end, lasted one week shy of two years.

Both of the skyscrapers, the Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building, these two tallest buildings in the world, were built, each separately, in less than a year.

New York has increased its population three-fold over the past forty years. Chicago has increased its population six-fold over the past forty years. Los Angeles has increased its population one-hundred-and-twenty-four-fold over the past forty years. In Detroit, the population has doubled every ten years.

In the United States over the past one hundred years:
The population has grown .............................................. 9-fold
The number of people living in cities with a population over 8,000 has grown .... 68-fold
The number of manufacturing jobs has grown ........................................ 707-fold
The number of spindles in the cotton-thread industry has grown ............. 101-fold
The output of cast iron has grown ........................................ 222-fold
The extraction of coal has grown ...................................... 4289-fold
Mechanical motivity has grown .................................... 3500-fold
The railway system has grown .................................... 11400-fold
Exports have grown ........................................ 68-fold
Imports have grown ........................................ 56-fold
National wealth has grown ................................... 70-fold

The labor productivity of the American worker is currently 30 times higher than the labor productivity of the Chinese worker and eleven times higher than the labor productivity of the Italian worker. The labor productivity of the American worker currently surpasses the labor productivity of the German by two and a half times. For every worker who labors in American industry, four and a half units of mechanical horsepower are needed to assist him.

Twenty-nine hours (to be more exact, twenty-eight hours and fifty minutes) are spent on the preparation of automotive engines at the Ford plant (tens of thousands of them are produced each day). The preparation proceeds according to the following time schedule:
1) unloading from the steamer the ore that is headed to the plant .............. 10 minutes
2) converting the ore into iron ........................................... 20 hours
3) casting the cylinder block ....................................... 5 hours
4) manufacturing the cylinder block in the machine shop
   (the block passes through forty-four procedures) ............. 1 hour, 40 minutes
5) assembling the engine and testing it ................................... 2 hours
   Total = 28 hours, 50 minutes

During the last hundred years in America, everything has increased threefold, has increased tenfold, has increased a thousandfold. But some of the statistical data over the past century are
curious. Pavel Svinin, a fellow Russian countryman, visited America nearly a hundred and twenty years ago. He writes:

“The European war was very beneficial and opportune for the Americans. Taking advantage of the war, with the help of their country’s neutral flag, they expanded their seafaring and commerce, enriching themselves at the expense of all the other nations in the world and, so to speak, moved ahead of them by a whole century. On the other hand, the curtailment of this commerce, the exclusion of commodities, and the embargoes revived their factories and textile mills, whose appearance was so significant that it is unlikely that the goods of other countries could ever have led to their decline. And we know that, as a result of this, the English lost several million pounds sterling every year in the exportation of their goods. The craftsmen who had emigrated from Europe combined their knowledge and talents with American entrepreneurship and, encouraged by the protective laws and the freedom there, outdid themselves, so to speak. Not having at hand the resources of the English that were needed for the establishment of extensive institutions and seeking to find some way to make up for the high cost of labor, which was incomparably higher there than in England, Americans resorted to improving various machines, making them simpler and easier to operate. In this sphere, they have shown an especially creative mind and, in all instances where necessity was the mother of invention, extraordinary achievements. Mechanical inventions have completely replaced human hands in the United States. Everything there is done and made by a machine: a machine saws through stone cliffs, shapes bricks, forges nails, and so on . . . But nothing astonished me as much as the Stimbot [steam-powered boat], an invention of the Americans, and the more I examined it . . .533

“The rapid changes that this land has made in all areas and the giant steps it has taken toward power and prosperity during the course of these last ten years have made even the most fair-minded details written before this epoch incredible.”534

“There is no need to search for profoundly thoughtful philosophers and celebrated professors in America. But, on the other hand, you would be surprised at the fair-minded understanding of the lowest peasant in matters involving commerce and industry . . . A passion for commercial enterprises prevails within all the social classes, and this passion inevitably gives birth to a passion for silver – a greed for money – and to other vices that flow from it . . . Money is a godhead for the American, and we could say that even to this day it is only the wealth of the land and piety that support their morality.”535

Thus wrote Pavel Svinin 117 years ago.

If one out of fourteen people in Germany today is a civil servant bureaucrat, then in America it is one out of a thousand. In America, everything that can be seen and that can’t be seen is measured in numbers, and everywhere prices are established – on art pieces imported from Italy, Greece, Egypt, India, and China, on exhibition halls, on showrooms, on bridges. Even on
churches one can sometimes read “For Sale” signs and the price listed. This happens in those instances when the members of a congregation didn’t make their payment on time, by the due date set by the contractors, and the contractors have sold the churches for their scrap value upon demolition or have sold them to other religious communities: a Methodist church to Catholics, a Catholic church to Jews. In America, one must toil, and manual labor, the labor performed by human hands, which are controlled by the dollar, must be multiplied by mental labor, the labor performed by a machine. In America, you will not last long with just speeches. As is true with speeches, a deity, like all other sorts of “spiritual” values, is not a matter of dollars in America, therefore, they’re not valued.

Ford’s men of letters write for him, and Ford works as a prophet (to rush about in an automobile without knowing what for – now that is of value!), Ford endorses these commandments:

“Don’t honor the past and don’t fear the future.”

“Our business life is a mirror of us as a nation, a mirror of our economic achievements, and it creates for us a place among other peoples.”

“Work is our one and only leader. This is one of the reasons why we don’t have any ranks and titles (!).”

In America, there is industrial liberty and liberty for industrialists. Coca-Cola, frozen Eskimo Pies, Ford. In America, they used to pay well for labor because it was valuable. It was creating a sizable domestic market. But in America they were also concerned that a field of action would continue to exist for labor: not only one with broken down automobiles lying along the side of highways and telephone sets thrown away, but also one with traditions. Like the following tradition: each year on September 16th, no matter what the weather is like, straw hats, which have been tossed away, are scattered about everywhere – in garbage pits, in the Hudson River, in subway cars – all across America. On May 16th, all of America dons a straw hat. On September 16th, all of America takes off its straw hat. On September 16th, all of the gangs of young boys from all of the city’s bloki [blocks], acting like the Indians in Hollywood cowboy movies, band together for the destruction of straw hats. These young boys are equipped with sticks that have nails at their end, which they use to pluck straw hats. These young boys are helping the machines, but the machines, which save time, are developing mass production, which doubles their “effectiveness” (an American mot juste!) by means of rationalization. “Our business life is a mirror of us as a nation!” The “technology” of unemployment! . . .

Posters convey the truths of American morality:

“Time is money!”

“He who does not work more than he is paid is not paid more than he works!”

“Your severed finger will not grow back even in a hundred years!”
“An accident is lost time!”

And to the breed of basses, baritones, mezzo-sopranos, violinists, and pianists who are celebrated in every possible way in America, we must add mathematicians, chemists, physicists, designers, and engineers. Their lectures are perceived as concerts. They are as beloved as are tenors. Their speeches and formulations are broadcast over the radio. Mathematics, physics, and chemistry are enveloped with emotions in America. I haven’t seen this, on such a mass scale, anywhere else on earth.

The latest round of my presentations of statistical figures touched upon American technology, American standards, and American heights, features of a country that occupies only six and a half percent of the earth’s surface, that constitutes only seven and two-tenths percent of the earth’s population, and that has accumulated more than half of the earth’s wealth. When people say that America doesn’t have its own culture (they say this often), they’re not speaking the truth. America does have its own proper culture. The essence of this culture consists of all that has been recounted above: skyscrapers, subway systems, bridges across rivers, railroad tracks across mountains, automobiles, mineral ores, coal, all sorts of world records. This culture is a bourgeois culture. America didn’t know any gentry culture, just as it didn’t know any of the overhead expenses for feudalism and gentry regalia. The northern states of America were hostile toward feudalism. If feudalism was hoping to settle down and remain in the southern states, it was destroyed by the Civil War.

Everything on earth passes and nothing is eternal, just as nothing passes as well. This American culture has now degenerated to the point where it’s impossible to live in America because one can asphyxiate there from gasoline fumes. And, besides, a person there is not a person (although he considers himself an individualist), but is instead merely an addendum to the conveyor belt because the skyscrapers, twenty-story buildings, streets, and automobiles there have lost their minds and have descended into anarchy; and having become all entangled, they are now climbing over each other, in the same way that the White House got its functions all entangled with Al Capone and Edward Doheny. But a hundred years ago, even seventy years ago, this American culture was a positive, progressive phenomenon that was moving humankind forward. This bourgeois, democratic culture threw off from its legs the shackles of monarchic mold and mildew, gentry regalia, and feudal scleroses. These molds, mildews, regalia, and scleroses still exist in certain places in Europe right up to this day. Members of the English Parliament on occasion get dressed up in medieval wigs and meet in legislative sessions at Westminster Abbey. In France, the carriage from the Château de Chambord in the Loire Valley, the carriage from that very same château where Molière staged for the first time his play, Le Bourgeois gentilhomme, that carriage did not make it all the way to Paris with the Chambord king. In the Château d'Amboise, which is located in that same Loire Valley, a château that to this day still belongs to the Dukes of Orléans, Leonardo da Vinci is buried. How can one not make a bow out of reverence to centuries past, when Westminster, Molière, and da Vinci were alive?! And how, when remembering the Chambords, can one not call to mind the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth? And how can one not call to mind the
“gloomy German genius,” which swings from Goethe to Nietzsche and from Nietzsche to Wilhelm the Second and which is currently being forged by the Polish Corridor! And how can one forget the Forum in Athens, the Coliseum in Rome, the pyramids in Egypt! America did not have either a period of classical antiquity or a medieval period. America has no Molière, no Goethe, no da Vinci. America has no châteaux, no cathedrals, no ruins. America arose at a time when the dust was being shaken off of these ruins, cathedrals, and châteaux. America arose without needing them. America fled from Chambord politesses. America did not wish to starve on account of theatrical performances – premiered at the Château de Chambord – of bourgeois gentilhommes, reckoning that a bourgeois can get by without any nobility. America was built not upon tax assessments and the politesses of balls held in châteaux located on the cliffs and in the valleys of the Loire River, but rather on the tapping sound of the woodcutter’s axe. Here arises the primacy given in America to the material, proprietary culture of things over the humanist, humanitarian culture of the spirit. And a hundred years ago all of this was a positive chapter in the history of the development of humankind, a positive, progressive, and revolutionary chapter.

The following three historical facts should not be cast off from the scales of history.

First Fact. The American War of Independence and the American Declaration of Independence of 1776 were the tocsin for the democratic revolutions in Europe, for the Great French Revolution. The Declaration of Independence proclaimed, for the first time in the history of humankind, the principles of the equality of citizens and of religious freedom, as well as the destruction of feudal privileges. In the American Revolutionary War, armed peasants, workers, and craftsmen were fighting against the regular army troops of the English monarch. They were fighting for their freedom, and they taught the French Revolution how one needs to fight against the troops of a king or of kings. A number of public figures in the French Revolution – Lafayette, for example – received their revolutionary education and training in the war the Americans fought for their independence.

Lenin wrote:

“The history of the newest America, the civilized one, opens with one of those great, truly liberating, truly revolutionary wars, of which there were so few amidst the enormous mass of predatory wars that were caused, like the Imperialist War was, by a fight between kings, landowners, and capitalists due to the partition of captured lands or stolen gains. This was a war of the American people against the English brigands who were oppressing them and holding them in colonial slavery, just as even now, in India, in Egypt, and in all four corners of the world, these ‘civilized’ blood-suckers are oppressing and holding in colonial slavery hundreds of millions of people.”

Second Fact. The General Council of the First International found it necessary and possible for it to greet the American States, the one and only statehood of its kind that existed at that time. And the American States considered it an honor to answer the First International with a letter written by Abraham Lincoln that was addressed to the General Council. The First International was now in correspondence with the American government.
But that is not all. Just as the wind of the American War of Independence was one of those winds that gave birth to the storm of the French Revolution, the Civil War turned out to be one of the winds that gave birth to the First International. On March 28, 1863, in London, in St. James Hall, a rally of English workers was assembled, a grandiose labor rally to express sympathy for the Northerners. This rally turned out to be simultaneously a preparatory step toward organizing the First International. The history of the Civil War in America was directly intertwined here with the history of this great international labor organization.

During the time of the Civil War in America, the General Council of the First International, greeting the re-election of Abraham Lincoln to the office of president, wrote, through both the word and deed of Karl Marx:

“... when an oligarchy of three hundred thousand slaveholders dared, for the first time in the annals of the world, to inscribe ‘slavery’ on the banner of Armed Revolt, when on that very spot where hardly a century ago the idea of one great Democratic Republic had first sprung up, whence the first Declaration of the Rights of Man was issued and the first impulse given to the European revolution of the XVIII century; when, on that very spot, counterrevolution could boast that it was systematically and thoroughly rescinding, like some unnecessary rag, ‘the ideas entertained at the time of the formation of the old constitution’ ... at that point the working classes of Europe understood at once, even before the fanatical intercession of the upper classes for the Confederacy of gentry landowners (the plantation owners in the South) had given them their cue, that the slaveholders’ insurrection was to sound the tocsin for a universal holy crusade of property against labor, and that for the toiling masses, not only their hopes for the future, but also their gains in the past were at stake in this frightful conflict on the other side of the Atlantic.”

The fortunes of the American Civil War, the fortunes of the American revolution, were turning out to be the fortunes of the world-wide labor movement.

And the Third Fact. The working class has its own magnificent celebratory holiday, a celebration of the youthfulness of the working class, a celebration of solidarity, a celebration of labor, a celebration of the future – the First of May. This holiday was first established by the American Order of the Knights of Labor, as one of the first revolutionary organizations in America was romantically called.

All of this did happen! And all of this has now passed!

All the time I kept dreaming one and the same dream: I wanted to recollect in my memory the fantasy about America’s bearded pioneers. It’s simpler, it turns out, to do without any fantasy, but with some knowledge.
A number of circumstances became the foundation of what America now appears to be or what it seemed to be ten years ago, because my fellow Russian countryman, Pavel Svinin, was absolutely right when he said that “the rapid changes in this land have made even the most fair-minded details written before this epoch seem incredible.” America was by no means being made by people wearing white gloves, although it has now made – and precisely for this reason – Arsenty Ivanovich Ford. The fundamental reasons that led to the making of America are the people, the time, the American constitution, the position of America in the world, and the position of America’s land itself. The people, the time, and the American land are what led America to the point where it is now. We have talked about this earlier and it is being recounted here now.

The people. The Russian Revolution transformed words. They say not that he left, but that they forced him to leave. They not only left Europe for America, they also were forced to leave. America was for Europe not only a refuge for the discontented, for dreamers, adventurists, and sectarians. People fled to America not only to escape from European authorities, from medieval sclerosis, from revolutions and counter-revolutions. Many exiles, convicts, and outcasts were forced to go there by the European authorities, primarily by the British authorities. Once, the kind-hearted and compassionate English Queen Anne even sent two ships loaded with prostitutes for these miscreants. During those times, when America was still an English colony, there were few authorities, and those authorities were bad ones. People steered clear of the authorities, and the British authorities were soon thrown off. If you were truly to picture to yourself Cabot’s small sailing ship in the Atlantic Ocean, a ship that was traveling from Europe to America for a month and a half at the mercy of the wind, and if you were to picture to yourself the people who were traveling on Cabot’s caravel, no matter whether they were members of the galley crew or were going voluntarily, whether they were sectarians or craftsmen (peasants at that time did not travel by ship, unless you count as peasants the kulaks who professed to be Quakers), then you could say with some degree of certainty that these passengers placed an axe under their pillow before turning in for the night. For all that, they owned axes that were better than, let us say, muskets. For all that, they were traveling to the New World. And you could say with some degree of certainty that these people were not very eager to speak about their past. And, for the majority of them, their kin did not have any kind of past. In other words, it was a selection of European people that came to America. And by the standards of those medieval times (for the Middle Ages continued, essentially, up until the time of Cromwell’s Revolution and the Great French Revolution), this selection was a positive one. People came to this primitive land truly with the woodcutter’s axes in hand to hew paths in the primeval forests. Only those survived who knew how to struggle against nature – how to toil, to make, and to do. The rest perished, and perished cruelly, serving as an edifying lesson for those who remained among the living. Man, in the first and decisive place, had to depend solely upon himself. The contention made by Americans, that a person’s happiness and his fate rest entirely in his own hands, was conceived during these times. The very bounteous nature in America accommodated this contention. People in America had to make everything all over again, because besides the forests and rivers, the lakes and the mountains, the valleys and the wild animals, there was nothing there. And the months it took to travel across the ocean did not permit them to carry from Europe
everything that they needed. People came to America, fleeing from Europe, fleeing from poverty mainly. People wanted to live well in a material sense. And the labor of a cooper as well as that of a physician was more honorable than the labor of a judge and a mayor, about whom unpleasant memories still remained from their time in Europe. These were the kinds of people who traveled to America not only during the days of pioneering, but throughout the entire history of America, right up until the days of the World War, because it was only beginning with the World War that quotas were set for immigration into America. This was the time when Americans considered that their own non-alien population was sufficient. After all, in just the past forty years America’s population has increased in size nine-fold. After all, to this day a quarter of the population of New York speaks Russian, and if not Russian, then Polish or Czech. This is because the last wave of immigrants to America came from the western provinces of the Russian Empire, from the eastern part of Germany, from the Slavic part of Austria. Why, even some Italians came. This last wave of immigrants differed from the pioneers by the fact that an extra century and a half of European civilization and training lay upon them. But once again it was those who wanted to live well in a material sense that were traveling there. We will have occasion to speak about this last wave of immigrants later. The people who were now in America, the pioneers, had degenerated into the all-American philistine.

Time and the constitution. The people who made America two centuries ago were inherently democrats, craftsmen mainly. These people didn’t want to become bourgeois gentilhommes, but wanted in general to do without any nobility. These people, who didn’t inquire about their past, naturally rejected any regalia and traditions from the past. For them, it wasn’t important who you are – a Hellene or a Jew, a Teuton or a Gaul. These people, who didn’t expatiate either about their past or upon the topic of so-called conscience, so as not to disturb the weights and the vaults of this so-called conscience, these people, like the Puritans and the Methodists, came to America fleeing from religious persecution. These people and others like them managed to settle down in such a way that to this day there are, on occasion, on one and the same premises, people praying to both the Catholic and the Methodist god, to both the Lutheran and the Jewish god. The Church in America is a matter of stupidity for each individual believer, although it is required when entering America, as it was required for me, to believe in some god, in any god, as long as it’s a god. These people freed themselves from feudalism’s ranks and titles (which, to this day, still reign in Europe, where some people continue to act like barons and counts). All of this was revolutionary for those times. American farmers stepped onto the land as industrialists, as craftsmen. In order to feed themselves, they didn’t waste their time burying their noses in the entrails of the earth and inhaling the aroma, but instead worked the land, cultivated it. And they preferred to cultivate the land by means of machinery, of an implement, so as to avoid excessive rummaging around in the mud and dirt. If they found some better lands to cultivate, then they would abandon the old ones without any second thoughts, without any philosophizing. The dawning of America came at a time when it could no longer lose connections with the world because all of the globe was involved in the maelstrom of humankind. And America was for Europe just about the same thing that the Don Host Oblast and the Cossacks were for those Russian peasants who were indentured serfs. The only difference was that fleeing to the Don Host Oblast only called for one to have the few quick hops of a hare, whereas you couldn’t very well sneak into America by escaping across the ocean. And trans-oceanic refugees had to
have at least enough rubles on them to afford a ticket. This connection with the world was significant because Americans always knew all the latest news about what was going on in the world. They had a primitive state close at hand and thus, in an effort to tame this primitiveness, they availed themselves of the latest human knowledge about the world. There was nothing in America. A barrel proved to be no less important than a Bible because one could always read the Bible a bit the day after tomorrow, but to go without water until the day after tomorrow in hot weather meant that one could die. America valued the thing and made haste. There was nothing in America, and there was mainly a shortage of manpower, of working hands. This created, first of all, those conditions whereby, both in the forests and in the fields, the majority of the physical labor was being performed by unskilled workers. And, secondly, it led to the Americans seeking to replace working hands with a machine. They were doing all of this without white gloves. Liberated from taxes and the freeloading of feudalism, liberated from the conscription of wealth for war (more about this several lines below), living amidst a very bountiful nature, the Americans, the petit bourgeois, saved money and accumulated wealth. The Americans colonized the primeval lands not in the way that primeval people had colonized them thousands of years ago, but as people who had come to this primitive state with thousands of years of human skills and knowledge. And so Pavel Svinin is right: the costliness of working hands was the impetus for the replacement of human hands by the machine. Pavel Svinin is right: “craftsmen,” that is, engineers, mechanics, builders, doctors – that is, the human brain – were bought up by the American dollar. But this brain itself, this human brain, went to America, to the country of democracy and free enterprise, because in those times this was the best place in the world, and the most appropriate one, for the human brain. Americans, democrats, petit bourgeois, people who wanted to live well, they were mainly the ones who bought up this human brain, which made their labor easier, creating machines and things, and which improved their health. Pavel Svinin is right, and Mister Kotofson confirms this: Americans didn’t need philosophers. However, Mister Kotofson carted his daughter off to be taught by English ladies who were writers: it’s only during these last twenty years that America has been allowing itself this luxury, having finally made a fortune at a time when Americans were aiming to buy the entire Athenian Acropolis so that they could have it shipped back home to themselves as a little gift from an uncle to an aunt, just as they had purchased our opera singer Chaliapin and our aviator Sikorsky. America was discovered at just the right time. The laws of American democracy a hundred years ago were revolutionary laws that were aiding the development of Americans – equal rights, freedom of conscience, freedom of nationalities. The petit bourgeoisie isn’t very whimsical, but it does love money and, instead of an oil portrait, it loves to hang a photograph of daddy on the wall. The American “freedom” of democracy, the anarchy of free enterprise, was positive up until that time when America finally became settled and populated, up until that time when there were not enough things. In America, there were not enough things, and so things began to be made. America made haste. All of this did happen in the past. What America is presently – this we have recounted and we are recounting here. In America, one can suffocate, from things in particular, but democracy was based upon, and rested against, gangsterism.

The land. America is called the New World. The New World hid itself nicely beyond the ocean. The ocean was essentially tamed only about seventy years ago. Even during the days of the Civil War, the English weren’t able to get to the Americans: their arms were not long enough to reach them. The Americans could maintain that “America is for Americans,” and
they lived without any European harassment, although they were making haste. When the ocean was finally bridled, the Americans already knew very well how to cast their own cannons, and long before that time they were already sending not only rum, but also wheat and cotton and machines to Europe. We’re talking about the geographical position of America on the Earth. It freed America from the European plague, which thrived from the time of the Middle Ages to the present time, and freed it from European wars. America had almost no wars at all; there were very few of them, and all of them without exception were successful. But even the most successful war is worse than no war at all. And, essentially, America started to maintain a real standing army only since the beginning of the twentieth century.

The extermination of the Indians doesn’t count as a war! In the bourgeois lexicon, this is called “colonization.” And this process of colonization in America lasted right up until the twentieth century itself, just as did the process of immigration into America. These two processes were supplementing and replenishing each other. A wonderful country accrued to the Americans, a very bounteous and enormous land with the most wonderful climate, the most wonderful terrain, the most wonderful watersheds and rivers, from subtropical cloudbursts to taiga snowfalls. In this land and from this land, there is everything: forests, meadows, plains, valleys, mountains, wild animals, fish, reptiles, earth deposits, minerals, ores. And America kept growing, up until the twentieth century, colonizing itself after having originated as a long strip of land along the Atlantic seaboard and then stretching to reach all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Along with the lands, the French, when they were colonizing Africa, and the Russian tsars, when they were colonizing Siberia, gained populations as well, gained people who were primordial in their social relations and their ideas, people from whom you can’t get anything worthwhile. Along with the lands, the English, when they were colonizing India, gained people who were steeped in Asiatic feudalism, people who would likewise give you a lot of trouble. The Americans were colonizing wastelands, sending off to these lands people from their own culture who shared their same traditions. We recounted the story of these people when we spoke about the fate of Johann Augustus Sutter. These people were making haste. These people were tossing aside everything that was superfluous and unnecessary. These people were dragging behind themselves railway lines and were plowing the land not with a plough but with machinery. All of this was being done by hands that were by no means clean. Each of these people, according to the information provided to us by Jack London, carried a dagger under his belt, but this didn’t mean that a person went around looking for a fight. The lands truly were bounteous, and a person was making haste, a person was running from one mile to the next so as to grab more and more. It was precisely at this time that the commandment given by Ford came into being: “Do not honor the past and do not fear the future!” A person was remembering the traditions: he was keeping a smile on his face, o’kei, your fate lies in your own hands, everything in this world is a stroke of good luck, you turn around and you have become a billionaire, you turn around and you have become the president. Only do something – in this country of democrats and labor, do what you want to do, and do it how you want to do it. And make haste. This hastiness has remained here to this very day. It is reflected not only in the way that America has driven itself forward with automotive speed, but even by means of the factories that build their own equipment for only two or three years because after three years this equipment will become outdated and obsolete amidst the competition. Do something! Make haste! O’kei! A sporting competition! The lands were bounteous, the hands were free with democratic freedoms, everything was being measured by
chance, by accident, by fortuity. Everything – the land, and the freedom, and the fortuity – was
elementally rewarded a hundredfold: in elemental wealth, in fortuitous fortuity, in the
elemental will of an elemental selection of humankind. Thus by the time of the imperialist
World War, the Americans, after stretching out to rest against two oceans, were elementally
colonizing their very own selves.

All of this did happen.

America entered the twentieth century not as a very big event and not in any way as the master
of the capitalist globe. In the eighteen seventies, one had to talk about America as a great
democracy. In the eighteen nineties, one could still talk about America as a democracy. This
was a large agricultural country, with a preference for extensive farming. This was a country
that was rather well equipped for industry, but with a balance of imports.

Truly, there are to this day some cranks who maintain that America is the same way now as it
was a hundred years ago: a Puritanical and democratic country that is filled with the life stories
of men such as Woolworth and Ford. These cranks confuse the America of their youth with
the real America of today when they contend that Ford, it is said, remembers the calluses he
had developed on his hands as a paltry engineer, that the president of the Standard Oil
Company was a former bailer, that the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad (the largest one
in the country) was a former shunter, that the president of the Radio Corporation of
America, Sernov, a Jew from Mogilev (Belarus), was a former paperboy, and that
Edison was a former mechanic at a small workshop. All of this is the case. Truly, prior to
October 29, 1929, America was created in the days between the beginning of the century and
this fateful date. Just as truly, these people (or, to be more precise, their companies), together
with Mister Kotofson and Arsenty Ivanovich, are the ones who created the America of
today. All of this is the case, all of this did happen, but it happened in the past! All of this
will no longer be repeated and cannot be repeated. And this is not only because Edsel Ford, the
son of Arsenty Ivanovich, no longer knows calluses and doesn’t know workers either. We
will be talking about him later.

Then again, we could utter a few words about him right now. In New York, I have a lady
friend, Miss Margaret Bourke-White, a woman who is engaged in American business
matters. To be more specific, she takes photographs of factories, plants, skyscrapers, and
steamships so that her photographs can be published as posters and advertisements. Besides
this, she serves as the artistic design editor for the magazine Fortuna (Fortchen [Fortune] in
English). Miss Margaret Bourke-White is a famous woman in America. She has visited the
U.S.S.R. twice and she keeps company with people who are pro-Soviet. She works among
major businessmen. Her workshop – her studio – is located on the sixty-first floor of the
Chrysler Building. Joe and I once stopped by to see her. In her studio, we happened upon a
man who was visiting her on some business matter, an American – well, let me come right out
and say it: he was a Frenchman. His surname didn’t register with me. But Joe’s eyes lit up
when he heard it. The Frenchman bore down upon me, slipping me his address (Park Avenue,
the street of billionaires) and taking out of his pocket a batch of Russian postcards and
envelopes with the U.S.S.R. postmark on them. The Frenchman started to make demands upon
me:
“Tell me plainly and clearly, what in the world is going on with you people in the U.S.S.R.!? I don’t understand any of it! My son has left to go live with you people. As a father, I beseech you to tell me!”

Joe explained to me why his eyes had lit up. This Frenchman was a billionaire, the proprietor of the largest textile plants in Passaic, and, by his nature, an American fascist. Several years ago there was a strike at one of his textile plants. Joe, in his capacity as a journalist, went to Passaic to observe this strike and the beatings that the police were administering to the workers. And while he was there, at the Literature House, a neutral site, Joe by chance met this Frenchman’s son. The son was already polished in a European fashion, and not an American one. The exact formulation this son had used in regard to the leaders of the strike impressed itself upon Joe’s memory forever.

“If the leaders of this strike were to have fallen into my hands,” the son said, “I would have shot all of them down in cold blood.”

“Why such cruelty and aggressiveness?” Joe asked.

“I don’t intend to discuss justice with you at all,” the son answered. “These strike leaders want to remove the butter from my bread and deprive me of my chicken for breakfast.”

The social class dimension of this attitude is formulated very clearly here. Well, then this son left for the U.S.S.R., to go see Meyerhold, to study Russian theatre arts under Meyerhold.

Ford’s generation, the generation of bailers and shunters who later became presidents of companies and billionaires, knew blisters. This generation knew how to make haste, as the pioneers had made haste. And it knew how to replace factory equipment every three years. It acted elementally with its successes and its competition, not feeling ashamed of using the means needed to reach its desired ends.

And once again – Pavel Svinin: “...the European war was very propitious and profitable for America, which took advantage of it with the help of the neutrality of its flag...”

After the World War, America entered the arena of the world circus as the world’s main circus performer. Prior to the war, America used to satisfy its domestic market. During the war, America traded both with the Allied Powers and with the Central Powers, making a fortune that was no smaller than the one it had amassed by colonizing itself. America stabbed the Central Powers in the back when it became clear that the weight of American shells and of American human meat (a very small quantity) would be decisive on the scales of war and would pay very high interest. And it was at this point that America felt the desire to become the master of the world. America was starting to feel cramped on its own mainland.

And so, despite the agricultural crisis that began in 1920, America flourished after the war and continued to flourish up until October 29, 1929. America’s democratic constitution, the
selection of people who showed pre-eminence in labor and initiative, the period of time in the country’s history when Americans could throw off the rags of feudalism, the standing of the country and its wealth in the world, the absence of war – all of these things were returning to Americans a hundredfold what they had been doing over the past hundred years. Before October 29th, by eight o’clock in the morning on October 29, 1929, the population had increased nine-fold, the manufacturing industry had increased 207-fold, the mechanical motivity had increased 35,000-fold, and so on, and so on, and so forth. We must keep in mind that every American worker is assisted in his work by four and a half units of mechanical horsepower.

All of this did hap-pen! . . . And Americans, in their hastinesses and hurriednesses, in their rules about needing to “keep” a smile on their face, did not concern themselves with major philosophies. My fellow Russian countryman Pavel Svinin is right: “The rapid changes this land has made in all areas and the giant steps it has taken . . .”

What was true ten years ago is not at all true for today, the more so in today’s cut-throat, elemental competition, the more so when even factory equipment is being built with a life expectancy of only three years. What was positive a hundred and fifty years ago – democracy, so-called free enterprise – has by now degenerated into gangsterism, something that people had not even heard about just ten years ago. Likewise, the American flag, which nowadays can be seen protruding everywhere, even in dog cemeteries, did not protrude before the days of the World War because this flag symbolizes American imperialism. Free enterprise, the American commandment, which was a reality just thirty years ago, doesn’t exist any longer because America has been grabbed around the throat by banks in the sclerosis of trusts. And Americans have been allowed to drive automobiles only to have it reach the point of absurdity along the conveyor belts of highways and to have jets of compressed air blow upon them from below at Coney Island, suffocating from publiciti [publicity] and advertisements. Americans (just as they did a hundred years ago, like the woman of puritanical morals from the Bronx park) would take exception to “Eskimo Pie” ice cream bars. I came across a man, an American, who invented a method of preparing cement out of any kind of soil. His drainage pipes and the cement he uses for construction purposes are better than the standard American cement, they are more portable, and they are ten times less expensive. This inventor walks around in shabby old trousers precisely because the cement industry in America has been combined into a trust and it depends upon the substructures of Wall Street, just like it does those of the White House, and because the preparation of cement by the new methods this man has invented would destroy the old cement industry. This inventor fears not just for his invention, but also for his very life, having every reason to believe that his continued existence is not convenient or propitious in present-day America. Truly, one could have invented the “Eskimo Pie” ice cream bar before the time when it was invented. But nowadays this very same “Eskimo Pie,” armored with publiciti, the dollar, and racketeers, would not allow any inhabitant of a new Greenland to compete with him. Americans go away to their kempy – to their “camps” – for the summer. We Russians would say that they go away to their dachas. And they live there in shacks that look like little hunting cabins. These are the people who are a little poorer. On occasion, people live there who have been matched up by nationality. I
used to know a *kemp* of this kind. The campers chose a man who was not a merchant to serve as their elder, to manage their supplies and rations. In a month this man resigned his post as the elder, first of all, because he had begun to get rich since the wholesale merchants started giving him gifts; secondly, because racketeers were eating away at him; and, thirdly, because he turned out to be bewitched, for he was sometimes acquiring goods for fifty percent of their cost, but he was forced to sell them according to the standard market value, that is, to overcharge his friends, his fellow campers. And he could not act otherwise, because if that were the case, all the weight of American trade laws would fall down upon him. Thirty years ago, Ford could lord it over other people the way that Arsenty Ivanovich used to do. But now he can’t do that. It’s precisely this feudal, autocratic attitude, personified by Arsenty Ivanovich, that made it possible for the faceless “General Motor Company,” with its Chevrolets and its Buicks, with its faceless new products backed by the banks of a depersonalized, faceless America, to overtake Ford. Gangsters, who together with cement depended upon the White House and Wall Street, are by no means a fortuitous phenomenon (just as, in general, all American assertions about “fortuity” are the essence of nonsense). Gangsters, they are the American “democracy” of today. And the financial crisis that is now sweeping across America by means of boots being taken off of the feet of corpses, should by no means be considered a cyclical, so to speak, crisis because this is a crisis of the entire capitalist system, a crisis that was created over time as capitalism was dying. A country that calls itself democratic, but that exists by means of gangsters and presidents who take bribes, cannot exist, simply cannot exist. Let even the financial crisis of October 29, 1929 not be the final one!

Remarkable things are being done here that can serve as a lesson for sociologists! I once stopped on Fifth Avenue near the shop window of a clothing store. Displayed there were men’s and women’s apparel with the sign: “For the country.” And that was all. There were outfits there in imitation of what Bavarians wear. Also displayed there were the types of outfits worn by Russian Mordvinians. For those of us who live in Russia, to get a Mordvinian outfit, we would have to take a trip to a village in the Mordvinian countryside and convince the old women who live there to rummage around for a while in their trunks to find us one. Even in England, a home-made Scottish outfit is imported into London from a little backwater hamlet in rural Scotland. In America, rustic outfits are taken from the city to the country. Human America leaned up against the dikes holding back the sea, and a human wave was sent careening backwards, it climbed up upon itself, and began to press down upon itself. New York has lost its mind and gone crazy. It is suffocating, changing its shoes, refitting itself to fit into shoes taken from corpses, and bawling: “more! more! more!”

It’s a most edifying thing – this, let us say, “social” chemistry! – Americans burn their wheat (“it’s mine, don’t touch it!” “individualism!” “sacred property!” “let my neighbor do as he pleases!”), Americans ruin their cars, and they’re now the world’s most malicious imperialist country, sending their money all across the globe so that they can seize possession of the world and dominate it. Americans are now making colonies for themselves because “Pan-Americanism” is nothing other than the colonization of the rest of America. Americans want to dig a second Panama Canal so that they can finally take complete possession of the American continent and its seas. And – a remarkable social chemistry! – Americans, those people who escaped from European feudalism, want to implant feudalism in Mexico, in Peru,
in Cuba, and in Argentina, and they are, in fact, implanting it in those countries. Now we should talk about American degeneration, about how America has become wild and uncivilized.

All of this happened before 8 o’clock in the morning on October 29, 1929. By this time, everything had converged. Humankind on the earth had outgrown bourgeois democracy. During the first thirty years following the Civil War, at the threshold of the new century, America, a young country that had not yet come to a halt, like a sturdy nineteen-year-old blockhead, was looking beyond the oceans no longer with the eyes of a democrat but now with the eyes of an imperialist. On the threshold of the new century, America pressed against its geographical borders and set off to go beyond them. But America’s “fortuities” were exhausted, and the lands were filled with people. America should have “come to a halt.” Out of the anarchy of accumulation, out of the hasty (and tasteless) heaping up of wealth onto the mountains of skyscrapers, the organization of the economy should have come into being. But it can’t exist under capitalism and it can’t exist in a country that rests upon the principles of fortuity and special cases, a country where everything is fortuitous and special and particular and private – the telegraph, railways, steamships, the police, detectives, universities, the church. Ever since the days at the beginning of the century, ever since the days of the wartime period in particular, America started to work on the earth. But the earth itself rots under capitalism. And the global economy, refitted for machines, gave birth to the agricultural crisis that began in 1929. Once again, this was not a cyclical crisis, but a crisis of the American economic system, which had got rid of farming. Having begun to arm itself with an enormous army ever since the days of the wartime period, America has been wanting to despoil the world. But in America itself, on the streets of New York, and from New York to Portland, from Portland to Bellingham, to Tijuana, to Miami, America has become flooded with such rotten stuff that it makes even the noses of gangsters droop, sickened by the smell of it. But Hoover’s nose has drooped to such an extent that he talks about a “twenty-year plan,” parodying the Five-Year Plan of the U.S.S.R. In America, there is a crisis of overproduction. In America, there are twenty million workers. In America, banks are crashing, factories are shutting down, warehouses are overflowing with goods . . . more! more! more! . . . and ten million unemployed workers, every other worker, together with the members of his family, is fated to dress himself up in the boots of a corpse.

One could write an arithmetic problem for school children in the first grade: how are these problems written? “So many kilos of coffee were lying in a storehouse.” “So many people were living in a city.” And so on.

My fellow Russian countryman Pavel Svinin is right: any first-grader could solve this problem with the simplest long division. But in America such problems are solved in the following way: surpluses of coffee are poured out into the sea to – to provide support for the coffee market. And all of this taken together is called the sacred right of property, “democracy,” and capitalism. May the American god grant them good health! But one could continue the arithmetic problems farther. There were stories told earlier about the poor, lyrical millionaire who counted forty to fifty people who are buttressed by the skyscrapers that led to the rise of New York. It was reported earlier that the publisiti-men [publicity man], Harry Reichenbach, had died. He died and left memoirs that reported how fifty people, and no
more, owned, managed, and commanded all the hundred and twenty million different tastes of
the American public, how these fifty people dressed, undressed, and put shoes on Americans,
how they lengthened and shortened women’s skirts, how they diversified the palette of men’s
suits by using Indian and electric colors, and so on. The poor millionaire lyrically asserted that
in America, in New York, there are forty to fifty people who are buttressed by skyscrapers that
are the same height as New York. They are called billionaires, and they freely grant to the
remaining millions of Americans the right to enjoy themselves at Coney Island. The
population of America numbers a hundred and twenty million people. Income tax is collected
from married people who earn more than two and a half thousand dollars annually and from
single people who earn more than a thousand five hundred dollars annually. In 1927, in the
best year of the most recent period of prosperiti, out of a population of a hundred and twenty
million people, income tax was paid by only two and a half million people. Ninety-five
percent of them were earning less than ten thousand dollars annually. And only two hundred
and eighty-three people were receiving (they were not earning it, of course) more than a
million dollars of income. In 1929, in the year of the highest period of prosperiti of capitalists,
those who received more than a million dollars of income numbered five hundred and eleven.
But in that very same year, ten thousand people became unemployed. In that prosperous year,
the government of capitalists, that is to say, once again, upon those who
don’t make or do anything. (By the way, parenthetically speaking, Americans were proud of
the fact that they had twenty million bank depositors). And here is an arithmetic problem for
the first-graders in a Soviet school: “There were five hundred and eleven people who received
annually, each of them separately, more than a million dollars, and there were ten million
people who didn’t receive anything at all,” and so on. The problem is likewise solved using
long division. But that would have been socialist arithmetic. (As far as concerns,
parenthetically speaking, the parenthetical information about the twenty million American
stockholders, including workers as well, this problem as well is solved by long division . . .)
Capitalist integrals find it necessary to write orations about “technological” unemployment, to
flood Broadway with the electric thunder of advertisements, and to shout, right under the nose
of people wearing boots taken off the feet of corpses: “. . . more! more! more! eat more! drink
more! wear out your boots and your automobiles more! . . . for the salvation of capitalism
depends upon this! . . .”

Half of the supply of gold that people have dug up is in America. Thousands – thousands! – of
American banks crashed all at once, right after eight o’clock in the morning on October 29,
1929. During the summer of 1931, American banks refused to accept deposits because they
had grown fat on gold, and they went bankrupt because they had more gold than they knew
what to do with it, for millions of people, who changed their footwear for those worn by
indigent beggars, had lost the capacity to purchase anything . . . “more! more! more!”

The French billionaire’s son, whom we described earlier, delineated his position clearly and
precisely when he spoke about the butter for his bread and about the chicken for his breakfast.
Pavel Svinin is right:

And now we must speak about the worker in America, in this country that was created substantially by the hands of the worker, the handicraftsman, and the artisan, because even bread was made here by the craftsman, and not by the peasant.

I will now juxtapose two facts.

The General Council of the First International, through both the word and deed of Karl Marx, wrote: “... for the workers, not only their hopes for the future, but also their gains in the past, are at stake in this terrible battle taking place on the other side of the ocean.”

This did happen. America is the country that has the highest percentage of working-class people in its population.

Fact number two: in the presidential election – when Mister Hoover was elected in 1928 by methods that were recounted earlier – the American working class was essentially absent at the polls because ninety percent of American workers gave their vote to the aforementioned Republican and Democratic parties. These ninety percent of voters did not come forth as an independent force.

On the opening pages of this American O’kei, I described Coney Island. I deliberately concealed one very significant circumstance there: namely, the fact that Coney Island is a site of entertainment and relaxation for workers.

I once read this description of Coney Island to one of my friends, the American communist T.

He said to me: “But don’t you think that the way you describe the American workers’ forms of entertainment will be offensive to them?”

I answered him with a question of my own: “But don’t you think that I described their forms of entertainment correctly and accurately?”

“Yes, they’re described accurately,” he answered.

And then I said to him the following, which I find it necessary to repeat here:

“If my brothers are doing some things that are stupid, it’s my duty as a writer to tell them about these stupid things they’re doing because they are my brothers. If they allow compressed air to blow upon them from below at a time when they, with their own hands, are tossing coffee into the sea and burning wheat in the fields (since they’re not, in fact, gentlemen billionaires), when they, after the collapse of the dollar, are starving while waiting in line for a heavenly bowl of bean soup, then it’s my duty to tell them that they’re looking at things askew, for they are my brothers, for the compressed air blowing upon them from below, just like the coffee being tossed into the sea, is not a ’special case,’ not a ’private
matter,’ for each individual, but rather a matter that concerns the entire working class, because from this selfsame compressed air blowing from below to Woolworth’s skyscrapers towering from high above, it’s not so much a logical as it is a most simple bridge, constructed arithmetically upon dollars and upon bricks, a bridge of arithmetical calculation. If one of my comrades, a proletarian, is going to try to prove to me that two times two is not even seven, but a camel, then it’s precisely my duty to try to prove to him that two times two is not a camel, and not seven, but four. And one needs to say this without delay, for the American son whom I described earlier grasped very well the essence, in terms of his own class identity, of the chicken for breakfast, just as he learned very well how to buy the leaders of the American labor movement for a dollar.”

In Washington, to date, every day when the president is home, from quarter past twelve until two o’clock in the afternoon, every American, who wishes to, can pass through the White House and can, in the name of the principles of “democracy” – of freedom, equality, and brotherhood – say hello to the president and hear a *khau-du-iu-du* [how-do-you-do] back from him.

All of this is very simple to do: one needs to sign up in the reception office and then stand in line. The line leads to the president’s Oval Office. Two guards are standing at the entrance to his office. The president is standing there inside his office. The line winds its way forward like a ribbon. People shake the president’s hand – “How do you do?” – and then, having now become acquainted with the president, they exit through the next door. If there are several people who wish to get acquainted with the president and if they present themselves as a delegation, they can have their photograph taken with the president. This is done right in front of the White House. The camera is focused on the spot where the president stands in the photographs. The president goes outside the White House when the visiting groups have already been seated. The whole process of immortalizing the delegation by including its members in a photograph takes no more than half a minute of the president’s time. Any American citizen can become acquainted with the president in this manner and even have their photograph taken with him.

Historical treatises are written about the skyscraper-like stories of presidents who came from the cabins of woodcutters, stories of the Empire State and Woolworth skyscrapers, about the poor farmer Hoover, how, they say, these *bois’y* [boys] all of a sudden gave a whistle and up they shot to the hundredth floor of all sorts of well-being. People speak seriously about the possibilities of meeting presidents, congressmen, governors, and other political officials, just as they speak seriously about how each American can become a billionaire or the president. Truly, truly there are such people who contend that America is the same now as it was a hundred years ago, and so on, and so forth! Truly, I met workers who confirm the American commandment, who say, “He who truly wants to find work for himself will find it in America.”

The eyes of American workers are powdered with the dust of the stories of Ford, Woolworth, Eskimo Pies, Coca-Cola, the Pennsylvania Railroad shunter, the Standard Oil Company bailer, of the stories of people at the threshold of the century who were the same as these other
Henry, Johns, and Jacks, and who filled the pages of all the newspapers and magazines. In America, everything is private! Private telegraph, private railways, private police, private church! And the all-American hubbub of newspapers tries to convince people that the concern of every American – and of the worker in particular – is his own private matter, his own private destiny, “pri-vate.” I had conversations with workers who think that one’s destiny is truly his own private destiny, for he believes in the idiotic American theory of fortuity, of chance. This same “fortuity,” with all the hubbub about the boys who shot up to the top of skyscrapers and about “private” matters, created such “fortuity” at a time when in America, a country with a working class that numbered many millions of members, there wasn’t – there almost wasn’t – nor is there now any labor legislation. And the juridical rules between workers and entrepreneurs are established by a code of civil laws and regulations, by commercial law, by a law of merchants and traders.

In America, they say, labor is respected. I think that in America they respect the dollar much more than they do the worker, and it makes no difference how the dollar is obtained, even if it’s through gangsterism. The clerk, Mister Johnson, was a clerk yesterday, but today he took off his jacket, donned a dark blue smock, and earns two dollars a week more after having become a worker. In American public opinion, he has come out ahead, for it isn’t important how you earn your money, but it is important how much money you earn. Mister Johnson is a bureaucrat, but Mister Jackson is a worker; Mister Jackson earns more money, and he is more respected in his midl-taun [middletown] than is the bureaucrat Mister Johnson. The latter is sitting on a bench at the gate with two people who are more respected than he is: with a pharmacist from the neighboring drug-stor [drugstore] and with a dairy shopkeeper, both of whom earn as much money as he does. But the bureaucrat Mister Johnson is sitting next to them not because he earns less money than they do. Mister Jackson owns an automobile that costs fifteen dollars more than the one that Mister Johnson owns. He also owns a refrigerator, whereas Mister Johnson doesn’t have a refrigerator. A district racketeer could walk up to their shop to wish them a good evening and to smoke a cigarette there, a Lokki-straiik [Lucky Strike]. This is a stroke of “good luck.” During the day, Jackson was working at a factory or was building a skyscraper, the pharmacist was trafficking in alcohol and coffee, the dairyman was selling milk and cream. This is the private business of each one of them.

Sitting on the bench, smoking their pipes and their cigarettes, the two friends are, of course, chatting. The pharmacist Schiller says to the dairyman Becker:

“Uell [Well], you are from Germany, Mister Becker. Even for you people in Germany, in Bavaria, there was a law right up until the middle of the nineteenth century that only the eldest son in a Jewish family was permitted to marry. The remaining male children had to remain single. Germany was considered an enlightened country. Not to mention Poland under tsarist Russian rule, where my ancestors hailed from. I came here to America. I finished pharmacy school. I traveled to Washington to introduce myself to the president, and he said to me: ‘Nice to see you!’ My father was a shoemaker. My sisters are still living in Poland.”
The dairyman Becker says:

“I came to America with my parents. We filled out the paperwork for my mother to come later . . . I was nine years old when we came here, and I washed dishes in a tavern. In Germany at that time, a law against socialists was enacted. It was a stupid law! In Germany, bureaucrats and noblemen were ruling the country. The workers were second-class citizens, and there was nowhere for me to go. We were pariahs, outcasts. I wouldn’t say that my father enjoyed good fortune in America: happiness did not befall him. But he did soon become an American citizen, and he could vote in the elections for president, for senator, and for mayor of his city. Living here, I go to the polls as a citizen and simply make my voice heard in support of the best one out of all the candidates, whereas in Germany every social class voted separately, and preference was given to the noblemen. My father didn’t enjoy good fortune in America, happiness did not befall him, no, it didn’t! . . . But at least happiness lay in his own hands, and he, even in his bitter poverty, considered himself to be a citizen. His poverty was not connected in any way with political humiliation.”

Jackson says:

“My father and I, we were born here in America. My grandfather came here as a young lad. At first, he worked in the coal mines of Pittsburgh. But then gold was discovered in California, and my grandfather left to go seek his fortune in California. On one occasion, he found an old, dried-up creek in whose sand, over the course of two days and two nights, he panned out two thousand dollars’ worth of gold. But then he grew sick and tired of the gold fever, so he said to himself: ‘O’kei, I clambered around in the mine shafts of Pittsburgh for a little while, then I crawled on my knees in the mountains of California for a little while, so now I’m going to become a farmer!’ At that time, in the state of Indiana near the Ohio River, some undeveloped public lands were being given away for homesteading. In that state, that my father and I were born. My father sold the land to a manufacturer when I was ten years old. A factory was built on our land. We moved to the state of Illinois, to Chicago. My father worked at the slaughterhouses there.”

The dairyman Becker says:

“You were born on a farm, whereas I was for a long time a farmhand. At first, I washed dishes in a restaurant. When washing dishes by hand was replaced by washing dishes by a machine, I became a boi [an errand boy] at a hotel, attending upon guests in the hallway and delivering messages. As a result, when I grew up, I became a mailman. When the postal business in New York was retooled and rationalized, numerous mailmen were let go, so I set off for the state of Florida. There were not enough manual laborers there. I met many fellow countrymen from my first homeland there and joined their artel, becoming a dyer. But the artel sent me to the state of Wisconsin to work doing varnishing. On a farm there,
I met a girl who, thank God, is still alive to this day. And she became my spouse. I worked for her father for twelve years, until such time as I had saved up enough money to open a dairy store with my spouse.”

I heard the life stories of these three people and their conversations directly from them themselves. During that evening of conversation, these three friends could have gone to a movie theater or to a sports club.

On Sunday, together with their wives and children, they will go to their local Coney Island. All three of them, of course, had their own checkbook and their own shares of dairy (or construction) stocks hidden away somewhere under their pillow.

It turned out that before the dairyman Becker became a dairyman and found his happiness in milk, he had been a tavern boy, then a mailman, and then a dyer (that is, a construction worker), whereas Mister Jackson, before he became a construction worker, used to milk cows in his younger years.

What I have recounted in this last section of my narrative was possible for two reasons:

It was possible, first of all, because this country was always moving without stopping, and it was moving not only forward, but also to new places. In light of the unexpectedness of all sorts of discoveries, as always happens when there are new discoveries, and in light of the constant shortage of manpower, people were seized with a thirst for working at any job you like, but mainly with a thirst for making a fortune whatever the cost. The country’s ethos of constantly moving forward was creating a shortage of manual laborers. Human hands were making things, and making things was sometimes more profitable than sitting in a clerical office. Even the Pennsylvania Railroad shunters passed through a period of labor, while the Eskimo was starving from an early age. And the shortage of manual laborers suggested that human hands, that labor, be respected as a good bizness [business]. In their discussions about what is a “private” matter, workers apparently don’t notice that a long time ago their bizness had turned into a dzhab [job].

But there is a second reason why Mister Jackson in his younger years was selling milk, whereas his neighbor, sitting next to him on the bench, was a worker. There was a shortage of manual laborers, work being done by hand was being replaced by work being done by machines. Machines grew into conveyor belts, where there was no need for one to have any skill or workmanship, but there was a need for one to know merely how to press the levers of a machine that powered the conveyor belt. No kind of special knowledge is required of a worker on the conveyor belt, but he must have reached a certain level of general literacy so that he can have some general ideas about the general work he is doing, so that he can grasp why it is that you are pressing your lever. Cows are likewise being milked by a conveyor belt and the milk is being sold at the will of a racketeer. It’s understandable how Mister Jackson became a dairyman. It’s doubly understandable if one remembers that this country was seen as a country on the move in the legends about fortuity, and actually was on the move in the fortuitous California and Alaska gold rushes.
It was said earlier that America needs to return to the time of the immigration of the last forty years, to those years when America became what it was prior to 8 o’clock in the morning on October 29, 1929, that America needs particularly to return to the time of this immigration. It was recounted earlier, and figures were provided to substantiate it, how American and German workers were earning their daily bread. A commodity ruble was being taken into account there. If you take into account marks and dollars, then the German worker was earning on average as many marks as the American worker was earning dollars. The American population has increased nine-fold over the past hundred years.

Friedrich Engels once said in regard to the English bourgeoisie:

“This most bourgeois of all nations apparently wants, in the end, to carry this matter through to the point where it will have . . . a bourgeois proletariat side by side with the bourgeoisie. Of course, from the perspective of the type of nation that exploits the entire world, this . . .”

This was Engels being ironic – using the term “bourgeois proletariat” – for Engels was witness to this development in particular, since the English proletariat was supporting the American revolution of the Civil War. But this irony was by no means ironical for the two categories of people who were working in factories and plants in America.

The American population over the last hundred years has increased nine-fold. This was by no means solely on account of the American birthrate. After the first period of American prosperity, following the Civil War, people came to America from Eastern Europe: Russians, Estonians, Latvians, Jews, Poles, Czechs, people from the Balkans, Italians, Greeks. These people were coming from lands with low levels of culture. These people were coming from lands where there had not been any revolutionary traditions for labor. These people, by their psychological essence, were petit-European bourgeois; in the best case, they were inclined toward anarchism. The poor were coming, the poor who had managed to save up enough difficult-to-come-by rubles to buy a ticket. People of this kind appeared in America even after the World War, despite the quotas. A very large percentage of these people in America (a quarter of New York speaks a Slavic language, the largest colony of Italians is not in Rome, but in New York) went to work in plants and in factories. They didn’t know American traditions. They didn’t speak English. They were given menial, second-rate jobs, requiring manual labor. They clambered down into mines and pits, they did the sewing for America, making clothes, they stood at conveyor belts. These people were coming from their East European and Italian cities and towns after having heard their fill of stories about all the remarkable things that were happening in America.

The first category of the “bourgeois proletariat,” a group that validated Engels’s irony, turned out to be the Yankees: those people who were native-born Americans, who were steeped in America’s traditions, and who spoke English. They were members of the American Federation of Labor, which we will be speaking about later. They ended up being bosses at factories, foremen, and skilled workmen. The skilled-labor jobs ended up being in their hands. The highest paying branches of labor and industry ended up being in their hands. Indeed, in certain branches of industry, for example, in the construction field, some of these workers would, on
occasion, earn up to thirty dollars – up to sixty rubles – per day. They turned out to be in the American traditions of “particularities,” of “special cases.”

The second category of Engels’s irony turned out to be a very large percentage of those very same people who were coming to America. A very large percentage of those people (I saw them) that were coming to America from countries that lacked culture, and didn’t have any labor culture, already bore within themselves the instincts of a bourgeois. They bore those instincts at the moment, at that very moment, when they were boarding a steamer somewhere in Europe. A petit bourgeoisie was coming to America. In many instances, only men were coming, reckoning that one didn’t need any kind of special skills to work on a conveyor belt in America, but that one did need general literacy. And this is precisely what the European lowbrow commoner possessed. The people who were coming to America had heard all about American earnings and American marvels. It seemed to them that they were going to a place where other people had already got things started for them. During their moments of leisure time on deck while crossing the ocean, they would make their calculations (a certain Pole, an Oklahoma worker, spoke exactly these words to me):

“I’ll work for three years. I’ll skimp on everything. I’ll save every penny. In a week, I’ll earn thirty dollars, and I’ll save fifteen. In a month, I’ll have sixty dollars saved. In a year, seven hundred and twenty. In three years, a little over two thousand. As much as I can, I’ll live a little more frugally for a while. I’ll work like a son of a bitch. I’ll squeeze all the lifeblood out of myself. Two thousand American dollars, that’s a paltry sum of money. But for us, in our homeland (we belonged to Austria at the time), that’s ten thousand krones, a large sum of capital. I’ll work, I thought at the time, for three years, then I’ll return to my homeland and open a shop in my village. I’ll get married to some Polish maiden.”

“Well, so how did that turn out?” I asked my Polish companion.

“It turned out well for some others, but it didn’t turn out well for me,” my Polish companion replied.

For one thing, those people who arrived from Europe, without any knowledge of the language, without any knowledge of American traditions, thirsting to accumulate wealth, undertook any work that they could find and they worked really hard, like sons of bitches. But, for another thing, not knowing either the language or the traditions, they didn’t grasp what was going on around them in America, and they reckoned that it was none of their business anyway, so they didn’t get involved in American matters. This was the petit bourgeoisie within the ranks of the proletariat.

One in every thousand of them turned out to be the inventor of Eskimo Pies or the head of the Radio Corporation of America. Certain percentages of them amassed dollars and saved them. Many harnessed themselves like draft animals, hitching up the straps of American manual laborers.614 They settled down, they got married, and they lived to the end of their days as semi-foreigners, dying under the banner of America. The multi-national nature of these
workers, of course, didn’t help them to consolidate and amalgamate. Ford, in particular, deliberately placed a German next to a Pole at the conveyor belt, and an Italian next to a Norwegian.

A certain percentage of these people broke down under the overly stressful strain of the working conditions in America. This percentage of people then proceeded to join the ranks of the poor, ragged vagabonds in America, filling up all sorts of American gateways and crannies, replenishing the number of impoverished Americans. They took up residence in New York on the Bowery, the world’s most terrible, most shameful street of lumpen-proletarians,⁶¹⁵ who didn’t want to do anything and who weren’t doing anything. And there isn’t a country in the world with a larger quantity of lumpen-proletarians than America. And there are a hundred times, many thousands of times, more lumpens than there are billionaires in America. They are called trempy [tramps] – down-and-out vagabonds who travel around the country barefooted.

Another percentage of these European immigrants, who broke down under the overly stressful strain of the working conditions in America, escaped into gangsterism. The names, Al Capone, an Italian, and his advisor, Harry Guzik,⁶¹⁶ a Jew, they speak for themselves, just as the fate of a member of the petit bourgeoisie in a gangster mob is completely natural and to be expected.

A third percentage of these people left their jobs to find escape in the revolutionary cause – they were members of the petit bourgeoisie who protested against capitalism. They escaped into anarchism, challenging everything that had befallen them. The anarchist and syndicalist currents were the strongest revolutionary tendencies in the American labor movement. My Polish companion, whose words I just quoted, was an anarchist. Essentially, he wished, for the sake of all the people in the world, and for Americans in particular, that everyone and everything would go to hell!⁶¹⁷ As the old Catholic adage goes, he wished that from the baptismal font, from the sacred chalice of America, they would throw the baby out with the dirty bathwater. But it’s very clear that we shouldn’t throw America out, if only because Americans (therefore, workers) have made a lot of magnificent things: they have learned, consequently, how to make things and how to do things, and they can make and do things.

The people who have come to America over the past forty years currently make up thirty-four percent of the entire American population. But seventy percent of the total number of workers in the coal industry, the steel industry, the oil industry, and the machine-building industry is made up precisely of those people who have come to America over the past forty years. Before 1917, entry into America was unrestricted. In 1917, Congress put in place thirty articles that deny entry to foreigners, first and foremost, anarchists. In 1921, Congress adopted a law that set immigration quotas. In accordance with this law, entry would be allowed to no more than three percent of the population of every nationality currently living in America. The census of 1910 was used as the basis for calculating what number this three percent would amount to. In 1924, the exact number of people who have the right to gain entry into America was established: 153,714 people per year. (Fixing this last number, in line with the thirty articles put in place in 1917, had, among other things, the following political aim: in accordance with this numerical timetable, entry for people from Eastern Europe had to be limited to fewer than ten thousand. The Eastern European pathway to America was cut off
because Eastern Europe was contaminated by revolutionary activities. In general, the relatives of people already living in America could come only by their invitation).

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America was by no means built by clean hands, nor by the hands in the white gloves that the engine drivers of the locomotives called “Bolsheviks” were wearing while they drove around the Ford automotive plant.618 There is a cruel rule in life: the living forget the dead, and the dead aren’t able to talk about themselves and their experiences to the living, because they are dead. If only we were able to listen to those people who went through the forests and across the deserts of America, breaking the first trails! If only we could listen to those people who died from starvation on the first trails?! If only we could listen to all those people who perished for America, gunned down during the days of worker strikes, convulsed and turned into carbon by the electric chair, rotting to death in the prisons of America . . .

The history of the American labor movement – this is a story of betrayals of American workers, betrayals that are no less terrible than those of the Middle Ages. I know of a conversation that a German engineer, named Otto Moog, had with a certain American public figure, a Mister Childs.619 This conversation took place on a steamer while crossing the ocean, during a leisure moment when, under the influence of oceanic expanses, they could philosophize. They were talking about the German tax system and about the imposition of taxes on German heavy industry. Mister Childs, an American public figure, said:

“Such an idiotic tax never would never have become law in our country. Even if the socialists were to have a majority in Congress and in the Senate, they wouldn’t be able to pass such a law. We would simply have acted upon the necessary people with money, and one fine day they would have found stocks for automotive plants in their desk drawers.”620

“But that, after all, is a bribe!” engineer Moog said.

“There wouldn’t have been anything immoral in this,” Mister Childs answered. “I would have cautioned them in this way against committing a stupidity that would do themselves harm: automobiles have given American workers the largest amount of work and money!”

This conversation, I must say, was both democratic and republican, and oceanic, just as it was transoceanic!

In 1869, the Order of the Knights of Labor arose in America.621 The Order was a clandestine organization, constructed on the model of Masonic lodges (and was, consequently, a rather mystical order). The Order’s work plan was likewise semi-secret, with an inclination toward anarchism. Nonetheless, Black Friday622 (the day when the financial crisis of 1873 began on the New York Stock Exchange) elevated the Order of the Knights of Labor to the crest of the labor movement at that time. In 1877, a railway strike swept across America.623 Miners helped the railway workers. In St. Louis, power went over to the workers, and the workers
formed a Safety Committee. This was repeated in a number of other cities and towns. It was the first time in the history of America that federal troops set off on punitive expeditions all across America. In Chicago, there were battles between soldiers and workers. In 1885, there was another railway strike, and it defeated Jay Gould,624 a famous railway billionaire at the time. These strikes, and this labor movement, were led by the Order of the Knights of Labor. In 1879, the Order emerged out of the underground. In 1886, it had 730,000 members. But in that same year of 1886, the following two events took place. In Chicago, on the heels of a labor lockout, a strike arose at the factories of McCormick, a farm equipment company.625 During that strike, a bomb was thrown into a crowd on Chicago’s Haymarket Square, and a police officer was killed. No one, not any court, could ascertain who threw the bomb, but a court convicted five anarchists, who were not guilty of committing any crime, and sentenced them to death by hanging. Four of them – Albert Parsons, August Spies, George Engel, and Adolph Fischer – were hanged, while the fifth defendant, Louis Lingg, committed suicide in prison.626 This trial and these executions were acts of White Terror.627 In that same year of 1886, the leader of the Order of the Knights of Labor, the “Great Master,” as he was called in accordance with the Order’s terminology, a man who was an implacable orator and a staunch foe of capitalists, left the Order and took the post of a high-ranking government official, of a bu-reau-crat! The leader was bought out, the soldiers were executed, and the Order disintegrated.

The Order disintegrated for its own good, according to the arguments of Mister Childs, the man from the steamer. The Order of the Knights of Labor was a recondite and mystical organization, but nonetheless an anarchist one. And here we must remember a third fact about the year 1886. The American Federation of Labor had arisen as early as 1881. It was organized by Samuel Gompers,628 the same person who managed to live until 1925, befogging the minds of American workers and duping them for nearly half a century. In 1886, Gompers picked up those workers who were searching for consolidation and amalgamation following the disintegration of the Order of the Knights of Labor. From the anarchist Order, workers now found themselves in an organization that (while clanging the whole arsenal of American clichés about democratism, equality, and brotherhood, clanging trite slogans, such as “He who truly wants to work will find work for himself,” and so on, from the American commandments) was promising to realize Engels’s irony by creating for American workers the everyday life of “bourgeois proletarians.”629 The American Federation of Labor was contending that socialism was not an American concern. The American Federation of Labor was affirming how homicidal it would be for American workers to engage in a battle against entrepreneurs (since the workers themselves could become entrepreneurs, and, consequently, already were, in their potentiality, entrepreneurs). And so the Federation thought it best to sign an amicable, “philanthropic” (Gompers, a philanthropist!) agreement with the entrepreneurs. The Federation of Labor is not a political party. It’s more along the lines of a federation of labor unions. Gompers maintained that political parties, and especially socialist ones, were harmful for the American people. For the American “people” – and workers, according to the American constitution, are members of the “people,” and as such they enjoy equal rights (they can even become billionaires or the president!) – two parties, they say, are sufficient: the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. These two parties, even without workers, can pass legislation in Congress that addresses workers’ needs. Gompers got the majority of organized labor in America to follow his lead. Gompers was being helped by capitalists. Gompers tried
to convince entrepreneurs to distribute shares of an enterprise among the workers who work
there (so that a worker would receive a dime as profit from a billionaire’s billions of
dollars). Gompers tried to convince workers to purchase shares of the enterprise where they
work so that they would consider themselves to be “proprietors” (and so that they would
receive a dime from a billionaire’s billions of dollars). There’s no need to try to explain why
Gompers made speeches voicing “workers’ demands” not just anywhere, but at conventions of
the Republican Party. There’s no need to try to explain why the American Federation of
Labor endorsed sending troops to suppress the Chinese Revolution and to seize
Nicaragua. And there’s no need to try to explain why the Federation was concerned that the
workers whom they had consolidated might not go to the voting booths as an independent
force.

There’s no need to talk about the splendid personal fate of Mister Samuel Gompers, who
possessed such good health that for nearly half a century he was able to toil in such a grueling
business as the business of workers! The fate of Mister Gompers is truly a genuine American
fate!

There’s no need to talk about the twenty million depositors who put their money in American
banks. That’s the American system. But we must remember that a good percentage of these
depositors were – workers! – they were both depositors and “ sharers in profits.” They were
stock holders as well! There were millions of them. There were so many of them that two
hundred and eighty-three people used to receive more than a million dollars a year of so-called
dividends!

I spoke earlier about the correspondence between the First International and Abraham
Lincoln. I passed over in silence the fact that in 1872, following the debacle of the Paris
Commune, the office of the General Council of the First International was transferred to
America. The work of this office gave birth in America to a labor party that, beginning in
1877, was called the Socialist Labor Party. At the turn of the century, this party was the left
wing of the Second International. But at the turn of the century, in 1899, the party split in two.
One part of the party kept its earlier name. The other part, headed by Morris Hillquit, which
had merged with groups of Social Democrats in America, shortened its name and began to be
called succinctly the Socialist Party. In 1905, the anarchists-syndicalists separated themselves
from the Socialist Labor Party and created a labor union called the Industrial Workers of the
World. Shortly thereafter, these anarchists-syndicalists died in prisons. In 1919,
communists separated themselves from the Socialist Party and created their own party, which
for a time was called simply the “Workers’ Party.” Since 1927, it has again been calling
itself the Communist Party.

But we’ll be speaking now about the Socialist Party, whose leader was Morris Hillquit. Before
Hoover’s election in 1928, the Socialist Party, which had already shortened its name, now
shortened its application forms: in the questionnaire that it used for accepting new members, it
discarded the article – the one and only article – about an obligatory acknowledgment of the
class war. Nonetheless, a chaplain was appointed, and a candidate for the post of Vice
President, James Maurer, would often give revolutionary speeches in his city:
“We are getting ready to give workers a government of the working class that is exemplary and true to type, but if a strike were to occur in Reading during the time of our term in office, then the life and property of the capitalist entrepreneur would be protected such as they have never been protected before! . . .”

But that’s not all. During the summer of 1931, in June, I was witness to, and a newspaper reader of, the following instructive episode. The leader of the Socialist Party at the time was Morris Hillquit. An American oil company purchased oil and some other petroleum products from Neftesindikat, the Soviet state oil company. It purchased these items for a hundred and five million dollars. The former owners of the Baku oil fields, owners who were now scattered all over the world and all over the various “industrial trade” agencies, filed suit in an American court, demanding the sequestration of funds belonging to Vacuum Oil, a company that had purchased oil in the U.S.S.R. The suit demanded that those funds be paid not to Neftesindikat, but to them, the former owners of lands in Baku that formerly belonged to them, lands that were their own private property. They argued that the Bolsheviks were selling stolen property that belongs, by rights and in fairness, to its former and “lawful” owners. And you know what: the solicitor who undertook to plead this case in an American courtroom was none other than Morris Gompers, or rather, I mean to say, Samuel Hillquit. Yes, yes, Morris Hillquit, that’s who it was, the leader of the American Socialist Party. America is a country of records. A case like this one, where defense of the interests of White Guard Russians against the Bolshevik Revolution is a defense undertaken by a socialist leader, such a case indeed sets a new world record for betrayal and treason.

I won’t say anything about the Communist Party in America so as not to sound like the immodest person who pats his own back or toots his own horn. But the dead aren’t able to talk about themselves and about their doings because they are dead! If only we could listen to all those people who perished for America and who died for the cause of workers in America, those who were gunned down during the days of worker strikes, those who were convulsed and turned into carbon by the electric chair, those who rotted to death in prisons. If only we could listen even to those people who arched their shoulders and hunched their backs not in prisons, but while stooping down behind the machine tools of conveyor belts! . . .

There is no need to go far back into the distant past. One need only recall the recent strikes by textile workers in Passaic, at the textile mill owned by that loving, devoted daddy whose spoiled son was talking about how he needed to have his chicken for breakfast at the same time that workers were being evicted from their homes and tossed out onto the streets. That strike took place in 1926, and it was led by the Workers’ Party. One need only recall the strike at Rockefeller’s mining enterprises in the state of Colorado on November 21, 1927 (a period of prosperiti!), when the police beat up the strikers unmercifully, killing six people and injuring twenty-three others. ‘That strike was led by the Workers’ Party. Miners’ strikes flare up every year in the state of Pennsylvania. The battles with police there result in mass beatings and the slaughter of workers. Besides kloby [billy clubs], the police at these strikes employ the latest words in technology: suffocating gas and tear gas. On August 22, 1927, two hundred people – men, women, and the children of workers – were beaten and gassed in this manner in Cheswick. The police were assisted by the American Federation of Labor. A miners’ strike in the states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia that began in 1927 lasted
for more than a year. During the winter, hence in freezing temperatures, up to a hundred thousand miners, along with their wives and children, were evicted from workers’ encampments. The strike committee proposed contributing funds as collateral to guarantee that the workers’ rents were covered, but Andrew Mellon, the Treasury Secretary for the federal government and a factory owner himself, rejected this proposal. In Pittsburgh, twelve thousand people were evicted in this manner. They inhabited areas around Pittsburgh, living inside boxes made out of planks and roofing felt. Each day, the strike committee was able to hand out only nine cents – eighteen kopecks – per head to the workers and their families. Mellon, a factory owner and the Treasury Secretary, was supported by the American Federation of Labor. This was talked about even in the Senate.

Senator Hiram Johnson gave this report to the Senate:

“We saw thousands of women and children literally starving to death. We saw hundreds of destitute families living in crudely constructed shacks that were hastily knocked together.”

Senator Reed, from the state of Pennsylvania, confirmed every word spoken by Hiram Johnson. In *The Evening World*, a newspaper that is by no means revolutionary, it was written:

“. . . an antiquated law allows the coal companies to hire people at their own expense, without any monitoring on the part of the authorities, to outfit them in police uniforms, and to arm them with revolvers and billy clubs . . . plain-clothes detectives and security guards themselves throw gas bombs so as to provoke acts of violence and justify their existence on the company’s payroll. Indeed, an official investigation has established that many of the officials in the special police force, who find themselves in the employ of the coal companies, have a criminal past.”

Even Fannie Hurst, from the Hearst Press, wrote:

“. . . such a situation, where families that have been thrown out of their homes are now living like dogs in barracks and kennels, right next to their vacant homes, runs counter to any feeling of civilization.”

Fannie Hurst stated:

“. . . incipient Red Bolshevism is stalking these mining camps . . . Children are born and reared into abhorrence of the present conditions. Civilization . . .”

Workers from the American Federation of Labor, did you read about this!? Or is this also a “private matter,” like the “private” police of Mister Mellon!?

If only the dead could hear this! And if only the dead could tell us about themselves! It’s a very cruel rule that neither the one nor the other can hear this!
In the state of Pennsylvania, in the Allegheny Mountains, there are blizzards like the ones that we have in Russia in the Vologda and Pskov regions. In the valleys between the mountain tops, the towers of mine shafts can be seen, jutting out of the ground. They are silent because for a long time now the land here has ceased to quiver with the jolts from coal-cutting machines. The rails are covered with snow. Coal residue is lying on the ground around the rails. Nighttime security lights are swaying in the wind, strewing the sense of being abandoned and orphaned. The wind is howling dolefully in the winch cables. During daylight, everything here looks destitute from coal dust, dust from the same coal that drove trains across the plains and the mountains and that powered ships across the oceans, dust from the same coal that heated fireplaces and the feet of those who were warming themselves in front of those fireplaces, dust from the same coal that miners excavated for kilometers across the land. But now it’s nighttime, the land is enveloped in the solitude of electric lights and the creaking of winches that have turned silent. Near the stone-dead mine shafts, police whistles can be heard calling out to each other. But on the mountain slopes, above the mine shafts, beyond the mine shafts, bonfires across from hovels were emitting smoke into the air. These were the hovels of those people who had been evicted from their homes. The bonfires were emitting smoke in the same way that for centuries they had emitted smoke on the highroads travelled by vagabonds. People who had been evicted from their homes were sleeping in these hovels. Picketers were sitting around the bonfires, keeping watch over the night. These were workers. They were silent, warming themselves at the bonfires. Their caps were pulled down low over their foreheads. The rails in the narrow passages of these Allegheny Mountains were covered by snow drifts. But beyond these narrow passages there were direct routes leading from New York to Chicago and Los Angeles, from Los Angeles to New York. Trains were speeding along these routes, trains that were called The Twentieth Century, trains that paid a dollar to their passengers for every minute that they ran late. Because time – is money! Because one can’t be late in New York, where . . . more! more! more! . . .

But if one were to stray from these direct routes, which are not covered by snow and that are fenced off from the natural environment by advertisements for things, if one were to have some sense knocked into them and head north, for example, to the state of North Dakota, to the American forests, to the truly natural environment, then they would see how, at each of their noble-minded conventions, representatives from the United States timber industry have requested, first of all, that an embargo be placed upon Soviet lumber, arguing that Soviet lumber has been hewn by the hands of exiled convicts. But freedom-loving America cannot use forced labor! If one were to come to America’s natural environment . . . they would see forests, forests, and more forests. The nature of Jack London. And so it’s nighttime, just before dawn. Fir trees, larches, cedars, snow. And at dawn, coming out of the hovels of barracks, people are going to work, those people who get paid twenty dollars a month. Here, besides the clerk, there are not any native-born Americans. Here there are Latvians, Lithuanians, and Belorussians. These people work on a contract: they get a bunk in the hovel, grub, twenty dollars pay a month, and they get to work from dawn to dusk. These people speak hardly any English. It’s not clear what language they’re speaking, lumping together Russian, Polish, Latvian, Estonian. These people have been living here for years. At dawn today, an incident occurred. Five days ago, the clerk beat up a worker, a youngster. This youngster had already been working here for many months. At the end of each month, this
youngster ended up owing the office money for those purchases that the office had made in
town on this youngster’s behalf. On the evening when the clerk beat him up, this youngster
was lying on his bunk in the barracks, apparently in delirium. His chest was sunken, he was
coughing a lot, and he was talking to himself that evening, bothering his neighbors. People got
tired of this, and he was told to stop coughing and stop mumbling. That night the youngster
escaped from the camp. Five days later, at dawn, the police on horseback brought him back to
the camp. This was an incident because a man entered the forests who had been there, beyond
the forests. The youngster lay down on his former bunk. The clerk was very tender and
affectionate. The workers poured themselves coffee from out of the pot. The workers were
standing around the coffee pot, speaking in hushed tones about how, rest assured, they were
glad not to be in his shoes during this battle, if he took it into his head to break the contract!
The boss had good reason to be so tender and affectionate. The workers went over to the
youngster’s bunk, sat down on the adjacent bunk, and started asking him questions out of
genuine curiosity:

“Well, so how are things over there? Tell us plainly, how are things over there in
town? You were in town, weren’t you? Where did you go?!”

The youngster lifted up his head and said guiltily:

“I wasn’t in town. For five days I just wandered around in the forests. I wanted
to cross the border into Canada . . .”

“You mean to say that you weren’t in town!? Oh, what a fool you are . . . well
then, you really are a tramp! . . .”

Dawn was breaking, it was getting light. People were finishing up their coffee, poured from
out of a jug, and setting out to go work in the forest.

. . . if one were to lose one’s way on routes that are not covered by snow and that are fenced off
from the natural environment by advertisements for things, if one were to have some sense
knocked into them and head not to the north, but to the south, there, in the states of Texas,
Mississippi, Tennessee, in East Virginia and West Virginia, in North Carolina and South
Carolina, in Alabama, Georgia, and so on, there, Negroes are working, ten million Negroes (in
the United States, there are twelve million of them in all), an entire state within a state. We
have already recounted how Negroes live. On December 26, 1930, that is, on the second day
of the Christian observance, in the West, of the feast of Christmas, a telegram from
Jacksonville, Florida, was published in American newspapers:

**FLIRTING WITH A NURSE’S AIDE** (the heading is in bold face)

“Timothy Rouse, a 24-year-old Negro, was working at a local hospital on Davis
Island. Accused of having a flirtation with a White woman who worked as a
nurse’s aide at the same hospital and of having molested her, the Negro was
arrested and thrown in jail. Soon an enormous mob of people gathered outside
the jail. Having obtained the release of Timothy Rouse, this mob abducted him,
driving him out of town and into some woods. There, a doctor who was part of
the mob performed a castration operation upon him under general anesthesia. Immediately following that operation, an ambulance was summoned, and the victim was transported to a Jim Crow hospital for medical treatment.

This is a fact! . . . This is a fact, although it is madness! Ten percent of American workers are Negroes. Dallas, Milwaukee . . . by whose hands were these cities built? . . . In Milwaukee, the Negro Labor League invited Milwaukee’s socialists to their conference. The “Socialist” Party flatly refused to do the same, for the simple reason that the Negro labor movement is not a labor movement, but a racial movement. This is a fact! . . . a fact, although it is madness!

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And so: more than half of the supply of all the gold that humankind has dug up on earth is in America. Half of all the institutions of higher learning on earth are in America. Half of the electric energy harnessed around the globe is consumed in America. Eighty percent of the automobiles around the globe are to be found in America. The deepest underground burrows dug for municipal subways and the tallest buildings constructed in the world – buildings that have so crushed, strangled, and dug through New York, in particular, that it’s impossible to live there – are to be found in America. And so on, and so on, and so forth. This is what all of this O’kei: An American Novel is devoted to.

And so: at eight o’clock in the morning on October 29, 1929, the financial crisis began, a crisis that has been commented upon by the entire globe because America was the master of the capitalist part of the globe and because everything – the largest, the most unsurpassed, the most record-setting – is to be found in America.

Everything that has been written above, all the verbs in this novel, O’kei, must be placed, must be transferred – grammatically – to the past tense: all of this, besides the financial crisis, “was,” all of this “did hap-pen.” My fellow Russian countryman Pavel Svinin is right:

“The rapid changes this land has made in all areas and the giant steps it has taken have made even the most fair-minded details written before this epoch seem incredible.”

At eight o’clock in the morning on October 29, 1929, as has been noted in the annals of history, America’s latest financial crisis began.

From the first two jolts, from the first two subterranean-volcanic-social tremors (as Americans assure us) that took place at the Wall Street stock exchange on October 29, 1929 and on November 13, 1929, America was flung into a financial crisis. The stock market – these are figures, numbers. During the period between October 24th and November 13th, people on the stock market lost – the stock market lost – fifty billion dollars, a hundred billion rubles. They vanished into thin air. This sum of money is twice as large as the amount of the national debt of that selfsame U.S.A. in 1920, the year when the national debt of the U.S.A. was at its largest. This sum of money is equal to the national budget of Imperial Russia over the course of fifty years, if we take the year 1913 as the norm. This sum of money is equal to the national
budget of the United States over the course of seven years, if we take that selfsame American year of 1929 as the norm. Stocks of the General Motors (automobile) company, for example, which were worth 4,159,770,000 dollars (4 billion!) on the stock market on, let us say, October 15th, were worth 1,617,750,000 dollars (1 billion!) on November 11th, having fallen in value by 2,542,020,000 dollars (2 billion!): two and a half billion dollars – five billion rubles – that is two and a half times the annual national budgets of Imperial Russia in the years 1912 and 1913.

Stock prices were falling:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the stocks</th>
<th>Top price</th>
<th>Price on October 29</th>
<th>Price on November 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Foreign Power</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westinghouse</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dupont</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int. Combustion</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster Eisenlohr</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Corporation</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Steel</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Motors</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Electric</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Manville</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston Oil</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americ. Water Works</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The names of fourteen major companies on the stock exchange have been listed here: exactly seven out of the fourteen, as can be seen from this listing, no longer had any value on November 13th. If we are to believe the American statistics, which maintain that there were twenty million stockholders in America at the time, then on average each stockholder (shareholder and so on), each one, had occasion to lose two thousand five hundred and fifty dollars. But the stock market tallied (by means of its ticker tape!) that during those days of geologically earth-shaking tremors on Wall Street 1,018,453,400 (1 billion!) different stocks exchanged hands to the astronomical sum of 125 billion dollars. 125 billion dollars – that is the same amount of money that there is in the American national budget over seventeen years and eight months. That is more money than there is in a century’s worth (the nineteenth century, for instance) of the national budgets of England, France, and Germany combined.

_Uoll-strit_ is written “Wall Street” in English. Its exact translation means “Embankment Street,” “Wall Street.” It is along here that a New York seawall once ran, when New York still belonged to the Dutch and was called New Amsterdam. Skyscrapers and oceans began to sway from Wall Street’s earthquakes, especially during the early days and especially in the offices of marzhinisty [marginists].
Following American financial practice, a marzhin [margin] is the loan against shares of stock that a person who wishes to purchase those shares receives in advance through the mediation of a professional stock market middle-man called a broker. The potential investors who wish to purchase those shares of stock are called marzhinisty. A potential investor has two thousand dollars. He borrows eight thousand dollars from a broker and purchases securities for ten thousand dollars. The securities are registered in the name of the investor, but they are kept on deposit with the broker. The broker takes a certain percentage for himself. All the gains and losses from these securities, all the liability for them, rest upon the investor. If a security cost a hundred dollars at the time of the transaction (of these one hundred dollars, only twenty actually belong to the investor) and if this security increases in value to a hundred and fifty dollars, then the investor has earned fifty dollars on his twenty dollars. If this security falls in value from a hundred dollars down to fifty dollars, the investor not only loses his twenty dollars, but he also has to pay his broker thirty dollars in addition, or else go out and hang himself.

Wall Street is a crooked, ancient, obsolete street (the only ancient street remaining in New York). Wall Street snarled, baring its canine teeth of skyscrapers at the sky and at the ocean. But the stock exchange is a two-storied building, and skyscrapers lose their proportions, without infringing upon the style of medieval solemnity of Wall (and Walled) Street.

It was the month of October, the time of year when different romances begin. In Paris, in Monaco, the theater season had just begun. In Egypt, the sweltering heat had subsided and the pyramids had now become accessible for tourist travelers. Steamers were crossing the ocean from America. Aboard the steamers, ticker tapes were working. Rich folk were sailing from America to see the pyramids and to spend some of the theater season in Paris, after finding peace of mind while resting in Monaco and amidst European culture. As the steamers were approaching Europe, hundreds of these rich folk from America knew that they didn’t have their own personal dollar with which to pay the porter because they were not only bankrupt, but also in debt. Bunin’s story, The Gentleman from San Francisco, conceived a different fate for rich folk. The ships were carrying to foreign shores the corpses of people, of Americans, who had not passed away aboard a steamer but had put a pistol to their head and shot themselves dead because they, these Americans, had been millionaires yesterday, but they awoke as beggars today. These gentlemen from San Francisco of American “fortuity!”

It was raining in New York during this time. The gunshot sounds of New York’s rainy nights were interwoven with the oceanic gunshots coming from the pistols of people committing suicide.

A deathly silence always sets in following the thunderclap sounds made by a landslide or a cave-in. In the midst of just such a silence, a council of bankers gathered together inside their Wall Street offices. John Morgan sat down next to Kuhn Loeb. They told the world and America that everyone needed to calm down. President Hoover and Treasury Secretary Mellon (coal mines!) met in the silence of their White House offices. They told America and the world that everyone needed to calm down: first of all, because not all of the twenty million stock holders suffered from the earthquakes of the financial crisis; secondly, because
the stock market crisis was prompted mainly by the excessive flow of capital into the stock exchange turnover; and, thirdly, because from that moment when stock market speculation ceased, it was possible for a number of enterprises to create the foundation for a new period of “flourishing,” that is to say, a new period of prosperity.

Hoover and Morgan were proposing a period of calm, of peace and quiet.

I arrived in America right in the middle of this period of calm, of peace and quiet. It is still here even today. And so I am addressing myself to the day labor, the work paid by the day, of the current period of American calm, of peace and quiet, which had been proposed by Hoover, who promised that a number of enterprises would provide the foundation for a future period of prosperity. I am deliberately not systematizing my materials here so as to give them to you in the context of the daily rounds of everyday life, just as each today generally takes its normal course. Today lives by means of newspapers. So let there be newspapers. I am inserting excerpts from them into my text, just as they happened to find their way into my hands.

“STIMSON ON IMMIGRATION
Washington.
Following a protest launched by Secretary of State Stimson and Secretary of Labor Doak, the Senate Immigration Commission has decided to review Senator Reed’s bill to ban immigration for two years. An exception will be granted only for the immediate family members of legal residents of the United States.

Stimson and Doak reprimanded the Commission, pointing out that it is precisely this exception for next of kin that will give an unfair advantage to immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe!

Stimson is advising Congress to reduce all immigration by at least 90 percent.”

“DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION ARE SCARED BY RED MENACE
Boston.
The conference of the ‘Daughters of the American Revolution’ has decreed that it will introduce a bill in Congress to outlaw the Communist Party and also to deport all communists who are natives of other countries. Mrs. Gould announced at the conference that a decline in patriotic spirit is being observed in schools and that it would be well to have teachers swear an oath of allegiance as a sign of their loyalty and patriotism.”

“FORMER MEMBER OF THE WORLD COURT LEVELS CRITICISM
New York.
Mr. John Bassett Moore, a former American judge at the World Court, spoke before the Association of New York Lawyers and delivered a sharp critique of the government’s position toward the Soviet Union. Although he did not directly demand diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union in his speech, he did point out
that such recognition would be entirely in keeping with American historical traditions, because the American government had been one of the first to recognize the regime of the French Revolution at the end of the XVIII century. Moore criticized the activity of the congressional committee headed by Representative Fish for its investigation into communism in America, pointing out that the agitation stirred up by the work of this committee actually serves to support communism. Mr. Moore believes that diplomatic recognition of the Soviets and trade with them would mitigate the financial crisis.”

“DURING THE PAST TEN MONTHS THERE HAVE BEEN 19,818 BANKRUPTCIES!
The indebtedness of the 19,818 firms that have gone bankrupt during the past ten months amounts to 744 million dollars.”

“The Bank of United States has closed. The bank had 59 branches in New York, 400,000 depositors, and holdings of around 203 million dollars. The most prominent American bankers conferred all night to discuss ways to prevent any further crisis. State authorities are reviewing the business dealings of the Bank of United States. The bank did not open its doors yesterday morning and remained closed all day. Crowds of depositors, disquieted by panicky rumors about the bank’s insolvency, began to flock toward the doors of its branch offices as early as the evening before last. Depositors stood in lines at the doors all night long. Reinforced police details were dispatched. At the doors of the branch offices the next morning, there appeared a notice, announcing that state authorities were conducting an investigation into the oversight and regulation of the bank.

In addition to the depositors, the most prominent New York bankers did not sleep all night either, as they discussed measures for averting a panic at other banks.

The bank, in all of its New York branch offices, numbers around 400,000 depositors, mainly retailers, artisans, skilled workers, housewives, and people of modest means.

The panic started the evening before last in the Bronx after one of the retailers there brought his shares of bank stock to his local branch office and requested that the branch manager buy them back from him. The branch manager started trying to talk the retailer out of the idea of selling his shares. And that was sufficient. The retailer set off to tell his relatives, friends, and acquaintances that the bank was not able to buy its own private shares of stock. At that same hour, depositors ran off to the branch offices of the bank and started to demand their deposits back. But their fate had already been sealed.”
“DEPOSITORS OF THE BANK OF UNITED STATES ORGANIZE COMMITTEES
Depositors at the Bank of United States, which closed its doors several days ago, have organized a number of committees and have hired an attorney to defend their rights.”

“MAYOR WALKER CALLS UPON DEPOSITORS NOT TO WITHDRAW THEIR FUNDS FROM THE BANKS
‘The public is worrying for nothing about the savings they have given over to the banks,’ says Mr. Walker, the Mayor of the city of New York.684 ‘The financial system of the United States ensures the safety of deposits. The municipal government is depositing a large sum of money into the Manufacturers Trust Company today.’685

‘The Manufacturers Trust company,’ says Mayor Walker, ‘is one of the banks from which a large number of people withdrew their savings last week. For short-term promissory notes alone, this bank in the course of the past few days has had to pay out 40 million dollars.’”

“BATTLE ON 3rd AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY
Right in front of building No. 327 on 3rd Avenue, a charitable dining hall that provides meals free of charge, a crowd of up to 4,000 unemployed workers stood in an endless line, waiting in anticipation of vacant seats. The police started to establish order. Billy clubs, as per usual, were put into use. The reason for the clashes between the unemployed workers and the police is not known. Traffic on 3rd Avenue was held up for almost an hour due to the battle between the unemployed workers and the police.”

“INDUSTRIALISTS AGAIN DEMAND AN EMBARGO ON SOVIET MANGANESE
Washington.
The American Manganese Producers Association has turned to Congress with the demand that it impose an embargo on Soviet manganese, arguing that the sale of manganese on the part of the Soviets constitutes an instance of dumping, which intensifies the American financial crisis.”

“SIX HUNDRED BANKS HAVE DECLARED BANKRUPTCY
According to statistics provided by the administration of the Federal Reserve Bank,686 during the course of the last eight months 600 banks have declared bankruptcy, having disposed of deposits to the sum of 266,000,000 dollars. In just the past two days, 73 banks in the states of Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Illinois, and Iowa have either declared bankruptcy or defaulted on payments. For the year 1930, there were, in all, 1,100 bank bankruptcies with losses in the sum of 565 million dollars.”

“CHELSEA BANK IN NEW YORK HAS CLOSED
“19 BRANCH OFFICES OF THE BANKERS TRUST COMPANY IN PHILADELPHIA HAVE CLOSED”

“DEPOSITOR AT THE BANK OF UNITED STATES COMMITS SUICIDE
David Polyak, a retailer, committed suicide by throwing himself out of a tenth-floor window. The reason for the suicide was his devastation in connection with the bankruptcy of the Bank of United States.”

“BATTLE AGAINST FEMALE SMOKERS
Boston.
A league to battle against smoking among girls has been formed here. The president of this league is Mrs. R. Williams.”

“SENATOR FISH HAS FOUND THE GUILTY PARTY!
Washington.
In a speech before Congress, the leader of the congressional committee investigating communism in the United States announced that he considers the trailblazer of the communist movement in America to be Sen Katayama, a Japanese chef who is currently hiding from America in Moscow.”

“NEW SECRETARY OF LABOR PROMISES TO ELIMINATE GANGSTERISM IN THE COUNTRY
The new Secretary of Labor promises that he will take all the necessary measures to strengthen the battle against the criminal world, which has advanced a whole series of prominent names, such as Capone, Rothstein, and others, who are openly conducting criminal activity in the country. The secretary intends to eliminate this excessively powerful band of gangsters by his favorite method, which he applies mainly to workers: namely, by the deportation of foreigners who are gangsters.”

“PEOPLE ARE PROTESTING AGAINST THE BAN ON IMMIGRATION
Washington.
A number of social organizations have appeared to testify before the Senate’s Immigration Commission. One of these organizations pointed out that in 1929 immigrants sent 247 million dollars home to their relatives in Europe. If these relatives had come to the United States, this money would have remained inside the country. One of the congressmen quipped that this was before October 29th. The Commission is endorsing an immigration ban, which it will be reporting to Congress.”

“GANGSTER TONY VOLPE IS CAPTURED
Chicago.
Immigration authorities have arrested Tony Volpe, the racketeer who is the biggest gangster after Capone. These authorities intend to deport him to Italy, the country whence he came 25 years ago.”

**“ROUND-UPS OF IMMIGRANTS AT THE ORDER OF DOAK**
New York.
In the port of New York, round-ups are being conducted of immigrants who are being sent off to Ellis Island (the Island of Tears).”

**“DEPORTATION OF ABNORMAL IMMIGRANTS**
Beacon, N.Y.
A resolution to deport all mentally abnormal immigrants has been passed. The head of the Matteawan Hospital reports that 35 percent of all the patients under his treatment there have such psychological abnormalities, that is, about 400 people.”

**“THE CONFESSION OF A POLICEMAN: A TRUE STORY**
(a short narrative, a true-life incident)
‘We’ve never had as much work as we do now,’ said the kap [cop]. ‘And the main thing isn’t that people who have never had a kriminel rekord [criminal record] are now turning into gangsters. It’s understandable: a man has a wife and kids, and there’s nothing to eat. What disturbs us more are the psychological aspects. For example, a boi [boy] comes up to us and asks: ‘Where is there a spik-izi [speak-easy] around here?’ The whole psychology here is that sometimes you can’t decide whether he truly wants to have a drink and you should show the guy a good place where he could do that. Or else: is he looking to get into trouble so that he won’t have to get wet in the rain and can instead spend the night at the police station? Yesterday, for example, I was driving to a detour on my motorcycle. I drove up to the post of a buddy of mine. We’re standing there talking. It’s dark, it’s nighttime. A guy comes up to us. He’s about twenty-eight years old, unshaven, not wearing a coat, and he asks us: ‘Where is there a spik-izi [speak-easy] around here?’ My buddy understood at once what was going on. He gave the guy a slight shove and told him to get lost, or else he would arrest him! He had given him just a slight shove, but the guy couldn’t keep his balance and he fell over. From the ground, he says: ‘That’s just what I want: for you to arrest me!’ And I could hear tears in his voice. It became clear that the boi hadn’t eaten all day long and now had nowhere to sleep.”

**“REMEDIES FOR UNEMPLOYMENT**
Detroit, Michigan.
An apple, as we know, was the original initiator of all our earthly afflictions. For a long time, the apple didn’t play any kind of historical role. But at present the historical fate of being America’s savior from the financial crisis has fallen upon the apple. The government thinks that this is the way to help the unemployed. Fruit growers are supporting this government initiative on the part of Mister Hoover. Slogans have appeared and patriotic propaganda has poured out,
calling for the mass purchase of apples from unemployed workers out on the streets. Municipal authorities in all our cities have noted that on every street corner there are places for the sale of apples by unemployed workers. Yes, but when are all these apples going to be eaten?"

“CAPONE, THROUGH THE MARRIAGE OF HIS SISTER, TRIES TO GET RID OF THE STRIFE BETWEEN GANGSTERS

Chicago.
A wedding took place here between gangster Capone’s sister, Mafalda, and one of the gangster chieftains, who up until this time has been feuding with Capone. Mafalda is 18 years old. She appeared in church holding a bouquet of 400 lilies in her hands.”

“HOOVER CONSIDERS OUR NORMAL LIVING AND RECREATIONS AS THE WAY FOR US TO BE SAVED FROM THE CRISIS

Washington.
In his annual address on the State of the Union, presented at the opening session of Congress, President Hoover declared that it’s not the government enacting legislation, but only the people pursuing their ‘normal living and recreations’ that will help us in our battle against the current economic crisis. He pointed out that the federal government, all the same, is prepared to allocate 150 million dollars to public works projects for the battle against unemployment that is taking shape. Hoover also advised Congress to strengthen the laws on the deportation of undesirable immigrants. While Hoover was delivering his address, the streets surrounding the Capitol were being guarded by reinforced detachments of police officers who were armed with rifles in the event that there might be a recurrence of the recent demonstration by communists.”

“MUNICIPAL LODGING HOUSE WAS EQUAL TO ITS TASK

There was a day last week when 2,587 people, 56 of them women and 11 of them children, suddenly turned to the city’s shelter for the homeless – the Municipal Lodging House – for assistance. This was the biggest day since the day the shelter was opened, but it was equal to the task. On this one day, these unemployed workers were fed at 27 food stations called ‘bread lines.’ They found shelter at 17 missions and at 9 social organizations that had mobilized their resources for assisting the unemployed.”

“THE MAGAZINE ‘YOUNG WORKER’ IS DENIED POSTAL MAILING

“THE PRESIDENT IS GIVEN A REQUEST TO AID THE UNEMPLOYED SIGNED WITH 100 THOUSAND SIGNATURES”

“BANKRUPTCY IS DECLARED BY 4 PARTNERED COMPANIES OF THE BANK OF UNITED STATES”
“APPLE SELLERS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED UNEMPLOYED IN THE NEW CENSUS”

“IN SING SING PRISON THE TWO BOLGER BROTHERS, 19 AND 20, AND ITALO FERDINANDI, 22, ARE PUT TO DEATH IN THE ELECTRIC CHAIR”

“TIMBER DEALERS OF THE UNITED STATES RISE UP IN ARMS AGAINST THE USSR”

“THE NUMBER OF MARRIAGES HAS DECREASED AS A RESULT OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS”

“THE POLICE ARE HUNTING FOR THE CRIMINAL ELEMENT AMONG IMMIGRANTS”

“9 MARCHES BY STARVING UNEMPLOYED WORKERS WILL BE ORGANIZED”

“NEXT WEEK WILL BE MARKED BY MASS MARCHES OF STARVING UNEMPLOYED WORKERS IN ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY”

“AN EXPEDITION IS BEING OUTFITTED TO SEARCH FOR AN ANDROGYNOUS TRIBE OF NEGROES

Los Angeles.

Doctor Arthur Torrance,701 a specialist in the study of tropical diseases, has flown to New York. From there, the scientist is leaving for Africa. Arthur Torrance intends to organize an African expedition to Lake Chad. According to the scientist’s hypothesis, a tribe of androgynous Negroes has been living near this lake. This is already the third time that the scientist has been going on this expedition. In 1924 and 1926, he did not succeed in reaching Lake Chad. The expedition is being financed by the Society of Tropical Medicine.”

“YESTERDAY THREE LEADERS OF UNEMPLOYED WORKERS WERE TRIED IN COURT

Yesterday, in a courtroom near the Tombs prison,703 a review took place of the case against Sam Nesin, Robert Lealess, and Milton Stone,704 three activist leaders of a movement among the mass of unemployed workers who were seeking some improvement in their situation. They were demanding a government program of social security and passage of a law that would prevent unemployed workers from being thrown out of their apartments and onto the street for non-payment of their rent. These three defendants had at one time been elected by 800,000 unemployed workers who had organized their own labor councils. By the time of the trial, the district was filled with masses of unemployed workers and was being guarded by police officers mounted on horseback.”
“UNEMPLOYED APPLE SELLERS HAVE BEEN CHASED OUT OF FASHIONABLE DISTRICTS OF NEW YORK”

“NEGROES AND WHITE UNEMPLOYED WORKERS HAVE JOINED FORCES
Charlotte, North Carolina.
More than a thousand unemployed workers joined forces during a hunger march to the local siti-kholl [city hall]. The city’s mayor had the police, who were armed with baseball bats, tear gas bombs, and firearms, advance upon the workers. The police were hoping to incite racial animosity between the White and Black workers. They did not succeed in doing this. A clash ensued as the police attacked the Negroes. The White workers interceded on behalf of their proletarian comrades. A worker named Binkley addressed the workers, giving a speech that called upon them to join together in the class struggle.”

“A MAN STANDING IN BREAD LINES COMMITS SUICIDE
After receiving notification from his landlord that he would be evicted from his apartment for non-payment of rent, Delicio Dischito, 38 years old, committed suicide by means of gas poisoning. In a suicide note, he wrote that ‘standing in bread lines – this is a slow death from emaciation.’ And he requested that his coat be given to some other unemployed worker.”

“DECEASED MAN WILL READ HIS LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT TO HIS HEIRS FROM A MOVIE SCREEN
Birmingham businessman X has decided that after his death he will nonetheless personally read out his last will and testament to his heirs. The businessman filmed himself reading his last will and testament in a speaking film, a ‘talkie.’ Moreover, he specified ahead of time which armchairs in the room his relatives should sit in. This speech from beyond the grave is constructed in such a way that the testator addresses himself singly to each of his heirs in turn.”

“FOR A TOTAL CESSION OF IMMIGRATION INTO THE UNITED STATES
The Immigration Commission in the House of Representatives has approved in principle the draft for a plan to put in place a total cessation of immigration into the United States for a period of two years.”

“AL CAPONE THE BENEFACCTOR
Chicago.
Al Capone has opened a bredlains (a literal translation is “bread line”) where bread and soup are handed out free to unemployed workers. Al Capone is feeding unemployed workers three times a day. Up to three thousand starving workers pass through his bread line each day. It is important to note that Al Capone has requested that his bread line not be guarded by the police. There has not been a single incident there thus far.”
“FISH IS MAKING HEADWAY

Senator Fish, who has received a great amount of publicity following the work of his commission investigating communism in the United States – a commission, incidentally, that is more often called not the Fish Commission,705 but the Fish Comedy – spoke at Carnegie Hall in New York City yesterday. Sympathetic sighs could be heard coming from the direction of his listeners when Fish spoke about the poor policemen who sometimes are even bitten by women and children when the guardians of law and order have occasion to defend themselves from the revolutionaries. Fish said: ‘Communism stands before the court of history to the same degree as does capitalism. Capitalism can learn much from the socialist experiments taking place in the Soviet Union. If capitalism wants to be victorious in its struggle for existence against communism, then it should protect its own house, as the communists are doing.’ Fish demanded the expulsion of all Reds and the embargo of all Soviet goods. One of Fish’s opponents pointed out how impracticable Fish’s proposals are, arguing in favor of his own contention by noting that if all the ‘Reds’ were to be expelled, the country and the capitalists could be left without any workers.”

“500 FARMERS WITH GUNS IN HAND DEMAND BREAD

State of Kansas.

500 farmers showed up in town armed with guns, demanding food and clothing for their wives and children.”

“SUICIDE OF AN UNEMPLOYED WORKER

Philadelphia.

Unemployed worker Anatole Wilson, 21 years of age, committed suicide, leaving behind a last will and testament in which he asks that his corpse be sold for 20 dollars to the university for the purposes of scientific research and that 18 of these dollars be used to pay off his creditors.”

“CRIMINALS OR MEXICANS!?706

Los Angeles.

On maps of Mexico found in Mexican geography textbooks, the states of Texas, Arizona, California, and New Mexico are pictured. The inscription reads: ‘This is our homeland, unjustly taken away from us by the United States during the War of 1846-48.’ This is what Mexicans think in regard to these lands. But the American authorities do not think this way. For them, Mexicans are immigrants. The Mexican colonies within these Mexican states are now being terrorized by the wave of arrests and deportations of Mexicans back to Mexico. Trains loaded with deported immigrants are traveling to the Mexican border all the time. In nearly every Mexican village, letters with the following contents are being passed from hand to hand: ‘I, Diego or Rodrigo Such-and-Such, am currently sitting in jail in such-and-such a town, and the authorities here agree to release me if I can get the money to pay for a ticket to travel to the Mexican border.’ The American authorities support their argument in defense of this harsh treatment of deportees
by making reference to the purported fact that criminals abound amidst these Mexican colonies.”

“POLICE BEAT UP WORKERS IN ELIZABETH”

“UNEMPLOYED WORKERS DEMAND IMPROVEMENT OF THEIR NIGHT QUARTERS”

“NEW LEGISLATIVE BILLS TO BAN IMMIGRATION”

“NEW YORK’S KING OF GANGSTERS, JACK DIAMOND, IS ARRESTED, CHARGED WITH YET ANOTHER MURDER”

“A PETITION FROM UNEMPLOYED WORKERS”
Milwaukee.
Unemployed workers appealed to City Hall with a petition that, in order to feed their family, they be given the funds that were allocated by the city to build a new jail. The petition was rejected by the municipal authorities.”

“PANIC AMIDST THE CAPITALISTS”
James McDonald, the head of the American Foreign Policy Association, announced at a conference of pastors in New York: “The main threat to the capitalist world comes not from communist propaganda or from Soviet dumping, but from the fact that there are no leaders among the capitalists themselves; instead there is panic, doubts, and uncertainty.”

“A NUMBER OF DEMONSTRATIONS BY UNEMPLOYED WORKERS ARE TAKING PLACE TODAY IN NEW YORK”

“HOOVER DELAYS ASSISTANCE TO UNEMPLOYED WORKERS”

“MASS RALLY BY UNEMPLOYED WORKERS TODAY IN MADISON SQUARE GARDEN”

“IN OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA, A MOB OF UNEMPLOYED WORKERS, NUMBERING 1,000 MEN, SEIZED FOOD SHOPS”

“LADY-MILLIONAIRESSES HELP UNEMPLOYED WORKERS – BY TELEPHONE”
Elizabeth, New Jersey.
At the suggestion of the Chamber of Commerce, the wives of local millionaires have come up with an amusing way of helping unemployed workers. These ladies from high society make telephone calls to unfamiliar but wealthy gentlemen, they introduce themselves to these gentlemen over the phone, and they ask them to be so kind as to do them, the ladies, a favor: namely, to give a job to
one or two unemployed workers. In this way, around 30 unemployed workers have received permanent jobs that were open.”

**“BLOODY BATTLE AT CITY HALL”**
New York City.
Yesterday at around twelve o’clock noon, on the square in front of City Hall, where a march by unemployed workers was taking place, a bloody battle broke out between workers and police. The march by unemployed workers selected its delegates, who set off to see the Deputy Mayor, Charles Kerrigan. The unemployed workers came to a halt so that they could wait for a while for their delegates. The police demanded that the demonstration break up. The workers refused. A bloody battle ensued. Numerous arrests were made.”

**“GANGSTER KING, JACK DIAMOND, IS ACQUITTED AND RELEASED.”**
Troy, New York.
A jury has acquitted Jack Diamond, nicknamed ‘Long Legs.’ Diamond was accused of torturing a farmer named Grover Parks with fire and by hanging him by his feet. On the basis of the verdict reached by the members of the jury, the king was released immediately. During his criminal career, Diamond has been arrested 25 times, but each time he has quickly gone free.”

**“DURING A STRIKE BY COAL MINERS IN A PITTSBURGH DISTRICT IN JUNE AND JULY OF 1931, 876 PEOPLE ARE ARRESTED”**

**“GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND MOBILIZES TROOPS AGAINST STRIKING WEAVERS.”**

**“A STRING OF NIGHTTIME ROBBERIES IN NEW YORK”**

**“SHOOTINGS, MURDERS, AND ROBBERIES IN JERSEY CITY”**

**“SIX MASKED GUNMEN ROB A TRAIN AND GO INTO HIDING”**

**“NEW WOMEN’S PROFESSIONS”**
Here is one of them. In large stores, a person is available, a saleswoman, who takes care of brides and grooms as they are setting up their future home. It is this female caretaker’s duty to handle the purchases for people who have little experience in family life or who do not have the time to devote proper attention to such purchases. This female caretaker rigorously steers the buyers in the direction of their own interests. She picks out everything for the young couple: not just the wallpaper for the dining room, but even the garland of *fleur d’orange* for the bride.”

**“INTERVIEW WITH MR. AL CAPONE”**
. . . Bolshevism is knocking at our gates. We can’t afford to let it in. We have got to organize ourselves against it, and put our shoulders together and hold fast. We
must keep America whole, and safe, and unspoiled. If machines are going to take jobs away from the worker, then he will need to find something else to do. Perhaps he’ll get back to the soil? In any case, we must take care of the worker, look after him, in this current period of disturbances. We must not allow him to fall into the maelstrom. We must keep the worker away from Red literature and Red allurements; we must see to it that his mind remains healthy.”

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“NEWSPAPER HUMOR!”

“TWO SHIRTS”
– Due to yesterday’s collapse of the Clippety-Clop [Tsok-Tsok] Automobile Company, I lost my last shirt.
– But you said the very same thing ten days ago when the Clippety-Clip [Klots-Klots] Aircraft Company collapsed.
– Yes. But that was my last silk shirt. Now I’ve lost my last linen shirt.

“STRANGE BEHAVIOR”
Doctor: – When did you notice the first signs of insanity?
Homeowner: – Yesterday, when he wanted me to pay the rent.

“FOUL BUSINESS”
Customer in a restaurant: – What is it, my dear, that smells so foul here?
Restaurant owner: – What smells so foul here? It’s my business that smells this way: it stinks!

“AMIDST MUSICIANS”
Pianist (to a violinist): – How are things going? In light of the unemployment, you must be having a lot of free time for perfecting your playing?
Violinist: – I’ve been taking my violin back to the pawnshop so often that the owner of the pawnshop plays better than I do.

“END TO DEPRESSION”
– You do know, after all, that the financial crisis has already ended!?
– Really, it has!?
– Yes, absolutely. Depression has ended. Panic has begun!

“HOW TO FIND A STREET IN AMERICA”
– Would you tell me how to get to such-and-such street?
– Turn left, count off two lines of unemployed workers waiting for free soup and turn right. Then count off another three lines of unemployed workers and turn left. There you’ll see a row of houses from which they’re evicting paupers for the non-payment of their apartment rent. That’s the street that you’re looking for.
One could increase the number of such newspaper clippings a hundred-fold and a thousand-fold. Yes, and one needs to increase them in order to hear that calm, that peace and quiet, that Hoover and Morgan suggested. There is no need to comment on these newspaper clippings. They speak for themselves. Hoover’s wisdom is absolutely clear when he asserts in his address to Congress that “normal lives and recreations” are the guarantee of a future period of American prosperity. These newspaper clippings have shown how Americans actively rid themselves of the financial crisis. As far as American calm, American peace and quiet, are concerned, we spoke about that topic at the beginning of this novel, of O’kei: An American Novel. American doctors who have conducted research on the effect of New York noise on the human organism contend that noise from time to time becomes a necessity. Indeed, they contend that it was precisely the human organism’s need for noise that gave birth to jazz. At the beginning of this novel, I recounted how there is only one thing that is not mechanized in the slaughterhouses of Chicago, and that one thing is betrayal. I have consciously and deliberately published newspaper clippings about mathematical concerts (which pass through into calm, into peace and quiet). But if I’m not providing commentary on the newspaper clippings, this doesn’t mean – in any way whatsoever – that one can forget about all the things that I recounted earlier in this novel, in O’kei: An American Novel. And one shouldn’t forget, above all else, that America, all the same, is the wealthiest, the most powerful, the most technologically advanced country in the world – the most, the most, the most. Thousands of people are now striding in step with the calm, with the peace and quiet, of America. It’s not only the marches by unemployed workers. They’re walking in disunity, in solitude, not in concert with others. They are to be found everywhere: on “macadamized” highways and on country roads, on prairies and in forests, in towns and in deserts. Their paths meet, intertwine, intersect. They themselves don’t know where they’re going. These aren’t trempy [tramps]. These are unemployed workers and people who have lost their minds during the panic. Sometimes they crawl along in their Fords, which are creaking like airplanes. Sometimes they float on rafts down the Missouri River and the Mississippi River. Their eyes are like those of the man in California who was digging for gold in a spot that had already been excavated long before. They live in caves, in deserts, on the Bowery. At daybreak, they rummage around in trash cans and garbage pits, searching for scraps.

During the summer of 1931, miners in the states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia went out on strike. Later, miners in the states of Illinois and Kentucky joined them. More than a hundred thousand men went out on strike. It would seem illogical: strikes during a year when workers were starving and out of work. But the logic of things, as they actually are, pointed out to the miners that it made more sense to go out on strike and starve than to work and starve. Workers were working in the mines for only two days a week. The mine owners (cabinet member and Republican leader Mellon!) stipulated that workers could only make purchases at the stores owned and operated by the mining company. For two days of work, the workers didn’t make enough money to buy bread, so they went hungry and were forced to stick their neck inside the noose of debt made by the mine owners. The workers went out on strike. A hundred thousand men went out on strike because to give battle and die is more honorable than simply to die. And this battle became a life-and-death struggle. Women, old-timers, and teenagers joined this battle. On Union Square in New York, the site of numerous labor protests, I attended a protest march that was organized to show sympathy for the miners’ cause.
I saw how a young girl from a mining family spoke to the crowd. The daughter of a miner, she was just a little thing, somewhere between thirteen and fifteen years old. After she had mounted the platform and found herself standing in front of thousands of eyes, she became very nervous. She began by mentioning a naïve thing – that in their settlement the movie house had been shut down and that their settlement was being guarded by police. On a holiday, she and a girlfriend of hers ran off secretly, past the police, to the movie house in a neighboring town, which was ten miles away, so that they could see a motion picture. This naïve thing seemed to me more terrible than her own terrible situation. Then she recounted how the miners were affixed to their place of work, how they were forced to buy everything at the one and only store that existed at the mining site. And they had to buy these things not for cash, but for the copper tokens that the mining company issued to them in lieu of money.

I will cite here one press-clipping, a telegram from Pittsburgh:

“Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, June 28, 1931.
By Sunday, the following statistics about the miners’ strike, and about the persecution of miners on the part of the private police force that belongs to the mine owners, were provided: miners killed – 3; miners seriously injured (possibly fatally injured) – 19; miners beaten with clubs and tear-gassed – more than 2,000; miners arrested . . .”

Theodore Dreiser drove around to visit the sites where strikes were being held. He wrote an appeal that he called “J’accuse.” Dreiser recounted how mounted police were driving miners away even from the sidewalks, completely prohibiting them from walking on the “proprietor’s” asphalt of the roads and streets.

It was morning, swelteringly hot, like a frying pan from the stove, and humid, like a faulty kerosene stove. It was a New York morning, fulminating with all the New York noise, stinking with all the New York odors, jammed with skyscrapers, and drenched with sun. On that morning, I was walking along Lafayette Avenue to building 54. From the windows of this building, a prison is visible on one side and a courthouse on the other. A line of people who were waiting to enter this building stretched for a long way down the street, bending around the corner to turn onto a side street. A conveyor belt of automobiles was crawling down the street. The people waiting in line were standing there in silence. Joe and I entered this building together. There were about a thousand people in the large barracks hall inside this building, the same sort of people as those who were standing in line outside. The premises were cordoned off by ropes and befouled by poverty. There was silence inside the building. The people inside the building were standing, sitting on window sills, sitting on their haunches, sitting on the floor. The clerks, who were sitting behind desks, were bored. On each desk there sat a telephone. From time to time a telephone would ring. The clerk on whose desk the telephone was ringing would get up from the desk and then stand on a chair with a megaphone in his hand. There was no need for a megaphone, however, since a deathly silence would fall upon the barracks, the kind of silence that can only occur in anticipation of something. The clerk, nonetheless, would shout into the megaphone: “A skilled workman is needed to repair a radio cabinet! Two hours of work! Fifty cents an hour!”
I had never known how the expression of hope can be such a pathetic facial expression, one that is humiliating to a person. About three dozen people raised their hands up into the air. They didn’t notice how they were jostling each other aside – work! the hope of getting some work! There is, it appears, no sound more terrible than the sound of human pleading. It’s a pathetic sound, one that’s humiliating to one’s human dignity. People were shouting at the clerk:

“Please, I beg of you! For God’s sake! . . . I’m a skilled workman, a good craftsman!”

“I have a family!”

“Word of honor, I’m a skilled workman, a good craftsman, and I have a sickly daughter!”

Twenty minutes later, another clerk shouts from another desk; he likewise shouts into a megaphone:

“Two men are needed for pruning trees out in the country! One day of work! A dollar and a half a day!”

This was repeated seven times per hour. An hour went by in this manner. Then the first group of a thousand unemployed workers, which had been inside the barracks hall, was asked to leave the building so that they could make way for those people who were waiting outside on the street, the next group of a thousand unemployed workers. So it went daily: every day eight to ten thousand people would pass through the employment office in building 54 on Lafayette Avenue. Two to three percent of the people who came here received some work, jobs for periods of time that ranged from one hour to one full day.

A man whose one hour inside the building had just expired was leaving this job market at the same time as we were. He was about thirty years old, dressed in a jacket, wearing a woolen scarf around his neck instead of a collar, and bareheaded. I invited him to join us for breakfast. This was not in keeping with American conventions. He was confused and embarrassed by our offer. He started to decline the offer. But he came with us.

It was already half a year now that he had been walking the streets, day after day, in search of work. On two occasions, he had “bought” work: that is to say, a private employment office had given him some work on condition that he hand over half of his earnings back to that office. On two occasions, he had landed in the hospital, both times for one and the same reason – from hunger. The first time, they had picked him up while he was waiting in a bread line; the second time, he had collapsed on the street. He remembers that when they were picking him up off the street and putting him into an ambulance, a policeman had said in hushed tones to the orderly: “A starving man.” And then he shouted loudly at a crowd of curious onlookers: “Hey, what are you doing here? Haven’t you ever seen any epileptics before!?” This unemployed worker had been spending the past few nights in the subways. And he had been walking around without a hat, because he had not paid his landlady for his bunk, and the landlady, when she kicked him out, had seized his things.
He said to us: “I have always respected private property, but I can no longer watch while people are eating.” His eyes duplicated the expression on the face of the man prospecting for gold that I had seen in California. This man was very obviously on the edge of physical catastrophe, but also on the edge of moral degeneration as well. He continued to speak: “Suicide, crime, insanity . . . I don’t know . . . I want only one thing: to find some work!”

That very same day, I went to go see Theodore Dreiser. He had just returned from Pittsburgh. Joe and I went over to his place together at three o’clock. This was several days before my departure from the U.S., so we went to see Dreiser to say good-bye. Since it was summertime, his things had been stored away and the apartment seemed vacant. Dreiser answered the door and let us in. There was no one at home but him. We took a seat in his empty and enormous study. Every time that I would meet with Dreiser, he would bring up the theme of the future of socialism. I think that he was working at this time on a piece that encompassed a range of such themes. And so, on this idle day, when he had nothing scheduled to do, Dreiser returned to the theme of socialism. He raised a question that he apparently had not yet resolved satisfactorily for himself, and so he was trying to settle it, for his own sake and in his own way:

“Under socialism, under communism, when communism spreads throughout the whole world, will there still remain any scoundrels or not?”

Dreiser is an old man. He has hands that are absolutely those of an old man and he has the absolutely old man’s habit of keeping a neatly crumpled handkerchief in his hands. And yet Dreiser has absolutely young eyes. Dreiser is a magnificent old man! We spoke through Joe. We had devised a system: after every ten sentences of mine, Dreiser would say, “Stap!” [full stop], and Joe would translate these sentences into English for him.

I had to respond to the question: will there or won’t there be scoundrels under socialism? I spoke about the social and biological instincts that predetermine “scoundrelism” within a human being. I told him that I was of the opinion that socialism, after it has destroyed social inequality, will destroy the “scoundrelism” that is associated with this inequality. Thus, the first thing to be restructured will be our social instincts. I told him that I was of the opinion that it’s not a long way off, however, before it will be the turn for even a number of our biological instincts to be restructured. Together with literacy in general, and with social literacy above all else, a socialized form of medicine, one that is equally accessible to everyone, that is mandatory for everyone, and that is preventative, will liberate humankind from epileptics, from tuberculars, and from syphilitics. It will restructure the health of humankind, and it will increase the growth of humankind. It will restructure the biology of the organism of every individual. It will create a healthy psychology for a healthy human being and it will destroy, consequently, the biological “scoundrelism” that is associated with the loathsomeness of ill health, of consumption, of plague.

Interrupting after every ten sentences of mine, Dreiser would say, “Stap!” He would listen to Joe’s translation, he would think for a moment, and then he would ask further: “Okay, but what
about hunchbacks? Okay, but what will be done after that? Look all around you: humankind has already been living on this earth for a hundred thousand years and what loathsomeness it has spawned!"

I suggested that he remember not a hundred thousand years, but the last thousand years, or even the last five hundred, and trace the time from the Middle Ages to the present day.

Dreiser said, “Stap!” He listened to Joe’s translation, and then he raised an objection with this rejoinder: “Why from the Middle Ages and during the last five hundred years? Take the one hundred and fifty years that the United States has existed: a constitution that guarantees the rights of man and then such loathsomeness as the kind exhibited in Pittsburgh!”

We didn’t come to any agreement. I believed and knew that socialism would liberate humankind from a very large amount of loathsomeness. Socialism and the future would do that, for the future of humankind is socialism. This wasn’t evident to Dreiser. He didn’t believe this very much. And he saw the past better than I did. In this way dinner time arrived. It had become clear by this hour on this idle day that our dinner hour was free both for Dreiser and for the two of us, Joe and me. So we decided to dine together. Both Dreiser and I had to leave to take care of some trifling matters. We arranged to meet at the restaurant, a small old French restaurant on 47th Street. Even before my trip to California, I had already been to this restaurant.

Joe and I arrived before Dreiser did. But we couldn’t find the restaurant. The old, three-storied buildings on this street, an entire city block of them, had disappeared. In their place was a wasteland, an abandoned lot where broken stones were lying around. The only thing that survived of the restaurant was the front door-stone – a slab of white stone that served as a provincial step-stone. I sat down upon it to wait for Dreiser. He was running late. A man emerged out of the wasteland, a security guard. Joe asked him where had all the buildings gone.

“The financial crisis,” the man answered. “The buildings turned out to be cheaper than the ground that lay beneath them. The rent strangled them. The proprietors sold them to avoid going completely bankrupt. One or two of them, however, have already gone bankrupt.”

Dreiser’s automobile stopped directly across from the missing doorway. Dreiser took his accustomed step onto the slab of the door-stone. And it was only then that he noticed that he was stepping onto an empty space. And Dreiser became agitated. Twice he crumpled up his handkerchief. We told him about the fate of these buildings. Dreiser carefully examined the slab of white stone that served as a provincial step-stone. Such slabs of stone are to be found everywhere in the world – in China, in Turkey, in Russia, in England. The small restaurant was gone. Dreiser said to me: “You say that the future is with socialism? And that socialism will restructure human instincts? The first time I was at this little restaurant was forty years ago.”

Dreiser fell silent.
The man from the wasteland put in his two cents: “On this slab of stone, the Radio Corporation is going to be building a skyscraper radio tower that will be even taller than the Empire State building. O’kei!”

“The last time I was here was a week ago,” Dreiser said. “And the first time, as I said, was forty years ago. Perhaps you’re right about social instincts?”

This farewell meeting with Dreiser took place several days before my departure from America. And I had finished my American novel. O’kei! To my right and to my left, to the east and to the west of 47th Street, New York, the island of Manhattan, was laid out. When Henry Hudson, whose name was given to the river that washes the shores of Manhattan, sailed up toward Manhattan, some Indians came out to meet him. Hudson treated these Indians to vodka, which the Indians used to call fire water. The Indian chief drank more than the rest of his brethren. He drank so much that he collapsed and fell dead asleep right there on the spot. The Indians decided that he must have died. But he awoke after his death. He reported that he had been in a blissful state of beatitude and had visited the other world that lies beyond our own. By means of vodka, Manhattan went over from the Indians to the Europeans. And on Manhattan, as has been said, people managed to visit paradise. What would that paradisiacal Indian think if he were to see today’s Manhattan, that same Manhattan where he once used to go fishing from granite cliffs! Indeed, just imagine for a minute what he would think if he were to visit that rocky locale – rocky from skyscrapers – rocky and pitted by caves, such as the caves that run beneath the Hudson River, if he were to visit thatlocale that has suffocated from gas fumes without a single blade of grass growing upon the concrete and iron. It would have been horrible, as we said earlier, for a wolf to walk upon these stones. He would have felt suffocated from the gas fumes and been short of breath from the coal-induced asphyxia. The nerves of the wolf would have been upset from the clattering noise of the city and from the millions of those radio waves, both long and short, that have been enmeshing the city, permeating everything with speeches by President Hoover, with mathematical concerts and jazz, with advertising and information about the coal miners’ strike in Pittsburgh. It was already evening time when we bid farewell to Dreiser. Broadway was choking with advertisements:

“Underwood . . . it’s the typewriter for you! . . . That’s it! . . . not another word!”

“Acquire at last some Sapau flour for your little boy!”

“Lucky Strike soothes the throat!”

“How can one live without a refrigerator!?”

. . . more! . . . more! . . . more!

Advertisements were booming, bawling, and dumbfounding with their light, with their avalanches of light, with the delirium of electric light, with all manner of possible and impossible colors and glows. A conveyor belt of automobiles was crawling along the asphalt. Electric cars – from the billboards – were climbing up skyscrapers and falling down from
skyscrapers. Skyscrapers were freezing to death from refrigerators. A red, electric woman’s skirt was sticking out in the sky, then it suddenly turned blue. But above it flashed the words:

“Don’t tell me that fortune has never smiled upon you!!!”

. . . Well, so what if – well, well, so what if – well, well, so what if – suddenly – above all of this – right in the very middle of the sky – they were to hang a huge poster that advertised the only non-mechanized thing from the Chicago slaughterhouses, from the city of Al Capone – a fat, rheumy-eyed, even with its fangs cut out . . . hog!725

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On the 4th of July 1776, on the day of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, in Philadelphia, an American woman named Betsy Ross gave a flag, the first national flag of the North American United States, as a gift to George Washington, the first American president. On the 7th of November 1931, in Detroit, an American woman named Betsy Ross, a communist, the great-great-granddaughter of the first Betsy Ross, gave a Red communist banner to the Detroit chapter of the Communist Party.726

MOSCOW
Yamsky Field Street
Ugodsky Lands
October 1931 – February 18, 1932
ENDNOTES

1 The Declaration of Independence is the statement adopted by the Second Continental Congress, which was meeting at the Pennsylvania State House (Independence Hall) in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. It announced that the thirteen American colonies, then at war with the Kingdom of Great Britain, regarded themselves as thirteen independent sovereign states, no longer under British rule. These states would found a new nation – the United States of America. John Adams persuaded the committee of five drafting the statement to select Thomas Jefferson to compose the original draft of the document, which Congress would edit to produce the final version. The Declaration was ultimately a formal explanation of why the Continental Congress had voted on July 2nd to declare independence from Great Britain, more than a year after the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War. Independence Day is celebrated on July 4th, the date that the Declaration of Independence was approved.

2 Elizabeth “Betsy” Ross (1752-1836), née Griscom, is widely credited with making the first American flag. According to family tradition, upon a visit in 1776 from General George Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, Ross convinced Washington to change the shape of the stars he had sketched for the flag from six-pointed to five-pointed by demonstrating that it was easier and speedier to cut the latter. However, there is no archival evidence or other recorded verbal tradition to substantiate this story of the first American flag, and it appears that the story first surfaced in the writings of her grandson in the 1870s (a century after the fact), with no mention or documentation in earlier decades. Betsy Ross had been making flags for the Pennsylvania navy during the American Revolution.

3 George Washington (1732-1799), one of the country’s founding fathers, was an American politician and soldier who served from 1789 to 1797 as the first President of the United States. He served as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). After victory had been finalized in 1783, Washington resigned as Commander-in-Chief rather than seize power, proving his commitment to American republicanism. Washington in 1787 presided over the Constitutional Convention, which drafted the United States Constitution, thus devising a new form of federal government for the United States. He is popularly considered the driving force behind the nation’s establishment and came to be known as the “father of the country,” both during his lifetime and to this day.

4 The October Revolution, officially known in Russia as the Great October Socialist Revolution, was a revolution that was launched with an armed insurrection in Petrograd on October 25, 1917 (November 7, New Style). It followed and capitalized on the February Revolution of the same year, which overthrew the tsarist autocracy and resulted in a provisional government after a transfer of power proclaimed by Grand Duke Mikhail, brother of Tsar Nicholas II, who declined to take power after the tsar had stepped down.
During the spring and summer of 1917, urban workers began to organize into councils, called “Soviets,” wherein revolutionaries criticized the provisional government and its actions. After the Congress of Soviets, now the governing body, held its second session, it elected members of the Bolsheviks and other leftist groups (such as the Socialist Revolutionaries) to important positions within the new state. This immediately led to the establishment of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, the world’s first self-proclaimed socialist state. The revolution was led by the Bolsheviks, who used their influence in the Petrograd Soviet to organize the armed forces. Bolshevik Red Guards forces under the Military Revolutionary Committee began the occupation of government buildings on November 7, 1917. The following day, the Winter Palace, the seat of the Provisional government in Petrograd (the capital of Russia at the time), was captured.

5 I have found no evidence to support Pilnyak’s claim that Betsy Ross’s great-great-granddaughter gave a red banner to the Detroit chapter of the Communist Party on November 7, 1931, to mark the 14th anniversary of the October Revolution.

6 Andrew Jackson (1767-1845) was an American soldier and statesman who served from 1829 to 1837 as the seventh President of the United States. Before being elected to the presidency, Jackson had gained fame as a general in the United States Army, winning a decisive victory over the British at the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812 that made him a national hero. Jackson also served in both houses of Congress before becoming president. As president, Jackson sought to advance the rights of the “common man” against a “corrupt aristocracy.” Jackson’s name has been associated with “Jacksonian democracy,” the shift and expansion of democracy with the passing of some political power from established elites to ordinary voters based in political parties. The “Age of Jackson” shaped the national agenda and American politics. Jackson's philosophy as President was similar to that of Thomas Jefferson, advocating the republican values held by the generation that fought the Revolutionary War. Jackson took a moral tone, with the belief that agrarian sympathies and a limited view of states rights and the federal government, would produce less corruption. He feared that moneyed and business interests would corrupt republican values.

7 Andrew Jackson’s misspelling of “all correct” is one of several explanations that have been advanced for the origin of the American word “okay.” Meanwhile, the Chinese word mamandi, as Edward Tyerman explains in The Search for an Internationalist Aesthetics: Soviet Images of China, 1920-1935 (Columbia University Ph.D. dissertation, 2014), had become for Pilnyak the linguistic and cultural equivalent of the Russian word seichas [сейчас] (literally, “now” or “right away”), which is used conventionally to mean “Wait a minute,” “Don’t rush.” Pilnyak details his understanding of the word mamandi in his Chinese Story (Китайская повесть) (1928), a work that describes his visit to China in 1926.

8 Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) was an Italian explorer, navigator, and colonizer. Born in the Republic of Genoa, he completed four voyages across the Atlantic Ocean under the auspices of the Catholic monarchs of Spain. Those voyages, and his efforts to establish settlements on the island of Hispaniola, initiated the permanent European colonization of
the New World. At a time when European kingdoms were beginning to establish new trade routes and colonies, motivated by imperialism and economic competition, Columbus proposed to reach the East Indies (South and Southeast Asia) by sailing westward. This proposal eventually received the support of the Spanish Crown, which saw a chance to enter the spice trade with Asia through this new sea route. During his first voyage in 1492, he reached the New World instead of arriving in Japan as he had intended, landing on an island in the Bahamas archipelago that he named “San Salvador.” Over the course of three more voyages, he visited the Greater and Lesser Antilles, as well as the Caribbean coast of Venezuela and Central America, claiming all of it for the Crown of Castile.

The SS Bremen was a German-built ocean liner constructed for the Norddeutscher Lloyd line to work the transatlantic sea route. Launched in 1928, the Bremen was notable for her bulbous bow construction, high-speed engines, and low, streamlined profile. At the time of her construction, she and her sister ship Europa were the two most advanced high-speed steam turbine ocean liners of their day, both of them designed to have a cruising speed of 27.5 knots (50.9 km/h), allowing a crossing time of five days. This speed enabled the Norddeutscher Lloyd line to run regular weekly crossings with two ships, a feat that normally required three. The German pair sparked an international competition in the building of large, fast, luxurious ocean liners that were national symbols and points of prestige during the pre-war years of the 1930s.

Ivan Alekseyevich Bunin (1870-1953) was the first Russian writer to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. In The Gentleman from San Francisco (Gospodin iz San-Frantsisko) [Господин из Сан-Франциско] (1915), Bunin describes how a wealthy American businessman, who is traveling with his family to Europe for a vacation, dies suddenly of a heart attack on the island of Capri. He then returns home in a coffin on the same ship on which he had sailed to Europe. Bunin’s story, which emphasizes how everything on board the ship is devoted to the comfort of the passengers as they pursue one idle distraction after another, exposes the shallowness and insensitivity of the gentleman and his fellow wealthy travelers.

Hagia Sophia (“Holy Wisdom”) was a Greek Orthodox basilica, later an imperial mosque, and now a museum in Istanbul, Turkey. The Roman Empire’s first Christian Cathedral, from the date of its construction in 537 AD and up until 1453, it served as an Eastern Orthodox cathedral and seat of the Patriarch of Constantinople, except between 1204 and 1261, when it was converted by the Fourth Crusaders into a Roman Catholic cathedral under the Latin Empire. The building was later converted into an Ottoman mosque from 1453 until 1931. It was then secularized and opened as a museum in 1935. Famous in particular for its massive dome, it is considered the epitome of Byzantine architecture and is said to have changed the history of architecture. It remained the world’s largest cathedral for nearly a thousand years, until the Seville Cathedral was completed in 1520. Just recently (July 2020), Turkish President Recep Erdogan restored Istanbul’s famous landmark, turning it back from a museum to a Muslim house of prayer.

Pilnyak is, of course, referring here to the New York Stock Exchange (abbreviated as NYSE and nicknamed “The Big Board”), the American stock exchange located at 11 Wall
Street in Lower Manhattan. It is by far the world’s largest stock exchange as measured by market capitalization of its listed companies.

13 The “electric baba” ([электрическая баба]) that Pilnyak mentions here (a baba in the sense of the word as a mechanical device, such as the “ram” or “drop weight” of a pile driver, rather than as an “old woman”) seems to refer to one of the many mechanical contraptions that were designed at the turn of the century by Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, director of the famous Battle Creek Sanatorium in Michigan, machines that were designed to help his affluent patients lose weight by means of vibro-mechanical stimulation of the body. Most likely Pilnyak is referring here either to a fat-melting “jiggle” machine that uses vibrating massage belts or to a stomach “roller” massager. Photographs of some of these devices, including those that were available to passengers traveling on board the Queen Mary, are posted at the following website: https://gizmodo.com/5963269/dr-kelloggs-15-most-absurd-medical-contraptions/

14 The “horse race” game (played with small wooden horses) on the Bremen that Pilnyak mentions here is just one of several forms of entertainment that were provided for passengers on early ocean liners. Becky Pemberton discusses some of these forms of entertainments (and provides vintage photographs of them) in “Tug-of-War on the Deck, Glamorous Balls, and the First Gymnasium at Sea (With Men Working Out in Suits): Fascinating Photos Reveal Life on Board Early Cruise Ships.” See the September 17, 2015 issue of the online version of The Daily Mail: https://www.google.com/search?q=horse+races+on+ocean+liners&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjur-nS7PzVAhXCI1AKHfl9Bi8QsAQLJQ&biw=1028&bih=463#imgrc=h_49F7id6frqjM:

15 Pilnyak puns here on the Russian verb balovat’ ([баловать]) (“to pamper,” “to indulge”), noting parenthetically that the verb derives from the word bal ([бал]) (“ball”).

16 As Anne Gorsuch explains in her study, Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), the foxtrot was condemned on moral as well as cultural grounds in Soviet Russia during the late 1920s and early 1930s, when it was viewed, at least officially, as a highly decadent Western dance form. “Flappers and fox trotters had special meaning,” she points out, “in this period of great anxiety about pleasure, about consumption, about sex” (2). For her discussion of how Bolshevik moralists saw the pleasures of dress and dance as evidence of deviance from, and opposition to, the important task of transforming Soviet youth into the “new man” and “new woman” of socialist Russia, see especially Chapter 6, “Flappers and Fox trot ters,” pp. 116-138. An earlier version of that chapter was published separately as the essay “Flappers and Fox trot ters: Soviet Youth in the ‘Roaring Twenties,’’ Carl Beck Papers in Russian & East European Studies, No. 1102 (1994): 1-33.

17 Pilnyak puns here again, this time by using the noun balovstvo ([баловство]) (“naughtiness,” “mischief,” “overindulgence”) and noting parenthetically that it, too, derives from the word for “ball” (bal) ([бал]).
Morse code is a method of transmitting text information as a series of on-off tones, lights, or clicks that can be directly understood by a skilled listener or observer without special equipment. It is named for Samuel F. B. Morse, an inventor of the telegraph. The International Morse Code encodes the ISO basic Latin alphabet, some extra Latin letters, the Arabic numerals, and a small set of punctuation marks and procedural signals as standardized sequences of short and long signals called “dots” and “dashes.” Morse’s original telegraph receiver used a mechanical clockwork to move a paper tape. When an electrical current was received, an electromagnet engaged an armature that pushed a stylus onto the moving paper tape, making an indentation on the tape. When the current was interrupted, a spring retracted the stylus, and that portion of the moving tape remained unmarked. Morse code was developed so that operators could translate the indentations marked on the paper tape into text messages.

Milla Fedorova has chosen to translate the complex adjective that Pilnyak invents here, serdechno-edushchii [сердечно-едущий], as “cordially going.” She explains that it apparently refers to those passengers who are “cordially anticipated.” See Yankees in Petrograd, Bolsheviks in New York: America and Americans in Russian Literary Perception (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013), p. 228.

As he will often do throughout this travelogue, Pilnyak uses here the Russian transliteration for the English word “breakfast” (brekfest) [бреќфест], rather than the Russian translation for it (zavtrak) [завтрак]. This emphasizes both the spoken (rather than the written) quality of the narration, of course, but it also reminds Russian readers of the “American-ness” of this travelogue.

Here again Pilnyak provides a Russian transliteration, this time for orange juice (orandzh-dzhius) [орандж-джюс], but he then immediately provides its Russian translation as well: i.e., apel’sinnyi sok [апельсинный сок].

And here again, for the third time in this one sentence, Pilnyak gives his readers the Russian transliteration (greip-frut) [грэйп-фрут] for an English word (“grapefruit”), followed by a brief parenthetical description of what this exotic – and newly hybridized – food item tastes like and where it comes from.

Luther A. Burbank (1849-1926) was a famous American botanist, horticulturist, and pioneer in agricultural science who developed more than 800 strains and varieties of plants over his 55-year career. Burbank experimented with a variety of techniques, such as grafting, hybridization, and cross-breeding. Burbank’s varied creations included fruits, flowers, grains, grasses, and vegetables. Despite Pilnyak’s claim to the contrary, grapefruit is not counted among Burbank’s creations. A hybrid originating in Barbados, grapefruit is recognized as an accidental cross between two introduced species, sweet orange and pomelo (or shaddock), both of which were introduced from Asia in the seventeenth century. One story of the fruit’s origins is that a certain Captain Shaddock brought pomelo seeds to Jamaica and bred the first fruit. However, it is believed that it probably originated as a naturally occurring hybrid.
This popular tune is featured in *The Gay Life*, a musical with story by Fay and Michael Kanin, lyrics by Howard Diet, and music by Arthur Schwartz. Based on a cycle of seven short plays by the Austrian dramatist Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931), it was published in 1893 and first staged in 1910. *The Gay Life* focuses on the womanizing playboy Anatol Von Huber. The score is a mixture of traditional Broadway show tunes and operetta.

Prohibition was a nationwide constitutional ban (as a result of the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1920) on the production, importation, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages in the United States. It remained in place from 1920 to 1933. During the nineteenth century, alcoholism, family violence, and saloon-based political corruption had prompted activists, led by pietistic Protestants, to advocate an end to the trade in alcoholic beverages as a way to cure these ills within American society. One result was that many communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries introduced alcohol prohibition, with the subsequent enforcement in law becoming a hotly debated issue. Prohibition supporters presented it as a victory for public morals and health. During the 1920s, well organized criminal gangs took control of the beer and liquor supply for many cities, unleashing a crime wave that shocked the nation. By the late 1920s, a new opposition mobilized nationwide. They attacked prohibition as causing crime, lowering local revenues, and imposing rural Protestant religious values on urban America. Prohibition ended with the ratification of the Twenty-First Amendment, which repealed the Eighteenth Amendment on December 5, 1933.

A *cordon sanitaire* is generally created around an area experiencing an epidemic of disease. Once the cordon is established, people from the infected area are no longer allowed to leave. In the most extreme form, the cordon is not lifted until the infection is extinguished. The Polish *cordon sanitaire* was established in 1918, when the Polish-Russian border was closed to stop the spread of typhus.

Pilnyak writes here that the young lady expressed an interest in his *foks-danny* [фокс-данные]. The primary meaning of the substantivized adjective *danny*, derived from the verb “to give” (*dat’*) [дать], is “facts,” “data,” “information.” If this is the meaning of the word that Pilnyak intended, then perhaps he is simply suggesting that the young lady, who overheard him conversing with the drowsy-looking mister who deals in furs in the Soviet Union, automatically assumed that a Russian – any Russian – must be familiar with fox hunting in his homeland, a practice that resulted in the fashionable furs that American women coveted so passionately. As a result, she is likely asking Pilnyak questions about this activity, hoping to gain some of the “data” or “facts” (*danny*) [данные] that he can provide about foxes (*foks*) [фокс]. But if Pilnyak had the secondary meaning of the word *danny* in mind, i.e., “qualities,” “gifts,” “ability,” “aptitude,” then she is instead asking him about his dexterity in dancing the foxtrot (*fokstrot*) [фокстрот], using the short-hand form of that word (*foks*) [фокс]. Since Pilnyak has already informed the reader that the passengers on board the SS Bremen spent their evenings “partying” – mainly by drinking alcohol and dancing the foxtrot – it seems most likely that he had this secondary meaning in mind here.
Pilnyak writes here (and elsewhere): “sleepy-fur mister” (sonno-pushnoi mister) [сонно-пушной мистер]. As Milla Fedorova explains, “In his ornamental prose, Pilnyak experiments widely with word formation across various parts of speech. Most often he achieves poetic economy by contracting a syntagm into one word.” Such a contraction occurs here as Pilnyak’s modernist way of identifying this drowsy-looking man who deals in furs. See Yankees in Petrograd, Bolsheviks in New York, p. 227.

Pilnyak performs yet another syntagm contraction here: the cablegram is said to be printed on “confectionary-elegant paper” (konfetno-iziashchnaia bumaga) [конфетно-изящная бумага].

The Hotel St. Moritz was a luxury hotel located at 50 Central Park South, on the east side of Sixth Avenue, in New York City. The hotel was built in 1930 on the site of the old New York Athletic Club. It was designed and built by the Hungarian-born architect Emery Roth. The estimated cost of its construction was about $6,000,000. The building, which is 365 feet tall, has 36 floors. When it operated as the St. Moritz, it had 1,000 rooms that were serviced by six elevators. Close to 400 windows are on Central Park South directly facing the park, in addition to over 300 more windows on 6th Avenue with a partial view of the park. The facade was clad in brown sandstone, with the various towers of the building rising high above the park. In his review from 1931, W. Parker Chase described the hotel as “a picturesque cliff, amidst towering trees to the north, and other soaring skyscrapers to the south.” Roth’s aim was to design a cosmopolitan home combining continental hospitality with American comforts and service. The spacious lobby was luxuriously furnished. On a wall in the lobby, which was made of Levanto marble, hung a large painting of the city of St. Moritz by Giovanni Giacometti, a gift to the hotel from the Swiss Alps resort for which it was named. The various guest rooms and suites (especially the penthouse suites with their cooling breezes from the park and their sumptuous furnishings) were designed to impress the guests. Both the rooms and the suites could be rented unfurnished by those wishing to use their own belongings. A dancing salon and diner was located on the 31st floor, with Omar Khayyam murals done by David Karfunkle. Laurence Emmons designed the interior. The structure was extensively rebuilt from 1999 to 2002 and today is a combination hotel/condominium complex known as The Ritz-Carlton New York, Central Park.

A zavalinka is a small mound of earth along the outer walls of a peasant’s house.

The word “tooth” in Russian (zub) [зуб] is also used in the expression “to bear a grudge against someone”: imet’ zub protiv kogo-to [иметь зуб против кого-то]. Pilnyak is likely being ironic here, in the midst of his ostensible paean to the generosity of spirit of the average Russian, when he comments that “every Russian, without fail, has his own tooth” (i.e., his own grudge).

Antaxerxes was the fifth King of Persia; he ruled from 465 to 424 BC.

Pilnyak is referring here to the International Date Line, an imaginary line of navigation on the surface of the Earth that runs from the North Pole to the South Pole. It demarcates the change of one calendar day to the next. It passes through the middle of the Pacific
Ocean, roughly following the 180-degree line of longitude, deviating slightly to pass around some territories and island groups.

35 Pilnyak puns here on the Russian expression for the “earth” (zemnoi shar) [земной шар], literally, the “earthly sphere,” by saying that the “earthly sphere” is a “sphere.”

36 Although it is not clear what poem this line originally comes from, the notion of the “hoary East” is found in Oswald Spengler’s The Decline of the West (1918), a well-known text that rejects the Eurocentric view of world history and a book that Pilnyak mentions several times in his travelogue. President Theodore Roosevelt popularized the idea that America’s future greatness, its manifest destiny, is to look “eastward across the Atlantic and westward across the Pacific, across to that West which is the hoary East, from the Occident west to the Orient.” See his Address at Santa Barbara, CA, on May 9, 1903.

37 This, of course, is the date of the Russian Revolution, when the Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government and assumed power. “Old style” refers to the Julian calendar that had been followed for centuries in tsarist Russia, while the “new style” is the Gregorian calendar that began to be followed in Russia starting in February 1918, soon after the Bolsheviks came to power. As a result, the October Revolution was celebrated each year in the Soviet Union on the 7th of November (rather than the 25th of October).

38 Pilnyak had traveled to Japan, China, and Mongolia in 1926. He described those travels to the Far East in Roots of the Japanese Sun (Korni iaponskogo solntsa) [Корни японского солнца] (1927) and Chinese Diary (Kitaiiskii dnevnik) [Китайский дневник] (1927).

39 A zeppelin was a type of rigid airship named after Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin, a German aircraft manufacturer who pioneered rigid airship development at the beginning of the twentieth century. After the outstanding success of the zeppelin design, the word “zeppelin” came to be used to refer generically for all rigid airships. Zeppelins were first flown commercially in 1910 by Deutsche Luftschifffahrts-AG (DELAG), the world’s first airline in revenue service. By mid-1914, DELAG had carried over 10,000 fare-paying passengers on over 1,500 flights. During World War I, the German military made extensive use of zeppelins as bombers and scouts, killing over 500 people in bombing raids over Britain. The defeat of Germany in 1918 temporarily slowed down the airship business. Although DELAG established a scheduled daily service between Berlin, Munich, and Friedrichshafen in 1919, the airships built for this service eventually had to be surrendered under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, which prohibited Germany from building large airships. In 1926, the restrictions on airship construction were lifted and the company’s fortunes were revived. During the 1930s, the passenger airships Graf Zeppelin and the larger Hindenburg operated regular transatlantic flights from Germany to North America and Brazil. The Art Deco spire of the Empire State Building was originally designed to serve as a mooring mast for zeppelins and other airships, although it was found that high winds made this impossible and the plan was abandoned. The Hindenburg disaster that occurred on May 6, 1937, when the large passenger airship with 97 people on board caught fire and was destroyed during its attempt to dock with its mooring mast at a naval air station in New Jersey, hastened the demise of zeppelins. The incident shattered
public confidence in the giant, passenger-carrying rigid airship and marked the abrupt end of the airship era.

40 The term “Samoyedic” is derived from the Russian term *samoyed* [самоед], which is used for some indigenous peoples of Siberia. The term has come to be considered derogatory because it has been interpreted by some ethnologists as originating from the Russian *samo-yed* meaning “self-eater” (i.e., “cannibal”). Samoyedic etymologists, however, reject this etymology and instead trace the term’s origin to the expression *saam-edne*, meaning the Land of the Sami people. At present, Samoyed territory extends from the White Sea to the Laptev Sea, along the Arctic shores of European Russia, including southern Novaya Zemlya, the Yamal Peninsula, the mouths of the Ob and the Yenisei rivers, and into the Taimyr peninsula in northernmost Siberia. Their economy is based on reindeer herding. They are contiguous with the Trans-Ural Ugric speakers and the Cis-Ural Komi to the south, but they are cut off from the Baltic Finns by the Russians in the west.

41 The House of Bourbon is a European royal house of French origin, a branch of the Capetian dynasty. Bourbon kings first ruled France and Navarre in the sixteenth century. By the eighteenth century, members of the Bourbon dynasty also held thrones in Spain, Naples, Sicily, and Parma. The royal Bourbons originated in 1272, when the heiress of the lordship of Bourbon married the youngest son of King Louis IX. The house continued for three centuries as a cadet branch, while more senior Capetians ruled France, until Henry IV became the first Bourbon king of France in 1589. Bourbon monarchs then incorporated into France the small kingdom of Navarre, which Henry’s father had acquired by marriage in 1555, ruling both until the 1792 overthrow of the monarchy during the French Revolution. Restored briefly in 1814, and definitively in 1815 (after the fall of the First French Empire), the senior line of the Bourbons was finally overthrown in the July Revolution of 1830. A cadet Bourbon branch, the House of Orléans, then ruled for 18 years (1830–1848), until it, too, was overthrown.

42 Westminster Abbey, formally titled the Collegiate Church of St. Peter at Westminster, is a large, mainly Gothic abbey church in the city of Westminster, London, just to the west of the Palace of Westminster. It is one of the United Kingdom’s most notable religious buildings and the traditional place of coronation and burial site for English and, later, British monarchs. Between 1540 and 1556, the abbey had the status of a cathedral. Since 1560, however, the building is no longer an abbey nor a cathedral, having instead the status of a Church of England “Royal Peculiar” – a church responsible directly to the sovereign. The building itself is the original abbey church. Since the coronation of William the Conqueror in 1066, all coronations of English and British monarchs have taken place in Westminster Abbey. There have been at least 16 royal weddings at the abbey since 1100. Two were of reigning monarchs (Henry I and Richard II), although before 1919 there had been none for some 500 years.

43 The royal Château de Chambord at Chambord, Loir-et-Cher, France, is one of the most recognizable châteaux in the world because of its very distinctive French Renaissance architecture, which blends traditional French medieval forms with classical Renaissance structures. The building, which was never completed, was constructed by King Francis I of
France. Chambord is the largest château in the Loire Valley; it was built to serve as a hunting lodge for Francis I, who maintained his royal residences at the châteaux of Blois and Amboise. Chambord was altered considerably during the twenty-eight years of its construction (1519–1547), during which time it was overseen on-site by Pierre Nepveu. With the château nearing completion, Francis showed off his enormous symbol of wealth and power by hosting his old archrival, Emperor Charles V, at Chambord. In 1792, in the wake of the French Revolution, some of the furnishings were sold and timber removed. For a time, the building was left abandoned, though in the nineteenth century some attempts were made at restoration. During the Second World War, art works from the collections of the Louvre and the Château de Compiègne were moved to the Château de Chambord. The château is now open to the public, receiving hundred of thousands of visitors each year.

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin (1622-1673), better known by his stage name, Molière, was a French playwright and actor who is considered to be one of the greatest masters of comedy in Western literature. Among Molière’s best known works are The School for Wives (1662), Tartuffe (1664), The Misanthrope (1666), The Miser (1668), The Bourgeois Gentleman (1670), and The Imaginary Invalid (1673). Born into a prosperous family and having studied at the Collège de Clermont, Molière was well suited to begin a life in the theatre. Thirteen years spent as an itinerant actor helped him polish his comic abilities while he began writing, combining Commedia dell’arte elements with the more refined French comedy. Through the patronage of aristocrats, including Philippe I, Duke of Orléans – the brother of Louis XIV – Molière procured a command performance before the King at the Salle du Petit-Bourbon near the Louvre, a spacious room appointed for theatrical performances. Later, Molière was granted the use of the theatre in the Palais-Royal. In both locations, he found success among Parisian audiences. This royal favor brought a royal pension to his troupe and the title Troupe du Roi (“The King’s Troupe”). Molière continued as the official author of court entertainments. Although he received the adulation of the court and Parisians, Molière’s satires attracted criticism from moralists and the Catholic Church. Tartuffe (1664), with its attack on perceived religious hypocrisy, received strong condemnations from the Church, while Don Juan (1665) was banned from performance. Molière’s hard work in so many theatrical capacities took its toll on his health and, by 1667, he was forced to take a break from the stage. In 1673, during a production of his final play, The Imaginary Invalid (1673), Molière, who suffered from pulmonary tuberculosis, was seized by a coughing fit and a hemorrhage while playing the hypochondriac Argan. He finished the performance but collapsed again and died a few hours later.

The encyclopédistes were members of the Société des gens de lettres (Society of Men of Letters), a French writers’ society that contributed to the development of the Encyclopédie, or dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers (Encyclopaedia, or a Systematic Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Crafts) from June 1751 to December 1765 under editors Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert. The composition of the 17 volumes of text and 11 volumes of plates of the Encyclopédie was the work of over 150 authors belonging, in large part, to the intellectual group known as the philosophes. They promoted the advancement of science and secular thought and supported the tolerance,
rationality, and open-mindedness of the Enlightenment. More than a hundred *encyclopédistes* have been identified.

46 A Petri dish, named after the German bacteriologist Julius Richard Petri (1852-1921), is a shallow cylindrical glass or plastic lidded dish that biologists use to culture cells, such as bacteria or small mosses. Petri dishes are often used to make agar plates for microbiology studies. The dish is partially filled with warm liquid containing agar and a mixture of specific ingredients that may include nutrients, blood, salts, carbohydrates, dyes, indicators, amino acids or antibiotics. Once the agar cools and solidifies, the dish is ready to be inoculated (“plated”) with a microbe-laden sample. Virus or phage cultures require a two-stage inoculation: after the agar preparation, bacteria are grown in the dish to provide hosts for the viral inoculum.

47 The Kirgiz people (also spelled Kirghiz, Kyrgyz, or Kyrghyz) are a Turkic ethnic group native to Central Asia, primarily Kyrgyzstan. The early Kirgiz people, known as Yenisei Kirgiz, have their origins in the western parts of modern-day Mongolia and first appear in written records in Chinese annals compiled from 109 BC to 91 BC. They were described in Tang Dynasty texts as having “red hair and green eyes,” while those with dark hair and dark eyes were said to be descendants of a Chinese general named Li Ling. In Chinese sources, these Kirgiz tribes were described as fair-skinned, green-eyed or blue-eyed and red-haired people with a mixture of European and Mongol features. The Kirgiz people are predominantly Muslims of the Hanafi Sunni school.

48 *Semirechye* [Семиречье] (literally, “Seven Rivers”) was an oblast (province) of the Russian Empire. It roughly corresponded to most of present-day southeastern Kazakhstan and northeastern Kyrgyzstan. It was created out of the territories of the northern part of the Khanate of Kokand that had been part of the Kazakh Khanate. Its center was Alma-Aty, the city now known as Almaty.

49 *Zavolzhye* [Заволжье] (literally, “Beyond the Volga”) is a town in the Gorodetsky District of the Nizhny Novgorod oblast, located on the right bank of the Volga River, opposite Gorodets, the administrative center of the district, and 35 miles northwest of Nizhny Novgorod, the administrative center of the oblast.

50 The Amtorg Trading Corporation, also known simply as Amtorg [Амторг] (short for *Amerikanskaia Torgovlia* [Американская Торговля], was the first trade representation of the Soviet Union in the United States. It was established in New York in 1924 by merging Armand Hammer’s Allied American Corporation (Alamerico) with the Products Exchange Corporation (Prodexco) and Arcos-America, Inc. (the U.S. branch of the All-Russian Co-Operative Society, ARCOS, in Great Britain). Formally a semi-private joint-stock company and American corporation, Amtorg occupied a unique position in the market as the single purchaser for a communist state. Even though it did not officially represent the Soviet government, it was controlled by the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Trade and, prior to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. in 1933, it served as a de facto trade delegation and a quasi-embassy. Amtorg handled almost all imports from the U.S.S.R., comprising mostly lumber, furs, flax, bristles, and caviar,
and all exports of raw materials and machinery for Soviet industry and agriculture. It also
provided American companies with information about trade opportunities in the U.S.S.R.
and supplied Soviet industries with technical news and information about American

The Statue of Liberty (Liberty Enlightening the World) is a colossal neoclassical
sculpture on Liberty Island in New York Harbor. The copper statue, a gift from the people
of France to the people of the United States, was designed by French sculptor Frédéric
Auguste Bartholdi and was built by Gustave Eiffel. The statue was dedicated on October
28, 1886. The Statue of Liberty is the figure of a robed woman representing Libertas, a
Roman goddess. She holds a torch above her head, and in her left arm carries a tabula
ansata that is inscribed in Roman numerals with “JULY IV MDCCCLXXVI” (July 4, 1776),
the date of the approval of the U.S. Declaration of Independence. A broken chain lies at
her feet. The statue, which became an icon of freedom and of the United States, was
positioned to serve as a welcoming sight to immigrants arriving from abroad.

Pilnyak repeats here the error committed by Vladimir Mayakovsky, who wrongly asserted
several years earlier in his American travelogue, My Discovery of America (Moe otkrytie
Ameriki) [Мое открытие Америки] (1925), that the Statue of Liberty conceals a prison on Ellis
Island.

Ellis Island, in Upper New York Bay, was the gateway for over 12 million immigrants to
the United States, serving as the nation’s busiest immigrant inspection station for over sixty
years, from 1892 until 1954. More than three thousand would-be immigrants died on Ellis
Island while being held in the hospital facilities. Some unskilled workers were rejected
because they were considered “likely to become a public charge.” About 2 percent were
denied admission to the U.S. and sent back to their countries of origin for reasons such as
having a chronic contagious disease, criminal background, or insanity. Ellis Island was
sometimes known as “The Island of Tears” or “Heartbreak Island” because of those 2
percent who were not admitted after the long transatlantic voyage. The island was greatly
expanded with land reclamation between 1892 and 1934. Before that, the much smaller
original island was the site of Fort Gibson and later a naval magazine. The island was
made part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument in 1965, and has hosted a museum
of immigration since 1990. Long considered part of New York state, a 1998 U.S. Supreme
Court decision found that most of the island is actually in New Jersey.

Pilnyak uses here the German word katzenjammer, which means literally “cat’s wail”
katerwaul] and hence a “discordant sound.” It is sometimes used to indicate a general
state of depression or bewilderment. It has also been used, as seems to be the case here, as
a term for a hangover, with the sufferer’s groans of discomfort being humorously likened to
those of a wailing cat.

Vladimir Yevgrafovich Tatlin (1885-1953), a Soviet painter and architect, was one of the
most important figures in the Soviet avant-garde art movement of the 1920s. He later
became an important artist in the Constructivist movement. He is most famous for his
design for a grand monumental building, Monument to the Third International (Pamyatnik

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III Kommunisticheskogo internatsionala [Памятник III Коммунистического интернационала] (1919-1920), more commonly known as “Tatlin’s Tower” (Bashnya Tatлина) [Башня Татлина]. The structure, which was never built, was planned to serve as the headquarters of, and a monument to, the Comintern (Third Communist International). Tatlin’s Constructivist tower was to be built from industrial materials (iron, glass and steel). In these materials, as well as in its shape and function, the work was envisaged as a towering symbol of modernity. This is no doubt the Tatlinesque “fantasy” that Pilnyak is referring to here.

56 The reference here is to Khlestakov, the central character in Nikolai Gogol’s well-known stage comedy, The Inspector General (Revisor) [Ревизор] (1836). This low-ranking civil servant, who has a penchant for braggadocio and exaggeration, is stranded in a provincial backwater, holed up in his hotel, where he is awaiting funds to be able to pay off his bill. His fortunes are suddenly reversed, however, when the town officials, who mistake him for a government inspector, start providing him with bribes. Pilnyak characterizes the press statement circulated about him as a “Khlestakovskian scrap of paper” perhaps as a way of expressing to his Russian readers how he feels (uncomfortably) that he is being greeted in America as a Khlestakov: that is, as a more important personage than he actually is. Milla Fedoroava, however, suggests that Pilnyak here is mocking the self-advertisement that has become a routine part of standard American business behavior. The author, she claims, is implying that America is a country of Khlestakovs, a country of people “who perpetually show off and exaggerate.” See Yankees in Petrograd, Bolsheviks in New York, p. 105.

57 Pilnyak uses here the registry office’s acronym ZAGS (Zapis’ aktov grazhdanskogo sostoianiia) [Запись актов гражданского состояния].

58 The “Party maximum” (Partmaksimum) [Партмаксимум] was a limit set on the salary of a member of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. It was introduced in 1920 by a decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) [ВЦИК] for all communists who held executive positions in the Party, in industry, in government, and in the Soviet trade unions. Their salary was not supposed to exceed that of a highly qualified industrial worker. If a communist had additional income (for example, honorariums or royalties), he or she had to transfer a specified percentage from the amount above the Party maximum into the Party’s funds. This salary ceiling was cancelled by a secret resolution of Politburo of February 8, 1932.

59 See “Calls Artists Richest of Russia’s Classes: Boris Pilnyak, Author, Here to Study American Life, Says Writers Also Flourish There,” New York Times (March 13, 1931): 3. According to the NYT piece, Don Levine served as the interpreter for Pilnyak during this interview aboard the Bremen.

60 This phrase, which is attributed to Jesus in the synoptic gospels, reads in full, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21). This phrase has become a widely quoted summary of the relationship between Christianity, secular government, and society. The original message, coming in response to a question of whether it was lawful for Jews to pay taxes to Caesar, gives rise to multiple
possible interpretations about the circumstances under which it is desirable for a Christian to submit to earthly authority. In the gospel accounts, the phrase is directed at hostile questioners (be they Pharisees or spies sent by “teachers of the law and the chief priests”) who are trying to trap Jesus into taking an explicit and dangerous stand. The passage has been much discussed in the modern context of Christianity and politics, especially on the questions of separation of Church and State and of tax resistance. The context in which this phrase is being invoked here by Pilnyak, a Soviet writer representing a socialist alternative to American capitalism, is perhaps even more ideological, political, and economic than was the original gospel context (not to mention much more ironic, coming from a Soviet writer who was himself a “fellow traveler” rather than a true believer in socialism, communism, or the Communist Party).

61 The theater that Pilnyak attended that evening was most likely the Mansfield Theater on Broadway, where Marc Connelly’s Pulitzer Prize-winning play, The Green Pastures, was still being performed at that time (it had opened on February 26, 1930 and would close on August 29, 1931). This innovative play, a fable of Black folk religion that was hailed as “one of the most successful Broadway plays of the era,” presented the modern Southern Negro conception of heaven, complete with a God who presides over a heavenly fish fry. A film version of the play was released in 1935. For the screenplay and some commentary on Connelly’s play, see Thomas Cripps, ed., The Green Pastures (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979). See also Chapter 2 of Judith Weisenfeld’s study, Hollywood Be Thy Name: African American Religion in American Film, 1929-1949 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 52-87.

62 The Lord of Sabaoth was a title of Jehovah; the “hosts” were the armies of Israel, but also included the angelic armies of heaven.

63 Cinchona is a genus of flowering plants native to the tropical Andean forests of western South America. A few species are used as medicinal plants, known as sources for quinine and other compounds. Carl Linnaeus named the genus in 1742 after Ana de Osorio, the Countess of Chinchon and the wife of the viceroy of Peru. According to some accounts, she suffered from malaria and was cured by a botanical remedy made of the powdered bark of a native tree. The veracity of the story is uncertain, but the tree still carries her name. The national tree of Peru is in the genus Cinchona. As a medicinal herb, cinchona bark is also known as “Jesuit’s bark” or “Peruvian bark.” The bark is stripped from the tree, dried, and powdered for medicinal uses. The bark is medicinally active, containing a variety of alkaloids, including the anti-malarial compound quinine and the anti-arrhythmic quinidine. Although the use of the bark has been largely superseded today by more effective modern medicines, cinchona is the only economically practical source of quinine, a drug that is still recommended for the treatment of malaria.

64 Thaumaturgics (from the Greek words thauma, meaning “miracle,” and ergon, meaning “work”) is defined as the capability of a magician or a saint to work magic or miracles. Pilnyak uses here the Russian word chudodeistvo [чудодеяство], which combines the two Russian words that mean “miracle” and “work.” Thus, chudodeistvo might here be rendered as “miracle-working.”
The Gillette razor was produced by the Gillette Company, founded in 1901 by King C. Gillette (1855-1932), the American businessman who invented a best-selling version of the “safety razor” (that is, a shaving implement with a protective device positioned between the edge of the blade and the skin). The initial purpose of these protective devices was to reduce the level of skill needed for injury-free shaving, thereby reducing the reliance on professional barbers. Several models of safety razors were in existence before Gillette’s design, but his distinctive innovation was the thin, inexpensive, disposable blade of stamped steel. Gillette is widely credited with inventing the so-called razor-and-blades business model, where razors are sold cheaply to increase the market for blades. In some East European languages, the brand has become the generic trademark for all razor blades: for example, in Czech (žiletka), Estonian (žilett), Latvian (žilete), Macedonian (žilét), Polish (żyletka), and Serbo-Croatian (žilet).

Pilnyak uses here the Russian word for whale, kit [кит], which calls to mind for the Russian reader the native folk belief that the earth sits upon the backs of three large whales that support the planet’s weight. In Russian colloquial speech, meanwhile, kit has come to acquire the figurative meaning of a large, strong person or authority figure: that is, a “big shot” or a “big wig.”

The League of Nations was an intergovernmental organization founded on January 10, 1920 as a result of the Paris Peace Conference that ended the First World War. It was the first international organization whose principal mission was to maintain world peace. Its primary goals, as stated in its Covenant, included preventing wars through collective security and disarmament and settling international disputes through negotiation and arbitration. The League held its first council meeting in Paris on January 16, 1920, six days after the Versailles Treaty and the Covenant of the League of Nations came into force. On November 1, 1920, the headquarters of the League moved from London to Geneva, where the first General Assembly was held on November 15, 1920. The Palais Wilson on Geneva’s western lakeshore, named after U.S. President Woodrow Wilson in recognition of his efforts towards the establishment of the League, was the League’s first permanent home. At its greatest extent, from September 28, 1934 to February 23, 1935, it had 58 members. After a number of notable successes and some early failures in the 1920s, the League ultimately proved incapable of preventing aggression by the Axis powers in the 1930s. Germany withdrew from the League, as did Japan, Italy, Spain, and others. The onset of the Second World War showed that the League had failed its primary purpose, which was to prevent any future world war. The League lasted for 26 years; the United Nations (UN) replaced it after the end of the Second World War and inherited a number of agencies and organizations founded by the League.

“Dumping,” in economics, is the name given to a kind of predatory pricing, especially in the context of international trade. It occurs when manufacturers export a product to another country at a price below the price charged in its home market or below its cost of production. This is done sometimes to increase market share in a foreign market or to drive out competition. Under the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement, “dumping” is condemned (but is not prohibited) if it causes or threatens to cause material injury to a
domestic industry in the importing country. The term has a negative connotation, as advocates of competitive markets see “dumping” as a form of protectionism. Furthermore, advocates for workers and laborers believe that safeguarding businesses against predatory practices, such as “dumping,” helps to alleviate some of the harsher consequences of such practices between economies at different stages of development.

69 Pilnyak’s unnamed American acquaintance, a Wall Street millionaire, appears to be referring here to the severe financial crisis that struck Florida in 1926. This sun-drenched state had experienced an unprecedented boom in land speculation during the early 1920s, when middle-class Americans were beginning to discover the charms of the Florida climate and lifestyle. Investors quickly doubled their profits during a brief frenzy of land buying, intensive home construction, and expansive real estate development during these several years. In 1926, however, real estate prices came crashing down, many properties were foreclosed, and numerous banks failed.

70 Pilnyak is referring here to Queen Marie (1875-1939), the colorful and very fashion-conscious royal spendthrift from Romania who visited the United States, with much publicity and fanfare, during fall of 1926. According to Hannah Pakula, the author of The Last Romantic: A Biography of Queen Marie of Roumania (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), Queen Marie dominated the front page of the New York Times throughout the month of October 1926, in advance of her arrival in the United States, as she shopped for clothes in Paris for several days before boarding the SS Leviathan for the trans-oceanic crossing to New York. The American newspaper filled its columns with lengthy paragraphs describing in detail her clothes, especially the innumerable dinner gowns she had purchased for her U.S. trip during her stay at the Paris Hotel Ritz, where thirty trunks stood in the corridors waiting to be filled with what came to be called her “American trousseau” (344). When Pilnyak protests that he, unlike Queen Marie, did not profit as a result of any endorsements he could have made for the clothing line of a certain couturier, but instead paid for his clothing himself (just as he had checked himself out of the St. Moritz, where he was receiving a hotel room gratis, and moved into an apartment where he would be paying the rent himself), he seems to be alluding to the many “freebies” that Queen Marie was receiving from fashion designers. The “commercial hullabaloo” that she was causing was captured nicely by this headline that appeared on the front page of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle on October 17, 1926: “Commercialism Showers Queen Marie With Gifts To Share Rain of Publicity.”

71 The Central Park of Culture and Rest (Tsentr’niy park kul’tury i otdykha) [Центральный парк культуры и отдыха] is located in central Moscow. It opened in 1928 and was named after the famous Soviet writer Maksim Gorky in 1932. Known more popularly as Gorky Park, it was constructed on the former site of the extensive gardens of the old Golitsyn Hospital and the Neskuchny Palace and covers an area of 300 acres along the Moscow River. The first park of its kind in Russia, this popular tourist attraction was conceived as an outdoor “cultural enterprise.” The idea for a central park of culture and leisure in Moscow arose in the late 1920s in connection with Moscow’s reconstruction and notions of a socialist “city of the future.”
A sazhen [сажень] is a Russian unit of measure equal to 2.134 meters.

“Mother-in-law’s tongue” (teshchinyi iazyk) [тещіній ізько] is one of the common names for sansevieria, a genus of about seventy species of flowering plants native to Africa, Madagascar, and southern Asia.

Uncharacteristically for him, Pilnyak uses here the English-language form of this word (Steeplechase), rather than a Russian translation (skachki s prepiatstviami) [скачки с препятствиями] or a Russian transliteration (stipl’chez) [стипльчез] of it. Steeplechase was the name of an amusement park in the Coney Island area of Brooklyn that was created by George C. Tilyou (1862–1914), who grew up in a family that ran a Coney Island restaurant. Steeplechase Park operated from 1897 to 1964. It was the first of the three original iconic large parks built on Coney Island, the other two being Luna Park (1903) and Dreamland (1904). Steeplechase was Coney Island’s longest lasting park. Unlike Dreamland, which burned down in a fire in 1911, and Luna Park, which, despite early success, saw its profitability disappear during the Great Depression, Steeplechase Park kept itself financially profitable for many years. The Tilyou family had been able to adapt the park to the changing times, bringing in new rides and new amusements, such as the Parachute Jump, to Steeplechase Park.

The “token” (zheton) [жетон] that Pilnyak is referring to here was a punch ticket called the “Geo. C. Tilyou’s Combination Badge.” Adorned with a facsimile of the park’s iconic smiling face, the ticket cost 50 cents and allowed the purchaser free entry to forty-one different rides and attractions at Steeplechase Park, dubbed the “Funny Place.” Charles Denson provides a photo of this punch ticket in his book, Coney Island: Lost and Found (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 2002), p. 32.

Photos of the Coney Island spinning tunnel, sometimes called “Barrel of Fun,” are posted on this website: http://collections.mcny.org/Collection/[Children-riding-in-spinning-tunnel-at-Coney-Island-amusement-park.]-2F3HRGCOUJE.html

The bumper cars at Coney Island in 1931 that Pilnyak is describing here were the early prototypes for the famous Eldorado Auto Skooters that opened later in the 1970s. This venue was well known for its colorful pink electric sign that encouraged patrons to “Bump Your Ass Off,” complete with an illustration that depicts the tail end of a horse. See the several photos posted at this website: https://www.google.com/search?q=coney+island+bumper+cars&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&sqi=2&ved=0ahUKEwib5_P457rTAhUO3GMKHRUdA7oQsAQIjNg&biw=1006&bih=525

The ride that Pilnyak is describing here appears to be the giant slide at Steeplechase Park: https://www.google.com/search?q=%22Steeplechase+Park+slide&tbm=isch&imgil=wr1wUUYuvVIIIM%253A%253BTTeGvM5VRDZ5XM%253B#imgdii=zNKIE_5_gDoWhM:&imgrc=wr1wUUYuvVIIIM
The ride that Pilnyak is describing here appears to be either the “Whirling Rotor” ride or the “Human Roulette Wheel” ride, both of which challenge patrons to fight centrifugal force and remain seated at the center of a rapidly rotating wooden disk. Here are photos of both rides:

https://www.google.com/search?q=Steeplechase+Park+Whirling+Rotor&tbm=isch&imgil=mgqhf65gd8_jifM%253A%253BmGKZUgRXxN7AuM%253Bhttps%25253A%25252F%25252F

https://www.pinterest.com/pin/7248049371205260/

Rides on wooden sleds down man-made, ice-covered hills in late medieval Russia are among the predecessors of modern roller coasters. The activity was taken to Paris in 1804 in the form of a ride called the “Russian Mountains” (Les Montagnes Russes). Small wheels were added to the sleds on this ride, a key modification that later persuaded some historians to credit it as the first wheeled coaster. In 1817, the “Belleville Mountains” (Les Montagnes Russes de Belleville) and the “Aerial Walks” (Promenades Aériennes) in Paris improved on the original “Russian Mountains” by adding locking wheels, continuous tracks, and, eventually, cables that hoisted cars to the top of the hill. Just as Coney Island transformed the hot dog (or frankfurter, a German invention) into a uniquely American food, it likewise popularized roller coaster culture in the United States.

Pilnyak may be referring here to the Coney Island sideshow exhibit whose sign read “Infant Incubators: With Living Infants.” This ostensible “freak show,” which displayed tiny, premature babies (“preemies”) living inside incubators made of glass and metal, was the brain child of a French-born doctor named Martin Couney, who created the exhibit in 1903 (it ran until the early 1940s). Visitors to the exhibit paid a few coins to enter, then approached rows of incubators lined up along the wall, where they could peer through the glass windows at the tiny, shriveled preemie babies living inside. Dr. Couney was not a sideshow hawker, however, but instead a great champion of this new lifesaving technology (incubators), a medical pioneer who is credited with saving the lives of thousands of the country’s premature babies, keeping them from dying from hypothermia. Most of the preemies came from local maternity wards that were not equipped to care for these tiny, vulnerable creatures. Here are photos of Dr. Couney’s “Infant Incubators:”

https://www.google.com/search?q=infant+incubators+coney+island&tbm=isch&imgil=ILHsJEwEjynrM%253A%253BT2hO3-mxuCZPIM%253Bhttps%25253A%25252F%25252F

Nicola Sacco (1891-1927) and Bartolomeo Vanzetti (1888-1927) were Italian-born American anarchists who were convicted of murdering a guard and a paymaster during the April 15, 1920 armed robbery of the Slater and Morrill Shoe Company in Braintree, Massachusetts. Both men adhered to an anarchist movement that advocated relentless warfare against a violent and oppressive government. After a few hours of deliberation on July 14, 1921, the jury convicted Sacco and Vanzetti of first-degree murder and they were sentenced to death. A series of appeals followed, but all of them were denied by trial judge Webster Thayer and were also later denied by the Massachusetts State Supreme Court. By 1926, the case had drawn worldwide attention. As details of the trial and the men’s suspected innocence became known, Sacco and Vanzetti became the center of one of the
largest causes célèbres in modern history, with protests on their behalf being held in every major city in North America and Europe. The verdict, however, was upheld, and Sacco and Vanzetti were executed in the electric chair at Charlestown State Prison just after midnight on August 23, 1927.

83 The wax museum that Pilnyak is describing here is most likely Lillie Santangelo’s famous “World in Wax Musée,” which was opened in 1926 and shut down in 1984. As Pilnyak indicates, this wax museum displayed exhibits of various gruesome murders that had been reported in the press. One of the most disturbing murders was the one committed by William Edward Hickman in 1927, when he kidnapped, murdered, and then mutilated the body of Marion Parker, the twelve-year-old daughter of a prominent Los Angeles lawyer. The bloody wax display shows Hickman, nicknamed “the Fox,” dismembering the young girl’s body in a bathtub:
https://www.google.com/search?q=world+in+wax+museum+coney+island&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjUrSAqdnTAhVW2WMKHTTbDUYQsAQIQSQ&biw=1052&bih=484

84 The labyrinth (or maze) that Pilnyak is describing here appears to be the “Foolish House” at Coney Island. This was a veritable jumble of windy passageways whose floors wallowed and shook as tempests and earthquakes were simulated. The walls, floors, and ceilings of this funhouse, moreover, were made of concave and convex mirrors that made any patron’s exit out of the maze very difficult, if not virtually impossible, to accomplish.
https://www.flickr.com/photos/stevesobczuk/2619046422/

85 A canotier, or “boater’s hat” (from the Middle French word for a small boat, canot, an alteration of canoe), is a kind of men’s formal summer hat. It is normally made of stiff straw and has a stiff flat crown and brim, typically with a solid or striped grosgrain ribbon around the crown. “Boaters” were popular as casual summer headgear in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, especially for boating or sailing, hence the name. Nowadays they are rarely seen except at sailing or rowing events, period theatrical and musical performances (e.g., barbershop music), or as part of old-fashioned school uniforms.

86 What the author is describing here was known as the “Blowhole Theater.” As Pilnyak correctly notes, hidden jets of compressed air would suddenly shoot out from vents located in the floor. These bursts of air would blow the skirts or dresses worn by female visitors up to their waists, exposing their legs underneath, and would blow the hats worn by male visitors off their heads. Both female and male visitors were also likely to be jolted by an electric cattle prod wielded by one of the two “freaks” who were cavorting about on stage. All of this mayhem was performed much to the delight of those people sitting in the audience, most of whom were themselves the previous victims of the clownish antics performed as part of this “Blowhole Theater.” Here is a video clip of it:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZNaJc_Igag
In addition to Steeplechase Park (which Pilnyak insists upon calling the “Forty-One Delights”), Coney Island was also home to Luna Park and Dreamland Park, as well as numerous sideshows, eateries, and independent amusements.

In the original Russian, Pilnyak has the salesperson ask the wife literally, “What system of weapon (kakoi sistemy oruzhie) [Какой системы оружие] does your husband prefer?” This reinforces the anecdote’s title, “Weapons System.”

What Pilnyak is describing here is usually called a “Murphy bed” (or “wall bed,” “pull-down bed,” “fold-down bed”): a bed that is hinged at one end to store vertically against the wall, or inside a closet or cabinet. The bed is named after William Lawrence Murphy (1876–1957), who applied for his first patents around 1900. According to legend, Murphy was wooing an opera singer, but living in a one-room apartment in San Francisco, where the moral code of the time frowned upon a woman entering a man’s bedroom. Murphy’s invention converted his bedroom into a parlor, enabling him to entertain. Earlier foldup beds had existed, and were even available through the Sears, Roebuck & Company catalog, but Murphy introduced pivot and counterbalanced designs for which he received a series of patents, including one in 1912 for a “Disappearing Bed.”

Pilnyak is referring, of course, to static electricity, the imbalance of electric charges within or on the surface of a material (such as carpeting), which is created whenever two surfaces contact and separate. At least one of the surfaces has a high resistance to electric current (and is therefore an electrical insulator). The spark associated with static electricity occurs when the excess charge is brought close to a large electrical conductor (for example, a path to ground) and neutralized. The familiar phenomenon that Pilnyak is referring to here (one that he admits he does not fully understand) is static shock, which is caused by the neutralization of an excess electrical charge.

The Empire State Building is a 102-story skyscraper located on Fifth Avenue between West 33rd and 34th Streets in Midtown, Manhattan. It has a roof height of 1,250 feet and, with its antenna included, it stands a total of 1,454 feet tall. Its name is derived from the nickname for New York, the “Empire State.” It stood as the world’s tallest building for nearly 40 years, from its completion in early 1931 until the topping out of the original World Trade Center’s North Tower in late 1970. Following the September 11th attacks in 2001, the Empire State Building was again the tallest building in New York, until One World Trade Center reached a greater height in April 2012. The Empire State Building is currently the fifth-tallest completed skyscraper in the United States and the 35th-tallest in the world. The Empire State Building is an American cultural icon. It is designed in the distinctive Art Deco style and has been named as one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World by the American Society of Civil Engineers. The building and its street floor interior are designated landmarks of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, and are confirmed by the New York City Board of Estimate. It was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1986.

The Eiffel Tower is a wrought iron lattice tower on the Champ de Mars in Paris. It is named after the engineer Gustave Eiffel, whose company designed and built the tower.
Constructed from 1887 to 1889 as the entrance to the 1889 World’s Fair, it was initially criticized by some of France’s leading artists and intellectuals for its design, but it has become a global cultural icon of France and one of the most recognizable structures in the world. The Eiffel Tower, which is the most-visited paid monument in the world, is 1,063 feet tall, about the same height as an 81-story building, and the tallest structure in Paris. Its base is square, measuring 410 feet on each side. During its construction, the Eiffel Tower surpassed the Washington Monument to become the tallest man-made structure in the world, a title it held for 41 years until the Chrysler Building in New York City was finished in 1930. Due to the addition of a broadcasting aerial at the top of the tower in 1957, it is now taller than the Chrysler Building by 17 feet. Excluding transmitters, the Eiffel Tower is the second-tallest structure in France, after the Millau Viaduct. The top level’s upper platform is 906 feet above the ground – the highest observation deck accessible to the public in the European Union.

Pilnyak here proceeds to translate the transliterated version he has just provided of the English word “avenue” into Russian as alleia [аллея], which can mean either “alley,” “avenue,” or “parkway.” As this example illustrates, it is important for Pilnyak that his Russian readers not only learn what these English words mean, but also that they hear what they sound like.

Pneumatic tube mail was a postal system operating in New York City from 1897 to 1953 that used pneumatic tubes. Following the creation of the first pneumatic mail system in Philadelphia in 1893, New York City’s system was begun, initially only between the old General Post Office on Park Row and the Produce Exchange on Bowling Green, a distance of 3,750 feet. Eventually, the network stretched up both sides of Manhattan Island all the way to Manhattanville on the West Side and Triborough in East Harlem, forming a loop running a few feet below street level. Travel time from the General Post Office to Harlem was 20 minutes. A crosstown line connected the two parallel lines between the new General Post Office on the West Side and Grand Central Terminal to the east, and took four minutes for mail to traverse. Using the Brooklyn Bridge, a spur line also ran from Church Street, in lower Manhattan, to the general post office in Brooklyn (now Cadman Plaza), taking four minutes. Operators of the system were called “Rocketeers.”

This colorful, but (deliberately) clumsy, compound adjective, avtomobile-neproezzhii [автомобиле-непроезжий], one that the author creates to capture the impassibility of the streets in New York City, serves as a good example of Pilnyak’s stylistic inventiveness and playfulness.

Rolls-Royce Limited owned a British luxury car and aero engine manufacturing business founded in 1904 by Charles Stewart Rolls and Frederick Henry Royce. Rolls-Royce Limited was incorporated on March 15, 1906 as a vehicle for their ownership of the Rolls-Royce business. Their business quickly developed a reputation for superior engineering quality and for manufacturing the “best car in the world,” building on F. H. Royce’s existing standing. Rolls-Royce became a leading manufacturer of piston aero-engines after it was brought into building them by the First World War.
Joseph “Joe” Freeman (1897-1965) was an American journalist, writer, and journal editor. He was born in a small Ukrainian village to Jewish parents, emigrating with them to the United States in 1904, when he was still a child. Freeman, who joined the Socialist Party of America in 1914 (when he was 17 years old), graduated from Columbia University in 1919 and then worked for several years as a journalist in New York and then as a foreign correspondent in Paris and London. In 1922, Freeman became a member of editorial staff of the left wing magazine The Liberator. During this time, he also became a member of the Workers Party of America, forerunner of the Communist Party U.S.A. Freeman worked for the Soviet news agency TASS in the late 1920s, serving as the TASS correspondent in Moscow in 1926-1927. In 1929, he served as the TASS correspondent in Mexico. Freeman was a co-founder and editor of The New Masses magazine during the early 1930s and a founding editor of the magazine Partisan Review in 1934. This publication concentrated primarily on literary and cultural themes, leaving The New Masses to pursue a heavier portion of political themes. Disillusioned by the events that marked Stalin’s Great Terror of 1936-1938, Freeman left the Communist Party in 1939. Subsequently, he worked as a freelance writer for a variety of publications, including The Nation, Fortune, and Life, before turning to public relations work and to creative writing in his later years. It is widely assumed that Freeman was assigned by the Communist Party to accompany the politically unreliable Pilnyak during his U.S. visit in 1931.

Pilnyak quoted this famous phrase (“Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s”) earlier in his narrative: see endnote #60.

Pilnyak coins here the reflexive verb amiuizmentit’sia [амиозментиться] from the transliterated form of the noun “amusement” (amiuzment) [амиозмент].

Pilnyak coins here another playful verb, dollarstvovat’ [долларствовать], from the noun dollar [дollar], which I have chosen to translate as “to strive to amass dollars.”

In the original text, Pilnyak places the Russian verbal adverb zavtrakaiia (“eating breakfast”) in parentheses following the transliterated verbal adverb he invents for “eating lunch” (loncha) [лончя] and the Russian verbal adverb obedaiia [обедая] in parenthesis following the transliterated verbal adverb he invents for “eating dinner” (dinneria) [дinnerия]. The playful author is punning here, exploiting a cultural/culinary difference that exists between Russia and the United States: namely, the fact that Russians call their midday meal “dinner” (obed) [обед] and their evening meal “supper” (uzhin) [ужин], both of them scheduled later in the day than their American counterparts. Lexically speaking, there is no “lunch” (lonch) for Russians, unless, of course, they come to visit the United States.

Pilnyak uses here the Russian word negritianka [негритянка] (Negress), the female form of negritianets [негритянец] (Negro), which could also be rendered as a “Negro woman” or a “Negro girl.” The singular form negr [негр] (Negro) and the plural form negry [негры] (Negroes) also existed as Russian ways to denote African-Americans at this time.
Pilnyak is referring here to coin-operated “automats,” the predecessors of fast-food restaurants, which first arrived in the United States in 1902, when the Horn & Hardart Company opened an automated cafeteria in Philadelphia. A decade later, the company expanded its operations to Manhattan, opening an “Automat Lunch Room” in Times Square that revolutionized the American food service industry. Their sleek, new self-service cafeteria contained gigantic, coin-operated vending machines, with row upon row of windowed compartments, resembling glass-fronted post office boxes, which housed dozens of menu items: sandwiches, slices of pie, and various comfort foods, from macaroni and cheese to chicken pot pie and tapioca pudding. In the original format, a cashier sat in a change booth at the center of the cafeteria, behind a wide marble counter with five to eight rounded depressions. The diner would insert the required number of coins into a machine and then lift a window, hinged at the top, and remove the meal, usually wrapped in waxed paper. The machines were replenished from the kitchen behind. With no waiters to tip and prices for most dishes set at five or ten cents, the automats held a strong economic appeal for working-class patrons and frugal diners. And unlike the elitist dining rooms that had dominated the American culinary scene, the automats were simple and democratic.

Pilnyak is referring here, of course, to Henry Ford (1863-1947), the American captain of industry and business magnate who founded the Ford Motor Company and sponsored the development of the assembly line technique of mass production. Although Ford did not invent either the automobile or the assembly line, he did develop and manufacture the first automobile that many middle-class Americans could afford to buy. In doing so, Ford converted the automobile from an expensive curiosity into a practical conveyance that would profoundly impact the landscape of the twentieth century. His introduction of the Model T automobile revolutionized transportation and American industry. As the owner of the Ford Motor Company, he became one of the richest and best-known people in the world. He is credited with creating “Fordism” – the mass production of inexpensive goods coupled with high wages for workers. Ford had a global vision, with consumerism as the key to peace. His intense commitment to systematically lowering costs resulted in many technical and business innovations, including a franchise system that put dealerships throughout most of North America and in major cities on six continents. Ford left most of his vast wealth to the Ford Foundation and arranged for his family to control the company permanently. Ford was also widely known for advocating pacifism during the first years of World War I and for promoting anti-semitism through his newspaper *The Dearborn Independent* and through his four-volume book *The International Jew* (1920-1922).

The F. W. Woolworth Company was a retail company and one of the original pioneers of the five-and-dime store. It was arguably the most successful American and international five-and-dime operation, setting trends and creating the modern retail model that stores follow worldwide today. Frank Winfield Woolworth (1852-1919) opened his first successful “Woolworth’s Great Five Cent Store” on July 18, 1879, in Lancaster, PA. He soon brought his brother, Charles Sumner Woolworth (1856-1947), into the business, and the two Woolworth brothers proceeded to pioneer and develop merchandising, direct purchasing, sales, and customer service practices commonly used today. The Woolworth brothers had the first five-and-dime store, which sold discounted general merchandise at fixed prices, usually five or ten cents, undercutting the prices of other local merchants.
Woolworth, as the stores popularly became known, was one of the first American retailers to put merchandise out for the shopping public to handle and select without the assistance of a sales clerk. Earlier retailers had kept all merchandise behind a counter and customers presented the clerk with a list of items they wished to buy. Woolworth’s concept was widely copied, and five-and-ten-cent stores (also known as five-and-dime stores) became a twentieth-century fixture in American downtowns. They would serve as anchors for the suburban shopping plazas and shopping malls in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Although the F.W. Woolworth Company grew to be one of the largest retail chains in the world through most of the twentieth century, increased competition led to its decline beginning in the 1980s.

Pilnyak calls these carwashes avtomobil’ nye bani [автомобильные бани], literally, “automobile bathhouses,” rather than the more conventional “automobile washers” (moika avtomobilei) [моїка автомобіль] that is used today.

Pilnyak uses here the phrase “automobile-human deaths” (avtomobil’no-chelovecheskikh smertei) [автомобильно-человеческих смертей] for traffic fatalities.

A verst [верста] is a Russian measure of length, equivalent to approximately 0.66 mile (1.1 km).

Pilnyak playfully combines here the two Russian words that he has just used to denote traveling “lengthwise” (vdol’) [вдоль] and “breadthwise” (poperek) [поперек] across America to form two new compound words of his own coinage, poperekovdol’ [поперековдоль] and vsolepoperek [вдолепоперек], which I am translating as “criss-crossing” and “cross-crissing” in hopes of capturing at least some of the author’s stylistic playfulness.

Vladimir Vladimirovich Mayakovsky (1893-1930) was a Russian and Soviet poet, playwright, artist, and actor. During his early, prerevolutionary period leading into 1917, Mayakovsky became renowned as a prominent figure of the Russian Futurist movement, being among the signers of the Futurist manifesto, A Slap in the Face of Public Taste (Pochechina obshchestvennomu vkusu) [Почёчина общественному вкусу] (1913), and authoring poems such as “A Cloud in Trousers” (Oblako v shtanakh) [Облако в штанах] (1915) and “Backbone Flute” (Fleita-pozvonochnik) [Флейта-позвоночник] (1916).

Mayakovsky produced a large and diverse body of work during the course of his career: he wrote poems, wrote and directed plays, appeared in films, edited the art journal LEF, and created agitprop posters in support of the Communist Party during the Russian Civil War. Although Mayakovsky’s work regularly demonstrated patriotic support for the ideology of the Communist Party and a strong admiration of Vladimir Lenin, Mayakovsky’s relationship with the Soviet state was always complex and often tumultuous. He frequently found himself engaged in confrontation with the increasing involvement of the Soviet state in cultural censorship and the development of what would become the official doctrine of Socialist Realism. Works that contained criticism or satire of aspects of the Soviet system, such as the poem “Talking with the Taxman About Poetry” (Razgovor s fininspektorem o poezii) [Разговор с финансисктором о поэзии] (1926), and the plays The Bedbug (Klop)
[Клоп] (1929) and *The Bathhouse* (*Banya*) [Баня] (1929), were met with scorn by the Soviet state and the literary establishment. In 1930, Mayakovsky committed suicide. Even after death his relationship with the Soviet state remained unsteady. Although Mayakovsky had previously been harshly criticized by Soviet governmental bodies, like the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), Joseph Stalin posthumously declared Mayakovsky “the best and the most talented poet of our Soviet epoch.”

111 The Mayakovsky poems that Pilnyak is referring to here are no doubt the twenty-two poems that comprise the verse cycle, *Poems About America* (*Stikhi ob Amerike*) [Стихи об Америке] (1925-1926), and more specifically “Brooklyn Bridge” (*Bruklinskii most*) [Бруклинский мост], which he composed during his trip to the United States. The Brooklyn Bridge is, of course, the famous hybrid cable-stayed/suspension bridge that connects the boroughs of Manhattan and Brooklyn by spanning the East River. Started in 1869 and completed fourteen years later in 1883, it is one of the oldest bridges in the United States and the first steel-wire suspension bridge ever constructed. It was originally called the New York and Brooklyn Bridge and the East River Bridge, but it was later dubbed the Brooklyn Bridge. Since opening, it has become an icon of New York City and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1964 and a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark in 1972.

112 Since the only two tunnels for vehicular traffic under the East River were constructed years after Pilnyak visited New York (the Queens-Midtown Tunnel opened in 1940, while the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel opened in 1950), the author is likely referring here to the East River Tunnels, four single-track railroad tunnels that extend from the eastern end of Pennsylvania Station underneath 32nd and 33rd Streets in Manhattan and cross the East River to Long Island City in Queens. The tunnels were built in the first decade of the twentieth century as part of the Pennsylvania Tunnel and Terminal Railroad, providing a connection between the Pennsylvania Railroad’s train station in New York City, Pennsylvania Station, and the railroad’s Sunnyside Yard. Work on the tunnels began in 1904 and was completed by 1909. The tunnels opened in 1910.

113 Pilnyak is referring here to the Holland Tunnel, a highway tunnel underneath the Hudson River between Manhattan and Jersey City, New Jersey. The tunnel was the first mechanically ventilated underwater vehicular tunnel in the world. Eighty-four fans, in four ventilation buildings, create a floor-to-ceiling air flow across the roadway at regular intervals, via systems of ducts beneath and above the roadway. A forced ventilation system is essential because of the poisonous carbon monoxide component of automobile exhaust, which constituted a far greater percentage of exhaust gases before catalytic converters became prevalent. The Holland Tunnel opened in 1927 as the first of two vehicular tunnels underneath the river, the other being the Lincoln Tunnel. The tunnel was originally known as the Hudson River Vehicular Tunnel (or the Canal Street Tunnel). It was renamed the Holland Tunnel in memory of Clifford Milburn Holland, the chief engineer, after his untimely death in October 1924, before the tunnel was opened. The innovative ventilation system was designed by Ole Singstad, who oversaw completion of the tunnel’s construction.
Pilnyak is referring here to the George Washington Bridge, a double-decked suspension bridge spanning the Hudson River between the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan in New York City and Fort Lee, New Jersey. Construction on the bridge began in October 1927 as a project of the Port of New York Authority. The bridge was dedicated on October 24, 1931, and opened to traffic the following day. Prior to and while under construction, the bridge was unofficially known as the “Hudson River Bridge.” The George Washington Bridge, with a span of 4,760 feet in total (including a main span of 3,500 feet), was the longest bridge span in the world at the time, at nearly double the length (1,850 feet) of the previous record holder, the Ambassador Bridge in Detroit. It held this title until the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937.

To denote that the motor car driver was a woman, Pilnyak here coins the word draiversha [драйверша], combing the Russian transliteration of the English word “driver” (draiver) with the Russian suffix -sha [sha], which is commonly added to an agentive noun to indicate that the agent is female rather than male.

In this instance, Pilnyak refers to their “chauffer” neither as shofer [шофер] nor as shofersha [шоферша], as Russian readers would normally expect, but rather as shofernitsa [шоферница], another new coinage, this one using another Russian suffix that can be attached to other agentive nouns to indicate that the agent is female, such as a taxicab driver (voditel’nitsa) [водительница], but not a motor car driver, which is the aforementioned shofersha [шоферша].

The identity of this writer (and his wife) is not specified, but it is likely that Pilnyak was driving in the California mountains with Upton Sinclair (1878-1968) and his second wife, Mary Craig Sinclair (1883-1961). The couple had moved to California in the 1920s, and were living in Pasadena at this time. They were involved with producing Sergei Eisenstein’s ill-fated film, Que Viva Mexico, during the time period when Pilnyak was visiting Hollywood.

Thomas Mayne Reid (1818-1883), was a Scots-Irish American novelist. “Captain” Reid wrote many adventure novels where the action takes place primarily in untamed settings: the American West, Mexico, South Africa, the Himalayas, and Jamaica. He was also very popular around the world. His tales of the American West captivated children everywhere, including Europe and Russia. Among his books, many of which were popular in translation in Poland and Russia, were The Rifle Rangers (1850), Scalp Hunters (1851), Boy Hunters (1853), War Trail (1851), Boy Tar (1859), and The Headless Horseman (1865-1866). Vladimir Nabokov recalled The Headless Horseman as a favorite adventure novel of his childhood years, a story that had given him “a vision of the prairies and the great open spaces and the overarching sky.”

James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) was a prolific and popular American writer of the early nineteenth century. His historical romances of frontier and Indian life in the early days of the new republic created a unique form of American literature. His best-known works are the five historical novels of the frontier period known as the Leatherstocking Tales. This series features the character Nathaniel “Natty” Bumppo, a resourceful
American woodsman at home with the Delaware Indians and their chief Chingachgook. Natty Bumppo was the hero in Cooper’s most famous novel, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826).

In an apparent slip, Pilnyak uses here the Russian “twenty-five-ruble” (dvadtsatirublevyi) [двадцатирублёвый], instead of the American “twenty-five-dollar” (dvadtsatidollarovyi) [двадцатидолларовый], as an adjective when characterizing these Ford automobiles by their price. He also attaches the diminutive suffix -ishko [-ышко] to the noun “Ford” (fordishko) [фордишко], adding a slightly disparaging shade of meaning to the word.

What Pilnyak describes here is called automatic (or mechanical) milking. Although automated milk extraction from dairy cattle developed rapidly in the twentieth century, development of a usable milking machine took several decades of trial and error. Some editors of late nineteenth-century dairy and agricultural publications acknowledged the need for a good milking machine, but they were dissatisfied with all the devices that were being offered. Others discouraged all attempts at machine milking, stating that it was unnatural or intrinsically injurious to the cow and that it would result in a poorer quality of milk and lower standards of dairy animals. The earliest devices for mechanical milking were tubes inserted in the teats to force open the sphincter muscle, thus allowing the milk to flow. Wooden tubes and feather quills, as well as more skillfully made tubes of pure silver, *gutta percha*, ivory, and bone, were used for this purpose. Catheter milking was blamed for various problems, such as the spread of disease, weakened sphincter muscles causing continuous dribbling, and injury to the teats. The earliest vacuum milkers used a large *gutta-percha* cup, fitting over the entire udder, that was connected to a hand pump. These devices, however, subjected the cow’s teats to constant vacuum, causing blood to pool there. The invention of the pulsator milker, which resulted in an intermittent (rather than constant) flow of milk, is what finally led to a workable milking machine.

In the United States, the “betrayer” (predatel’) [предатель] that Pilnyak is describing here is usually called a “Judas” goat. This is an animal trained to associate with sheep or cattle, leading them calmly to a specific destination. In stockyards, a Judas goat would lead sheep to slaughter, while its own life was spared. Judas goats were also used to lead other animals to specific pens and onto trucks. They have fallen out of use in recent times, but can still be found in various smaller slaughterhouses in some parts of the world, as well as in conservation projects. Cattle herders may use a Judas steer to serve the same purpose as a Judas goat. The technique, and the term, originated from cattle drives in the United States in the 1800s. The term itself is a reference, of course, to the biblical character Judas Iscariot, the disciple of Christ who is believed to have betrayed him to the Sanhedrin for thirty silver coins (Matthew 26:14, 26:47). His name has since become synonymous with betrayal or treason.

Pilnyak is referring here to the Woolworth Building, located at 233 Broadway in lower Manhattan, which was designed in the neo-Gothic style by architect Cass Gilbert and constructed between 1910 and 1912. On the evening when the building opened (April 24, 1913), President Woodrow Wilson turned the lights on by way of a button in Washington,
At its opening, the Woolworth Building stood 60 stories tall and had over 5,000 windows. As such, the Woolworth building topped the record set by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company Tower as the world’s tallest building. Given its resemblance to European Gothic cathedrals, the structure was called the “Cathedral of Commerce” by the Reverend S. Parkes Cadman in a booklet of the same title published in 1916. It remained the tallest building in the world until the construction of 40 Wall Street and the Chrysler Building in 1930. An example of an early U.S. skyscraper, the Woolworth Building remains today, more than a century after its construction, one of the 100 tallest buildings in the United States as well as one of the 30 tallest buildings in New York City. It has been a National Historic Landmark since 1966 and a New York City landmark since 1983.

Woolworth “five-and-dime” stores, which were begun in 1878, only added a twenty-cent line of merchandise in the spring of 1932. On November 13, 1935, the company’s directors decided to discontinue selling-price limits altogether.

The identity of this “semi-famous” (poluznamenitaiɛ) American actress, who was either Pilnyak’s “girlfriend” or simply a “female friend” (podrużka) of his while he was visiting the United States, is unclear. It could possibly be Regina Andrews Anderson (1901-1993), the African-American librarian, playwright, and actress whom Pilnyak later mentions as one of the Negro intellectuals he used to go visit in Harlem (she lived in Harlem but worked at a library in downtown NYC in 1931). In a letter he sent to Joe Freeman from Moscow, shortly following his return home from America, Pilnyak (who would soon get married for yet a third time) writes: “Call Ellen Weiner and have her search out Black Regina. When will Regina be coming to the U.S.S.R.? Bring her here with you! Tell her that if she comes, I will marry her. I’m completely serious. She and I will write plays together. She will teach me how. I love Regina very much . . . Come! Bring Regina with you!” Pilnyak’s letter of October 3, 1931 is published in one of Lazar Fleishman’s essays, “Joseph Freeman and Boris Pilnyak” (“Джозев Фримен и Борис Пильняк”) in the collection, From the History of Russian and Soviet Culture: Documents from the Hoover Institution (Маaterialy po istorii russkoi i sovetskoi kul’tury: Iz arkhiva Guverovskogo Instituta), Stanford Slavic Papers, Volume 5 (Stanford: Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, 1992), pp. 158-190. An English translation of that essay can be found at: https://scholars.unh.edu/faculty_pubs/790/

Pilnyak appears to be referring here to the flag-pole sitter, Joe (“Hold ‘Em”) Powers, who attracted publicity for sitting on the flagpole atop the Morrison Hotel in Chicago (637 feet above street level) for 16 days, 3 hours, and 27 minutes in July 1927. This stunt led to Powers becoming, in the words of one promoter at the time, the “World Champion Flagpole Sitter.” Another flag-pole sitter who gained a lot of publicity at the time was Alvin (“Shipwreck”) Kelly. The fad of flag-pole sitting seems to have died out in the late 1930s.

Pilnyak is referring here to dance marathons, competitions in which people dance or walk to music for an extended period of time. Dance marathons became popular in the United States during the Great Depression. Also known as endurance contests, dance marathons attracted people to compete as a way to achieve fame or win monetary prizes.
The popularity of dance marathons began in 1923 when a woman named Alma Cummings danced continuously for 27 hours with six different partners. After Cummings established her record, dance marathons became common in the United States. Initially, participants competed in order to break Cummings’s record, but later on people began to compete to win prizes, which could range from money to publicity. Dance marathons were a huge hit during the Great Depression as they provided contestants and spectators food, shelter, and the opportunity to earn cash prizes, at a time when many people needed a meal and free entertainment. The 1969 film, *They Shoot Horses, Don’t They?* (based on the 1935 novel of the same title written by Horace McCoy, who had served as a bouncer at several such marathons), popularized the idea and prompted students at several U.S. universities at the time of the film’s release to create charity dance marathons. Dance marathons could last anywhere from a few hours to several weeks.

128 Charles Augustus Lindbergh (1902-1974) was an American aviator, military officer, author, inventor, explorer, and environmental activist. In 1927, at age 25, he went from obscurity as a U.S. Air Mail pilot to instantaneous world fame by making a nonstop flight from New York to Paris alone in a single-engine monoplane, the Spirit of St. Louis. This was the first solo transatlantic flight and the first non-stop flight between North America and mainland Europe. Lindbergh, who was an officer in the U.S. Army Air Corps Reserve, received the United States’ highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor, for this feat. Lindbergh’s historic flight and instantaneous world fame led to tragedy, however. In March 1932, his infant son, Charles Jr., was kidnapped and murdered in what was widely called the “Crime of the Century.” By late 1935, the hysteria surrounding the case had driven the Lindbergh family into voluntary exile in Europe, from which they returned in 1939. Before the United States formally entered World War II, some people accused Lindbergh of being a fascist sympathizer. An advocate of non-interventionism, he supported the anti-war America First Committee, which opposed American aid to Britain in its war against Germany, and resigned his commission in the U.S. Army Air Forces in 1941 after President Franklin Roosevelt publicly rebuked him for his views. Nevertheless, he publicly supported the U.S. war effort after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and flew fifty combat missions in the Pacific Theater during World War II as a civilian consultant, although Roosevelt refused to reinstate his Air Corps colonel’s commission. In his later years, Lindbergh became a prolific prize-winning author, international explorer, inventor, and environmentalist.

129 The world record that Pilnyak is referring to here is the flight endurance record set in the summer of 1930 by two pilots (not one) in a flight that took place above Chicago (not New York). The pilots were two of the four Hunter brothers (Albert, John, Kenneth, and Walter) from rural Sparta, Illinois, who, after the early death of their father, worked as coal miners to support their family. But their hobby – motorcycle riding – led them to the career that would make the four brothers famous: aviation. After purchasing a plane in St. Louis in 1923, the Hunter brothers learned to fly. Along with several fellow aviators, they formed the “Hunter Flying Circus,” performing death-defying stunts in airshows while barnstorming across the Midwest. In 1929, John and Kenneth Hunter made their first attempt to break the world record for an endurance flight. After eleven consecutive days in the air, however, they were forced to land in heavy fog. The following summer, all four
brothers teamed up to attempt to break the record again. From June 11, 1930 to July 4, 1930, with John and Kenneth flying the “City of Chicago” and Albert and Walter piloting the supply plane, the Hunter Brothers managed to stay aloft for a record-breaking 553 hours and 41 minutes – approximately 23 consecutive days in the air. Their incredible feat brought them global attention and fame, including a movie contract with United Artists. Three of the four brothers, John, Kenneth, and Walter, pursued professional careers in the field of aviation after their world-record flight.

130 Pilnyak uses here the obsolete Russian word shtandart [штандарт], which means a “standard,” “flag,” “banner.” The “galloping” shtandart, as Milla Fedorova points out, is a reference to Khlestakov, the central character in Gogol’s The Inspector General (see endnote #56), who, when he gets completely carried away by his own embellished stories about life in St. Petersburg, utters: “The banner is galloping off” (shtandart skachet) [штандарт скачет]. “Pilniak invokes the phrase,” Fedorova explains, “in order to point to the American passion for patriotic ostentation as evidenced by America’s ubiquitous banners and other national symbols.” “Through this Gogolian allusion,” she adds, “Pilniak indicates that America is a country of slogans and stereotypes, obsessed with self-aggrandizement and mere display.” See Yankees in Petrograd, Bolsheviks in New York, p. 105.

131 The American War of Independence, also known as the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783), was a global war that began as a conflict between Great Britain and its Thirteen Colonies, which declared independence as the United States of America. After 1765, growing philosophical and political differences strained the relationship between Great Britain and its colonies. Following the Stamp Act, patriots protesting against taxation without representation escalated into boycotts, which culminated in the Sons of Liberty destroying a shipment of tea in Boston Harbor. Britain responded by closing Boston Harbor and passing a series of punitive measures against Massachusetts colony, which established a shadow government that wrested control of the countryside away from the British Crown. Twelve of the colonies formed a Continental Congress to coordinate their resistance, establishing committees and conventions that effectively seized power. British attempts to disarm the Massachusetts militia at Concord in April 1775 led to open combat. Militia forces then besieged Boston, forcing a British evacuation in March 1776, and the Continental Congress appointed George Washington to command the Continental Army. On July 2, 1776, the Continental Congress voted for independence, issuing its declaration on July 4th. American victories in 1777 at Trenton and Princeton, New Jersey, as well as at Saratoga, New York, led France to ally formally with the Americans and enter the war in 1778. The British mounted a “Southern Strategy,” led by General Cornwallis, that failed to turn the tide. In the fall of 1781, a Franco-American army led by the Comte de Rochambeau and General Washington besieged Cornwallis’s army at Yorktown, Virginia, and the British surrendered. In early 1782, the British Parliament voted to end all offensive operations in North America. On September 3, 1783, the belligerent parties signed the Treaty of Paris, in which Great Britain agreed to recognize the sovereignty of the United States and formally end the war.
The French Revolution was a period of far-reaching social and political upheaval in France that lasted from 1789 until 1799, and was partially carried forward by Napoleon during the later expansion of the French Empire. The French Revolution overthrew the monarchy, established a republic, experienced violent periods of political turmoil, and finally culminated in a dictatorship under Napoleon that rapidly brought many of its principles to Western Europe and beyond. Inspired by liberal and radical ideas, the French Revolution profoundly altered the course of modern history, triggering the global decline of absolute monarchies while replacing them with republics and liberal democracies. Through the Revolutionary Wars, it unleashed a wave of global conflicts that extended from the Caribbean to the Middle East. Historians widely regard the French Revolution as one of the most important events in human history. Pilnyak mentions that the streets of New Orleans are named after generals of the French Revolution. It would be more accurate, however, to say that the streets of New Orleans are named after a whole range of French historical figures and sites, including not only the Marquis de Lafayette and Napoleon himself (not to mention the locations of some of Napoleon’s celebrated military victories, such as Milan, Austerlitz, and Marengo), but also the royal house of the Bourbons, the Duke of Burgundy, the Prince de Conti, and numerous Catholic saints.

Pilnyak is referring here to *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, an Italian-language daily newspaper in the United States that was published in New York City from 1880 to 1988, when it was shut down due to a union dispute. In the early twentieth century, *Il Progresso* was the most popular of New York’s Italian newspapers, selling anywhere from 90,000 to 100,000 copies every day. Founded in 1879 by Carlo Barsotti, *Il Progresso* was a bully pulpit for raising funds for monuments by public subscription in the city of New York. From 1888 to 1921, it promoted monuments to Giuseppe Garibaldi, Christopher Columbus, Giuseppe Verdi, Giovanni da Verrazano, and Dante. Generosa Pope assumed the direction of the newspaper in 1928, doubling its circulation to 200,000 in New York City, thus making it the largest Italian-language daily in the country.

Theodore Herman Dreiser (1871-1945) was an American novelist and journalist of the naturalist school who was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1930. His best-known novels include *Sister Carrie* (1900) and *An American Tragedy* (1925). A committed socialist, Dreiser wrote several works of nonfiction on political issues. These included *Dreiser Looks at Russia* (1928), the result of his 1927 trip to the Soviet Union, and two books that present a critical perspective on capitalist America, *Tragic America* (1931) and *America Is Worth Saving* (1941). He praised the Soviet Union under Stalin during the Great Terror and the non-aggression pact with Hitler. Dreiser joined the Communist Party U.S.A. in August 1945. Pilnyak notes in his travelogue that he met with Dreiser on several occasions during his visit to the United States in 1931. He also informed Joe Freeman a year later (in a letter he wrote to him on May 4, 1932), that he would like to have Dreiser write the Foreword to the forthcoming English-language translation of his American travelogue, *O’kei*. See Natal’ia Griakalova, “Boris Pilnyak’s Letters from the East: Towards Pilnyak’s Stay in Japan in 1932” (“Boris Pil’niak. Pis’ma s vostoka. K prebyvaniiu B. Pil’niaka v Iaponii v 1932 godu”), *Russkaia literatura*, No. 3 (2002): 180.
Saint Patrick’s Day, or the Feast of Saint Patrick, is a cultural and religious celebration held on March 17th, the traditional date marking the death of Saint Patrick (c. AD 385-461), a fifth-century Christian missionary and bishop who is the foremost patron saint of Ireland. According to tradition, Patrick returned to Ireland to convert the pagan Irish to Christianity. Saint Patrick’s Day was made an official Christian feast day in the early seventeenth century. The day commemorates Saint Patrick and the arrival of Christianity in Ireland, and celebrates the heritage and culture of the Irish in general. Celebrations generally involve public parades and festivals, cèilidhs (Irish traditional music sessions), and the wearing of green attire or shamrocks. Christians who belong to liturgical denominations also attend church services and historically the Lenten restrictions on eating and drinking alcohol were lifted for the day, which has encouraged and propagated the holiday’s tradition of alcohol consumption. Saint Patrick’s Day is celebrated in more countries than any other national festival. Modern celebrations have been greatly influenced by those of the Irish diaspora around the world, particularly those that developed in North America. Until the late twentieth century, St Patrick’s Day was often a bigger celebration among the diaspora than it was in Ireland itself. In recent years, there has been criticism of Saint Patrick’s Day celebrations for having become too commercialized and for fostering negative stereotypes of the Irish.

Pilnyak uses here the Russian adjective krupnyi [крупный] (“large,” “big,” “prominent,” “important,” “serious”) to characterize the bourgeoisie, seeking to contrast the authentic, bona fide bourgeoisie – in Marxist terms – with the “petit” bourgeoisie.

The Bolshaia Moskovskaia Hotel [Большая Московская гостиница] (literally, the “Large Moscow Hotel”), built in 1878, was located in the very heart of downtown Moscow, at the intersection of Teatralny Square and Voskresensky Square. During the early Soviet period, it was called the “Grand Hotel” (Grand-otel’ [Гранд-отель]). It was demolished in 1968.

“Eskimo Pie” is a chocolate-covered vanilla ice cream bar, wrapped in foil, that is currently marketed by Dreyer’s, a division of Froneri. In June 2020, Dreyer’s announced that it would change the brand, saying that Eskimo is considered a derogatory term. The popular ice cream bar was invented by a Danish immigrant, Christian Kent Nelson (1893–1992), a schoolteacher and candy store owner, who claimed to have received the inspiration for the ice cream bar in 1920 in the town of Onawa, Iowa, when a boy in his store was unable to decide whether to spend his money on ice cream or a chocolate bar. After experimenting with different ways to adhere melted chocolate to bricks of ice cream, Nelson began selling his invention, under the name “I-Scream-Bars.” In 1921, he filed for a patent, and secured an agreement with a local chocolate producer, Russell C. Stover, to mass-produce them under the new trademarked name “Eskimo Pie” (a name suggested by Mrs. Stover), and to create the Eskimo Pie Corporation.

Nietzscheanism is the name given to the philosophical theories of the nineteenth-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), who advocated the overcoming of both a threatening nihilism and a slave morality (exemplified for him in historical Christianity) through a reevaluation of all values on the basis of a will to power, which he saw as the chief motivating force of both the individual and society. This will to power is
epitomized in Nietzsche’s doctrine of the superman and the idea of the eternal recurrence of all things. Pilnyak uses this term throughout his narrative as a tag for the myth of a rugged individualism that purportedly lies at the heart of American capitalist culture.

Pilnyak uses here a word of his own coinage, *mei-moneishchik* [мэй-монейщик], transliterating (imperfectly) the American expression, “ma(k)e money,” and then adding the agentive noun ending *-shchik* [-щик], which is used to denote the person who performs a certain action (like the English suffix –er): e.g., *nastroishchik* [настройщик] (a tuner), *otsenshchik* [оценщик] (an appraiser), etc. His newly coined word is perhaps best translated here, therefore, as “money-maker.” It is possible that with this Russianized version of the American phrase, “make money” (*meik monei*) [мэйк моней], Pilnyak is alluding here to Vladimir Mayakovsky’s poem “Broadway” (Brodvei) [Бродвей] from his 1925 verse cycle, *Poems About America* (*Stikhi ob Amerike*) [Стихи об Америке], where the poet observes that New Yorkers slow down the pace of their gum chewing only long enough to ask one another, “Make [any] money?” (*meik monei?*) [мэйк моней?]. Mayakovsky apparently believed (mistakenly) that Americans, whom he considered to be chronically obsessed with the almighty dollar, used this phrase as a common greeting.

In the original version of Pilnyak’s novel, published in 1933 by the Federatsiia publishing house, this name is rendered as *Orissei Vol’ter* [Ориссей Вольтер]. In the recent six-volume edition of Pilnyak’s collected works, however, this typo has been corrected and the name is now changed to *Odissei Vol’ter* [Одиссей Вольтер], that is, “Odysseus Voltaire.” See Boris Pil’niak, *Collected Works in Six Volumes* (*Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh*) [Собрание сочинений в шести томах] Moscow: Terra-Knizhnyi Klub, 2003), Volume 5, p. 138.

Puritanism is the name given to the principles and practices of members of a group of English Reformed Protestants (“Puritans”) in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who sought to “purify” the Church of England from its “Catholic” practices, maintaining that the Church of England was only partially reformed. Puritanism, in this sense, was founded as an activist movement within the Church of England. Puritanism played a significant role in English history during the first half of the seventeenth century. Puritans were blocked from changing the established church from within and were severely restricted in England by laws controlling the practice of religion. Their beliefs, however, were transported by the emigration of congregations to the Netherlands, and later to New England in North America. Puritans by definition were dissatisfied with the limited extent of the English Reformation and with the Church of England’s tolerance of practices that they associated with the Catholic Church. They formed (and identified with) various religious groups advocating greater purity of worship and doctrine, as well as personal and group piety. The Puritans were never a formally defined sect or religious division within Protestantism, and the term “Puritan” itself was rarely used to describe people after the turn of the eighteenth century. Some Puritan ideals became incorporated into the Church of England, such as the formal rejection of Roman Catholicism; some were absorbed into the many Protestant denominations that emerged in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in the Americas and Britain. The Congregationalist Churches, widely considered to be a part of the Reformed tradition, are descended from the Puritans.
Aimée Semple McPherson (1890-1944), also known as “Sister Aimée” (or simply “The Sister”), was a popular Canadian-American Pentecostal evangelist and media celebrity in the 1920s and 1930s. The founder of the Foursquare Church, McPherson was a pioneer in the use of modern media, using radio to draw upon the growing appeal of popular entertainment in the United States. In her day, she was the most publicized Christian evangelist in America, conducting public faith healing demonstrations before large crowds. McPherson’s preaching style exerted a major influence on Charismatic Christianity in the twentieth century.

Pilnyak is referring here to the Sionskii pesennik stoletnego perioda. Khristianskoi Religii Molokan Dukhovnykh Prygunov v Amerike [Сионский песенник столетного периода. Христианской Религии Молокан Духовных Прыгунов в Америке] (Los Angeles, 1930). The “Milk-Drinkers” (Molokane) were members of one of the underground sects that arose in Russia as a consequence of the late seventeenth-century “schism” (raskol) that took place within the Russian Orthodox Church, when certain so-called Old Believers refused to accept some of the liturgical reforms enacted by Patriarch Nikon in 1653. Their religious traditions (especially the consumption of dairy products during periods of Christian fasting) did not conform to those of the Russian Orthodox Church. Members of other sects, such as the “Icon-Wrestlers” (Ikonobortsy) [Иконоборцы], discarded these practices in the pursuit of individual approaches to scripture. In general, Old Believers rejected the institutionalized formalism of Orthodoxy in favor of more emphasis on “original Christianity,” as they understood it. They emphasized spirituality and spiritual practice; such sacramental practices as water baptism were permitted only as tangible signs and symbols of more important spiritual truths. The “Milk-Drinkers” had some practices similar to the European Quakers and Mennonites, such as pacifism, communal organization, spiritual meetings, and sub-groupings. They arose in Russia together with such sectarian as the “Spirit-Wrestlers” (Dukhobortsy) [Духоборцы] and “Sabbatarians” (Subbotniki) [Субботники] and similar movements of “Spiritual Christianity.” The “Jumpers” (Pryguny) [Прыгуны] were members of yet another charismatic sectarian group in early modern Russia. As their name suggests, they were known for jumping with the Holy Spirit. They may have been influenced in south Ukraine by some neighboring German Protestants who were called “Springers” or “Jumpers” (Heufers). The “Jumpers” believed that they were visited by a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. This new small sect began a revival with intense zeal, reporting miracles that purportedly rivaled those of Christ’s apostles. During the early twentieth century, about 2,000 “Jumpers” emigrated to the United States, first settling on the east side of Los Angeles.

Pilnyak is referring here to a line in Nikolai Gogol’s “The Story of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarrelled with Ivan Nikiforovich” (Povest’ o tom, kak possorilsia Ivan Ivanovich s Ivanom Nikiforovichem) [Повесть о том, как поссорился Иван Иванович с Иваном Никифоровичем] (1835). In this story, the narrator expresses surprise at “an astonishing puddle” (udivitel’naia luzha) [удивительная лужа], reportedly the only one of its kind that the reader is likely ever to see!
For background information on the Russian religious sectarians known as the “Jumpers” (Priguny) [Пригуны], see endnote #144.

Early in his life, Aleksandr Yakovlevich Brailovskii (1884-1958), who hailed from Rostov-on-Don, was a professional revolutionary. Twice he was condemned to death by the tsarist government for his revolutionary activities and twice he escaped captivity. After emigrating to Europe following the 1905 revolution, he lived for a long time in Italy and France. He served in the French Foreign Legion during the First World War before emigrating to the United States in 1917. Although he was suspected of having taken part in the terrorist bombing on Wall Street that occurred on September 16, 1920, Brailovskii seems largely to have abandoned his revolutionary radicalism during the 1920s, a time when he worked mainly as a journalist and editor for Russian-language publications, such as the American journals New World (Novy Mir) [Новый мир] and Worker and Peasant (Rabochii i Krest’ianin) [Рабочий и Крестьянин] and the newspaper Russian Voice (Russkii Golos) [Русский Голос]. It is not entirely clear why Brailovskii happened to be in Los Angeles during the summer of 1931, nor is it clear where and how he met Pilnyak. Most likely their relationship was connected in some way with the newspaper Russkii Golos, which would later publish excerpts from Pilnyak’s O’kei serially in the spring of 1932.

The old man addresses Ivan Karpovich here as his “light” – as “Ivan svet [свет] Karpovich,” much as one might say affectionately, respectfully, even worshipfully in English (with a somewhat poetic, folkloric, and archaic use of the language): you are the “light of my life.”

As Pilnyak explains to the reader, the old man here speaks a fractured brand of Russian, mixing English words with Russian ones (and/or substituting English words for Russian ones): e.g., kar [кар] instead of mashina [машина] (for “car”) and spikat´ [спикать] instead of govorit´ [говорить] (for “speak”).

The old woman’s fractured brand of Russian includes the mispronunciation of Russian words: e.g., she says khvakel [хвакел] instead of fakel [факел] (“torch”) and nekhftianoi [нефтяной] instead of neftianoj [нефтяной] (“petroleum”).

Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin (1875-1946), referred to familiarly by Soviet citizens as “Kalinych,” was a Bolshevik revolutionary and Marxist-Leninist functionary. He served as head of state of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and later as head of state of the Soviet Union from 1919 to 1946. In 1926, he became a member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Kalinin was one of comparatively few members of Stalin’s inner circle springing from peasant origins. His lowly social origins were widely publicized in the official press, which habitually referred to Kalinin as the “All-Union village elder,” invoking a term (starosta) [срамота] that harkens back to the village commune, in conjunction with his role as titular head of state. Kalinin’s lowly social origins also help to explain why someone like the “canonic” Russian peasant who approaches Pilnyak after the Pryguny prayer service would feel comfortable sending appeals to the one Soviet government official who closely resembles a “village elder.”
152 Pilnyak appears to be using the adjective “canonic” (канонный) here the way an American might today use the adjective “classic” (that is, “quintessential,” “archetypal,” “typical”).

153 For background information on the Russian religious sectarians known as the “Milk Drinkers” (Молокане), see endnote #144.

154 For background information on the Puritans and Puritanism, see endnote #142.

155 For background information on Aimée McPherson, see endnote #143.

156 Albert Lewin (1894-1968) was an American film director, producer, and screenwriter. He worked as the drama and film critic for the Jewish Tribune until the early 1920s, when he went to Hollywood to become a reader for Samuel Goldwyn. Lewin later worked as a script clerk for directors King Vidor and Victor Sjöström before becoming a screenwriter at MGM in 1924. Lewin was appointed head of the studio’s script department and by the late 1920s was Irving Thalberg’s personal assistant and closest associate. Nominally credited as an associate producer, Lewin produced several of MGM’s most important films of the 1930s. After Thalberg’s death, Lewin joined Paramount as a producer in 1937, where he remained until 1941. Notable producing credits during this period include True Confession (1937), Spawn of the North (1938), Zaza (1939), and So Ends Our Night (1941). In 1942, Lewin began to direct. He made six films, writing all of them and producing several himself. As a director and writer, he showed literary and cultural aspirations in the selection and treatment of his themes.

157 Souteneur is the polite (French) word for a “pimp,” that is, “a man who protects a prostitute and lives off her earnings.” It derives from the French verb soutenir (“to protect,” “to sustain”). Pilnyak uses here the Russian loan word sutener.

158 For background information on the significance of this phrase (“The banner is galloping off”), see endnote #130.

159 Pilnyak invents here the compound adjective rittsevo-bozhestvennyi, literally, “Ritz-divine,” to convey how Aimée McPherson characterized Parisian mores and manners.

160 Igor Severianin, whose real name was Igor Vasilyevich Lotaryov (1887-1941), was a Russian poet who presided over the circle of so-called Ego-Futurists in the early part of the twentieth century. In 1913, Severianin brought out a collection of poems titled “The Cup of Thunder” (Громокипящий кубок), with a preface written by the well-known Symbolist poet, Fyodor Sologub. The contemporary critic D. S. Mirsky characterized the poet’s artistic debut as “the moment when vulgarity claimed a place on Parnassus.” Introducing himself to readers with a bold proclamation (“I am Igor Severianin, a genius!”), the poet soon gained a cult following in Russia. His poems, which introduced such exotic images as “ice cream of lilacs” and “pineapples in champagne,”
were intended to overwhelm the bourgeois audience with a riot of colors and with the
glamor associated with high society life. The poet seems to have cultivated this exoticism
in his own personal life (and in his public image) as well. He is said to have “captured the
popular imagination and reached stardom with his slick pomaded hair parted in the middle;
his melancholy, darkly circled eyes; his impeccable tails; and an ever-present lily in his
hands.” The rhetorical question that Pilnyak poses here about Aimée McPherson (“What is
this!? Igor Severianin in a skirt!?”) alludes to the characterization that was once made of
Manya Yeltsova, the heroine of The Keys to Happiness (Kliuchi schast’ia) [Ключи счастья], 1908-1913), a lengthy boulevard novel by the turn-of-the-century Russian writer
Anastasya Verbitskaya (1861-1928). One critic characterized Verbitskaya’s passionate
heroine as “Sanin in a skirt,” referring to the hedonistic, lascivious male hero of Mikhail
Artsybashev’s Sanin [Санин] (1907), a novel that was banned due to its alleged
pornographic content. By characterizing Aimée McPherson as “Igor Severianin in a skirt,”
Pilnyak appears to be suggesting that the popular female evangelist is mimicking the
Russian poet’s exoticism, expressed both in his art and in his public persona. At the same
time, Pilnyak’s unflattering characterization of Aimée McPherson also links her with two
well-known literary characters (Artsybashev’s Vladimir Sanin and Verbitskaya’s Manya
Yeltsova), both of whom are closely associated in the minds of Russian readers with
amoralism, hedonism, and narcissism.

161 Peretz Hirshbein (1880-1948) was a Yiddish-language playwright, novelist, journalist,
travel writer, and theater director. Because his work focused more on mood than plot, he
became known as the “Yiddish Maeterlinck.” His work as a playwright and as the founder
of his own short-lived but influential troupe of Jewish actors in Odessa in 1908-1910 laid
much of the groundwork for the second golden age of Yiddish theater that began shortly
after the end of World War I. The dialogue of his plays is consistently vivid, terse, and
naturalistic. Unusually for a Yiddish playwright, most of his works have pastoral settings:
he had grown up the son of a miller, and he made several attempts at farming. He traveled
extensively during his lifetime, visiting locales in South America, Asia, Europe, Japan,
China, India, Australia, etc. Pilnyak, as he himself explains here, first became acquainted
with Peretz Hirshbein while visiting Japan in 1926 (the two men, along with their wives,
were guests staying in the same hotel for a few days).

162 “The Deer City Nara” (Oleinii gorod Nara) [Олеийний город Нара] is Pilnyak’s account
of the three-day visit he made in 1926 to Nara, the Japanese city that is famous for
maintaining a park where hundreds of deer (they are considered sacred creatures) are
allowed to roam freely. At the very beginning of this brief three-day visit, Pilnyak became
acquainted with Peretz Hirshbein and his wife, who were staying at the same hotel. The
two couples (Pilnyak was traveling with his second wife, the actress Olga Sergeyevna
Shcherbinovskaia) spent nearly all of their time in Nara together. The story was published
in Novyi Mir, No. 3 (1927): 58-76.

163 Komsomol is the acronym for the “Young Communist League” (Kommunisticheskii
soiuz molodyozhi) [Коммунистический союз молодёжи], a shortened version of the
organization’s official name: the “All-Union Leninist Young Communist League
(Vsesoiuznyi leninskii kommunisticheskii soiuz molodyozhi) [Всесоюзный ленинский
коммунистический союз молодёжи]. This was a political youth organization in the Soviet Union. It is sometimes described as the youth division of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), although it was officially independent.

164 Although the English word “Jewry” is generally used to indicate Jews collectively, the word in its original historical meaning designated the Jewish quarter – or “ghetto” – within a particular town or city. Pilnyak here uses the Russian loan word for “ghetto” (гетто), which translates back into English as either “Jewry” (its collective meaning) or “Jewish ghetto” (its historical meaning).

165 For background information on the significance of this phrase (“The banner is galloping off”), see endnote #130.

166 Pilnyak is referring here to St. Mark’s Church-on-the-Bowery, located in the East Village neighborhood of lower Manhattan. The property has been the site of continuous Christian worship for more than three and a half centuries. Indeed, it is the second-oldest church building in Manhattan. While the nineteenth century saw St. Mark’s Church grow through its many construction projects, the twentieth century was marked by community service and cultural expansion. William Guthrie, who served as Rector from 1911 to 1937, was known to incorporate Native American, Hindu, Buddhist, and Bahá’í ceremonies as well as guest speakers – from Isadora Duncan and William Carlos Williams to Kahlil Gibran and Edna St. Vincent Millet – into church services. A fervid admirer of the poetry of William Blake and Walt Whitman, Guthrie introduced various elements of American metaphysical religion as well as pagan Christianity into the services. He wrote passionately in defense of dance as a spiritual art form, arguing that dance was part of sacred ritual and that the beauty of dance was the very essence of religion. Beginning in 1920, Guthrie began to include dance along with chanted poetry in his special afternoon services, and some of the performances became a regular part of the church’s liturgical cycle. “The Pageant in Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary,” first staged in 1921 and subsequently performed every year for over a decade, was probably the best-known of these services. To celebrate the March 25th Feast of the Annunciation, this liturgy dramatized the angel Gabriel’s announcement to Mary that she was to become the mother of Christ. The 1922 version of the service began with hymns, Guthrie’s recitation of a poem by Henry Adams, titled “Prayer to the Virgin of Chartres,” and a choir performance of an “anthem on the Annunciation,” composed by the rector himself. The dance portion of the service was titled “Ritual Dance of the Della Robbia Annunciation.” It featured five Barnard College dance students, young women draped in flowing white robes and illuminated by blue spotlights. Although Guthrie argued that the dancing at his church was slow and graceful, not crude, ecstatic, vulgar or frenzied, reporters preferred to depict their own lurid scenes. “The movements of the participants only faintly suggested flesh beneath the long white silken flowing robes,” Guthrie wrote in defense of the performance, “that same suggestion which one receives from Fra Angelico angels moving in the fields of God.” Critics, however, complained of the “bare legs, bare knees, and bare hips” exposed by the female dancers. For more details about William Guthrie’s innovations as an Episcopal minister at St. Mark’s, see Kimberly Nichols, “The Brothers Guthrie: Pagan Christianity of the Early 20th Century,” Newtopia Magazine (April 16, 2013):
“Bootlegging,” otherwise known as “rum-running,” is the illegal business of transporting (smuggling) alcoholic beverages where such transportation is forbidden by law. Smuggling is usually done to circumvent taxation or prohibition laws within a particular jurisdiction. The term “rum-running” is more commonly applied to smuggling over water; “bootlegging” is applied to smuggling over land. It is believed that the term “bootlegging” originated during the American Civil War, when soldiers would sneak liquor into army camps by concealing pint bottles within their boots or beneath their trouser legs. The term was popularized when thousands of city dwellers would sell liquor from flasks they kept in their boot leg all across major cities and rural areas. The term “rum-running,” on the other hand, most likely originated at the start of Prohibition in the United States (1920–1933), when ships from Bimini in the western Bahamas transported cheap Caribbean rum to Florida speakeasies. But rum’s cheapness made it a low-profit item for the rum-runners, and they soon moved on to smuggling Canadian whiskey, French champagne, and English gin to major cities, such as New York, Boston, and Chicago, where prices ran high.

Literally, here, “in power” (в силе).

This passage comes from Pilnyak’s first novel, The Naked Year (Golyi god) [Голый год] (1921).

For background information on Vladimir Tatlin, the Soviet painter and architect, see endnote #55.

Babylon was a key kingdom in ancient Mesopotamia. The city was built upon the Euphrates River and divided in equal parts along its left and right banks, with steep embankments to contain the river’s seasonal floods. Babylon was originally a small Akkadian city dating from the period of the Akkadian Empire (c. 2300 BC), but it grew over the centuries to become the capital of the Neo-Babylonian Empire from 609 to 539 BC. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It has been estimated that Babylon was the largest city in the world from circa 1770 to 1670 BC and again from circa 612 to 320 BC. It was perhaps the first city in the world to reach a population above 200,000. Before modern archaeological excavations in Mesopotamia, the appearance of Babylon was largely a mystery, and was typically envisioned by Western artists as a hybrid between ancient Egyptian, classical Greek, and contemporary Ottoman cultures. Babylon often figures in the Jewish and Christian traditions as an oppressive force against which righteous believers must struggle (the Tower of Babel, the destruction of Jerusalem, the Babylonian captivity, etc.) and is sometimes linked with Lucifer. Nebuchadnezzar appears as the foremost ruler in this narrative. The city has also been personified by the “Whore of Babylon,” riding on a scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns, and drunk on the blood of the righteous. Some scholars of apocalyptic literature believe this New Testament “Babylon” to be a dysphemism for the Roman Empire.
Park Avenue is a wide New York City boulevard that carries northbound and southbound traffic in the borough of Manhattan. For most of the road’s length in Manhattan, it runs parallel to Madison Avenue to the west and Lexington Avenue to the east. As Park Avenue enters Midtown, north of Grand Central Terminal, it is distinguished by many glass-box skyscrapers that serve as the headquarters for corporations and investment banks such as Société Générale, J.P. Morgan Chase, UBS, Citigroup, Colgate-Palmolive, and MetLife. In the 1920s, the portion of Park Avenue from Grand Central Terminal to 96th Street saw extensive apartment building construction. This long stretch of the avenue contains some of the most expensive real estate in the world. Real estate at 740 Park Avenue, for example, sells for several thousand dollars per square foot. In the PBS documentary, Park Avenue: Money, Power and the American Dream (2012), American documentary film director and producer Alex Gibney sheds light on the gap between the impoverished people living on Park Avenue in the South Bronx and the extremely wealthy people living at 740 Park Avenue in Manhattan.

The Bowery is a street and a neighborhood in the southern portion of the New York City borough of Manhattan. Leading to the Post Road, the main route to Boston, the Bowery for many years rivaled Broadway as a thoroughfare; as late as the early nineteenth century, it was still the second principal street of the city and rivalled Fifth Avenue as an address. By the time of the Civil War, however, the area had begun its slide from respectability. The mansions and shops in the Bowery had given way to low-brow concert halls, brothels, German beer gardens, pawn shops, and flophouses. The Bowery, which marked the eastern border of the “Five Points” slum, had also become the turf of one of America’s earliest street gangs, the nativist Bowery Boys. In the spirit of social reform, the first YMCA opened on the Bowery in 1873. Another notable religious and social welfare institution established there during this period was the Bowery Mission, which was founded in 1880. By the 1890s, the Bowery had become a center for prostitution and sleazy bars; its dark streets, as one journalist noted in 1919, were filled with “employment agencies, cheap clothing and knickknack stores, cheap moving-picture shows, cheap lodging-houses, cheap eating-houses, cheap saloons.” In the 1920s and 1930s, the Bowery became a highly impoverished area, and from the 1940s through the 1970s, it was known as New York City’s “Skid Row,” notable for its “Bowery Bums” (disaffiliated alcoholics and homeless persons). The vagrant population of the Bowery declined after the 1970s, however, in part because of the city’s effort to disperse it, and since the 1990s the entire Lower East Side has been reviving, with gentrification contributing to ongoing change along the Bowery, which is now dotted with a number of high-rise condominium buildings and luxury apartment complexes.

Pilnyak is referring here to the scene in his 1921 novel, The Naked Year (Golyi god) [Голый год], where he describes the beauty of an old woman dug up out of an ancient burial mound during an archeological excavation. He quotes from that scene and discusses it at the beginning of Chapter 18.

Lumpenproletariat is a term that was originally coined by Karl Marx to describe the layer of the working class that is unlikely ever to achieve class consciousness and is
therefore lost to socially useful production, of no use to the revolutionary struggle, and perhaps even an impediment to the realization of a classless society. The term is derived from the German word *Lumpen*, which literally means “miscreant” as well as “rag.” Marxists generally understand the *lumpenproletariat* to be the class of outcast, degenerated, and submerged elements that make up a section of the population of industrial centers. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852), Marx gives the following description of the *lumpenproletariat*: “Alongside decayed roués with dubious means of subsistence and of dubious origin, alongside ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeoisie, were vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, mountebanks, *lazzaroni*, pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, *maquereaux*, brothel keepers, porters, *litterati*, organ grinders, rag-pickers, knife grinders, tinkers, beggars – in short, the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass, thrown hither and thither, which the French call *la bohème*.”

Pilnyak is referring here to Maksim Gorky (Aleksei Maksimovich Peshkov) (1868-1936), the Russian and Soviet writer who is considered the founder of the Socialist Realist literary method that became the predominant form of approved art in the Soviet Union beginning in 1934. A political activist in pre-revolutionary Russia, Gorky was connected with the emerging Marxist social-democratic movement, publicly opposing the tsarist regime and for a time closely associating himself with Vladimir Lenin and the Bolshevik wing of the Communist Party. For a significant part of his life, he was exiled from Russia and later the Soviet Union. In 1932, he returned to the U.S.S.R. at the personal invitation of Joseph Stalin, and he died there in June 1936. Before achieving success as a writer, Gorky frequently changed jobs and roamed across the Russian empire, accumulating impressions that would later influence his writing. One of Gorky's most famous works was the play, *The Lower Depths (Na dne)* [На дне], subtitled “Scenes from Russian Life,” which depicts a group of impoverished Russians living in a shelter near the Volga River. Staged initially at the Moscow Art Theater in 1902, under the direction of Konstantin Stanislavsky, Gorky’s play has been recognized as exerting an important influence on the American playwright Eugene O’Neil, as evidenced by his 1946 drama *The Iceman Cometh*. Pilnyak likely has *The Lower Depths* specifically in mind when he speaks here of how tramps and other *lumpenproletarian* types are portrayed so memorably in Gorky’s works.

The Salvation Army is a Protestant Christian church and an international charitable organization, founded in London in 1865, that is structured in a quasi-military fashion. Its founders, Catherine and William Booth, sought to bring salvation to the poor, destitute, and hungry by meeting both their “physical and spiritual needs.” It is currently present in 127 countries, running charity shops, operating shelters for the homeless, and providing disaster relief and humanitarian aid to developing countries. The Salvation Army’s doctrine is typical of evangelical Protestant denominations: its stated purposes are “the advancement of the Christian religion . . . of education, the relief of poverty, and other charitable objects beneficial to society or the community of mankind as a whole.” During the Great Depression, the Salvation Army was particularly active. In cities and towns all across America, thousands of people would line up outside their missions, which distributed food for the jobless and provided shelter for the homeless. In January 1932, for example, the
Salvation Army fed and clothed 12,000 unemployed marchers after President Herbert Hoover had turned them away during a jobless demonstration in Washington, D.C.

Mott Street is a narrow but busy thoroughfare that runs in a north-south direction in Manhattan. Specifically, it runs from Chatham Square in the south to Bleecker Street in the north. Mott Street is regarded as Chinatown’s unofficial “Main Street.”

The so-called Negro question (негритянский вопрос) arose in mid-nineteenth-century Europe, sparked by the publication of Thomas Carlyle’s essay, “Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question” (1849), which features a fictitious speaker who makes various controversial points, ranging from insults about the appearance and intelligence of Black Africans to radical alternative solutions to the slavery problem. Carlyle’s essay, which met with widespread disapproval in liberal circles, prompted an angry rebuttal from John Stuart Mill in his essay, “The Negro Question” (1850). As one contemporary critic noted, Mill argues that “what Carlyle takes as the distinctive and self-evidently inferior ‘nature’ of the negro is in fact the result of the historical circumstances of subjection under which that character has been formed, and it is the distinctive mark of the modern age to be bent on mitigating or abolishing such subjection.” The “Negro Question” also attracted the attention of early twentieth-century Marxists, as evidenced by the “discussion” that took place in Prinkipo, Turkey, in 1933, between Leon Trotsky and Arne Swabeck on the topic of “The Negro Question in America.”

The famous Pryvoz Market, located at 14 Pryvozna Street, is the largest food market in Odessa, Ukraine. It originated in 1827, when wares were sold from the back of horse-driven carts. The market was a large area where carts with goods that were sold at the local bazaar stopped. It was a rather dirty, unpaved area without capital buildings, and there was no system of weights and measures, which was standard in the markets of that time. Privoz adjoined the Stary [Old] Bazaar (also called the Volny [Free] Market), the first bazaar in Odessa. The market was burned down (due to an outbreak of the plague) and rebuilt in 1902. In 1904, the Fruit Passage was added. Designed by the famous city architect Fyodor Pavlovich Nesturkh, the Passage provided covered shopping galleries with arched entrances. In 2007, a shopping center, called “New Privoz,” was built. Odessa’s central market is currently being restored and modified again, but it has not lost any of its color and remains a place where not only is food bought and sold, but also the latest news is exchanged.

Pilnyak characterizes the poor millionaire’s mustache as being “trimmed in a Nietzschean-MacDonald fashion” (подстриженные ницшеанско-макдоналдьовски). This means, presumably, that his mustache was worn the same way that the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and British Prime Minister James Ramsay MacDonald (1866-1937) wore theirs: namely, thick, bushy, and dropping over the mouth (the so-called walrus or handlebar mustache). Stalin, incidentally, wore his mustache this way.

For background information on Nietzscheanism (and how Pilnyak uses this term throughout the narrative as a tag for rugged American individualism), see endnote #139.
Harry Reichenbach (1882–1931) was a U.S. press agent and publicist who dreamed up sensational publicity stunts to promote films. He worked both for actors (as an agent) and for the studios (as a promoter). He was one of the founding members of the Associated Motion Picture Advertisers. Among his first jobs was to promote a woman, called “Sober Sue,” who never smiled. He got her a contract at the Victoria Theater on Broadway and made them offer $1000 to any New York comedian who could make her laugh. Actually, the woman had Mobius syndrome (paralyzed face muscles), so she was incapable of laughter. Between 1914 and 1916, Reichenbach served as publicity director for various motion picture companies, but then, in December 1916, he founded his own public relations company. In some of his publicity stunts, Reichenbach would stage fake kidnappings of actresses set to appear in his films. One attempt involved crossing the border into Mexico, which resulted in President Woodrow Wilson writing an angry letter to Reichenbach asking him to stop. His 1931 book, *Phantom Fame*, written with David Freeman, was the basis for the 1932 film *The Half-Naked Truth*. Harry Reichenbach died on July 4, 1931.

Pilnyak plays here upon the phonetic affinities between two Russian words: the archaic noun *shtandart* (“banner,” “flag”) and the current noun *standart* (“standard,” “norm”).

For a brief description of Nietzsche and Nietzscheanism, see endnote #139.

One of the main “legends” about Abraham Lincoln that Pilnyak is alluding to here is the “rags to riches” myth in American culture and history: the belief that any person, through hard work and ingenuity, can rise from poverty to wealth (and, in many cases, from absolute obscurity to the heights of fame). This is a common archetype found in American literature and popular culture, exemplified most famously in the writings of Horatio Alger, Jr. (1832-1899), the prolific nineteenth-century writer who is best known for his many young adult novels about impoverished boys and their rise from humble backgrounds to lives of middle-class security and comfort through hard work, determination, courage, and honesty. Alger secured his literary niche with the publication of his fourth book, *Ragged Dick* (1868), the story of a poor bootblack’s rise to middle-class respectability, which was a huge success. Sterling North’s popular work of juvenile fiction, *Abraham Lincoln: From Log Cabin to White House* (1956), illustrates explicitly how this “poor boy makes good” notion extends to the legends about President Lincoln and the way he overcame his modest social beginnings. Pilnyak, by the way, repeats (perhaps plagiarizes) here the mistake that Mayakovsky made in his earlier travelogue, when he claims that Lincoln is the U.S. president featured on the one-dollar bill.

Pilnyak is referring here to Herbert Clark Hoover (1874-1964), the thirty-first president, who was born in West Branch, Iowa, the son of Jesse Clark Hoover (1846-1880) and Hulda[h] Minthorn (1848-1884), both of them Quaker farmers.

Pilnyak uses here the verb “whistle” (svišnut’) [свиснуть] to characterize the meteoric rise to fame and celebrity of such iconic American “poor boys” as Lincoln and Hoover.
Pilnyak uses here a more colorful (mother-cursing) Russian idiom: “May the devil’s mamma take you!” (Poidi ty k missis chortovoi mamashe!) [Пойди ты к миссис чёртовой мамаше!].

For background information on Henry Ford, see endnote #104.

Edsel Bryant Ford (1893-1943), the son of Clara Jane Bryant Ford, was the only recognized child of Henry Ford. He was the president of the Ford Motor Company from 1919 until his death in 1943. His eldest son was Henry Ford II. As the sole heir to the family business, Edsel worked closely with his father, but he was keen to develop cars more exciting than the Model T (“Tin Lizzie”), cars that were more in line with his own personal tastes. Even as the company president, he had trouble persuading the older man to allow any departure from this formula. Only a change in market conditions enabled him to develop the more fashionable Model A in 1927. Edsel also founded the Mercury division and was responsible for the Lincoln Zephyr and Lincoln Continental. He introduced important features, such as hydraulic brakes, and greatly strengthened the company’s overseas production. Edsel was a major art benefactor in Detroit and also financed Admiral Richard Byrd’s polar explorations. He died of stomach cancer at age 49, with his father resuming presidency of the company, before handing it over to his grandson, Henry Ford II. The range of cars launched by Ford in 1957 under the name Edsel is remembered as one of the classic marketing failures in the history of American business.

For background information on Puritans and Puritanism, see endnote #142.

Pilnyak uses here the Russian word for “placidity” (blagodushie) [благодушие], which means, literally, having “a good soul,” “a good nature.” When Pilnyak claims that this blagodushie is a national trait of Ukrainians, he is at the same time alluding to the stereotype that many Russians have of their geographical and cultural neighbors as being somewhat provincial, backward, unsophisticated, naïve, and slow-witted. Indeed, some Russians commonly use the term khokhol [хохол], a word that denotes the traditional Cossack style of haircut (one that features a long lock of hair commonly sprouting from the top or the front of an otherwise closely shaven head) as a jocular, pejorative term for ethnic Ukrainians. It suggests a comically stupid rustic: what we might call a “country bumpkin,” a “hick.” Pilnyak appears to be invoking precisely this stereotype for his Russian readers later in the paragraph when he mentions how his Ukrainian buddy scratched the back of his head in bewilderment and shook his head in puzzlement “in the manner of a Ukrainian” (po-ukrainski) [по-украински].

To characterize New York’s modern skyscrapers, Pilnyak creates and uses here the compound adjective zaoblachno-bradobreinyi [заоблачно-бр абобрейный]. The first element, zaoblachno [заоблачно], literally means “beyond the clouds.” The second element, bradobreinyi [бр абобрейный], combines an archaic form of the word for “beard” (brada [брада] and an equally archaic adjectival/participial form of the verb “to shave” (breinyi) [брейный]. In Russian cultural history, one of the reifications of Peter the Great’s efforts in the early eighteenth century to modernize and Westernize his country (he viewed Muscovite Russia as a land of backward, primitive, obscurantist people) was the requirement that men
have their beards shaven off. The word *bradobreinyi* would thus suggest that skyscrapers (like barbers) are something “modern” and “western,” something that is not traditional, native or natural.

195 As Milla Fedorova points out, Pilnyak seems to be punning here (and elsewhere in the text) on the two senses of the adjective “dear” (*dorogoi* [доро́гои], which can mean “dear” not only in the emotional sense, but also in the economic sense (i.e., “expensive,” “costly”). See *Yankees in Petrograd, Bolsheviks in New York*, p. 82.

196 Alphonse Gabriel “Al” Capone (1899-1947), sometimes known by the nickname “Scarface,” was an American gangster who attained fame during the Prohibition era as the co-founder and boss of the Chicago Outfit. Capone was born in Brooklyn to Italian immigrants. As a member of the Five Points Gang, he became a bouncer in organized crime premises such as brothels. In his early twenties, he moved to Chicago and became a bodyguard and trusted factotum for Johnny Torrio, the head of a criminal syndicate that illegally supplied alcohol and that was politically protected through the *Unione Siciliana*. A conflict with the North Side Gang was instrumental in Capone’s rise and fall. Torrio went into retirement after North Side gunmen almost killed him, handing control over to Capone, who expanded the bootlegging business through increasingly violent means. But his mutually profitable relationships with Chicago’s mayor, William Hale Thompson, and with the city’s police meant that Capone seemed safe from law enforcement. He made donations to various charities and was viewed by many to be a modern-day Robin Hood. However, the Valentine’s Day Massacre of rival gang members (especially the warring gangs headed by arch-rivals Al Capone and George “Bugs” Moran) that took place on February 14, 1929, resulting in the killing of seven men in broad daylight, damaged Chicago’s image – as well as Capone’s – and led influential citizens to demand governmental action and newspapers to dub him “Public Enemy No. 1.” The federal authorities became intent on jailing Capone, and in 1931 they resorted to a novel strategy by prosecuting him for tax evasion, which was a federal crime. Capone was convicted and sentenced to 11 years in federal prison. He was already showing signs of syphilitic dementia early in his prison sentence, however, and he became increasingly debilitated before being released after serving eight years. On January 25, 1947, Capone died of cardiac arrest after suffering a stroke.

197 Peter the Great (Peter I) (1672-1725) ruled the Tsardom of Russia, and later the Russian Empire, from 1682 until his death in 1725, jointly ruling before 1696 with his elder half-brother, Ivan V. Through a number of successful wars, Peter expanded the tsardom into a much larger empire that became a major European power. He led a cultural revolution that replaced some of the traditionalist and medieval social and political systems with ones that were modern, scientific, westernized, and based on the Enlightenment. Peter’s reforms made a lasting impact on Russia, and many institutions of Russian government trace their origins to his reign.

198 Semyon Mikhailovich Budyonny (1883-1973) was a Russian cavalryman at the time of the October Revolution and later a Soviet General in World War II. In the Russian Civil War, Budyonny’s large cavalry force helped the Bolsheviks to victory. He became a friend of Joseph Stalin and was promoted to the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union in 1935. In World
War II, he took the blame for many of Stalin’s misjudgments, but was retained in high command because of his bravery and popularity. He was a notable horse-breeder, who declared that the tank could never replace the horse as an instrument of war.

There have been twelve Roman Catholic popes named Pius: Pope Pius I (circa 140–154; officially listed as 142/146 – 157/161), Pope Pius II (1458–1464), Pope Pius III (1503–1503), Pope Pius IV (1559–1565), Pope Pius V (1566–1572), Pope Pius VI (1775–1799), Pope Pius VII (1800–1823), Pope Pius VIII (1829–1830), Pope Pius IX (1846–1878), Pope Pius X (1903–1914), Pope Pius XI (1922–1939), and Pope Pius XII (1939–1958). Pilnyak is likely referring here to Pope Pius VII (1800-1823), the only pope by this name whose fame in France comes anywhere close to approaching that of Napoleon, with whom his papacy is historically linked. When Pius VII was elected pope in 1800, he at first attempted to take a cautious approach in dealing with the French ruler. With him, he signed the Concordat of 1801, which guaranteed religious freedom for Catholics living in France, and he was present at Napoleon’s coronation as Emperor in 1804. In 1809, however, during the Napoleonic Wars, Napoleon invaded and annexed the Papal States, which led to his excommunication. Pius VII, as a consequence, was taken prisoner and transported to France, where he remained until Napoleon’s defeat in 1814. Pius VII’s five-year imprisonment in France gave him an aura that recognized him as a living martyr, so that when he arrived back in Rome in May 1814, he was greeted most warmly as a hero and defender of the Catholic faith.

Napoléon Bonaparte (1769-1821) was a French military and political leader who rose to prominence during the French Revolution and led several successful campaigns during the French Revolutionary Wars. As Napoleon I, he was Emperor of the French from 1804 until 1814, and again briefly in 1815 (during the Hundred Days). Napoleon dominated European and global affairs for more than a decade while leading France against a series of coalitions in the Napoleonic Wars. He won most of these wars and the vast majority of his battles, building a large empire that ruled over continental Europe before its final collapse in 1815. Since he is recognized as one of the greatest commanders in history, the wars he fought and the campaigns he launched are studied at military schools worldwide. Napoleon’s political and cultural legacy has endured as one of the most celebrated and controversial leaders in human history.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was a German composer and pianist. A crucial figure in the transition between the Classical and Romantic eras in Western music, he remains one of the most famous and influential of all composers. His best-known compositions include 9 symphonies, 5 piano concertos, 1 violin concerto, 32 piano sonatas, 16 string quartets, 1 opera, Fidelio (1805), and his great Mass, the Missa solemnis (1824).

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was an English poet, playwright, and actor, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world’s pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called England’s national poet, and has been dubbed the “Bard of Avon.” His extant works, including collaborations, consist of approximately 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses, some of uncertain authorship. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.
The surname “Rockefeller” began to achieve prominence in America starting with John Davison Rockefeller, Sr. (1839-1937), the American oil industry business magnate and philanthropist who is widely considered the wealthiest American of all time and the richest person in modern history. Born into a large family in upstate New York, Rockefeller became an assistant bookkeeper at the age of 16, and went into a business partnership with Maurice B. Clark and his brothers at age 20. After buying them out, he and his brother William founded Rockefeller & Andrews with Samuel Andrews. Instead of drilling for oil, they concentrated on refining it. In 1867, Henry Flagler entered the partnership, and in 1870 Rockefeller formally founded the Standard Oil Company, Inc., as a partnership with his brother William, Henry Flagler, Jabez A. Bostwick, Samuel Andrews, and a silent partner, Stephen V. Harkness. He ran the company until 1897. As kerosene and gasoline grew in importance, Rockefeller’s wealth soared and he became the richest person in the country, controlling 90% of all oil in the United States at his peak. Oil was used throughout the country as a light source until the introduction of electricity and as a fuel after the invention of the automobile. Furthermore, Rockefeller gained enormous influence over the railroad industry, which transported his oil around the country. Standard Oil was the first great business trust in the United States. Rockefeller, who revolutionized the petroleum industry, became the country’s first billionaire with a fortune worth nearly 2 percent of the national economy. Rockefeller spent the last 40 years of his life in retirement at his estate in Westchester County, New York. Along with other key contemporary industrialists, such as steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, he defined the structure of modern philanthropy. His fortune was mainly used to create the modern systematic approach of targeted philanthropy through the creation of foundations, which had a major effect on medicine, education, and scientific research. His foundations pioneered the development of medical research and were instrumental in the eradication of hookworm and yellow fever. Rockefeller was also the founder of both the University of Chicago and Rockefeller University.

Egon Petri (1881-1962), who was brought up in Dresden, Germany, where he attended the Kreuzschule, was the son of a professional violinist who taught his son that instrument. Petri played in the Dresden Court Orchestra and with his father’s string quartet while still a teenager. He studied composition and theory with Hermann Kretzschmar and Felix Draeseke at the Dresden Conservatory. From an early age, Petri also took lessons in piano, and he eventually concentrated on that instrument, after strong encouragement from Ignacy Jan Paderewski and Ferruccio Busoni. He studied with Busoni, who proved to be a great influence on him. In the 1920s, Petri taught in Berlin: Victor Borge, Stanley Gardner, Jan Hoffman, Gunnar Johansen, and Vitya Vronsky were among his students. Shortly after Hitler’s invasion of Poland in 1939, Petri moved to the United States, becoming a naturalized American citizen in 1955. Petri died in 1962 in Berkeley, California.

Albert Einstein (1879-1955) was the German-born theoretical physicist who developed the theory of relativity, one of the two pillars of modern physics (alongside quantum mechanics). Einstein’s work is also well known for its influence on the philosophy of science. Einstein is perhaps best known by the general public for his mass-energy equivalence formula $E = mc^2$ (it has been dubbed “the world’s most famous equation”). He received the 1921 Nobel Prize in Physics “for his services to theoretical physics, and especially for his discovery of the law of the photoelectric effect,” a pivotal step in the evolution of quantum theory. Einstein was
visiting the United States when Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933. Being Jewish, Einstein
decided not to return to Germany, where he had been serving as a professor at the Berlin
Academy of Sciences. Instead he settled in the United States, becoming affiliated with the
Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, where he remained until his death in
1955. During his lifetime, Einstein published more than 300 scientific papers along with over
150 non-scientific works. Einstein’s considerable intellectual achievements and originality
have made the surname “Einstein” synonymous with genius.

This detail about Einstein’s preference for sandals most likely surfaced during one of the
many interviews with reporters that the famed physicist had to endure. As Alva Johnston
noted in an article, titled “Scientist and Mob Idol,” that appeared in the December 2, 1933 issue
of The New Yorker, soon after Einstein came to the U.S., American readers were much more
interested in the man than in his theories. “The reader tires eventually of the fourth dimension,
parallel lines that meet, straight lines that travel in circles, and various other games of that
sort,” Johnston writes. “The reader demands to be, and is, informed that Einstein’s favorite
dish is stuffed pike with mushrooms; that he likes to pad about the house in bare feet or
sandals; that he adores Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart, but finds that Wagner makes him
emotionally uncomfortable; that he likes to take long walks alone, especially in the rain; that he
entered the dining salon of the Belgenland in his pajamas; that he disapproved of the
Eighteenth Amendment because he believed the saloon to be an important center for the
exchange of ideas; that he uses the same soap for shaving and washing because of a firm
conviction that two kinds of soap needlessly complicate life” (36).

The Syas Paper Company, founded in 1928, was one of the first pulp and paper mills in the
U.S.S.R. This giant paper company is located on – and named after – the Syas River, in the
Liubytinsky District of Novgorod Oblast and the Tikhvinsky and Volkhovsky Districts of the
Leningrad Oblast. The Syas River flows from Valdai Hills north into Lake Ladoga. Pilnyak
personally visited this giant paper company and observed its modern operations in early March
1928.

The massive project (1927-1932) to build a hydroelectric dam on the Dnieper River was one
of the rapid industrialization initiatives undertaken in the U.S.S.R. during the late 1920s and
early 1930s as part of Stalin’s ambitious Five-Year Plans. Generating about 560 megawatts of
power, the station became the largest Soviet power plant at the time and one of the largest in
the world. American specialists under the direction of Colonel Hugh Cooper took part in the
construction. The first five giant power generators were manufactured by General Electric.

The “tele-writing machine” (tele-pishushchaia mashinka) [телеф-пишущая машинка] that
Pilnyak mentions here was the teletypewriter (also called a teletype or teleprinter), a device
that sent a typed message to another location. A teletypewriter had a typewriter keyboard, a
local printer (so the user could see what had been typed), and a transmitter. Messages could be
sent over wires or radio waves. Teletypes were used mostly in the early to mid-twentieth
century. They were developed to improve telegraphs, some of which also used keyboards,
though not typewriter keyboards. Although teleprinters have been replaced by other
technologies, TDDs (Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf), which are based on the idea
and design of teletypes, are still being used today. People who are deaf, hard of hearing, or
speech-impaired use TDDs to communicate. TDDs allow them to type messages back and forth to one another, similar to texting, instead of talking and listening.

210 The Russian word that Pilnyak employs here for “phrase-mongering,” (slovobludie) [словооблудие], literally means “adultery by word,” just as the lexical item, rukobludie [рукоблудие], which is used to denote “masturbation,” literally means “adultery by hand.” It should strike the reader of O’kei as fairly ironic that Pilnyak, of all people, should be accusing others of habitually using grandiose or striking phrases (slovobludie).

211 Stuart Chase (1888-1985) was an American economist, social theorist, and writer. His writings covered topics as diverse as general semantics and physical economy. Chase’s thought was shaped by Henry George, economic philosopher Thorstein Veblen, Fabian socialism, as well as the communist social and educational experiments being conducted in the Soviet Union around 1930. Chase spent his early political career supporting a wide range of reform causes, such as the single tax, women’s suffrage, birth control, and socialism. Chase’s early books, The Tragedy of Waste (1925) and Your Money’s Worth (1928), were notable for their criticism of corporate advertising and their advocacy of consumer protection.

212 “Cadet” was the name given to a member of the Constitutional Democratic Party (Konstitutsionno-Demokraticskaia Partiiia) [Конституционно-демократическая партия], also called Constitutional Democrats. This was a liberal political party in the Russian Empire that encompassed constitutional monarchists and republicans. Party members were called Kadets (or Cadets) from the abbreviation K-D of the party’s name in Russian. The writings of Konstantin Kavelin and Boris Chicherin formed the theoretical basis of the party’s political platform. Historian Pavel Miliukov was the party’s leader throughout its existence. The Kadets’ base of support were intellectuals and professionals; university professors and lawyers were particularly prominent within the party. A large number of Kadet party members were veterans of the zemstvo (local councils).


214 Pilnyak is once again playing here with the phonetic affinities between the two words shtandart and standart as well as invoking again the Gogolian refrain: “The banner is galloping off!” See endnote #130.

215 The verb that one would normally use here would be to “organize” or “arrange” a party (ustroit’ vecherinku) [устроить вечеринку], not to “build” or “construct” one (postroit’ vecherinku) [построить вечеринку]. It is not clear why Pilnyak is trying to draw attention to the latter verb, which he does by enclosing it within quotation marks.

216 Pilnyak creates two new Russian verbs here out of the transliterated forms of the English words for “cocktail” (kokteilit’) [коктейлить] and “foxtrot” (fokstrotit’) [фокстротить].

217 Pilnyak makes this joke comprehensible (in both a linguistic and a cultural sense) for his Russian readers by translating into Russian the transliterated name for this popular American
dance (poluchaetsia ne fokstrot – lisii shag) и then creating a new name for this dance when it is a Russian, rather than an American, who is trying to dance it (a bertrot – shag medvezhi), cleverly substituting the iconic animal of one culture (the Russian bear) for an iconic animal of the other (the American fox). The African-American origins of the foxtrot are examined in an M.A. thesis, titled A Compilation and Analysis of the Foxtrot in White Mainstream America (2002), written by Christina M. Hawkins in the Department of Dance at Brigham Young University.

218 The Russian word that Pilnyak uses here, polotёr [полотёр], denotes someone who “rubs” or “polishes” (teret’) [тереть] a floor (pol) [пол]. But the word also possessed a figurative meaning (now obsolete), denoting someone who “gets carried away with dancing, with merriment,” a meaning that Pilnyak seems to revive, since it fits so well in his discussion here of the foxtrot.

219 William “Ray” Long (1878-1935) was an American writer and editor who worked in various media (newspaper, magazine, film) during his career. He is notable mainly for having been the editor-in-chief of Cosmopolitan magazine between 1919 and 1931. Long, who had branched out at this point in time to become head of Cosmopolitan’s book publishing business, traveled to Russia in 1930. “I went there,” he explained upon his return, “primarily to get acquainted with some of the Russian writers of today and if possible to find material of theirs which would appeal to the public in the United States and England.” Together with Charles Malamuth, a translator and interpreter who was working in Moscow at the time (he had previously worked as an instructor in the Slavic Department at the University of California at Berkeley), Long quickly got acquainted with some of the leading prose writers in the U.S.S.R. – including Boris Pilnyak, Valentin Kataev, Aleksei Tolstoy, and several others – and signed contracts with each of them for the right to publish some of their works in English translation. See Ray Long, An Editor Looks at Russia: One Unprejudiced View of the Land of the Soviets (New York: Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, Inc. 1931). The English translation of Pilnyak’s Five-Year Plan novel, The Volga Flows to the Caspian Sea (Volga vpadaet v Kaspiiskoe more) [Волга впадает в Каспийское море] (1931), translated by Malamuth, was timed to appear in print during Pilnyak’s stay in the U.S. Indeed, Pilnyak’s U.S. trip itself, as Brian D. Harvey observes, was sponsored by Hearst’s International-Cosmopolitan, which was publishing his novel. See “Whose Artists in Uniform? Boris Pil’njak and American Writers in the Early 1930s,” Russian Literature, 62, No. 3 (2007): 293-322.

220 This reception banquet at the Metropolitan Club, arranged by Ray Long and held on the evening of March 19, 1931, gained wide notoriety for the scandalous slapping episode involving Sinclair Lewis and Theodore Dreiser that occurred near banquet’s end. Eugene Lyons, who served as the TASS correspondent in Moscow during the late 1920s and early 1930s (and who was a close friend of Pilnyak), attended the banquet. He provides a description not only of this event, but also of Ray Long’s recruitment of Soviet writers during his 1930 visit to the U.S.S.R., in his memoir, Assignment in Utopia (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1937), pp. 403-406.

221 The American “friends” of Pilnyak who were in attendance at this banquet held in his honor included Eugene Lyons, Louis Fischer, Isaac Don Levine, Duva Mendelssohn, and Joe Freeman.
222 Louis Fischer (1896-1970) was a Jewish-American journalist who went to live in Moscow in 1922. There he married Bertha “Markooshka” Mark (1890-1977) and began working for *The Nation*. While in the Soviet Union, Fischer published several books, including *The Soviets in World Affairs* (1930). In 1934, Max Eastman, in a chapter of his book, *Artists in Uniform* (1934), criticized Fischer for his Stalinism. Although he had never been a member of the Communist Party, Fischer subsequently became disillusioned with communism, as is reflected in his contribution to the volume, *The God That Failed* (1949), and began writing for anti-communist liberal magazines, such as *The Progressive*. Fischer taught about the Soviet Union at Princeton University from 1958 until his death in 1970.

223 This friend was Duva Mendelssohn, the International Secretary for the John Reed Club and someone who was closely associated with the journal *New Masses* and its editorial board.

224 Harry Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951), better known as Sinclair Lewis, was a major American novelist, short-story writer, and playwright. His best-known works include *Main Street* (1920), *Babbitt* (1922), *Arrowsmith* (1925), and *Elmer Gantry* (1927). In 1930, he became the first writer from the United States to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature, which was awarded “for his vigorous and graphic art of description and his ability to create, with wit and humor, new types of characters.” His works are known for their insightful and critical views of American capitalism and materialism between the wars. He is also respected for his strong characterizations of modern working women.

225 For background information on Theodore Dreiser, see endnote #134.

226 Sinclair Lewis is referring here to the claim some people were making that Theodore Dreiser, in his account of the visit he had made to the U.S.S.R. in 1927 (*Dreiser Looks at Russia*, 1928), plagiarized lengthy passages from *The New Russia* (1928), which had been written by Dorothy Thompson, Lewis’s wife. “The reasons for the remarkable verbal similarities between the two books,” Brian D. Harvey explains, “were accounted for by the fact that both Thompson and Dreiser relied heavily on the same source, both transcribing material with which the Soviet government had provided them.” See “Whose Artists in Uniform?” p. 307.

227 The “second” and “third” persons in attendance at the banquet whom Sinclair Lewis singles out here during his brief remarks (two journalists who maintained that the 1930 Nobel Prize in literature should have been awarded not to Lewis, but to Dreiser) were Heywood Broun (1888-1939) and Arthur Brisbane (1864-1936).

228 In an “Editor’s Note” that was attached to Pilnyak’s brief essay, “Farewell to America,” when it appeared in the September 1931 issue of *New Masses*, we learn that “Mister Z” (the millionaire who offered to introduce Pilnyak to Al Capone) was Otto Hermann Kahn (1867-1934), a highly successful investment banker and wealthy financier. See p. 14 of that September 1931 issue of *New Masses*.

229 For background information on John D. Rockefeller, see endnote #203.
The surname “Morgan” began to achieve prominence in America starting with John Pierpont Morgan Sr. (1837-1913), the American financier and banker who dominated corporate finance and industrial consolidation in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1892, Morgan arranged the merger of Edison General Electric and the Thomson-Houston Electric Company to form General Electric. He was also instrumental in the creation of the United States Steel Corporation, International Harvester, and AT&T. At the height of Morgan’s career during the early 1900s, he and his partners had financial investments in many large corporations and had significant influence over the nation’s high finance and over members of the United States Congress. He directed the banking coalition that stopped the Panic of 1907. He was the leading financier of the Progressive Era, and his dedication to efficiency and modernization helped transform American business. Morgan, who has been described as America’s greatest banker, died in his sleep in 1913, at the age of 75, leaving his fortune and business to his son, John Pierpont Morgan, Jr. (1867-1943).

The “Twentieth-Century Limited” was an express passenger train on the New York Central Railroad from 1902 to 1967. It was advertised as “The Most Famous Train in the World.” In the year of its last run, The New York Times said that it “was known to railroad buffs for 65 years as the world’s greatest train.” The train traveled between Grand Central Terminal in New York City and the LaSalle Street Station in Chicago, along the railroad’s “Water Level Route.” The New York Central Railroad inaugurated this train as competition to the Pennsylvania Railroad, aiming to attract upper class and business travelers. It made few station stops along the way and used track pans (long troughs, filled with water, that lay between the rails) to take water at speed. Its style was described as “spectacularly understated . . . suggesting exclusivity and sophistication.” Passengers walked to the train on a crimson carpet that was rolled out in New York and Chicago and was designed specifically for the “Twentieth-Century Limited.” Getting the “red carpet treatment” passed into the language from this memorable practice.

The Valdai Hills (Valdaiskaia vozvyshennost’) [Валдайская возвышенность] is an upland region in the northwest of Central Russia, running north-south, about midway between Saint Petersburg and Moscow, spanning the Leningrad, Novgorod, Tver, Pskov, and Smolensk Oblasts. The Valdai Hills is a northward extension of the Central Russian Upland. It is an area with many lakes, among them Lake Volgo, Lake Peno, Lake Seliger, Lake Brosno, and Lake Valdaiskoe.

Tver (from 1931 to 1990, it was called Kalinin) is the capital city of the Tver region. It is located 170 kilometers northwest of Moscow, at the confluence of three rivers: the Volga, the Tmaka, and the Tvertsa. What Pilnyak means by the “Tver land” (tverskaia zemlia) [тверская земля] is likely its non-mountainous topography, very much like that of the American Midwest.

With the closing of the American frontier in the late nineteenth century, the centuries-long series of wars waged against Native Americans by the United States government culminated with the wars of “extermination” that Pilnyak is referring to here. These wars included, among others, the Great Sioux War of 1876-1877, the Nez Perce War of 1877 (famous for Chief
Joseph’s four-month, 1200-mile fighting retreat of 800 Nez Perce Indians), the Apache War of 1881-1886 (famous for Geronimo’s leadership), and the Wounded Knee massacre of Lakotas in 1890.

235 Upton Sinclair (1878-1968), who won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1943, was an American writer whose work was well-known and popular in the first half of the twentieth century. Sinclair acquired particular fame in 1906 for his classic muckraking novel, *The Jungle*, which exposed labor and sanitary conditions in the U.S. meat packing industry, causing a public uproar that contributed in part to the passage a few months later of the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act. Writing during the Progressive Era, Sinclair described the world of industrialized America from both the working man’s point of view and that of the industrialist. Novels such as *King Coal* (1917), *The Coal War* (published posthumously), *Oil!* (1927), and *The Flivver King* (1937) described the working conditions of the coal, oil, and auto industries at the time. In these works, he attacked such wealthy and powerful Americans as J. P. Morgan, Henry Ford, and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. An outspoken socialist, Sinclair ran unsuccessfully for Congress as a nominee from the Socialist Party. He was also the Democratic Party candidate for Governor of California during the Great Depression, running under the banner of the “End of Poverty in California” campaign, but was defeated in the 1934 elections.

236 The Russian word that Pilnyak uses here, *obyvatel’* [обыватель], means, literally, an “inhabitant,” a “resident,” but figuratively it has a less neutral, more pejorative meaning, indicating someone who is hostile or indifferent to culture and the arts: i.e., a “philistine,” a “middle brow” person.

237 “Journalist P” is most likely Albert Parry (born Victor LeClerc in Rostov-on-Don) (1901-1992), a writer, journalist, and subsequent academic, who was working at this time at *Russkii golos*, a Russian-language newspaper in New York. Parry, who was hired as a part-time interpreter for Pilnyak during the summer of 1931, describes his interactions with the writer in a highly colorful way in his yet unpublished memoirs, *Ask That Your Way Be Long: An Autobiography*. See Chapter XVI (“Sundry Other Talents”), pp. 363-378.

238 Pilnyak’s use of this phrase (“a chicken on the table for dinner”) seems to be mimicking Herbert Hoover’s campaign slogan during the 1928 presidential election (or at least the first half of that slogan): namely, “a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage.” The second half of that campaign slogan is strongly suggested by the sentence that follows in Pilnyak’s narrative: “And the makes and models of their automobiles never dropped lower than a Buick.” In any event, the slogan’s two images of material well-being – a chicken and an automobile – were being used, of course, as symbols of the middle-class prosperity that would purportedly visit upon America with Hoover’s election to the presidency.

239 Pilnyak uses the word “kopeck” (*kopeika*) [копейка] here, rather than “cent” (*tsent*) [цент].

240 Pilnyak seems to be referring here to Kingman, Arizona, a town that lies on the eastern edge of the Mojave Desert. One of its claims to fame is the fact that Route 66 passes through it.
Later, in Chapter 27, Pilnyak will describe the night he once spent at a motel in Kingman, a town that he considers the epitome of American philistinism.

Pilnyak uses here the word *kinodei* [кинодей], which may be his equivalent of the current term *kinodelets* [киноделец], used to denote a “movie mogul” (i.e., a very important and powerful person in the movie industry).

The play about Hollywood that Pilnyak is referring to here is most likely *Once in a Lifetime* (1930) by Moss Hart (1904-1961) and George S. Kaufman (1889-1961), the first of several plays on which the two playwrights collaborated during the 1930s. This satirical comedy tells the story of a Hollywood film studio during the transition from silent films to “talkies,” focusing on the effect that sound films were having on the entertainment industry. The play, which opened on Broadway on September 24, 1930 and closed on September 5, 1931, was being performed during the time when Pilnyak was visiting the United States.

The *Moscow News*, which began publication in 1930, is Russia’s oldest English-language newspaper. Many of its feature articles used to be translated from the Russian language periodical, *Moskovskie Novosti* [Московские Новости]. *Moscow News* was founded by the American socialist Anna Louise Strong (1885-1970) and approved by the Soviet leadership in 1930 as an international newspaper with the purpose of spreading the ideas of socialism to an international audience. The paper was soon published in many languages, including major world languages, such as French, German, Spanish, and Arabic, as well as languages of neighboring countries, such as Finnish. The first foreign editor of the *Moscow News* was British communist Rose Cohen (1894-1937), who was arrested in Moscow in August 1937 and executed in November 1937.

Pilnyak is referring here to the first Five-Year Plan of the U.S.S.R., which was a list of economic goals created by the Party’s General Secretary, Joseph Stalin, and was based on his policy of “Socialism in One Country.” Implemented between 1928 and 1932, the first Five-Year Plan pursued the goal of the rapid industrialization of the entire country. In 1929, Stalin edited the plan to include the creation of collective farming systems (*kolkhozes*) [колхозы] that stretched over thousands of acres of land and had hundreds of peasants working on them. The creation of collective farms essentially destroyed the social class known as *kulaks* [кулаки], the wealthy or prosperous peasants, generally characterized as those who owned a relatively large farm and several head of cattle and horses and who were financially capable of employing hired labor and of leasing land. It also brought about the slaughter of millions of farm animals that these peasants would rather kill than give up to the gigantic farms. This disruption led to widespread famine in Ukraine, Russia, and Kazakhstan as well as areas of the Northern Caucasus.

Nicholas II (Nikolai Aleksandrovich Romanov, 1868-1918) was the last Emperor of Russia, ruling from November 1, 1894 until his forced abdication on March 15, 1917. His reign saw the fall of the Russian Empire, reduced from being one of the foremost great powers of the world as it suffered economic and military collapse in 1917. Russia’s last tsar had been given the nickname “Nicholas the Bloody” by his political adversaries due to the Khodynka tragedy (the human stampede that occurred during the festivities following his coronation ceremony in

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May 1896, when more than a thousand people were trampled to death), anti-Semitic pogroms (the large-scale, targeted, and repeated riots aimed against Jews), Bloody Sunday (the events that took place in St. Petersburg on Sunday, January 22, 1905, when unarmed demonstrators were fired upon by soldiers of the Imperial Guard as they marched towards the Winter Palace to present a petition to the tsar), the violent suppression of the 1905 Revolution (the wave of mass political and social unrest that spread through vast areas of the Russian Empire during that year), the execution of political opponents, and his perceived responsibility for the disastrous Russo-Japanese War. Soviet historiographers have portrayed Nicholas as a weak and incompetent leader, whose decisions led to military defeats and the deaths of millions of his subjects.

246 If Pilnyak has in mind the British monarch at the time (and not one of the other four King Georges who preceded him), then he is referring here to King George V (1865–1936), who ruled from 1910 until his death in 1936. He was the second son of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), and the grandson of the then reigning British monarch, Queen Victoria. From the time of his birth, he was third in the line of succession, behind his father and his own elder brother, Prince Albert Victor. From 1877 to 1891, George served in the Royal Navy, until the unexpected death of his elder brother in early 1892, which put him directly in line for the throne. Upon the death of his grandmother in 1901, George’s father became King-Emperor of the British Empire, and George became the Prince of Wales. He succeeded his father as king in 1910. His reign saw the rise of socialism, communism, fascism, Irish Republicanism, and the Indian independence movement, all of which radically changed the political landscape in the United Kingdom and the world. He had smoking-related health problems throughout much of his later reign, and at his death he was succeeded by his eldest son, Edward VIII.

247 Louis Loss Burns, Jr. (1882–1944) in 1912 co-founded (with Harry Reiver) the Western Costume Company, one of the oldest motion picture businesses in Hollywood. Burns was an adventurous Indian trader who, in the course of his extensive travels through the West, had not only picked up a considerable amount of knowledge about Native American costumes and lore, but had also become a collector as well. It was a chance meeting between Burns and famed star and director of westerns, William S. Hart, that laid the foundation for what became the Western Costume Company. Hart had made a film where the costumes worn by the Native American extras were so flagrantly inaccurate that Burns felt compelled to share his dismay with the director. Hart was impressed, so he invited Burns to become the official supplier of Native American garb for his future pictures. In its early years, the Western Costume Company produced the Civil War costumes for D.W. Griffith’s Birth of a Nation (1915) and supplied costumes in films produced by Douglas Fairbanks and Charlie Chaplin. It also supplied the costumes for Rudolph Valentino’s The Sheik (1921). In the late 1920s, the Western Costume Company was competing with other costume companies and the film studios themselves, which were creating their own costume departments. Burns lost control of the Western Costume Company in 1928, selling it to the Jesse L. Lasky Feature Play Company, which then became Paramount Pictures. Burns went on to become the head of the costume department at Warner Brothers.

248 Pilnyak creates here the peculiar adjective naiindeiskii [наиндейский], adding to the adjective form for “Indian” (indeiskii) [индейский] the prefix nai- [наи], which is generally
added to a degree word to express the idea of superlativity: e.g., “the most” (naibolee) [наиболее], “the largest” (naibol’shii) [наибольший], “the best” (nailuchshii) [наилучший]. I have chosen to translate Pilnyak’s odd wording as “the most Indian-looking.”

249 Wilhelm II (Frederick William Victor Albert) (1859-1941) was the last German Emperor (Kaiser) and King of Prussia, ruling the German Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia from 1888 to 1918. He was the eldest grandchild of the British Queen Victoria and was thus related to many monarchs and princes of Europe. Acceding to the throne in 1888, Wilhelm II dismissed the Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, in 1890 and launched Germany on a bellicose “New Course” in foreign affairs that culminated in his support for Austria-Hungary in the crisis of July 1914 that led in a matter of days to the First World War. Bombastic and impetuous by nature, Wilhelm II sometimes made tactless pronouncements on sensitive topics without first consulting his ministers, culminating in a disastrous Daily Telegraph interview in 1908 that cost him most of his influence. His leading generals, Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff, dictated policy during the First World War with little regard for the civilian government. An ineffective war-time leader, Wilhelm II lost the support of the army, abdicated in November 1918, and fled to exile in the Netherlands.

250 Verdun, a small city in the Meuse department in Lorraine in northeastern France, was the site of a major battle of the First World War that was one of the costliest in history. Verdun exemplified the policy of a “war of attrition” that was being pursued by both sides of combatants in World War I, a policy that led to an enormous loss of human life.

251 The Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris is a medieval Catholic cathedral on the Île de la Cité in Paris. The cathedral is widely considered to be one of the finest examples of French Gothic architecture, and it is among the largest and most well-known church buildings in the world. The naturalism of its sculptures and stained glass serve to contrast it with earlier Romanesque architecture. The cathedral treasury contains a reliquary that houses some of Catholicism’s most important relics, including the purported Crown of Thorns, a fragment of the True Cross, and one of the Holy Nails. In the 1790s, Notre-Dame suffered desecration in the radical phase of the French Revolution, when much of its religious imagery was damaged or destroyed. An extensive restoration began in 1845, and a more recent project of further restoration and maintenance began in 1991. On April 15, 2019, however, the much beloved 850-year-old cathedral suffered what French President Emmanuel Macron called a “terrible tragedy,” being ravaged by a fire that was difficult to extinguish. President Macron set a five-year goal for the cathedral’s reconstruction.

252 For background information on Westminster Abbey, see endnote #42.

253 A dreadnought was a type of battleship introduced in the early twentieth century, one that was larger and faster than its predecessors and was equipped entirely with large-caliber guns.

254 The Pamir Mountains (or the Pamirs) are a mountain range in Central Asia at the junction of the Himalayas with the Tian Shan, Karakoram, Kunlun, and Hindu Kush ranges. They are among the world’s highest mountains.
For background information on the Komsomol, see endnote #163. A “Tadzhik” is a member of the mainly Muslim people that inhabit Tadzhikistan (also spelled Tajikistan) and parts of neighboring countries. Tadzhikistan is a mountainous, landlocked country in Central Asia that is bordered by Afghanistan to the south, Uzbekistan to the west, Kyrgyzstan to the north, and China to the east. Pakistan lies to the south, separated by the narrow Wakhan Corridor. Traditional homelands of the Tadzhik people included present-day Tadzhikistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan. Most of Tadzhikistan’s 8.7 million people belong to the Tadzhik ethnic group, who speak Tadzhik (a dialect of Persian). Many Tadzhiks also speak Russian as their second language. Mountains cover more than ninety percent of the country.

In the original Russian, Pilnyak calls cowgirls “cowboy women” (kovboiskie zhenshchiny) [ковбойские женщины].

Pilnyak uses a Russian expression here for she “lost weight” (poteriala v vese) [потеряла в веся] that can also be used, as slang, to mean “she fell off” [the horse].

Lydia (Churilova) Charskaia (1875-1938) was a Russian writer and actress who worked at the Alexandrinsky Theater from 1898 to 1924. Between 1901 and 1916, she published about eighty books, several of which became bestsellers. Her most popular work was the novel Princess Dzhavakha (Kniazhna Dzhavakha) [Княжна Джаваха] (1903). In the 1940s, when Boris Pasternak was working on his novel Doctor Zhivago, he said that he was “writing almost like Charskaia,” because he wanted his prose to be accessible to common readers, hoping that it would be gulped down “even by a seamstress, even by a dishwasher.” The main theme of most of her works is female friendship. The protagonists are usually independent girls and young women who look for adventure or some kind of diversion from the everyday routine. Critics have commented that these characteristics account in large part for the wide popularity of Charskaia’s works among young female readers in early twentieth-century Russia. Charskaia’s reputation began to fade in 1912, after the critic Kornei Chukovsky published an article in which he claimed that her books were formulaic, repetitious, and excessive with respect to female emotions. She stopped publishing in 1916, and in 1920 her works were banned. Throughout the Soviet period, her work was held in low regard, although there is evidence to suggest that young girls continued secretly to read her works, at least through the 1930s. Charskaia’s works were revived in Russia during the late 1980s and early 1990s, when several of her works appeared in new editions.

Johann Augustus Sutter (1803-1880) was a German-born Swiss pioneer in California who was known for his association with the California Gold Rush. He owned a sawmill, Sutter’s Mill, located on the bank of the South Fork American River in Coloma, California, where gold was found, setting off the California Gold Rush. He is also known for establishing Sutter’s Fort in the area that would eventually become Sacramento, the state’s capital. Although famous throughout California for his association with the Gold Rush, Sutter saw his business ventures fail while those of his elder son, John Augustus Sutter, Jr., were more successful.

Vladimir Ivanovich Nemirovich-Danchenko (1858-1943) was a Soviet theater director, writer, pedagogue, playwright, producer, and theater administrator. In 1879, he abandoned his studies at Moscow State University to pursue the theater, starting as a theater critic, then
proceeding to write and produce plays himself, ultimately co-founding the Moscow Art Theater with his colleague, Konstantin Stanislavsky, in 1898. The Moscow Art Theater staged dramas by Chekhov and Gorky with theretofore unknown naturalism and full expression. In addition, their theater presented highly acclaimed dramatizations of works by Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. It has been said that “if Stanislavsky was the soul of the Moscow Art Theater, then Nemirovich-Danchenko was its heart.” Indeed, he has been credited with creating the Moscow Art Theater’s unique acting and directing style, known for its “actors’ ensemble” and its “atmosphere.” Due largely to his directorial and production skills, the Moscow Art Theater was considered, at the time, the best theater in the world. Nemirovich-Danchenko’s experiences in Hollywood, which he visited in the late 1920s, are described in Sergei Bertensson’s memoirs, In Hollywood with Nemirovich-Danchenko 1926-1927 (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004).

Sergei Mikhailovich Eisenstein (1898-1948) was a famous Soviet film director and theorist, who was a pioneer in the theory and practice of montage. He is noted in particular for his silent films Strike (Stachka) [Стачка] (1925), Battleship Potemkin (Bronenosets Potemkin) [Броненосец Потемкин] (1925) and October (Oktyabr’) [Октябрь] (1928), as well as the historical epics Alexander Nevsky (Aleksandr Nevskii) [Александр Невский] (1938) and Ivan the Terrible (Ivan Groznyi) [Иван Грозный] (1944, 1945). In late April 1930, Eisenstein signed a short-term contract for $100,000 to make a film in the United States for Paramount Pictures. For the film, Eisenstein proposed a biography of munitions tycoon Sir Basil Zaharoff, a film version of Arms and the Man by George Bernard Shaw, or a film version of Sutter’s Gold by Jack London. All of these proposals, however, failed to impress the studio’s executives. Paramount then proposed a movie version of Theodore Dreiser’s An American Tragedy (1925), but the studio bosses disliked the script that Eisenstein submitted to them. On October 23, 1930, by “mutual consent,” Paramount and Eisenstein declared their contract null and void. Rather than return to Moscow at that time, however, Eisenstein, at the prompting of Charlie Chaplin, met with Upton Sinclair, whose wife was interested in producing a film about Mexican culture and politics up to the time of the Mexican revolution. On November 24, 1930, Eisenstein signed a contract with Mary Sinclair and some of her fellow investors for the film project, which was to be titled Que viva México! This project, which was plagued by numerous problems and complications, was ultimately abandoned, however, and Eisenstein was made to return to the U.S.S.R., touring through parts of the U.S. on his way to New York.

Emelyan Ivanovich Pugachev (1742-1775) was a “pretender” to the Russian throne (he impersonated the late Emperor Peter III) who led a great popular insurrection during the reign of Catherine II. Alexander Pushkin wrote a notable history of the rebellion, The History of the Pugachev Revolt (Istoriia Pugachevskogo bunta) [История Пугачёвского бунта] (1833-1834), and he recounted some of the events in his novel, The Captain’s Daughter (Kapitanskaia dochka) [Капитанская дочь] (1836). Pugachev was captured in September 1774, at which time he was placed in a metal cage and sent first to Simbirsk and then on to Moscow for a public execution, which took place on January 21, 1775. On Bolotnaia Square in the center of Moscow, he was decapitated and then drawn and quartered in public.

By the word that he uses here, sinopsis [synopsis], Pilnyak seems to mean what we would call a film “treatment,” that is, the piece of prose that typically serves as the step between scene
cards (index cards) and the first draft of the screenplay for a motion picture. A film treatment is generally longer and more detailed than an outline (or a one-page synopsis), and it may include details of directorial style that an outline omits. Treatments read like a short story, but are told in the present tense and describe events as they happen.

Monte Carlo officially refers to an administrative area of the Principality of Monaco, specifically the ward of Monte Carlo/Spélugues, where the Monte Carlo Casino is located. Informally, the name also refers to a larger district, the Monte Carlo Quarter (corresponding to the former municipality of Monte Carlo), which, besides Monte Carlo/Spélugues, also includes the wards of La Rousse/Saint Roman, Larvotto/Bas Moulins, and Saint Michel. Monaco has four traditional quarters: Fontvieille, Monaco-Ville, La Condamine, and Monte Carlo. Monte Carlo (literally, “Mount Charles”) is situated on a prominent escarpment at the base of the Maritime Alps along the French Riviera. Near the quarter’s western end is the world-famous Place du Casino, the gambling center which has made Monte Carlo “an international byword for the extravagant display and reckless dispersal of wealth.” It is also the location of the Hôtel de Paris, the Café de Paris, and the Salle Garnier (the casino theater that is home to the Opéra de Monte-Carlo).

Pilnyak is referring here to Grauman’s Chinese Theater, the movie palace on the historic Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6925 Hollywood Boulevard in Hollywood. The Hollywood Walk of Fame comprises more than 2,600 five-pointed terrazzo and brass stars embedded in the sidewalks along 15 blocks of Hollywood Boulevard and three blocks of Vine Street in Hollywood. The stars are permanent public monuments to achievement in the entertainment industry, bearing the names of a mix of actors, musicians, directors, producers, musical and theatrical groups, fictional characters, and others.

Pilnyak is outlining here some of the artistic and legal difficulties that Theodore Dreiser encountered in 1931 after he agreed to allow Hollywood to produce a film based on his novel, An American Tragedy (1925). Dreiser had signed a contract with Paramount Pictures, giving them the rights to produce and distribute the film, which was directed by Josef von Sternberg. When Sternberg’s film version departed from Dreiser’s novel (the author thought that the film was inadequate to his novel’s grand design), the author sued to protect his work. He lost the suit, and the precedent-setting case established the right of studios and filmmakers to pursue their own vision, not the author’s. Dreiser’s suit became a test case for a studio’s right to radically alter, if not downright travesty, any literary property it acquired. Although the case did not really break new legal ground, it did confirm what had up to then been standard studio operating procedure when it came to the purchase of literary material.

Pilnyak uses here the word stolonach’al’nik [столоначальник], literally, the “head” or “chief” (nachal’nik) [начальник] of a “desk” (stol) [стол], a term that derives from the civil service bureaucracy in tsarist Russia.

For background information on Al Lewin, see endnote #156.

Frances Marion (1888-1973) was an American journalist, author, film director, and screenwriter who is widely regarded as the most renowned female screenwriter of the twentieth
century, alongside June Mathis and Anita Loos. She was the first writer to win two Academy
Awards. Early in her career, Marion worked as a journalist and served overseas as a combat
correspondent during World War I. On her return home, she moved to Los Angeles, where she
was hired as a writing assistant, an actress, and a general assistant by “Lois Weber
Productions,” a film company owned and operated by pioneering female film director Lois
Weber. Marion could have been an actor, but she preferred to work behind the camera. She
learned screenwriting from Weber, and wrote one screenplay for her, but then burned it. She
wrote many scripts for actress and filmmaker Mary Pickford, including Rebecca of Sunnybrook
Farm (1917) and The Poor Little Rich Girl (1917), as well as scripts for numerous other
successful films of the 1920s and 1930s. During this time, she earned a salary of $50,000 per
year, an amount that was unheard of at the time. She became the first female to win an
Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay for the film The Big House in 1930; she
received the Academy Award for Best Story for The Champ in 1932, both featuring Wallace
Beery; and she co-wrote Min and Bill starring her friend Marie Dressler and Beery in 1930.
She was credited with writing 300 scripts and over 130 produced films. She directed and
occasionally appeared in some of Mary Pickford’s early movies.

270 For background information on Lydia Charskaia, see endnote #258. By calling Frances
Marion the “American Lydia Charskaia,” Pilnyak is, of course, not paying his Hollywood co-
author any compliment.

271 Pilnyak once again uses here the colorful (mother-cursing) Russian idiom: “May the devil’s
mamma take you!” ([Poidi] k missis chortovoi mamashe!) [Пойди] к миссис чёртовой
мамаше!].

272 Pilnyak uses here the Russian idiomatic expression for one’s “livelihood,” one’s “means of
support” – kusok khleba [кусок хлеба], literally, one’s “crust of bread.”

273 Douglas Fairbanks, born Douglas Elton Thomas Ullman (1883-1939), was a legendary
American actor, screenwriter, director, and producer. Fairbanks is best known for his
swashbuckling roles in silent films, such as The Mark of Zorro (1920), Robin Hood (1922), and
The Thief of Bagdad (1924), but he spent the early part of his career making comedies. With
his marriage to Mary Pickford in 1920, the couple became Hollywood royalty, and Fairbanks
was referred to as the “King of Hollywood,” a nickname that was later passed on to actor Clark
Gable. Although he was widely considered one of the biggest stars in Hollywood during the
1910s and 1920s, Fairbanks’s career rapidly declined with the advent of the “talkies.” His final
film was The Private Life of Don Juan (1934).

274 Greta Garbo, born Greta Lovisa Gustafsson (1905-1990), was a Swedish-born American
film actress during the 1920s and 1930s. Garbo was nominated three times for the Academy
Award for Best Actress and received an Academy Honorary Award in 1954 for her “luminous
and unforgettable screen performances.” In 1999, the American Film Institute ranked Garbo
fifth on their list of the greatest female stars of Classic Hollywood Cinema, after Katharine
Hepburn, Bette Davis, Audrey Hepburn, and Ingrid Bergman.
Sir Charles Spencer “Charlie” Chaplin (1889-1977) was an English comic actor, filmmaker, and composer who rose to fame during the era of silent film. Chaplin became a worldwide icon through his screen persona “the Tramp” and is widely considered one of the most important figures in the history of the film industry. His career spanned more than 75 years, from childhood in the Victorian era until a year before his death in 1977, and encompassed both adulation and controversy.

Experimental Cinema was an avant-garde film journal published by the Cinema Crafters of America during 1930-1934. In its debut issue (February 1930), it advertised itself as “the only magazine in the United States devoted to the principles of the art of the motion picture.” Its stated intention was “to experiment with new forms and to introduce to the spectator and creator the leading ideas and principles of the new film world.” Pilnyak renders the journal’s name incorrectly as Experimental Sinema.

Alexander Gumberg (1887-1939) was born in Russia, but emigrated with his parents to the United States in 1903. He returned to Russia in 1917 as an American businessman sympathetic to the progress of Russia’s October Revolution. After the Bolshevik seizure of power, Gumberg became a secretary, translator, and adviser to the American Red Cross Commission and the Committee on Public Information. Through him, a Soviet-American dialogue formed despite the lack of official diplomatic relations between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. Gumberg advised congressmen who hoped to establish diplomatic ties between the two countries. He helped American publicists, publications, and institutions which sought to present a favorable, or at least balanced, picture of Soviet Russia.

Pilnyak calls his friend here an “old American wolf” (стaryi amerikanskii volk) [старый американский волк], meaning that Gumberg had seen and experienced a lot during the time he had spent in America, so he was wise to how things worked in his adopted country.

Pilnyak coins here the adjective kinosiluimushchii [киносилуимущий], which translates literally as “having film power.”

Pilnyak is referring here to Main Street (1920), Sinclair Lewis’s scathingly satirical portrait of the stagnant philistinism of middle-class life in the American Midwest. Some of the author’s contemporaries said that the novel was too bleak, even humorless, in its conveyance of ignorant small-town life and small-minded people. However, Main Street is generally considered to be Lewis’s most significant and enduring work, along with its immediate successor, Babbitt (1922).

For background information on Frances Marion, see endnote #269.

George William Hill (1895-1934) was an American film director and cinematographer of silent films known for his skill in lighting female stars. Hill worked on a series of independently produced features for Mae Marsh and others in the postwar years and was eventually recruited by the burgeoning major studios to be a director, beginning in 1920. Throughout the following years, Hill’s directing career began to gain serious traction and his assignments allowed him access to top stars such as Marion Davies and Jackie Coogan. Hill
directed Lon Chaney’s biggest money-maker, *Tell It to the Marines* (1926). Four years later, Wallace Beery headed the cast of one of Hill’s most memorable films, *The Big House* (1930), a stark prison drama that is regarded by critics as a major achievement in early sound film artistry. For this film, and many others, he worked with his eventual wife, screenwriter Frances Marion, who served as Pilnyak’s co-author for the film project that M.G.M. contracted with him to work on (see endnote #269). Hill was severely injured in a car accident just when his career was beginning to peak, and it is rumored that his injuries were the root cause of his apparent suicide in 1934. His body was found in his Venice beach home with a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

283 Boris Ingster (1903-1978) was a Latvian-born writer-director who had worked in France with Sergei Eisenstein on the film *Sentimental Romance* (*Sentimentálnyj romans*) in 1930. Later that same year, Ingster arrived in the U.S., where he became best known as the director of *Stranger on the Third Floor* (1940), an effective minor film noir, produced by RKO on a modest budget. A decade later, Ingster helmed another film noir, *Southside 1-1000* (1950).

284 As mentioned earlier (in endnote #261), Eisenstein’s contract with Paramount Pictures had been voided in late October 1930, and the Soviet director left Hollywood shortly thereafter for Mexico, where he attempted to make a film about Mexican culture (up until the time of the revolution) for a small group of investors headed by Mary Sinclair (Upton Sinclair’s wife). Boris Ingster apparently remained behind in Hollywood after the departure of Eisenstein and his “group” – i.e., his two colleagues, cinematographer Eduard Tisse (1897-1961) and screenwriter and co-director Grigory Aleksandrov (1903-1983) – in December 1930.

285 For background information on Al Lewin, see endnote #156.

286 Irving Thalberg (1899-1936), the son of Jewish-German immigrants in Brooklyn, became an award-winning American film producer in Hollywood during the early decades of cinema. He was known as “The Wonder Boy” for his youthfulness and for his innate ability to choose good scripts, to select the right actors, to hire the best team, and, above all, to make sure that the films he produced were profitable. In 1925, at the age of 25, he joined Louis B. Mayer to become vice president and production chief of Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM). In 1927, he married the actress Norma Shearer, with whom he had two children. After the birth of their second child, Shearer thought about retiring, but her husband was obsessed with making his wife the biggest star on the screen. Monroe Stahr, the lead character in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s unfinished novel, *The Last Tycoon* (1941), is believed by many to have been modeled after Irving Thalberg.

287 Norma Shearer (1902-1983) was a Canadian-American actress and Hollywood star from 1925 through 1942. Her early films cast her as a spunky Ingénue, but in the pre-Code film era she played sexually liberated women. She excelled in drama, comedy, and period roles. She gave well-received performances in film adaptations of plays by Noel Coward, Eugene O’Neill, and William Shakespeare. She was the first person to be nominated five times for an Academy Award for acting, winning Best Actress for her performance in the 1930 film *The Divorce*. In 1927, she married the film producer Irving Thalberg, with whom she had two
children. Shearer’s fame declined after her early retirement in 1942. She was rediscovered in the late 1950s, however, when her films were sold to television, and in the 1970s, when her films enjoyed theatrical revivals. Shearer is celebrated today as a feminist pioneer, “the first American film actress to make it chic and acceptable to be single and not a virgin on screen.” Her films continue to be exhibited and studied today.

288 Pilnyak writes here that he was hired as a consultant to make sure that there would not be any “cranberries trees” (kliukvy) [клюквы] in the film. He is referring here to the Russian phrase (razvesistaia kliukva) [развесистая клюква], literally, “the spreading branches of a cranberry tree,” that has come to be used as shorthand for the unfortunate tendency among many foreign visitors to their country to create (and then disseminate) fallacious, ridiculous stereotypes about Russia and Russians. Historically, the phrase has been mistakenly attributed to the French writer, Alexandre Dumas père (1802-1870), who allegedly wrote in his travel notes, during a trip across Russia, that he was pleased, after a busy day of touring the local countryside, to be comfortably luxuriating in the cooling shade from the spreading branches of a large, majestic cranberry tree. A French visitor describing Russian cranberry plants (which are sometimes characterized as “low bushes”) as a large shady tree epitomizes this unfortunate proclivity on the part of foreign visitors to Russia for fabricating totally improbable, nonsensical, and absurd nonsense about their host country. Pilnyak is hired, in large part, to make sure that this does not happen in the film about Soviet Russia that he will be contributing to as a co-writer and a consultant.

289 For a brief discussion of how Pilnyak appears to be using the word sinopsis (the equivalent of a film “treatment”), see endnote #263.

290 G.P.U. is the abbreviation for the State Political Administration (Gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie) [Государственное политическое управление], the intelligence service and secret police of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) from February 6, 1922 to December 29, 1922, and of the Soviet Union from December 29, 1922 until November 15, 1923. The G.P.U. was formed from the Cheka, so named by the initials for “Extraordinary Commission” (Chrezvychайна komissia) [Чрезвычайная комиссия], the original Russian state security organization founded on December 20, 1917. The G.P.U.’s first chief was the Cheka’s former chairman, Felix Dzerzhinsky (1877-1926). Its official name was changed to the Joint State Political Administration (Ob‘единенное государственное политическое управление), O.G.P.U., in November 1923.

291 For background information on the Cheka, see the previous endnote (#290).

292 Pilnyak is referring here to rushniki [рушники], colorful ritual cloths, embroidered by hand, with symbols and cryptograms of the ancient world. They have been used in sacred Eastern Slavic rituals, religious services, and ceremonial events, such as weddings and funerals. Each region has its own designs and patterns with hidden meaning, passed down from generation to generation and studied by ethnographers. Even today, rushniki are one of the obligatory symbols at many ceremonies in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. The power of the rushnik is said to come from the sacred act of embroidery.
The village priest having his beard shaven off alludes to the ban on beards that Peter the Great had instituted in Russia upon returning from his European tour in 1698. As a measure designed to reflect the process of modernization that he was intent upon imposing in his homeland, the reformist tsar required courtiers, state officials, and members of the military to shave their beards and to adopt modern dress, imposing a “beard tax” for those who refused to comply (only clergy and peasants were exempted from this requirement). Police officers were instructed to shave on sight any violators. Religious traditionalists, however, continued to abide by the words of Ivan the Terrible, who once said, “Shaving the beard is a sin that the blood of all the martyrs will not wash away.” Indeed, the current head of the Russian Orthodox Old Believer Church, Metropolitan Kornily, has asserted that men protect themselves against homosexuality by not shaving, since a beard, he claims, wards off the sin of sodomy by making men less likely to be “corrupted” by same-sex relationships. See also endnote #194.

I can find no evidence to support the claim Pilnyak makes here (that for many years a prison was located at the base of the Statue of Liberty). Perhaps the author is confusing Liberty Island (formerly, Bedloe’s Island) with Ellis Island, which did serve during the 1920s as a detention center (and point of deportation) for “undesirable” immigrants, mainly suspected communists and political radicals from Eastern Europe, as part of the Red Scare. Or perhaps Pilnyak is simply plagiarizing Vladimir Mayakovsky, who made the same false claim in his travelogue, My Discovery of America (Мое открытие Америки) (1925-1926) six years earlier. See endnote #52.

The Ramzin Trial, more commonly known as the Industrial Party Trial (Процесс Промпартии), which took place between November 25 and December 7, 1930, was an early show trial in which several Soviet scientists and economists were accused (and subsequently convicted) of plotting a coup against the government of the Soviet Union. The presiding judge was Andrei Vyshinsky, who later became famous as the prosecutor at the Moscow show trials in 1936-1938. The defendants were a group of notable Soviet economists and engineers that included Leonid Konstantinovich Ramzin (1887-1948), the Soviet thermal engineer who invented a type of flow-through boiler (a straight-flow boiler) that came to be known as the Ramzin boiler. Ramzin and his fellow defendants stood accused of having formed an anti-Soviet “Union of Engineers’ Organization” (an “Industrial Party”) and of having tried to wreck Soviet industry and transport through sabotage in 1926-1930.

Charles Reznikoff (1894-1976) was an American poet best known for his long two-volume work, written between 1934 and 1979: Testimony: The United States, 1885-1890: Recitative (1965) and Testimony: The United States, 1891-1900: Recitative (1968). The term Objectivist was coined for him. The multi-volume Hedigmony was based on court records and explored the experiences of immigrants, Black people, and the urban and rural poor in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He followed this with Holocaust (1975), based on court testimony about Nazi death camps during World War II. Reznikoff was married to Marie Syrkin, a prominent Zionist who was a friend (and the biographer) of Golda Meir.
For background information on Johann Augustus Sutter, see endnote #259.

The French Revolution of 1830, also known as the July Revolution, the Second French Revolution, or the *Trois Glorieuses* in French, saw the overthrow of King Charles X, the French Bourbon monarch, and the ascent of his cousin, Louis-Philippe, who himself, after eighteen precarious years on the throne, would, in turn, be overthrown in 1848. It marked the shift from one constitutional monarchy, under the restored House of Bourbon, to another, the July Monarchy; the transition of power from the House of Bourbon to its cadet branch, the House of Orléans; and the replacement of the principle of hereditary right by popular sovereignty. Supporters of the Bourbon monarch would be called Legitimists, and supporters of Louis-Philippe would be called Orléanists.

Pilnyak is referring here, of course, to the eponymous hero of Daniel Defoe’s famous novel, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). This classic tale is presented as the autobiography of the title character, a castaway who spends twenty-eight years on a remote tropical desert island near Trinidad, encountering cannibals, captives, and mutineers, before ultimately being rescued. The story has been thought to be based on the true-life story of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish castaway who lived for four years on a Pacific island. According to J. P. Hunter, Robinson Crusoe is an everyman who begins as a wanderer, aimless on a sea he does not understand, and ends as a pilgrim, crossing a final mountain to enter the promised land. The book tells the story of how Robinson becomes closer to God, not through listening to sermons in a church but through spending time alone amongst nature with only a Bible to read. When Pilnyak writes that Johann Sutter, seeking to get away from people, left Sacramento to explore unsettled lands upstream in search of peace and quiet, intending to live there “like Robinson Crusoe,” the author appears to have mainly the “wanderer” and “pilgrim” aspects of Defoe’s hero in mind.

New Helvetia was the name of the agricultural and trading colony that Johann Sutter established near present-day Sacramento in 1839. It was located at the confluence of the Sacramento River and the American River. In English, the name means “New Switzerland,” after Sutter’s home country (Helvetia is the female national personification of Switzerland). The design was influenced by Fort Vancouver, the principal trading station of the Columbia Department, operated by the Hudson’s Bay Company, which Sutter visited in 1838 before entering Alta California. The site of “New Helvetia” is just a few miles east of where his son, John Sutter, Jr., established Sacramento, and is on the eastern edge of present-day downtown Sacramento. As many as six hundred Indians worked at New Helvetia during the wheat harvest. Other industries included a distillery, a hat factory, blanket works, and a tannery. Housing and working conditions at the fort were very poor, and have been described as “enslavement,” with uncooperative Indians being whipped, jailed, and executed. Housing for workers living in nearby villages and *rancherias* was described as somewhat better. In January 1848, James W. Marshall found gold at Sutter’s Mill on the rancho, starting the California Gold Rush. Sutter was forced to abandon his business ventures at the settlement after that, when the area was overrun by large numbers of gold-seekers. Sutter’s Fort is preserved as a California State Historic Park. With the gold rush, Sutter’s workers abandoned him to seek their fortune in the gold fields. Later, squatters occupied his land. By 1852, Sutter was bankrupt.
John Griffith “Jack” London, born John Griffith Chaney (1876-1916), was an American novelist, journalist, and social activist. A pioneer in the then-burgeoning world of commercial magazine fiction, he was one of the first fiction writers to obtain worldwide celebrity and a large fortune from his fiction alone, including science fiction. Two of his most famous works were *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *White Fang* (1906), both of which are set in the Klondike Gold Rush. He also wrote about the South Pacific, in stories such as “The Heathen” (1910) and “The Pearls of Parlay” (1911), and about the San Francisco Bay area in *The Sea Wolf* (1904). London was part of the radical literary group, “The Crowd,” in San Francisco and a passionate advocate of unionization, socialism, and the rights of workers. He wrote several powerful works dealing with these topics, such as his dystopian novel *The Iron Heel* (1908), his non-fiction exposé *The People of the Abyss* (1903), and *The War of the Classes* (1905). Although he wrote from a socialist viewpoint, London was neither a theorist nor an intellectual socialist. His socialism, he claims, grew out of his own life experience. As London explains in his essay, “How I Became a Socialist” (1903), his political views were influenced by his real-life experience with people who were living at the bottom of the social pit.

Pilnyak’s sarcastic comment here about the shortcomings of studying a country through the window of a railway car (especially a luxurious railway car of a train such as the “Twentieth Century”) seems to be aimed directly at Vladimir Mayakovsky, who did exactly that during his visit to the United States six years earlier and who admitted as much in his American travelogue: “I saw America only through the windows of my railway car” (“Америку я видел только из окон вагона”). See *Mayakovskiy on America: Poems, Travel Sketches, Newspaper Interviews (Maiakovskii ob Amerike: stikhi, ocherki, gazetnye interv'iu)* [Маяковский об Америке: стихи, очерки, газетные интервью], compiled by V. Katanian (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1949), p. 109.

The “Tsar’s mercy” (*tsarskaia milost’*) [царская милость] was the Russian version of “royal” or “imperial” mercy in the West: that is, a monarch granting an official pardon (or amnesty) to a subject who has committed – or will commit – something that is illegal or forbidden. In this instance, the Cossack chieftain appears to be seeking the Tsar’s permission to marry a non-Russian heathen (the local Indian princess).

The word *dzhigit* [джигит] is of Turkic origin and is used in the Caucasus and Central Asia to describe a skillful and brave equestrian, or a brave person in general. The term *dzhigitovka* [джигитовка] means the special style of trick riding that originated in the Turkic cultures of the Caucasus and Central Asia, and is also popular with Russian Cossacks, who adopted it from the peoples of the Caucasus. When performing *dzhigitovka*, the riders at full gallop stand up, jump to the ground and back up to the saddle, pick up objects from the ground (such as coins, hats, etc.), shoot targets with various weapons, ride hanging on the side or under the belly of the horse, and do other acrobatic feats. Since the early nineteenth century, *dzhigitovka* has been demonstrated in circuses and in horse sport competitions, and it has made its way to popular Western culture: for instance, Russian Cossacks (actually Georgian horsemen from the region of Guria in the western part of Georgia) demonstrated *dzhigitovka* as part of *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show*. *Dzhigitovka*, as a sports competition, was also used in the training of cavalry forces in the Russian Empire and the U.S.S.R. *Dzhigitovka*, as a circus performance,
includes complex stunts usually performed by a group of riders.

305 The baiga [байга] is a traditional form of horse racing popular among the Turkic peoples of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, Bashkiria, and Southern Siberia. The length of the race could vary, but it was essentially a test of endurance for the horses.

306 The driving distance between Moscow and Odessa is approximately 822 miles. It seems inconceivable, therefore, that Pilnyak and his two companions, driving an automobile that was made before 1932, could have traveled that distance in a single day.

307 I have not been able to determine the exact identity of this unsuccessful Hollywood screen actor (the author refers to him simply as Isidore K.) who drove cross country from California to New York with Pilnyak and Joe Freeman.

308 Pavel Petrovich Svinin (1787-1839) was a prolific Russian writer, painter, and editor known as the “Russian Munchausen” for the many exaggerated accounts he provided of his travels. An inveterate Anglophile, Svinin accompanied Dmitry Seniavin in the second Archipelago expedition of 1806 and was employed at the Russian consulate in Philadelphia between 1811 and 1813. His first book, Sketches of Moscow and St. Petersburg (1813), made its initial appearance in Pennsylvania in English. Svinin authored several historical novels and plays, a guide to St. Petersburg and its suburbs (in 5 volumes, 1816–1828) and a catalogue of the Kremlin Armory (1826). His personal collection, known as the “Russian Museum,” featured a number of valuable paintings, statues, manuscripts, antiques, coins, and gems. As secretary to the Russian diplomatic representative in the early 1810s, he painted a number of watercolors of life in America. Later he published the book Pilnyak mentions here: A Picturesque Journey in North America (Opyt zhivopisnogo puteshestviia po Severnoi Amerike) [Опыт живописного путешествия по Северной Америке] (St. Petersburg: tip. Drekhslera, 1815).

309 Pilnyak is quoting here from Chapter 5, “Niagara Falls” (Niagarskii vodopad) [Ниагарский водопад] of Svinin’s A Picturesque Journey in North America.

310 The Grand Canyon is a steep-sided canyon carved by the Colorado River in Arizona. It is 277 miles long, up to 18 miles wide, and attains a depth of over a mile. The Grand Canyon is known for its visually overwhelming size and its intricate and colorful landscape. The canyon and adjacent rim are contained within the Grand Canyon National Park, the Kaibab National Forest, the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, the Hualapi Indian Reservation, the Havasupai Indian Reservation, and the Navajo Nation. President Theodore Roosevelt was a major proponent of preservation of the Grand Canyon area, and he visited it on numerous occasions to hunt and enjoy the scenery. Nearly two billion years of Earth’s geological history have been exposed as the Colorado River and its tributaries cut their channels through layer after layer of rock while the Colorado Plateau was uplifted. For thousands of years, the area has been continuously inhabited by Native Americans, who built settlements within the canyon and its many caves. The Pueblo people considered the Grand Canyon a holy site and made pilgrimages to it. The first European known to have viewed the Grand Canyon was Garcia Lopez de Cardenas from Spain, who arrived in 1540.
The Zuni are a federally recognized Native American tribe, one of the Pueblo peoples. Most live in the Pueblo of Zuni on the Zuni River, a tributary of the Little Colorado River, in western New Mexico. The Pueblo of Zuni is located 34 miles south of Gallup, New Mexico. In addition to the reservation, the tribe owns trust lands in Catron County, New Mexico, and Apache County, Arizona. They called their homeland Shiwinnaqin.

Pilnyak is referring here to the El Tovar Hotel, a celebrated lodge located directly on the south rim of the Grand Canyon. The hotel, which was designed by Charles Whittlesey, chief architect for the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway, first opened its doors in 1905. The Chicago architect envisioned the hotel as a cross between a Swiss chalet and a Norwegian villa. This was done in an effort to appeal to the tastes of the elite from that era, who at the time considered European culture the epitome of refinement. El Tovar was one of a chain of hotels and restaurants owned and operated by the Fred Harvey Company in conjunction with the Santa Fe Railway. The hotel was built from local limestone and Oregon pine. It cost $250,000 to build, and many considered it the most elegant hotel west of the Mississippi River. In 1987, the hotel was designated a National Historic Landmark. Over the years, the hotel has hosted such luminaries as Theodore Roosevelt, Albert Einstein, Western author Zane Grey, President Bill Clinton, Sir Paul McCartney and countless others.

Ruvim Markovich Blank (1866-1954) was a Russian chemist, economist, publicist, and editor. Born into a Jewish merchant family in Kishinev, Blank was arrested in 1884 for his participation in a youth revolutionary circle, accused of distributing illegal literature. The following year, he was deported to Krasny Yar of the Astrakhan province for a period of three years. After his exile, Blank returned to his hometown, but then in 1889 he entered the University of Zurich. During the period 1893-1895, he continued his studies in the Chemistry Department of the University of Berlin, where he received his Ph.D. in 1895. Until 1905, he lived in Frankfurt am Main and Berlin, where he was engaged in Jewish public activities under the auspices of “Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden,” an organization that provided assistance to the victims of the Kishinev pogrom. In 1905, Blank was appointed to the editorial board of the newspaper Our Life (Nasha Zhizn’) in St. Petersburg, becoming its editor a year later. At the end of November 1914, he left St. Petersburg to serve as the envoy of the United Committee of Jewish Political Organizations in London, Paris, and New York. Following the end of the First World War, he continued to live in Europe, where he was active in journalistic endeavors and in emigré organizations. Blank was the author of several books in Russian, French, and German.

Miscellaneous orthographic adjustments were made to the Russian language throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the Russian literary language came to assume its modern and highly standardized form. The most recent major reform of Russian spelling (and the one to which Pilnyak is referring here) was carried out shortly after the October Revolution of 1917. The reform was prepared by the noted philologist Aleksey Shakmatov (1864-1920), who headed the commission that was assigned the task of simplifying Russian orthography. His proposals of May 11, 1917 formed the basis of the new rules soon adopted by the Ministry of Popular Education. One of the major changes, as Pilnyak notes, was the elimination of the hard sign (which had become obsolete) in word final position following consonants.
Blank is referring here to Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas (1549-1625), a chronicler, historian, and writer of the Spanish Golden Age, who is best known as the author of A General History of the Deeds of the Castilians on the Islands and Mainland of the Ocean Sea Known As the West Indies (Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las Islas y Tierra Firme del mar Océano que llaman Indias Occidentales, 1601), better known in Spanish as Décadas and considered one of the best works written on the conquest of the Americas. He was Chief Chronicler of Castile and the Americas during the reigns of Philip II and Philip III. Cristobel Pérez Pastor called him the “prince of the historians of the Americas.” He is considered the most prolific historian of his era, and his works also include a general history of the world, a history of Portugal, and a description of the Americas. Herrera is not given much value by modern historians, however. A standard Spanish reference work describes him as “an official historian, who was not impartial . . . an opportunist, a schemer, and greedy . . . He plagiarized entire works which were unpublished at the time . . . He had no interest in Native American civilization and therefore never dealt with it.”

Cacique is a word that the colonialist Spanish used as a title for the leaders of indigenous groups that they encountered in the Western hemisphere. In colonial Mexico, caciques and their families were considered part of the native nobility. They often held the Spanish noble honorifics don and doña, and some of them had entailed estates (cacicazgos). In modern Spanish, the term has come to mean a local political boss who exercises significant power. In Spain, Portugal, and Brazil, the word is most commonly used nowadays to denote “a person in a village or region who exercises excessive influence in political matters.”

Hatuey (died 1512) was a Taino Cacique (chief) from the island of Quisqueya (now Hispaniola) who lived in the early sixteenth century. He has attained legendary status for leading a group of natives in a fight against the invading Spaniards, thus becoming one of the first fighters against colonialism in the New World. He is celebrated as “Cuba’s First National Hero.” The film Even the Rain (2010) includes a cinematic account of Hatuey’s execution.


Karakum is a desert in Central Asia. Its name means “Black Sand” in Turkic languages. It occupies about 70 percent of the area of Turkmenistan. The population of Karakum is sparse, with an average of one person per 2.5 square miles. Rainfall is also sparse, ranging from 70 to 150 mm per year. Covering much of present-day Turkmenistan, the Karakum Desert lies east of the Caspian Sea, with the Aral Sea to the north, and the Amu Darya River and the Kyzyl Kum desert to the northeast.
Pilnyak is referring here to the devastation caused by the series of massacres and episodes of ethnic cleansing that occurred on Turkey’s Yalova Peninsula during 1920-1921. These atrocities against the local Turkish Muslim population that lived there were committed by local Greek and Armenian gangs as well as by the invading Greek army. Ottoman and Turkish documents on massacres claim that at least 9,100 Muslim Turks were killed. An Inter-Allied Commission, consisting of British, French, American, and Italian officers, headed by Maurice Gehri, the representative of the Geneva International Red Cross, and by Arnold Toynbee, the famous British historian and philosopher of history, went to the region to investigate the atrocities. Some historians claim that Circassian irregulars also took part in the massacres.

“Hawk Claw” (*Iastrebinyi Kogot’*) [Ястребиний Коготь] is the type of Indian name that sounds as if it comes straight from a frontier novel written by James Fenimore Cooper or Mayne Reid (both of whom, incidentally, are mentioned in Pilnyak’s travelogue). One scholar, however, has traced this colorful Indian name back to Anton Chekhov’s short story, “Young Boys” (*Mal’chiki*) [Мальчики] (1887), in which two gymnasium students, their romantic imaginations inflamed by fictional accounts of the “Wild West,” are planning to run away to America. One of the boys begins to call himself “Montigomo,” nicknamed “Hawk Claw,” the self-styled “Indian chief of the Invincibles” (*vozhd’ nepobedimykh*) [вождь непобедимых]. See Aleksandr Anichkin, “A Vestige of the Claw: 125 Years Ago Chekhov Contrived Montigomo the Hawk Claw – About the Amazing Fate of This Name” (“Sled kogtia: 125 let nazad Chekhov pridumal Montigomo iastrebinyi kogot’ – Ob udivitel’noi sud’be etogo imeni”) [След когтя: 125 лет назад Чехов придумал Монтигомо ястребиний коготь – Об удивительной судьбе этого имени] Ogonek (February 6, 2012): [https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1862703](https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1862703).

The Office of Indian Affairs, now called the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), is a federal agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior that is responsible for the administration and management of 55,700,000 acres of land held in trust by the United States for Native Americans, Native American Tribes, and Alaska Natives. It was formed on March 11, 1824 by Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, who created the agency as a division within his department, without authorization from the United States Congress. In 1849, Indian Affairs was transferred to the U.S. Department of the Interior. The BIA is one of two bureaus under the jurisdiction of the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Bureau of Indian Education, which provides education services to approximately 48,000 Native Americans. The BIA’s responsibilities include providing health care to American Indians and Alaska Natives. In 1954, that function was transferred to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (now known as the Department of Health and Human Services). The Office of Indian Affairs was renamed the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1947. Pilnyak refers to it throughout his narrative simply as the “Indian Department” (*indeiskii department*) [индейский департамент].

*Kishlak* is the name used for a rural settlement of semi-nomadic Turkic peoples of Central Asia and Azerbaijan. The meaning of the term in Turkic languages is “wintering place.” Traditionally, a kishlak is surrounded by a clay/mud fence.

Pilnyak is quoting here the same passage from Chapter 5, “Niagara Falls” (*Niagarskii vodopad*) [Ниагарский водопад], of Pavel Svinin’s *A Picturesque Journey in North America* that he had quoted earlier (in Chapter 25).
Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin (1766-1826) was a Russian writer, poet, critic, and pioneering historian who was instrumental in founding nineteenth-century Russian imperial conservatism. Born on the provincial estate of his father in the village of Mikhailovka, in the Orenburg Region, Karamzin was educated at home before entering the University of Moscow at age fourteen. After a brief period of service in the army, Karamzin settled in Moscow in 1784 and found his way into the intellectual life of the city. Karamzin established himself as the first major short-story writer in Russia with more than a dozen stories. All of them were in the Sentimentalist style and most of them were extremely popular. Two of the best remembered ones are “Poor Liza” (*Bednaia Liza* [Бедная Лиза] (1792) and “The Island of Bornholm” (*Ostrov Borngol’m* [Остров Борнгольм] (1793). These stories inspired a large number of imitations and provided the basis for literary Sentimentalism in Russia. When Pilnyak states that Pavel Svinin writes “in such a Karamzinian way,” he is no doubt referring to Svinin’s sentimentalist sensibilities.

Pilnyak is quoting here the continuation of the passage from Chapter 5, “Niagara Falls” (*Niagarskiy vodopad* [Ниагарский водопад]), of Pavel Svinin’s *A Picturesque Journey in North America* that he had twice quoted earlier (both times in Chapter 25).

For background information on Thomas Mayne Reid, see endnote #118. The legend that Pilnyak claims “follows in the tradition of Mayne Reid” is, no doubt, the legend of the “noble savage” – the concept (derived from Rousseau’s romantic philosophy) that the native American, as an indigene who has not been “corrupted” by civilization, symbolizes humanity’s innate goodness.

Pilnyak is referring here to the Komi people, for whom, historically, there have been at least three different names: Permyaks, Zyrians and Komi, the last one being the self-designation of the people. The name Permyaks first appeared in the tenth century in Russian sources and came from the ancient name of the land (“Perm”) that lies between the Mezen River and the Pechora River. Since the twentieth century, the name has been applied only to the southern Komi in the Perm area (Komi-Permyaks). The name for the northern Komis – the Zyrians – has existed since the fourteenth century and has had many different forms in various Russian sources (such as Seryan, Siryan, Syryan, Suryan, and Ziryan), but the latter has finally become predominant. The name Komi is the endonym for all groups of the people. It was first recorded by ethnographers in the eighteenth century. It originates from the Finno-Ugric word *kom*, meaning “man,” “human.”

For background information on the Samoyed peoples, see endnote #40.

Dnepropetrovsk is Ukraine’s fourth largest city, with about one million inhabitants. It is located 391 kilometers southeast of the capital Kiev on the Dnieper River, in the south-central part of Ukraine. Known until 1925 as Ekaterinoslav, the city was formally inaugurated by Catherine the Great in 1787 as the administrative center of the newly acquired vast territories of imperial “New Russia,” including those territories that were ceded to Russia by the Ottoman Empire under a treaty signed in 1774. The city was originally envisioned as the Russian Empire’s third capital city, after Moscow and Saint Petersburg. In the early Soviet period, the
The city was famous for its proximity to the Dneprostroi Dam, which was built on deserted land in the surrounding countryside to stimulate Soviet industrialization during Stalin’s first Five-Year Plan (1928-1932). The hydroelectric station at the dam was planned to provide electricity for several aluminum production plants and a high-quality steel production plant that were also to be constructed in the area. Generating about 560 megawatts of power, this hydroelectric station became the largest Soviet power plant at the time and one of the largest in the world. American specialists under the direction of Colonel Hugh Cooper took part in its construction. See also endnote #208.

332 A “liana” is any of various long-stemmed, woody vines that are rooted in the soil at ground level and that use trees, as well as other means of vertical support, to climb up to the canopy to get access to well-lit areas of the forest. Lianas are characteristic of tropical moist deciduous forests, but may be found in temperate rainforests. The term “liana” is not a taxonomic grouping, but rather a description of the way the plant grows – much like “tree” or “shrub.”

333 Pilnyak is referring here, of course, to the famous Scopes Trial, formally known as The State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes, but commonly referred to as the “Scopes Monkey Trial.” This was an American legal case in July 1925 in which a substitute high school teacher, John T. Scopes, was accused of violating Tennessee’s Butler Act, which had made it unlawful to teach human evolution in any state-funded school. Scopes was unsure whether he had ever actually taught some evolution, but he purposely incriminated himself so that the case could have a defendant. Scopes was found guilty and fined $100, but the verdict was overturned on a technicality. The trial served its purpose of drawing intense national publicity, as reporters from across the country flocked to Dayton, Tennessee, to cover the big-name lawyers who had agreed to represent each side: William Jennings Bryan, a three-time presidential candidate, argued for the prosecution, while Clarence Darrow, the famed defense attorney, spoke for Scopes. The trial publicized the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy, pitting those who held that evolution was not inconsistent with religion against those who held that the word of God as revealed in the Bible took priority over all human knowledge. The case was thus seen as both a theological contest and a trial on whether “modern science” should be taught in schools.

334 The Huguenots were French Protestants, mainly from northern France, who were inspired by the writings of John Calvin. The Huguenot community reportedly reached as much as 10% of the French population on the eve of the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre in August 1572, when thousands of these French Calvinist Protestants perished during a wave of Catholic mob violence directed at them. It declined to 7-8% by the end of the sixteenth century, and even further after heavy persecution began once again with the Edict of Fontainebleau (also known as the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes) proclaimed by Louis XIV in 1685, when Huguenots lost the right to practice their religion without persecution by the state. Only a tiny minority of Huguenots remained, and they faced continued persecution under Louis XV. By the time of the death of Louis XV in 1774, French Calvinism was almost completely wiped out. Persecution of Protestants officially ended with the Edict of Versaille (Edict of Tolerance), signed by Louis XVI in 1787. Two years later, with the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, Protestants gained equal rights as citizens. The bulk of Huguenot émigrés relocated to Protestant states abroad. The Huguenot diaspora in England and Australia still retain their beliefs and Huguenot designation.
Pilnyak appears to be punning here on the well-known idiom (an idiom both in English and in Russian), that “money does not grow on trees” (den'gi ne rastut na derev'iaxh) when he says that “bananas do grow on trees” (banany rastut na brevnakh) substituting the word brevno [бревно], which can mean “tree” but more often means “log,” for the word derevo [дерево].

Pilnyak’s uses the word niagara [ннагара] here in its plural form and without capitalizing the initial letter “n,” so he is most likely alluding to the generic meaning that has attached itself to the word as a “torrent,” a “flood,” rather than to the famous waterfall itself.

Ku Klux Klan (KKK) is the name given to three distinct movements in the United States that have advocated extremist, reactionary currents, such as White supremacy, White nationalism, anti-immigration, and, especially in later iterations, Nordicism, anti-Catholicism, and anti-Semitism. Historically, the KKK used terrorism, both physical assault and murder, against groups or individuals that they opposed. All three movements have called for the “purification” of American society, and all are considered right-wing extremist organizations. The first Klan flourished in the Southern United States in the late 1860s, then died out by the early 1870s. It sought to overthrow the Republican state governments in the South during the Reconstruction Era, especially by using violence against African-American leaders. Although it had numerous chapters across the South, the KKK was suppressed around 1871 through federal law enforcement. Members made their own, often colorful, costumes: robes, masks, and conical hats, designed to be terrifying, and to hide their identities. The second group was founded in 1915, and it flourished nationwide in the early and mid-1920s, particularly in urban areas of the Midwest and West. It was rooted in local Protestant communities and opposed Catholics and Jews, stressing its opposition to the Catholic Church at a time of high immigration from mostly Catholic nations in southern and eastern Europe. This second organization adopted a standard white costume and used code words that were similar to those used by the first Klan, while adding cross burnings and mass parades to intimidate others. The third and current manifestation of the KKK emerged after 1950, in the form of small, local, unconnected groups that use the KKK name. They have focused on opposition to the Civil Rights Movement, often using violence and murder to suppress activists. It is classified as a hate group by the Anti-Defamation League and the Southern Poverty Law Center. The second and third incarnations of the Ku Klux Klan made frequent references to America’s “Anglo-Saxon” blood, hearkening back to nineteenth-century nativism. Although members of the KKK swear to uphold Christian morality, virtually every Christian denomination has officially denounced the KKK.

“Lynch’s court” (sud Lincha) gets its name from Charles Lynch (1736-1796), a Virginia planter, politician, and American revolutionary who headed an irregular court in Virginia to punish Loyalist supporters of the British during the American Revolutionary War. The terms “Lynch’s court,” “Lynch’s law,” and “lynching” are all believed to be derived from his name. In several incidents in 1780, Lynch and several other militia officers and justices of the peace rounded up suspects who were thought to be part of a Loyalist uprising in southwestern Virginia. The suspects were given a summary trial at an informal court; sentences handed down included whipping, property seizure, coerced pledges of allegiance, and conscription into the military. Lynch’s extralegal actions were legitimized by the Virginia General Assembly in 1782.
“Lynch’s law,” referring to organized but unauthorized punishment of criminals, became a common phrase, as it was used by Lynch himself to describe his own actions as early as 1782. Subsequently, the three terms that derived from Lynch’s campaign against Loyalists became increasingly linked to acts of violence, performed by self-appointed commissions, mobs, or vigilantes, without due process of law, against African-American slaves in the Southern States at the time of the Civil War. Racist extremism, with an eye to viciousness and public spectacle, was frequently evident in these subsequent instances of “lynching” during the era of Jim Crow, the racial caste system that operated primarily, but not exclusively, in the Southern States (and border states) between 1877 and the mid-1960s.

339 Pilnyak uses here the adjective “White Guard” (belogvardeiskii) [белогвардейский], referring pejoratively to the White movement (Beloe dvizhenie) [Белое движение] and its military arm, the White Army, also known as the White Guard, a loose confederation of anti-communist forces that vehemently opposed and stubbornly fought against the Bolsheviks at the time of the Russian Revolution and the Civil War (1917-1923) that ensued in its aftermath. The White Guard continued operating as militarized associations both within and outside Russian borders until roughly World War II. Remnants and continuations of the movement, some of which had only narrow support, endured within the wider White émigré community until after the fall of communism.

340 Pilnyak writes that this is a sud without a sud [суд без суда]. Since the Russian word sud [суд] has various meanings (“trial,” “court,” “verdict,” “justice,” etc.), I have tried to suggest several of them here in my translation of this phrase.

341 Pilnyak uses here the term samosud [самосуд], which means, literally, “we ourselves judge,” but suggests that a mob of angry people – rather than justice officials – is doing the “judging.”

342 The Scottsboro Boys were nine Black teenagers falsely accused in their home state of raping two White women on a train in 1931. The case was first heard in Scottsboro, Alabama, in three rushed trials, in which the defendants received poor legal representation. All but one of the defendants were convicted of rape and sentenced to death, the common sentence in Alabama at the time for Black men convicted of raping White women, even though there was medical evidence to suggest that they had not committed the crime. With help from the Communist Party USA, the case was appealed. The Alabama Supreme Court affirmed seven of the eight convictions, and granted the eighth defendant a new trial because he was a minor. Chief Justice John C. Anderson dissented, ruling that the defendants had been denied an impartial jury, a fair trial, fair sentencing, and effective counsel. The cases were twice appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ordered new trials. The case was returned to the lower court and the judge allowed a change of venue, moving the retrials to Decatur, Alabama. During the retrials, one of the alleged victims admitted fabricating the rape story and asserted that none of the Scottsboro Boys touched either of the White women. The jury found the defendants guilty, but the judge set aside the verdict and granted a new trial. That judge was replaced and the case tried under a more biased judge, whose rulings went against the defense. For the third time, a jury – now with one African-American member – returned a guilty verdict. The case was sent to the U.S. Supreme Court on appeal. It ruled that African-Americans had to be included on juries, and ordered retrials. Charges were finally dropped for four of the nine defendants. Sentences for the rest
ranged from 75 years in prison to death. All but two served prison sentences. One was shot in prison by a guard and permanently disabled. Two escaped, were later charged with other crimes, convicted, and sent back to prison. Clarence Norris, the oldest defendant and the only one sentenced to death, “jumped parole” in 1946 and went into hiding. He was found in 1976 and pardoned by Governor George Wallace, by which time the case had been thoroughly analyzed and was shown to be an injustice. Norris later wrote a book about his experiences. The last surviving defendant died in 1989. The “Scottsboro Boys,” as they came to be known, were defended by many in the North and attacked by many in the South. The case is now widely considered an egregious miscarriage of justice, particularly highlighted by the use of all-White juries. Black Americans in Alabama had been disenfranchised since the turn of the century and thus were generally disqualified from jury duty. The case has been explored in many works of literature, music, theater, film, and television. In November 2013, Alabama’s parole board voted to grant posthumous pardons to the three Scottsboro Boys who had not been pardoned or had their convictions overturned during their lifetimes.

The Ritz Paris (Hôtel Ritz) is a luxury hotel in central Paris that overlooks the octagonal border of the Place Vendome at number 15. The hotel, founded in 1898 by the Swiss hotelier, César Ritz, in collaboration with the French chef, Auguste Escoffier, is ranked among the most luxurious hotels in the world. The hotel was constructed behind the façade of an eighteenth-century town house, overlooking one of Paris’s central squares. It was among the first hotels in Europe to provide a bathroom en suite, a telephone, and electricity for each room. It quickly established a reputation for luxury, with clients including royalty, politicians, writers, film stars, and singers. Several of its suites are named in honor of famous guests of the hotel, including Coco Chanel and Ernest Hemingway, who lived at the hotel for years. One of the bars of the hotel, Bar Hemingway, is devoted to him. L’Espadon is a world-renowned restaurant, attracting aspiring chefs from all over the world who come to learn at the adjacent Ritz-Escoffier School. The grandest suite of the hotel, called the Suite Impériale, has been listed by the French government as a national monument in its own right.

Pilnyak characterizes these American ladies in Paris as pririttsnye [приритцные], an adjective he coins, from the preposition “at” (pri) [при], that seems to mean, in a rather straightforward way, that they are lodging at a very expensive and opulent hotel: that is, they are “at” (pri) [при] the “Ritz” (ritts) [ритц]. What is less clear, however, is whether Pilnyak might not also be suggesting here the American slang expression, “putting on the Ritz,” meaning to dress very fashionably. This expression was made famous, of course, in the 1927 Irving Berlin song, “Puttin’ on the Ritz,” which was introduced by Harry Richman and chorus in the musical film Puttin’ on the Ritz (1930) and which quickly became the number-one selling record in America (sung by Fred Astaire). The original version of Berlin’s song included references to the then-popular fad of flashily-dressed but poor Black Harlemites parading up and down Lenox Avenue, “Spending ev’ry dime / For a wonderful time.” Berlin later revised the lyrics to apply to affluent White people strutting “up and down Park Avenue.” This Irving Berlin song appears to have gained some popularity in post-Soviet Russia as evidenced by this 2012 Moscow flash mob performance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNXd3wX_USc
Pilnyak is referring here to an earlier statement he had made about students at American universities: “One doesn’t need to ask students at these universities what department they are studying in, but rather what athletic team they are playing on.” See Chapter 23.

Although Pilnyak uses here the word khizhina [хижина], which denotes a “shack” or a “hut,” to characterize the type of ramshackle dwelling that these poor Black sharecroppers inhabit, I have chosen to translate it instead as “cabin,” since Harriet Beecher Stowe’s famous anti-slavery novel, Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly (1852), has consistently been translated into Russian as Khizhina diadi Toma [Хижина дядя Тома] (1908).

The Russian stove heater that Pilnyak is referring to here is called a burzhuika [буржуйка], literally, a bourgeoise (a female member of the bourgeois class). Whereas the American “pot belly” stove reportedly gets its name from the resemblance the stove bears to a corpulent man’s midsection, the burzhuika gets its name from its wide use by members of the privileged class during the cold and famine that plagued Petrograd during the winter of 1919-1920. These small cast-iron, moveable wood stoves, which were widely used for heating rooms during that winter, were apparently so expensive that only the affluent “former people” (byvshie liudi) [бывшие люди] were able to afford them.

War Communism (Voennyi kommunizm) [Военный коммунизм] was the economic and political system of requisitioning that existed in Soviet Russia during the Russian Civil War (1917-1923). This policy was adopted by the Bolsheviks with the goal of keeping towns and the Red Army supplied with food and weapons. The system had to be used because the ongoing war disrupted normal economic mechanisms and relations. “War Communism,” which was enforced by the Supreme Economic Council, began in June 1918 and ended in March 1921, with the beginning of NEP, the government’s “New Economic Policy” (Novaia ekonomicheskaia politika [Новая экономическая политика], which lasted until 1928 (the year when Stalin’s first Five-Year Plan was launched).

Aleksandr Sergeyevich Pushkin (1799-1837) was a Russian poet, playwright, and novelist of the Romantic era who is widely considered to be Russia’s greatest poet and the founder of modern Russian literature. Pushkin was born into Russian nobility in Moscow. His matrilineal great-grandfather was an African Moor, Abram Petrovich Gannibal, who was kidnapped from what is now Cameroon (there are various scholarly views on this) and raised in the household of Peter the Great. Pushkin published his first poem at the age of fifteen, and was widely recognized by the literary establishment by the time of his graduation from the Tsarskoe Selo Lyceum. While under strict surveillance by the tsar’s political police and unable to publish, Pushkin wrote his most famous play, the drama Boris Godunov [Борис Годунов] (1825) and his novel in verse, Evgeny Onegin [Евгений Онегин] (1825-1832). Pushkin was fatally wounded in a duel with Georges-Charles d’Anthès, a French officer serving with the Chevalier Guard regiment, who attempted to seduce the poet’s wife, Natalia Pushkina. The issue of Pushkin’s “blackness” is the subject of the scholarly essays included in the volume, Under the Sky of My Africa: Alexander Pushkin and Blackness, ed. Catharine Theimer Nepomnyashchy, Nicole Svobodny, and Ludmilla A. Trigos (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2006).
In Russian, a “back” (or “rear”) entrance or stairway is literally a “black” one: a chernyi khod [чёрный ход] and a chernaia lestnitsa [чёрная лестница], respectively. The Black journalist thus makes his way to Pilnyak’s hotel room by using the “black” elevator (chernyi lift) [чёрный лифт].

Carpenters’ Hall is a two-story brick building in the Old City neighborhood of Philadelphia that was a key meeting place in the early history of the United States. Completed in 1775, the meeting hall was built for (and is still owned by) the Carpenters Company of the City and County of Philadelphia, the country’s oldest extant craft guild. The building was declared a National Historic Landmark and was added to the National Register of Historic Places on April 15, 1970. The First Continental Congress met here in October and November 1774, resolving to ban further imports of slaves and to discontinue the slave trade within the colonies, a step toward phasing out slavery in British North America.

Pilnyak uses here the Russian idiom for “a fly in the ointment” (literally, “a drop of tar in a barrel of mead”) (kapel’ degtia v medakh) [капель дегтя в мёдах], to convey how a minor irritation can spoil the success or enjoyment of something larger. Queen Anne’s monopoly over the slave trade was thus, figuratively speaking, just a small “drop of tar” (not the decisive drop, perhaps, but a drop nonetheless) that contributed toward ruining the barrel of mead that Americans were hoping to drink from (profits from the slave trade).

Thomas Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924) was an American politician and academic who served as the 28th President of the United States from 1913 to 1921. The recipient of a law degree and then one of the first doctorates in political science awarded by Johns Hopkins University, Wilson served as a professor and scholar at various institutions before being selected as president of Princeton University, a position that he held from 1902 to 1910. In 1910, he won the Democratic nomination for governor of New Jersey and was subsequently elected as a progressive reformer, holding office from 1911 to 1913 and gaining a national reputation. Wilson’s victory in the 1912 presidential election made him the first Southerner elected to the presidency since Zachary Taylor in 1848. He also led the United States during World War I, establishing an activist foreign policy known as “Wilsonianism” (or “Wilsonian idealism”), characterized by an emphasis on the self-determination of peoples, an advocacy of the spread of democracy and capitalism, as well as an opposition to isolationism and non-intervention. He was a major leader at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, where he championed the proposed League of Nations. However, he was unable to obtain Senate approval for U.S. membership. After he suffered debilitating strokes in September 1919, Wilson secluded himself in the White House, his disability having diminished his power and influence. His wife and staff members, as a result, handled most of his presidential duties. Failing in his bid to win re-nomination at the 1920 Democratic National Convention, Wilson retired at the end of his presidency, and he died in 1924. In Pilnyak’s narrative, Wilson, it seems, figures much more prominently as an American historian than as an American president.

A latifundium was a large landed estate or ranch in ancient Rome and, more recently, in Spain or Latin America, that was typically worked by slaves.

The phrase (purportedly from newspaper reports) that Pilnyak repeats twice in this paragraph, “with moral horror” (*s nравственным ужасом*) [с нравственным ужасом], was made famous by John L. O’Sullivan (1813-1895) in his passionate defense of “Manifest Destiny,” the nineteenth-century belief that the expansion of the United States throughout the continent was both inevitable and justified, that America was destined by God and by history to expand not only its boundaries but also its system of democracy over a vast area. In an essay, titled “The Great Nation of Futurity,” that appeared in the November 1839 issue of his journal, *Democratic Review*, O’Sullivan wrote: “What friend of human liberty, civilization, and refinement can cast his view over the past history of the monarchies and aristocracies of antiquity, and not deplore that they ever existed? What philanthropist can contemplate the oppressions, the cruelties, and injustice inflicted by them on the masses of mankind, and not turn with moral horror from the retrospect? America is destined for better deeds.”

Pilnyak is likely referring here to the so-called Franklin-Nashville Campaign: the consecutive devastating defeats that the Confederate Army suffered late in the Civil War in the state of Tennessee at the Battle of Franklin (November 30, 1864) and the Battle of Nashville (December 15-16, 1864), where the Union Army, led by General George H. Thomas, routed the Confederate Army, led by Lt. General John Bell Hood. Eight regiments of United States Colored Troops, with more than 5,000 soldiers, fought in that campaign for the Union. I have not been able to find any Civil War battle that was waged in a Southern city or town named Buford or Beaufort (*B’iufor*) [Бьюфор].

The young dramatist, whom Pilnyak refers to here as Regina Anzhul [Регина Анжул] is Regina Anderson Andrews (1901-1993), an African-American playwright and librarian who became a key member of the Harlem Renaissance. Born in Chicago, she studied locally at Wilberforce University and then later, after moving to New York, at Columbia University. She became a librarian at the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library, working there under the supervision of Ernestine Rose and sharing a nearby apartment in the Sugar Hill district of Harlem with Ethel Ray and Louella Tucker. These three young Black women opened the space to the community, hosting salons, events, and gatherings for artists at their apartment, which became known as the “Harlem West Side Literary Salon.” Andrews helped to organize the famous Civic Club dinner of 1924 for Black New York intellectuals and writers. Attended by over a hundred guests, including W.E.B. DuBois, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, and Langston Hughes, the dinner was one of the coalescing events of the Harlem Renaissance. Andrews and DuBois co-founded the Krigwa Players (later known as the Negro Experimental Theatre), a Black theater company. The Krigwa Players produced her two one-act plays *Climbing Jacob’s Ladder* (about a lynching) and *Underground* (about the Underground Railroad). She is thought by some scholars to have been one of the real-life models for Mary Love, the fictional librarian who serves as the heroine of Carl Van Vechten’s controversial novel, *Nigger Heaven* (1926). For more detailed biographical information about Regina Andrews, see Ethelene Whitmire, *Regina Anderson Andrews: Harlem Renaissance Librarian* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014).
The play was no doubt the aforementioned Climbing Jacob’s Ladder, which was being performed for the first time during the spring of 1931, while Pilnyak was staying in New York. This one-act play is about a lynching that occurs while Black people are praying inside a church.

Regina Anderson was married to William T. Andrews (1898–1984), an American lawyer and Democratic politician, originally from Sumter, South Carolina, who served as a New York State Assemblyman during much of the 1930s and 1940s. He also served during the 1930s as a Special Legal Assistant for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), where he was responsible for investigating allegations of Jim Crow discrimination. He and Regina Anderson were wed on April 10, 1926. Ethelene Whitmire notes that just two years earlier (in 1924), while Regina was looking after her ailing mother back in Normal, IL, for a short while, she wrote two letters to her friend, Joe Freeman, wishing in one of them that he were with her now in Illinois so that they could walk beneath the elms together and chat, and writing in the other that she hoped that some evening, upon her return to New York, he would look her up and talk with her about his book, his work, and his interests. These two letters, as Whitmire writes, suggest “a possible romance.” See Regina Anderson Andrews: Harlem Renaissance Librarian, p. 49. Pilnyak himself, in a letter he would write to Joe Freeman two months after his return to Moscow (October 3, 1931), expresses a romantic attraction that he apparently had toward Regina Anderson Andrews as well: “Call Ellen Wiener and have her search out Black Regina. When will Regina be coming to the U.S.S.R.? Bring her here with you! Tell her that if she comes, I’ll marry her. I’m dead serious. She and I will write plays together. She’ll teach me how. I’m not kidding. I love Regina very much.” See Lazar Fleishman, “Joseph Freeman and Boris Pilnyak” (“Dzhozef Frimen i Boris Pil’niak”) in Stanford Slavic Studies, Volume 5: From the History of Russian and Soviet Culture: Documents from the Hoover Institution Archives (Materialy po istorii russkoi i sovetskoi kul’tury: Iz Arkhiva Guverovskogo Instituta) (Материалы по истории русской и советской культуры: Из Архива Гуверовского Института) (Stanford University, 1992), p. 172. An English translation of Professor Fleishman’s essay can be found at: https://scholars.unh.edu/faculty_pubs/790/

The “new innovative theater” in Harlem that Pilnyak is referring to here was the Negro Experimental Theatre, also known as the Harlem Experimental Theatre (1928-1934), which evolved out of the Little Negro Theatre (1925-1928), home to the aforementioned Krigwa Players. The Little Negro Theatre had been co-founded a few years earlier by W.E.B. DuBois and Regina Anderson Andrews with the aim of performing African American plays that were “for us, by us, near us, and about us.” Two of Regina Anderson Andrews’s one-act plays, Climbing Jacob’s Ladder (1931) and Underground (1932), were performed at the Negro Experimental Theatre under her pseudonym, Ursula Trelling.

I have not been able to locate any biographical information about Ellen Weiner or Ellen Wiener (Elen Viner) [Элен Винэр], the female journalist who, according to Pilnyak, hosted a salon in Greenwich Village, where the Soviet writer met regularly with some of his newfound “Negro friends” (such as Walter and Thomas).

For background information on Vladimir Mayakovsky, see endnote #110.
Vsevolod Emilevich Meyerhold (1874-1940) was a Russian and Soviet theater director, actor, and theatrical producer. As a student at the Moscow Philharmonic Dramatic School, Meyerhold began acting in productions at the Moscow Art Theatre under the guidance of Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, one of its co-founders. During the following several years, Meyerhold participated in a number of innovative theatrical projects, both as a director and an actor, experimenting with new staging methods while working with the imperial theaters in St. Petersburg. He introduced classical plays in an innovative manner, and staged works of controversial contemporary authors, such as Fyodor Sologub, Zinaida Gippius, and Alexander Blok. In these plays, Meyerhold tried to return acting to the traditions of *Commedia dell’arte*, rethinking them for the contemporary theatrical reality. The October Revolution made Meyerhold one of the most enthusiastic activists of the new Soviet Theater. He joined the Bolshevik Party in 1918 and became an official in the Theater Division of the Commissariat of Education and Enlightenment. In 1918-1919, Meyerhold formed an alliance with Olga Kameneva, the head of the Division. Together, they tried to radicalize Russian theaters, effectively nationalizing them under Bolshevik control. The head of the Commissariat, Anatoly Lunacharsky, however, soon secured Lenin’s permission to revise government policy in favor of more traditional theaters and dismissed Kameneva in June 1919. The following year, Meyerhold founded his own theater, which was known from 1923 until 1938 as the Meyerhold Theater. In it, he confronted the principles of theatrical academism, claiming that they were incapable of finding a common language with the new reality. Meyerhold’s methods of scenic constructivism and circus-style effects were used in his most successful works of the time, which included plays by Mayakovsky, such as *Mystery-Bouffe (Misteriia-buff)* (1921) and *The Bedbug (Klop)* (1929). The actors participating in Meyerhold’s productions acted according to the principle of *biomechanics*, the system of actor training that was later taught in a special school created by Meyerhold. His provocative experiments dealing with physical being and symbolism in an unconventional theater setting made him one of the seminal forces in modern international theater. In the wake of the campaign against Formalism and Naturalism, which would launch the Great Purge in the late 1930s, Meyerhold was arrested, tortured, and executed in February 1940.

I have not been able to determine the exact identity of these two young African-American intellectuals, whom Pilnyak calls (most likely using literary names) “Walter” (Volter) and “Thomas” (Tomas). The fact that one of them is an actor, while the other is a poet, suggests that they might be, respectively, Harold Jackman (1901-1961) and Countee Cullen (1903-1946). Jackman, who taught social studies at DeWitt Clinton High School for more than thirty years, was a prominent figure in the Harlem Renaissance, mainly by virtue of his contributions as an actor, participating actively in stage productions performed by the Krigwa Players and other acting troupes. He was also a member of the executive board and the historian for the Negro Actors Guild, an organization co-founded by Fredericka Carolyn (“Fredi”) Washington for the benefit of Black performers. He is usually noted for his intimate relationship with Cullen. Indeed, they were commonly referred to as the “David and Jonathan of the Harlem Twenties” because of their extremely close friendship. Langston Hughes famously noted how he laughed heartily at the headline in a Black newspaper that ran after Cullen and Jackman sailed to Paris together just two months after the former’s lavish wedding to Yolande DuBois, the only daughter of W.E.B. DuBois (the headline read: “Groom Sails With Best Man”). Cullen, for his
part, gained prominence as a leading African-American poet, novelist, and playwright. Like Jackman, Cullen taught for many years at a local secondary school (in his case, at Frederick Douglass Junior High School). He also worked as assistant editor for *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life*, where his column, “The Dark Tower,” increased his literary reputation. It is possible, therefore, that the actor Jackman and the poet Cullen were indeed the two “inseparable” friends that Pilnyak characterizes here as “Mayakovsky and Meyerhold in their younger days.” Pilnyak, incidentally, uses the same word to characterize these two “inseparable” friends (неразлучные) that Tolstoy does in *Anna Karenina* when describing the two homosexual officers who serve in Vronsky’s army regiment (Part 7, Chapter 19).

366 Pilnyak is referring here to the notion advanced by Marcel Proust (1871-1922) that it is not so much the common objects linked to one’s past that evoke involuntary (or automatic) memory, but rather the “primary sensations” that are associated with those objects. The classic example of the way that sensory stimuli – tastes, scents, sounds, sights – serve as triggers that evoke one’s involuntary memory is provided in the famous episode in *Swann’s Way* (Du côté de chez Swann) (1913), the first volume of Proust’s multi-volume *In Search of Lost Time* (A la recherche du temps perdu) (1913-1922), where the smell and taste of a small French pastry (a petite madeleine) trigger the narrator’s vivid recollections of his childhood years without any conscious effort on his part.

367 As the reader will see later (Chapter 43), this particular issue – whether there will be any remaining “scoundrels” after the victory of communism – is raised again during the conversation that Pilnyak has with Theodore Dreiser several days before the Soviet writer’s departure from New York in early August: “He [Dreiser] raised a question that apparently he still had not satisfactorily resolved and so he was trying to solve it, for his own sake and in his own way: ‘Under socialism, under communism, when communism spreads throughout the whole world, will there still remain scoundrels or not?’”

368 The Mayakovsky poem that Pilnyak is quoting from here is “Black and White” (*Blek end uait*) [Блек энд уайт] (1925). In Russian, “black work” (чёрная работа) means the same thing as “unskilled labor” (nekvalifitsirovannaia rabota) [неквалифицированная работа].

369 By what he calls here the “Negro Labor League” (негритянская рабочая лига), Pilnyak appears to be referring to the American Negro Labor Congress, which was established in 1925 by the Communist Party USA as a vehicle for advancing the rights of African-Americans, propagandizing for communism within the Black community, and recruiting African-American members for the Communist Party. The organization attacked the segregationist practices of many of the unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. It also campaigned against lynching, the disfranchisement of Black Americans, and Jim Crow laws. In 1930, the group was renamed the League of Struggle for Negro Rights. The League was particularly active in organizing support for the “Scottsboro Boys,” the nine Black men convicted in 1931 of crimes they had not committed (see endnote #342). The League also advocated a more general policy of opposition to fascism and support for the Soviet Union. Pilnyak’s “Negro Labor League” is likely a conflation of these two names.
for the same organization: that is, the earlier American Negro Labor Congress (1925-1930) and the later League of Struggle for Negro Rights (1930-1936).

370 Carried away perhaps by his exuberant endorsement of the valuable cultural contributions that African-Americans have made to American national dance and American national music (or perhaps it was simply a Freudian slip?), Pilnyak writes here “sexophone” (seksafon) [сексафон], rather than “saxophone” (saksofon) [саксофон].

371 As the reader may recall, Pilnyak mentioned the town of Kingman, Arizona, earlier in his narrative (Chapter 23), when describing what American philistinism looks like.

372 The Black Mountains of northwest Arizona are an extensive, mostly linear, north-south mountain range that stretches 75 miles long. They form the north-south border of southwest Mohave County as it borders the eastern shore of the south-flowing Colorado River from the Hoover Dam. The northwest part of the range, and parts to the west of the range, are located in the Lake Mead National Recreation Area. Three wilderness areas (Mount Nutt, Warm Springs, and Wabayuma Peak) are located in the range. So, too, is the historic mining site of Oatman, Arizona. For background information on the town of Kingman, see endnote #240.

373 Aleksei Nikolaevich Tolstoy (1883-1945), nicknamed “Comrade Count,” was a Russian and Soviet writer who worked in many genres, but he specialized in science fiction and historical novels. Born into an aristocratic family (his parents were distant relatives of the Tolstoy and Turgenev families), Aleksei Tolstoy as a young boy was thrilled by the adventure stories of James Fenimore Cooper, Jules Verne, Thomas Mayne Reid, and Victor Hugo. His early writings earned the praise of Maksim Gorky, who urged his readers to look to this “new Tolstoy” for a powerful depiction of the collapse of the Russian provincial gentry. Tolstoy would attain especial prominence with his lengthy historical novel, The Road to Calvary (Khozhdenie po mukham) [Хождение по мукам], which he started writing in 1919 and completed in 1944. The novel, which tracks the period from 1914 to 1919, including the October Revolution and ensuing Civil War, was awarded the Stalin Prize. Tolstoy, who sided with the Whites, moved to an émigré community in France in 1920, but in 1923 he returned permanently to Soviet Russia, where he learned how to make successful accommodations with the Soviet regime. This is evidenced by his election in 1937 to the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union and his appointment to full membership in the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences in 1939.

374 The adjective “colored” that Pilnyak uses repeatedly throughout this paragraph – “colored photograph,” “colored suit,” “colored young man,” “colored smoke” – is the past passive participle form raskrashennyi [раскрашенный] of the verb raskrasit’ [раскрасить], which means, literally, “to paint,” “to color.” As a rule, he uses the adjective kolernyi [колерный] throughout his narrative when speaking about an African-American as a “colored person.”

375 Pilnyak is referring here to the town that was founded in 1767 as a Volga German community called Baronsk [Баронск]. It was soon renamed Yekaterinenshstadt [Екатериненштадт] [Catherine’s Town] after Catherine the Great. In 1915, it was renamed Yekaterinengrad [Екатериненград], replacing the German word for “town” (stadt) [штадт].
with the Russian word for “town” (grad) [град] in its name. In 1920, it was renamed Marksshtadt [Марксштадт], after Karl Marx. And finally, in 1941, during the resettlement of Volga Germans, the town was given its present name of Marks [Маркс]. The town is located on the left bank of the Volga River, in the Saratov Oblast, 60 kilometers northeast of Saratov, the administrative center of the oblast.

376 The Seven Years’ War was a global conflict fought between 1756 and 1763 that involved all of the European great powers of the time and that spanned five continents. The conflict split Europe into two coalitions: one led by the Kingdom of Great Britain (including Prussia, Portugal, Hanover, and other small German states), the other by the Kingdom of France (including the Austrian-led Holy Roman Empire, the Russian Empire, Bourbon Spain, and Sweden). Seizing the opportunity to curtail Britain’s and Prussia’s ever-growing might, France and Austria put aside their ancient rivalry to form a grand coalition of their own, bringing most of the other European powers over to their side. Faced with this sudden turn of events, Britain aligned itself with Prussia in a series of political maneuvers known as the Diplomatic Revolution. French efforts, however, ended in failure when the Anglo-Prussian coalition prevailed, and Britain’s rise as one of the world’s predominant powers destroyed France’s supremacy in Europe, thus altering the European balance of power.

377 Dictionary entries for the word “Babbitt” include the following definitions: “a materialistic, complacent, and conformist businessman,” “a person and especially a business or professional man who conforms unthinkingly to prevailing middle-class standards,” and “a self-satisfied person who conforms readily to conventional, middle-class ideas and ideals, especially of business and material success; a philistine: from the main character in the novel by Sinclair Lewis.” As this last dictionary entry indicates, the eponymous hero in Lewis’s novel Babbitt (1922) has entered the English language as a generic name for a philistine (“a person who is hostile or indifferent to culture and the arts, or who has no understanding of them”). This scathingly satirical novel about American culture and society is well known for the way it critiques the vacuity of middle-class life and the social pressure toward conformity. Some scholars claim that the controversy provoked by the publication of Babbitt was influential in the decision to award the Nobel Prize in literature to Lewis in 1930.

378 Pilnyak uses here the Russian word for “standards” (стандарты) [стандарты], but in this instance he seems to have its figurative, rather than its literal, meaning in mind: that is, “clichés,” “stereotypes.”

379 Pilnyak is referring here to a practice that was started by Gideons International, an evangelical Christian association founded in Wisconsin in 1899. Since its inception, the primary activity of Gideons International has been to distribute copies of the Bible to the public free of charge. The association is most widely known for the Bibles (they are called “Gideons’ Bibles”) it has placed in hotel and motel rooms across the U.S. and around the world. These Bibles are usually placed inside the night stands in each room. Gideons International also distributes Bibles to hospitals, schools, and colleges, as well as to jails and prisons. The association takes its name from the Biblical figure Gideon, depicted in Judges 6. Gideons International began distributing free Bibles, the endeavor for which it is chiefly known, in
1908, when the first Bibles were placed inside the rooms of the Superior Hotel in Superior, Montana.

380 For background information on Sinclair Lewis, see endnote #224.

381 The vobla (*rutilus caspicus*), also termed the Caspian roach, is a species of cyprinid fish inhabiting the Caspian Sea and its inflowing rivers. Salt-dried vobla is a common Russian snack that goes well with beer. It is popular in many Russian households and beer restaurants. Pilnyak is invoking this fish here more for the significance that it has gastronomically (as a tasty hors d’oeuvre that accompanies the consumption of alcohol) than zoologically (as an actual sea creature). This is precisely the way that the contemporary Russian writer and literary critic Victor Erofeev views vobla. “Russian people go crazy over this fish,” he writes in a recent essay. “Some Russians order vobla right before their death, they eat it, and they die happy. Vobla answers the people’s gustatory ideals. You see vobla – and your mouth waters.” See his essay, “Stalin is a Vobla” (Stalin – vobla) [Сталин – вобла] in the March 22, 2017 issue of the online journal Snob [Сноб].

382 The “barbershops and hair salons of God” (*parikmaхerskie boga*) [парикмахерские бога] that Pilnyak mentions here are likely intended to serve not only as symbols of the concern Americans have with their personal appearance, but also as emblems of some of the insular social milieus where banal conversations were often taking place and where philistinism, evangelical righteousness, and conformity were constantly being reinforced within middle-class, small-town America during this time period.

383 *Liberty* was a weekly, general-interest magazine, originally priced at five cents and subtitled, *A Weekly for Everybody*. It was launched in 1924 by the publisher McCormick-Patterson, who ran it until 1931, when it was taken over by Bernarr Macfadden, who published it until 1941. At one time it was said to be the “second greatest magazine in America,” ranking behind only *The Saturday Evening Post* in circulation. It featured contributions from some of the most famous politicians, celebrities, authors, and artists of the twentieth century. The contents of the magazine provide a unique look into popular culture, politics, and world events through the Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression, World War II, and Post-War America. It ceased publication in 1950 and was revived briefly in 1971.

384 “Bear’s disease” (*medvezh’ia bolez’*) [медвежья болезнь] is the term that Russians use for irritable bowel syndrome, or nervous diarrhea, which can be brought on suddenly by stress or anxiety. The name of the disease is obliged to the bear because in strong fright of attack this animal will often suffer a sudden attack of diarrhea.

385 For background information on Jack London, see endnote #301.

386 William Sydney Porter (1862-1910), better known by his pen name O. Henry, was an American short story writer whose works are famous for their surprise endings. In his day, he was considered the American answer to Guy de Maupassant. While both of these authors wrote plot twist endings, O. Henry’s stories were considerably more playful. His stories are also known for their witty narration. Most of O. Henry’s stories are set in his own time, the early
twentieth century. Many take place in New York City and deal for the most part with ordinary people: policemen, waitresses, etc. O. Henry’s work is wide-ranging, and his characters can be found roaming the cattle-lands of Texas, exploring the art of the con-man, or investigating the tensions of class and wealth in turn-of-the-century New York City. O. Henry had an inimitable gift for isolating some element of society and describing it with an incredible economy of words and grace of language. Some of his best work is contained in his first collection of stories, *Cabbages and Kings* (1904), a series of stories, each of which explores some individual aspect of life in a sleepy town in a Central American country called the Republic of Anchuria. *Cabbages and Kings* was followed by *The Four Million* (1906), a collection of stories about people living in New York (a city he lovingly called “Bagdad-on-the-Subway”). A heavy drinker, Porter died in 1910 of cirrhosis of the liver, complications of diabetes, and an enlarged heart.

387 Greenwich Village, often referred to by locals as simply “the Village,” is a neighborhood on the west side of Lower Manhattan in New York City. *Groenwijck*, one of the original Dutch names for the village (meaning “Green District”), was eventually anglicized to *Greenwich*. Greenwich Village historically was known as an important landmark on the map of American bohemian culture in the early and mid-twentieth century. The neighborhood was known for its colorful artistic residents and the alternative culture they propagated. Due in part to the progressive attitudes of many of its residents, the Village was a focal point of new movements and ideas, whether political, artistic, or cultural. This tradition as an enclave of avant-garde artists and advocates of alternative culture was established during the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, when small presses, art galleries, and experimental theater thrived. Later in the twentieth century, Greenwich Village became known as the East Coast birthplace of both the Beat Generation and the 1960s counterculture movement, as well as the cradle of the modern LGBT movement. Two of New York’s private colleges, New York University (NYU) and the New School, are located in Greenwich Village.

388 Michael (“Mike”) Gold (1894-1967) was the pen-name of Itzok Isaac Granich, a Jewish-American writer who was born on the Lower East Side of New York City to Romanian Jewish immigrant parents. Gold was a journalist, essayist, and literary critic whose only work of prose fiction, *Jews Without Money* (1930), a fictionalized autobiography about growing up in the impoverished world of the Lower East Side, became a bestseller. During the 1930s and 1940s, Gold was considered the preeminent author and editor of proletarian literature in the U.S. Throughout his life, he was an ardent supporter of the Bolshevik Revolution and of the Soviet Union in all its phases. His first essayistic pieces appeared in 1914 in *The Masses*, a socialist journal edited by Floyd Dell and Max Eastman. In 1921-1922, Gold and Claude McKay became Executive Editors of Max Eastman’s magazine, *The Liberator*. And in 1926, Gold became a founding editor of *The New Masses*, an American Marxist magazine closely associated with the Communist Party USA, serving as its editor-in-chief from 1928 until 1934. At both *The Liberator* and *The New Masses*, Gold favored publishing letters, poems, and fiction written by ordinary workers over works written by literary leftists with bourgeois backgrounds. Indeed, Gold famously branded Gertrude Stein as a “literary idiot” and called Marcel Proust the “master-masturbator of bourgeois literature.” Until his death, Gold wrote a daily column in the *Daily Worker*, the official organ of the Communist Party USA.

389 For Pilnyak’s earlier account of this traffic accident, see Chapter 12.
Hangjiu, often translated (for lack of a better English term) as “yellow wine,” is a type of Chinese alcoholic beverage made from water, cereal grains (such as rice, sorghum, millet, or wheat), and a jiuqu starter culture. Unlike baijiu, it is not distilled and contains less than twenty percent alcohol. Huangjiu is usually pasteurized, aged, and filtered before final bottling for sale to consumers. Many famous huangjiu brands are noted for the quality of water involved in the brewing process, and some consider it to be the most important ingredient. Huangjiu is either drunk directly after being cooled or warmed, or is used in Chinese cooking. Major producers of huangjiu include mainland China and Taiwan.

Anthony Cornero Stralla (1899-1955), also known as “the Admiral,” was a bootlegger and gambling entrepreneur in Southern California who ran legal gambling ships of the kind that Pilnyak is describing here. Cornero purchased large ships and converted them into luxury casinos. Cornero’s premier cruise ship could accommodate over 2,000 gamblers. It carried a crew of 350, including waiters and waitresses, gourmet chefs, a full orchestra, and a squad of gunmen. Its first-class dining room served French cuisine exclusively. By sailing his ships in international waters, Cornero could legally run his gambling dens without interference from U.S. authorities. Wealthy residents of Los Angeles would take water taxis out to the ships to enjoy the gambling, shows, and restaurants in these floating casinos.

Pilnyak not only puns here on the anagrammatic pairing of the Russian words for “hump” (gorb) [горб] and “grave” (grob) [гроб], but also on the Russian idiomatic expression, “[only] the grave will correct the humpbacked man” (gorbatogo mogila ispravit’ ) [горбатого могила исправит].

Pilnyak creates here, out of the Russian word for “image,” “shape,” “form” (obraz) [образ], the rather peculiar compound word obrazoobrazovanie [образообразование], one that suggests giving image to an image, giving form to a form, giving shape to a shape.

For Pilnyak’s account of his attempt to meet with Al Capone, see Chapter 21. For background information on Capone himself, see endnote #196.

Pilnyak will later quote a part of that 1931 interview (near the end of Chapter 40). See endnote #711.

Pilnyak is referring here to the system of underground tunnels built beneath Lake Michigan that Al Capone is said to have used for a number of purposes, from escaping police detection (via underground escape routes) and smuggling contraband alcohol to burying the bodies of rivals and traitors that he and his mobsters had murdered. It’s difficult to separate the factual from the mythical in accounts about the purposes of these underground tunnels.

William Hale Thompson (1869-1944) was an American politician who served as mayor of Chicago for three terms, from 1915 to 1923 and again from 1927 to 1931. Known as “Big Bill,” Thompson has been, to date, the last Republican to serve as Mayor of Chicago. Historians rank him among the most unethical mayors in American history, mainly for his open alliance with Al Capone. However, others recognize the effectiveness of his political methods
and publicity-oriented campaigning, acknowledging him as a “political chameleon” and an effective political machine. Thompson was known for his over-the-top campaigning and uncensored language that, along with his towering height and weight, earned him the nickname “Big Bill.” In a recent opinion piece in the Chicago Tribune, Ron Grossman compared his colorful language to that of Donald Trump. Although Thompson was a popular figure during his lifetime, his popularity escalated after his death, when two safe-deposit boxes were found in his name containing nearly $1.8 million in cash and bonds.

398 Jack “Legs” Diamond, born John Thomas Diamond (1897-1931), also known as Gentleman Jack, was an Irish-American gangster in Philadelphia and New York City during the Prohibition era. A bootlegger and close associate of gambler Arnold Rothstein, Diamond survived a number of attempts on his life between 1916 and 1931, causing him to be known as the “clay pigeon of the underworld.” In 1930, Diamond’s nemesis, Dutch Schultz, remarked to his own gang, “Ain't there nobody that can shoot this guy so he don't bounce back?”

399 For background information on Charles Lindbergh, see endnote #128.

400 Pilnyak is referring here to Anne Spencer Morrow (1906-2001), the daughter of Senator Dwight Morrow (1873-1931) and the wife of aviator Charles Lindbergh (1902-1974). When Pilnyak calls Senator Morrow “the recent conqueror of Mexico,” he is referring to Morrow’s appointment as the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico (1927-1930) by President Coolidge, whose administration was determined to change relations between the two countries. Morrow was widely hailed as a brilliant ambassador, mixing popular appeal with sound financial advice (he had formerly been a partner in J. P. Morgan & Co.). Morrow initiated a series of breakfast meetings with the Mexican President, Plutarco Elias Calles, at which the two men would discuss a wide range of issues, from religious uprisings to oil and irrigation. This earned him the nickname “the ham and eggs diplomat” in U.S. newspapers. Morrow invited popular humorist and commentator Will Rogers to accompany him and Calles on a tour of Mexico, with Rogers sending favorable human interest stories about Mexico and Mexicans back home to U.S. newspapers, stories that helped to change U.S. perceptions of Mexico. Morrow’s best known accomplishment was his mediation of the conflict between the Mexican government and the Catholic Church in Mexico, which had escalated into a violent armed conflict, known as the Cristero Rebellion (1926-1929). Morrow’s efforts in brokering negotiations between the warring parties were ultimately successful.

401 Pilnyak is referring here to the famous Lindbergh kidnapping case. On March 1, 1932, Charles Augustus Lindbergh, Jr., the 20-month-old son of aviator Charles Lindbergh and Anne Morrow Lindbergh, was abducted from their home in Highfields, NJ. On May 12th, the child’s dead body was discovered just off the side of a road about five miles south of the Lindbergh home, near the hamlet of Mount Rose in the neighboring Hopewell Township. In September 1934, Bruno Richard Hauptmann was arrested. After a trial lasting over a year, he was found guilty of first-degree murder and sentenced to death. He professed his innocence until his execution by electric chair at the New Jersey State Prison on April 3, 1936. Newspaper writer H. L. Mencken called the kidnapping and trial “the biggest story since the Resurrection.” Legal scholars have referred to the trial as one of the “trials of the century.” The crime spurred
Congress to pass the Federal Kidnapping Act, commonly called the “Lindbergh Law,” which made the transporting of a kidnapping victim across state lines a federal crime.

402 Al Capone was one of several organized crime figures – others included Willie Moretti, Joe Adonis, and Abner Zwillman – who spoke from prison at the time, offering to help return the Lindbergh baby in exchange for money or for legal favors. Specifically, Capone offered assistance in return for being released from prison under the pretense that his assistance would be more effective that way. This offer, however, was quickly rejected by the authorities. Lindbergh himself, as well as some military colonels who had offered their aid in finding the child – men such as Herbert Norman Schwarzkopf, the superintendent of the New Jersey State Police, Henry Skillman Breckenridge, a Wall Street lawyer, and William J. Donovan, a hero of the First World War who would later head the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) – believed that the kidnapping was perpetrated by organized crime figures.

403 A “public house” (publichnyi dom) [публичный дом] in Russian means not a “pub,” but a “brothel,” a “house of ill repute.”

404 Pilnyak is referring here to the James Scott Memorial Fountain, a monument located in Detroit’s Belle Isle Park. Designed by architect Cass Gilbert and sculptor Herbert Adams, the fountain was completed in 1925. The fountain honors the controversial businessman James Scott (1831-1910), who left $200,000 to the City of Detroit for erecting a fountain in tribute to himself. Scott was left a sizable fortune by his father, who invested in Detroit real estate. According to contemporaries, the younger Scott gambled and told off-color stories. He was described as a “vindictive, scurrilous misanthrope” who attempted to intimidate his business competitors. Scott died in 1910 with no heirs or colleagues, and he bequeathed his estate to the City of Detroit with the condition that the fountain include a life-sized bronze statue of him. Several community and religious leaders spoke against accepting the bequest, saying that a person with Scott’s terrible reputation should not be immortalized in their city. But the mayor and city council president at the time urged accepting the gift, arguing that the city should not insult any of its citizens by refusing such a generous offer.

405 Pilnyak is referring here to the statue of Johann Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) that was designed by local sculptor Herman Matzen in 1907. A group from Detroit’s large German community (Germans were the most numerous European ethnic group in Detroit in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century) sought to commemorate the tremendous contributions of the famous German poet and playwright, so they commissioned Martzen to design a statue in his honor. The composition shows a relaxed, seated Schiller, holding a book and apparently contemplating a thought. Engraved on the base of the statue is: “Schiller, erected by citizens of German descent, Detroit, Mich., 1907.” Like the James Scott Memorial Fountain, the Schiller statue is located in Belle Isle Park, near downtown Detroit.

406 For background information on Al Lewin, see endnote #156.

407 The Burns Detective Agency was created in 1909 by William John Burns (1861-1932), who was known as “America’s Sherlock Holmes.” Burns became famous while serving as the Director of the Bureau of Investigation (1921-1924), the predecessor to the Federal Bureau of
Investigation (FBI). As a young man, Burns performed well as a Secret Service Agent and parleyed his reputation into creating his own firm, the William J. Burns International Detective Agency. His natural ability as a detective, combined with an instinct for publicity, made Burns a national figure. His exploits made national news, the gossip columns of New York newspapers, and the pages of detective magazines, in which he published “true” crime stories based on his exploits. Burns agents infiltrated the Industrial Workers of the World during an organizing drive in the copper mines of Arizona. Activities included issuing fake IWW membership cards, infiltrating the workforce, spying, and intercepting the mail of organizers.

The Pinkerton Detective Agency, founded as the Pinkerton National Detective Agency, is a private security guard and detective agency that was established in 1850 by Allan J. Pinkerton (1819-1884). Pinkerton became famous when he claimed to have foiled a plot to assassinate president-elect Abraham Lincoln, who later hired Pinkerton agents for his personal security during the Civil War. These agents performed services ranging from security guarding to private military contracting work. Pinkerton was the largest private law enforcement organization in the world at the height of its power. During the labor strikes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, businessmen hired the Pinkerton Agency to infiltrate labor unions, to supply guards, to keep strikers and suspected unionists out of factories, and to recruit goon squads to intimidate workers. The organization was pejoratively called the “Pinks” by its opponents.

For background information on William “Big Bill” Thompson, see endnote #397.

Pilnyak is referring here to Morris Becker, the owner of ten dry cleaning and dye shops in the greater Chicago area. When one of Becker’s shops was bombed in 1928, after he had refused to agree to the price increase on dues to be paid to the Master Cleaners’ and Dyers’ Association, a racketeering organization, Becker turned to Al Capone for help. Along with Jake Guzik and Louis Cowan, Capone shared a $25,000 equity that resulted in a newly incorporated chain of shops, the Sanitary Cleaning Shops, the first of which opened near Capone’s Prairie Avenue home. “I have no need of the police or the Employers’ Association now,” Becker said in a public statement at the time. “I now have the best protection in the world.”

After providing his readers with the Russian transliteration of the English word “racketeer” (raketir) [ракетир], Pilnyak then adds the Russian word for “rocketeer” (raketchik) [ракетчик], which is close – not in meaning but in sound and form – to the American term that is used to denote a person who engages in dishonest and fraudulent business dealings involving extorted money. Throughout this section of the narrative, which focuses on American “racketeering,” Pilnyak uses interchangeably raketir [English racketeer] and raketchik [Russian rocketeer] – once even inserting raketnik [Ukrainian rocketeer]!

Pilnyak uses here the Russian word for a “small shop” (lavochka) [лавочка], the diminutive form of “shop” (lavka) [лавка], that also has the figurative meaning of a “racket” – that is, a “clique,” a “gang,” a “shady enterprise,” a “phony/bogus business.”
Pilnyak is most likely referring here to the parades that were part of the annual celebration in New York City (especially in the neighborhoods of Washington Heights and the Bronx, where most of the Dominican émigrés lived) of two holidays: Dominican Republic Independence Day (February 27th) and Dominican Republic Independence Restoration Day (August 16th). During the nineteenth century, the Dominican Republic won its autonomy from Haiti (on February 27, 1844), only to lose it again just two decades later to Spain. The country reclaimed its freedom after winning a two-year-long war with Spain in 1865. The historic raid that marked the beginning of that war took place on August 16, 1863. The freedom fighter Santiago Rodriguez led his small contingent up Capotillo Hill in the capital city, Santo Domingo, where they raised the Dominican flag. To pay tribute to its complicated history, Dominicans therefore celebrate independence twice a year: on February 27th and again on August 16th. Customary festivities include parades, street fairs, and performances of the national anthem and other compositions. When Pilnyak states that young gang members would go around knocking straw hats off the heads of parade onlookers on August 16th, he appears to be confusing the annual celebration of Dominican Republic Independence Restoration Day with the annual rite in New York City of men switching from wearing straw hats to wearing felt or silk hats each year on September 15th (near the end of summer). It was a tradition for youths on that date to knock straw hats off the heads of people wearing those hats and to stomp on them. For background information on this hat-switching custom, see endnote #536.

The American Federation of Labor (AFL) was a national federation of labor unions in the U.S. that was founded in December 1886 by an alliance of craft unions that had grown dissatisfied with the Knights of Labor, a national labor association. Samuel Gompers of the Cigar Makers’ International Union was elected president at its founding convention and re-elected every year, except one, until his death in 1924. The AFL was the largest union grouping in the United States for the first half of the twentieth century, even after the creation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) by unions that were expelled from the AFL in 1935 over its opposition to industrial unionism. The Federation was founded and dominated by craft unions throughout its first fifty years, after which many craft union affiliates turned to organizing on an industrial union basis to meet the challenge from the CIO in the 1940s. In 1955, the AFL merged with the CIO to create the AFL-CIO, which has comprised the longest lasting and most influential labor federation in the United States to this day. In Chapter 38, Pilnyak will speak at much greater length about Samuel Gompers, about the AFL, and about how this powerful union betrayed American workers for decades. For background information on Gompers, see endnote #613.

Pilnyak is referring here to the “Gideons’ Bibles,” which are discussed in endnote #379.

Herbert Clark Hoover (1874-1964) was an American engineer, businessman, and politician who served as the 31st President of the United States from 1929 to 1933. A lifelong Quaker and Republican, he became a successful mining engineer and businessman who later served as Secretary of Commerce from 1921 to 1928, introducing Progressive Era themes of efficiency in the business community and providing government support for standardization, efficiency, and international trade. As president from 1929 to 1933, his ambitious programs were overwhelmed by the Great Depression, which seemed to get worse every year despite the
increasingly large-scale government interventions he made in the economy. He was defeated in a landslide in 1932 by Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt, and he spent the rest of his life as a conservative denouncing big government, liberalism, and federal intervention in economic affairs, as Democrats repeatedly used his Depression-era record to attack conservatism and justify more regulation of the economy. Hoover is generally not ranked highly in historical rankings of U.S. Presidents.

Rather than use the conventional Russian words for a religious “father” – *отец* [отец] or *батюшка* [батюшка] – Pilnyak instead uses here the transliterated form of the Latin word for “father” – *pater* [петер].

Warren Gamaliel Harding (1865-1923) was the 29th President of the United States, serving from 1921 until his death in 1923. Born in Blooming Grove, Ohio, Harding lived in rural Ohio all his life, except when political service took him elsewhere. After serving as a State Senator and then as the Lieutenant Governor of Ohio, Harding was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1914. He was considered a long shot when he ran for the Republican nomination for president in 1920, but he won the nomination and subsequently the presidency in a landslide over Democrat James M. Cox and Socialist Party candidate Eugene Debs, running on a theme of a return to normalcy. A major foreign policy achievement came with the Washington Naval Conference of 1921-1922, in which the world’s major naval powers agreed on a naval limitations program that lasted a decade. Harding died of a heart attack in San Francisco while on a western speaking tour in 1923. He was succeeded by his vice president, Calvin Coolidge. At the time of his death, Harding was one of the most popular presidents. But the subsequent exposure of scandals that took place under his administration, such as Teapot Dome, when two members of his cabinet, Interior Secretary Albert Fall and Attorney General Harry Daugherty, were implicated in corruption, eroded his popular regard. So, too, did revelations of an affair with Nan Britton, one of his mistresses. The resulting scandals did not fully emerge until after Harding’s death, nor did word of his extramarital affairs, but both greatly damaged his reputation. In historical rankings of the U.S. presidents, Harding is, as a result, often rated among the worst.

Capone’s right-hand man was not actually Harry Guzik (1875-1949), but rather his younger brother, Jake “Greasy Thumb” Guzik (1886-1956), who served as the financial and legal advisor for Capone, and then later as the political “greaser” for the Chicago Outfit. His older (and less intelligent) brother, Harry, meanwhile, was a lieutenant in the Capone organization who was chiefly in charge of prostitution operations. The brothers were the children of Max and Mamie (Zeitlin) Guzik, Jews from Katowice, Poland, who had immigrated to the U.S. in the late nineteenth century. Whereas Harry was chiefly engaged in prostitution operations (and, allegedly, sexual slavery), Jake served as a top financial and legal advisor for Capone, who had come to trust his advice in the various gang wars that developed as he tried to organize criminal operations in Chicago. Jake also served as the mob’s principal bagman in payoffs to police and politicians, hence the origin of his nickname. Pilnyak here has apparently confused Harry with Jake.

Edwin Denby (1870-1929) was an American lawyer and politician who served as Secretary of the Navy in the administrations of Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge from 1921 to
1924. He also played a notable role in the infamous Teapot Dome scandal that took place during the Harding presidency.

421 Albert Bacon Fall (1861-1944) was a United States Senator from New Mexico and the Secretary of the Interior under President Warren G. Harding. He, too, was infamous for his involvement in the Teapot Dome Scandal.

422 Harry Ford Sinclair (1876-1956) was an American industrialist who founded Sinclair Oil. He was implicated in the 1920s Teapot Dome Scandal and served six months in prison for jury tampering. Afterwards he returned to his former life and enjoyed its prosperity until his death. He was an avid owner of sports properties, one of the principal financial backers of baseball’s Federal League, and a force in U.S. thoroughbred racing. Horses from his stable won the Kentucky Derby and three runnings of the Belmont Stakes.

423 Edward Laurence Doheny (1856-1935) was a California oil tycoon who, in 1892, drilled the first successful oil well in the Los Angeles City Oil Field. His success set off a petroleum boom in Southern California and made him a fortune when he sold his properties in 1902. He then began highly profitable oil operations in Tampico, Mexico, drilling the first well in the nation in 1901. He expanded operations during the time of the Mexican Revolution, and opened large new oil fields in Mexico’s “golden belt” inland from Tampico. His holdings developed as the Pan American Petroleum & Transport Company, one of the largest oil companies in the world in the 1920s. Doheny was implicated in the Teapot Dome Scandal, accused of offering a $100,000 bribe to U. S. Secretary of the Interior, Albert Fall. Doheny was twice acquitted of offering the bribe, but Fall was convicted of accepting it. Doheny and his second wife, Carrie Estelle, were noted philanthropists in the Los Angeles area, especially regarding Catholic schools, churches, and charities. The character J. Arnold Ross in Upton Sinclair’s 1927 novel Oil! (the inspiration for the 2007 film, There Will Be Blood) is loosely based on Doheny.

424 Harry Micajah Daugherty (1860-1941) was an American politician. A key Ohio Republican political insider, Daugherty is best remembered for his service as the U.S. Attorney General under Presidents Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge. Despite his status as a key political leader of the Ohio Republican Party from the 1880s through the first decade of the twentieth century, Daugherty was himself only briefly a statewide elected politician, serving just two terms in the Ohio General Assembly, working closely during the last two years with Governor William McKinley. Although he sought national office several times, Daugherty was thwarted in his effort to obtain the nomination of his party and was never elected to office again. Nonetheless, Daugherty remained an influential figure behind the election of several Congressmen and U.S. Senators. In 1920, he served as the campaign manager for Warren G. Harding for President at the Republican National Convention. Following Harding’s successful election, Daugherty was named U.S. Attorney General. In this capacity, Daugherty was instrumental in winning Presidential pardons for jailed anti-war dissidents such as Eugene V. Debs. Twice the subject of federal corruption investigations, Daugherty was forced to resign his post as Attorney General in 1924 by Calvin Coolidge, the late Harding’s successor as president.
Standard Oil Company, Inc. was an American oil producing, transporting, refining, and marketing company. Established in 1870 by John D. Rockefeller as a corporation in Ohio, it became the largest oil refinery of its time in the world. Its controversial history as one of the world’s first and largest multinational corporations ended in 1911, when the United States Supreme Court ruled that Standard Oil was an illegal monopoly. Standard Oil dominated the oil products market initially through horizontal integration in the refining sector, then, in later years, vertical integration. The company was an innovator in the development of the business trust. The Standard Oil trust streamlined production and logistics, lowered costs, and undercut competitors. “Trust-busting” critics accused Standard Oil of using aggressive pricing to destroy competitors and to form a monopoly that threatened other businesses.

William Harrison Hays, Sr. (1879-1954), namesake of the Hays Code for censorship of American films, was chairman of the Republican National Committee (1918-1921) and U.S. Postmaster General (1921-1922). He had been the manager of Warren G. Harding’s successful campaign for the presidency in the 1920 election and was subsequently appointed Postmaster General. While serving in the Harding administration, he became peripherally involved in the Teapot Dome scandal and was forced to resign his cabinet position in January 1922, at which time he became the President of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) shortly after the organization’s founding. The goal of the organization was to renovate the image of the movie industry in the wake of the scandal surrounding the alleged rape and murder of model and actress Virginia Rappe, of which film star Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle was accused, and amid growing calls by religious groups for federal censorship of the movies. Hiring Hays to “clean up the pictures” was, at least in part, a public relations ploy and much was made of his conservative credentials, including his roles as a Presbyterian deacon and past chairman of the Republican Party. In general, his efforts at pre-release self-censorship were unsuccessful in quieting calls for federal censorship. Catholic bishops and lay people tended to be leery of federal censorship and favored the Hays approach of self-censorship.

Andrew William Mellon (1855-1937), from the wealthy Mellon family of Pennsylvania, was an American banker, businessman, industrialist, philanthropist, art collector, U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom, and U.S. Secretary of the Treasury (from March 9, 1921 to February 12, 1932). Mellon was one of the wealthiest people in the United States, the third-highest income-tax payer in the mid-1920s, behind John D. Rockefeller and Henry Ford. While he served as Secretary of the U.S. Treasury Department, his wealth peaked at around $300-$400 million in 1929-1930. Mellon was appointed Secretary of the Treasury by new President Warren G. Harding in 1921. He served for 10 years and 11 months, the third-longest tenure of a Secretary of the Treasury. His service continued through the Coolidge and Hoover administrations. Along with Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson and Secretary of Labor James J. Davis, he is one of only three Cabinet members to serve in the same post under three consecutive Presidents.

For background information on William Burns, see endnote #407.

Pilnyak is referring here to John Pierpont (“Jack”) Morgan, Jr. (1867-1943), the American banker, finance executive, and philanthropist who inherited the Morgan family fortune and
took over the business interests (including J.P. Morgan & Co.) after his father, J. P. Morgan, Sr., died in 1913. A graduate of St. Paul’s School and Harvard University, he was trained as a finance executive in the business world, having worked for both his father and grandfather. That background would serve him well as a banking financier and lending leader, and as a director of several companies. He supported the New York Lying-In Hospital, the Red Cross, the Episcopal Church, and provided an endowment for the creation of a rare books and manuscripts collection at the Morgan Library. Morgan brokered a deal that positioned his company as the sole munitions and supplies purchaser for the British and French governments during World War I. The results produced a one percent commission on $3,000,000,000 (or $30,000,000) to the company. Morgan was also a banking broker for financing to foreign governments both during and after the war.

430 For background information on John D. Rockefeller, see endnote #203.

431 The Ford Motor Company (commonly referred to simply as “Ford”) is an American multinational automaker headquartered in Dearborn, Michigan. It was founded by Henry Ford and incorporated on June 16, 1903. The company sells automobiles and commercial vehicles under the Ford brand and most luxury cars under the Lincoln brand. In the past, it has also produced tractors and automotive components. Ford introduced methods for large-scale manufacturing of cars and large-scale management of an industrial workforce, using elaborately engineered manufacturing sequences typified by moving assembly lines. By 1914, these methods were known around the world as “Fordism.” Ford is currently the second-largest U.S.-based automaker (preceded by General Motors) and the fifth-largest in the world (behind Toyota, VW, Hyundai-Kia, and General Motors) based on 2015 vehicle production.

432 General Motors Company, commonly known as GM, is an American multinational corporation, headquartered in Detroit, Michigan, that designs, manufactures, markets, and distributes vehicles and vehicle parts, and sells financial services. The company was founded by William C. Durant on September 16, 1908 as a holding company. The company was the largest automobile manufacturer from 1931 through 2007. In addition to brands selling assembled vehicles, GM has also had various automotive-component and non-automotive brands, many of which it divested in the 1980s through 2000s. With global headquarters at the Renaissance Center in Detroit, GM manufactures cars and trucks in 35 countries. The current company, General Motors Company (“new GM”), was formed in 2009 following the bankruptcy of General Motors Corporation (“old GM”), which became Motors Liquidation Company. The new company purchased the majority of the assets of the “old GM,” including the brand “General Motors.”

433 The American Civil War was fought from 1861 to 1865. The result of a long-standing controversy over slavery, war broke out in April 1861, when Confederates attacked Fort Sumter, in South Carolina, shortly after Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated. The nationalists of the Union proclaimed loyalty to the U.S. Constitution. They faced secessionists of the Confederate States of America, who advocated for states’ rights to perpetual slavery and its expansion in the Americas. In February 1861, seven Southern slave states individually declared their secession from the U.S. to form the Confederate States of America. The Confederacy, known as the South, grew to include eleven states. The Confederacy was never
diplomatically recognized by the United States government, nor was it recognized by any foreign country (although Britain and France granted it belligerent status). The states that remained loyal, including the border states where slavery was legal, were known as the Union or the North. The North and South quickly raised volunteer and conscription armies that fought mostly in the South over four years. The Union finally won the war when General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant at the Battle of Appomattox, which triggered a series of surrenders by Confederate generals throughout the Southern states. Four years of intense combat left 620,000 to 750,000 soldiers dead, a higher number than the number of American military deaths in all other wars combined. Much of the South’s infrastructure was destroyed, especially the transportation systems. The Confederacy collapsed, slavery was abolished, and 4 million slaves were freed. The Reconstruction Era (1863-1877), with the process of restoring national unity, strengthening the national government, and granting civil rights to freed slaves throughout the country, overlapped with and followed the war. The Civil War is the most studied and written about episode in American history.

434 Pilnyak uses here a folksy idiomatic expression for conveying the notion that “it’s not worth choosing between two evils:”  *khren red’ki ne slashche* [хрен редьки не слаще], literally, “horse radish is no sweeter than a black radish.” It should be noted that in the Soviet Union during the 1920s and 1930s, the word “radish” (*red’ka*) [редька] was used in a political and ideological context to denote fellow-travelers (such as Pilnyak) who were “Red” (revolutionary) on the outside, but “White” (counter-revolutionary) on the inside.

435 Pilnyak is referring here to how the shortage of natural rubber spurred the development of synthetic rubber at this time. The expanded use of motor vehicles, and particularly motor vehicle tires, starting in the 1890s, had created increased demand for rubber. Political problems that resulted from great fluctuations in the cost of natural rubber led in 1921 to the enactment of the Stevenson Act, which was an effort on the part of the British government to stabilize low rubber prices resulting from a glut of rubber following World War I. This act essentially created a cartel that supported rubber prices by regulating production. But insufficient supply, especially due to wartime shortages, also led to a search for alternative forms of synthetic rubber. By 1925, the price of natural rubber had increased to the point where many companies were exploring methods of producing synthetic rubber to compete with natural rubber.

436 Pilnyak uses here the word “whale” (*kit*) [кит] for these foundational pillars. See the explanation for this use of the word “whale” in endnote #66.

437 Boies Penrose (1860-1921) was an American lawyer and Republican politician from Philadelphia who represented Pennsylvania in the United States Senate from 1897 until his death in 1921. Penrose, who was the fourth boss of the Pennsylvania Republican machine, following Simon Cameron, Donald Cameron, and Matthew Quay, was the longest-serving Pennsylvania Senator until Arlen Specter surpassed his record in 2005. Penrose, who consistently supported “pro-business” policies and opposed labor reform and women’s rights, has been quoted as saying, “Public office is the last refuge of a scoundrel.”
Pilnyak is referring to Frank Richardson Kent’s book, *Political Behavior: The Heretofore Unwritten Laws, Customs and Principles of Politics as Practiced in the United States* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1928). Kent (1877-1958) was an American journalist and political theorist of the 1920s and 1930s. Although a Democrat, by the 1930s he was one of the leading conservative critics of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal, producing a daily column that reached millions of newspaper readers across the country. Historians group him with David Lawrence, Walter Lippmann, Mark Sullivan, and Arthur Krock as one of the most influential political commentators in the 1930s. His face graces the cover of the August 27, 1928 issue of *Time* magazine.

Kent, *Political Behavior*, p. 27.


John Calvin Coolidge, Jr. (1872-1933) was the 30th President of the United States (1923-1929). A Republican lawyer from Vermont, Coolidge worked his way up the ladder of Massachusetts state politics, eventually becoming governor of that state. He was elected as the 29th vice president in 1920 and succeeded to the presidency upon the sudden death of Warren G. Harding in 1923. Elected to the Presidency in his own right in 1924, he gained a reputation as a small-government conservative and also as a man who said very little, although he had a rather dry sense of humor. Coolidge restored public confidence in the White House after the scandals of his predecessor’s administration, and he left office with considerable popularity. Modern assessments of Coolidge’s presidency are divided. He is adulated among advocates of smaller government and laissez-faire economics. Supporters of an active central government, on the other hand, generally view him less favorably, while both sides praise his stalwart support of racial equality.

For background information on Herbert Hoover, see endnote #416.


Kent, *Political Behavior*, pp. 53-54.

Kent, *Political Behavior*, p. 5.


Charles Gates Dawes (1865-1951) was an American banker, politician, and military general
who was the 30th Vice President of the United States (1925-1929). For his work on the Dawes Plan for World War I reparations, he was a co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1925. Dawes served in the First World War, then was the Comptroller of the Currency, the first director of the Bureau of the Budget, and, in later life, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom.

Charles Evans Hughes, Sr. (1862-1948) was an American statesman, lawyer, and Republican politician from New York. He served as the 36th Governor of New York (1907-1910), Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (1910-1916), U.S. Secretary of State (1921-1925), a judge on the Court of International Justice (1928-1930), and the 11th U.S. Chief Justice (1930-1941). He was the Republican nominee in the 1916 U.S. Presidential election, losing narrowly to incumbent President Woodrow Wilson. Hughes was a professor in the 1890s, a staunch supporter of Britain’s New Liberalism, an important leader of the progressive movement of the twentieth century, and a leading diplomat and New York lawyer in the days of Harding and Coolidge. He was also known for being a swing voter when dealing with cases related to the New Deal in the 1930s. Historian Clinton Rossiter has hailed him as a leading American conservative.


Kent, *Political Behavior*, p. 156.


Kent, *Political Behavior*, p. 188.


Kent, *Political Behavior*, p. 204.


The two “graphic illustrations” that Pilnyak provides here are both taken from Kent’s *Political Behavior*: the first one from Chapter X (“Give Them a Good Show”) and the second from Chapter XIX (“The Floaters Hold the Real Power”).

John Boynton Philip Clayton Hill (1879-1941) was a U.S. Congressman from the 3rd Congressional district of Maryland, serving three terms from 1921 to 1927 (he was elected to the Sixty-Seventh, Sixty-Eighth, and Sixty-Ninth Congresses).

Pilnyak uses here the Russian expression “You and I are at four eyes” (*my s toboi v chetyre glaza*) [*мы с тобой в четыре глаза*] to express how Ivan Faddeyevich, looking in the mirror, realizes at this moment that he is all alone with his own conscience.


Pilnyak is referring here to Eli Whitney (1765-1825), the American inventor who is best known for inventing the cotton gin (the word *gin* here is short for *engine*), the mechanical
device that removes the seeds from cotton, a process that had previously been extremely labor-intensive. The cotton gin was a wooden drum stuck with hooks that pulled the cotton fibers through a mesh. The cotton seeds would not fit through the mesh and would fall outside. This was one of the key inventions of the Industrial Revolution and shaped the economy of the antebellum South. Whitney’s invention made upland short cotton into a profitable crop, which strengthened the economic foundation of slavery in the United States. Despite the social and economic impact of his invention, Whitney lost many profits in legal battles over patent infringement for the cotton gin. Thereafter, he turned his attention to securing contracts with the government in the manufacture of muskets for the newly formed United States Army. He continued making arms and inventing until his death in 1825.

477 To express the “ends of the earth,” Pilnyak uses here the Russian idiomatic expression к чорту на рога, literally “[to] the devil on horns.”

478 Pilnyak is referring here to the “Panic of 1857,” a financial panic in the United States caused by the declining international economy and over-expansion of the domestic economy. Because of the interconnectedness of the world economy by the 1850s, the financial crisis that began in late 1857 was the first worldwide economic crisis. In Britain, the Palmerston government circumvented the requirements of the Peel Banking Act of 1844, which required gold and silver reserves to back up the amount of money in circulation. Surfacing news of this circumvention set off the “Panic in Britain” that began in September 1857. Although the financial downturn did not last long, a proper recovery was not seen until the American Civil War in 1861. The sinking of the SS Central America (the “Ship of Gold”) in September contributed to the panic of 1857, as New York banks were awaiting a much-needed shipment of gold. American banks did not recover until after the Civil War. After the failure of the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Company, the financial panic quickly spread as businesses began to fail, the railroad industry experienced financial declines, and hundreds of workers were laid off. Since the years immediately preceding the Panic of 1857 were prosperous, many banks, merchants, and farmers had seized the opportunity to take risks with their investments, and as soon as market prices began to fall, they quickly began to experience the effects of financial panic.

479 Hans Heinrich Justus Philipp Ruperti (1833-1899) was a Lutheran clergyman who was appointed pastor of an evangelical Lutheran community in Bremerhaven, Germany, in 1862. He was later appointed the first pastor of the St. Marien congregation in Geestendorf in 1873. But he left Germany later that same year to accept a position at St. Matthew’s German Church in New York. He served there until 1876, when he resigned due to ill health. It is not clear what particular writing by Pastor Ruperti is being quoted here by Pilnyak.

480 The “Tombs” is the colloquial name given to the Manhattan Detention Complex (formerly the Bernard B. Kerik Complex), a municipal jail in Lower Manhattan, as well as the nickname for three previous city-run jails in the former Five Points neighborhood of Lower Manhattan, an area now known as the Civic Center.

481 Rather than use the standard Russian word for “peacefulness,” “calmness,” “tranquility,” “serenity” (спокойствие), Pilnyak instead coins here the word pokoiistles
[покойствие], emphasizing, it would seem, both etymologically and phonetically, how “peace” (pokoi) лієs at the root of the name of this ocean off America’s west coast.

482 For background information on Jack London, see endnote #301.

483 For background information on Johann Augustus Sutter, see endnote #259.

484 For background information on Stuart Chase, see endnote #211.

485 For background information on Russian Cadets, see endnote #212.

486 Chase, Prosperity: Fact or Myth, pp. 42-46.

487 Chase, Prosperity: Fact or Myth, pp. 45-46.

488 Floyd James Dell (1887-1969) was an American newspaper and magazine editor, literary critic, novelist, playwright, and poet. Dell has been called “one of the most flamboyant, versatile and influential American men of letters of the first third of the twentieth century.” Dell became a leader of the pre-war bohemian community in Greenwich Village and managing editor of Max Eastman’s left-wing magazine The Masses. As editor and critic, Dell’s influence is alive in the work of many major American writers from the first half of the twentieth century. Dell wrote extensively on controversial social issues of the early twentieth century and played a major part in the political and social movements originating in New York during the 1910s and 1920s.

489 The Klondike Gold Rush was the migration by an estimated 100,000 prospectors to the Klondike region of the Yukon in northwestern Canada between 1896 and 1899. Gold was discovered there by local miners on August 16, 1896. When news reached Seattle and San Francisco the following year, it triggered a stampede of would-be prospectors. Some became wealthy, but the majority went in vain. It has been immortalized in photographs, books, films, and artifacts.

490 Mineola is a city in Wood County, Texas. It lies at the junction of U.S. highways 69 and 80, eighty miles east of Dallas in southwestern Wood County. The population was 4,515 at the time of the 2010 census.

491 Nash Motors Company (1916-1937) was an American automobile manufacturer that was founded by Charles W. Nash, the former president of General Motors. It was based in Kenosha, Wisconsin. From 1937 to 1954, Nash Motors was the automotive division of the Nash-Kelvinator Corporation. Nash production continued from 1954 to 1957 after the creation of the American Motors Corporation. Nash pioneered some important innovations: in 1938, it debuted the heating and ventilation system that is still used in cars today; in 1941, it introduced unibody construction; in 1950, it introduced seat belts and a U.S. built compact car; and in 1957, it debuted muscle cars (two-door sports cars with powerful engines designed for high-performance driving).
Packard was an American luxury automobile marque built by the Packard Motor Car Company of Detroit, Michigan. The first Packard automobiles were produced in 1899, and the last true Packard in 1956, when the Packard Motor Car Company built the Packard Predictor, their last concept car. Packard bought Studebaker in 1953 and formed the Studebaker-Packard Corporation of South Bend, Indiana. The final Packards were actually badge engineered 1958 Studebakers. From its beginning at the turn of the century, through and beyond the 1930s, Packard-built vehicles were perceived as highly competitive among high-priced luxury American automobiles.

Cord was the brand name of an American automobile company from Connersville, Indiana, manufactured by the Auburn Automobile Company from 1929 to 1932 and again in 1936 and 1937. Cord was noted for its innovative technology and streamlined designs. Cord had a philosophy to build truly different, innovative cars, believing that such cars would also sell well and turn a profit. This did not always work well in practice.

Gladewater is a small Texas town located approximately 115 miles east of Dallas. Lakeview is an incorporated community in northern Louisiana located 5 miles north of Shreveport. Gladewater and Lakeview are about 82 miles apart from each other on U.S. Route 20.

For background information on Sutter’s New Helvetia, see endnote #300.

Pilnyak is referring here to the Klondike Gold Rush of 1896-1899. For background information on the Klondike Gold Rush, see endnote #489.

Pilnyak is no doubt referring here to The Son of the Wolf (1900), a collection of some of Jack London’s stories drawn from his experiences during the Klondike Gold Rush.

A verst is a Russian measure of length: 0.66 mile (1.1 km). See endnote #108.

For Pilnyak’s expression of his initial stupefaction at the American obsession with the acquisition of consumer goods, see Chapter 14.

For background information on Frank Winfield Woolworth (and his nickel and dime stores), see endnotes #105 and #124.

Coca-Cola (or “Coke”) is a carbonated soft drink produced by the Coca-Cola Company. Originally intended as a patent medicine (a “nerve tonic”), it was invented in the late nineteenth century by John Pemberton, a Georgia pharmacist. Pemberton was bought out right before his death by businessman Asa Griggs Candler, whose marketing tactics led Coca-Cola to its dominance of the world soft-drink market throughout the twentieth century. The drink’s name refers to two of its original ingredients: coca leaves and kola nuts (a source of caffeine). The current formula of Coca-Cola remains a trade secret, although a variety of reported recipes and experimental recreations have been published. By the time of Pilnyak’s visit to America, this soft drink had reached the status of a national icon in the U.S.A.
For background information on the origins of the “Eskimo Pie,” see endnote #138. Pilnyak claims (mistakenly) that the “Eskimo Pie” was invented by a “Russian Jew.” It’s not clear whom exactly he has in mind here.

George Grosz (1893-1959) was a German artist known especially for his caricaturish drawings and paintings of Berlin life in the 1920s. He was a prominent member of the Berlin Dada and New Objectivity group during the Weimar Republic. Grosz worked in a style influenced by Expressionism and Futurism, as well as by popular illustration, graffiti, and children’s drawings. Sharply outlined forms are often treated as if transparent. In his drawings, usually in pen and ink, which he sometimes developed further with watercolor, Grosz did much to create the image most people have of Berlin and the Weimar Republic in the 1920s. Corpulent businessmen, wounded soldiers, prostitutes, sex crimes, and orgies were his great subjects.

Pilnyak is referring here to the $1,000,000 libel suit that Henry Ford filed against The Chicago Tribune for an editorial, titled “Ford is an Anarchist,” that appeared in the June 22, 1916 issue of the newspaper. The editorial attacked Ford for his refusal to allow employees at his plants to respond to duty in the National Guard, which had been activated by President Woodrow Wilson in June 1916 to defend the Mexican border, and it questioned his knowledge of American government and history. What especially galled Ford, however, was the editorial’s claim that he was an “ignorant idealist” and “an anarchistic enemy of the nation.” The members of the jury, all of them Midwestern farmers who were apparently fond of Ford as a “man of the people,” ruled in his favor, but they awarded him merely a symbolic 6 cents in damages when their decision was announced on August 14, 1919. Moreover, Ford’s inability to answer basic questions about American history during the eight days of questioning by lawyers for The Chicago Tribune that he underwent during the trial exposed the shallowness of his knowledge, the limits of his education, and the provincial nature of his pathetically ill-informed ideas. Among other things, Ford believed, for instance, that the American Revolution had taken place in 1812 and that Benedict Arnold was a writer.

For background information on Puritans and Puritanism, see endnote #142.

The Ford River Rouge Complex (commonly known as “The Rouge Complex” or just “The Rouge”) is a Ford Motor Company automobile factory complex located in Dearborn, Michigan, along the Rouge River, upstream from its confluence with the Detroit River at Zug Island. Construction began in 1917, and when it was completed in 1928, it was the largest integrated factory in the world. It inspired the Gorky Automobile Plant (Gorkovskii avtomobilnyi zavod) [Горьковский автомобильный завод], which was constructed in Nizhny Novgorod in 1932 as part of Stalin’s First Five-Year Plan, and the later Hyundai factory complex in Ulsan, South Korea, which was developed beginning in the late 1960s. In the summer of 1932, through Edsel Ford’s support, Mexican artist Diego Rivera was invited to study the facilities at the Rouge. These studies informed his set of murals known as Detroit Industry, which has been on continuous display at the Detroit Institute of Arts since their completion in 1933. Designed by Albert Kahn, the Rouge was designated a National Historic Landmark District in 1978 for its architecture and historical importance to the industry and economy of the United States.
For background information on *latifundium*, see endnote # 354.

Pilnyak uses here the same colorful Russian expression, “May the devil’s mamma take you!” (*k missis chortovoi mamashi*) [к миссис чортовой мамаши], that he has used on a number of occasions in this narrative already.

For Pilnyak’s earlier account of what fate befell this Ukrainian worker at the Ford plant, see Chapter 19.

For some reason, Pilnyak refers here to Ford’s liquid assets (his readily available cash at hand) as “dry” dollars (*sukhie dollary*) [сухие доллары], when he should actually have characterized them as “wet” dollars (liquid assets).

In 1907, Henry Ford purchased 160 acres near the village of Highland Park, within Metropolitan Detroit, to build an automobile plant. Construction of the Highland Park Ford Plant was completed in 1909, and the plant opened in 1910. The local area’s population increased dramatically just three years later, when Ford opened the first assembly line at the plant (it was the first factory in history to assemble cars on a moving assembly line). The new assembly line improved production time of the Model T from 728 to 93 minutes. The Highland Park Plant’s assembly line lowered the price of the Model T from $700 in 1910 to $350 in 1917, making it an affordable automobile for most Americans. Ford offered nearly three times the wages paid at other unskilled manufacturing plants. Between 1910 and 1920, during the boom associated with the automobile industry, Highland Park’s population grew from a little over 4,000 to about 46,500. In 1918, the village of Highland Park was incorporated as a city to protect its tax base, including its successful Ford plant, from Detroit’s expanding boundaries. The complex at the Highland Park Plant included offices, factories, a power plant, and a foundry. Over 120 acres in size, the Highland Park Plant was the largest manufacturing facility in the world at the time of its opening. Because of its spacious design, it set the precedent for many factories and production plants built thereafter. In the late 1920s, Ford moved automobile assembly to the River Rouge Plant complex in nearby Dearborn. Pilnyak appears at times to confuse the one greater-Detroit-area Ford plant with the other in his narrative account (they are less than 10 miles apart from each other).

Instead of using here the conventional Russian word for “sprinkler” (*razbryzgivatel’*) [разбрызгиватель], Pilnyak instead creates the colorful term “mechanical rain” (*mekhanicheskii dozhd’*) [механический дождь].

Pilnyak is referring here to the Russian locomotive class Ye, a series of 2-10-0 locomotives that were built at the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Pennsylvania for the Russian railways in World War I. Due to the fall of the tsarist government in the spring of 1917 and the ensuing October Revolution that fall, some 200 of these locomotives were not shipped to Russia but were instead stranded in the United States. These locomotives, which were nicknamed “Russian Decapods,” were adopted by the United States Railroad Administration, which fitted them with wider tires (so as to fit the American gauge) and then sent them to various American railroads. Ten of them were sent to the Detroit, Toledo and Ironton Railroad (DT&I), the local...
railroad that Henry Ford had purchased in 1920. As Pilnyak observes, Ford refurbished these locomotives, which he named “Bolsheviks,” and then used them on the grounds of his auto plant.

Alexander Fyodorovich Kerensky (1881-1970), a Russian lawyer and revolutionary, was a key political figure in the October Revolution of 1917. After the February Revolution earlier that same year, when Tsar Nicholas II abdicated the throne, Kerensky joined the newly formed Russian Provisional Government, first as Minister of Justice, then as Minister of War, and shortly thereafter as the government’s second Minister-Chairman. A leader of the moderate Trudoviks faction of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, he was also vice-chairman of the powerful Petrograd Soviet. On November 7th, his government was overthrown by the Lenin-led Bolsheviks in the October Revolution. Kerensky spent the remainder of his life in exile, in Paris and New York City, and worked for the Hoover Institution, the public policy think tank located at Stanford University in California.

Pilnyak coins here a verb form (steilorit') [стейлорить] that derives from the surname of the famous American mechanical engineer, Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856-1915), who sought to improve industrial efficiency by devising a system he called scientific management. It was a form of industrial engineering that established the rational organization of work that is found in Ford’s assembly line. Taylor was one of the first management consultants. It is unclear whether Pilnyak consciously intended here the homonymic pun that obtains on the verb “to tailor” when the last part of the sentence is read aloud (that is, “places that have been taylored for them”).

Pilnyak coins here the verb “puritanize” (puritanstvovat’) [пуританствовать].

In the May 30, 2012 issue of her online blog, Live Journal, Marisha Ambler provides a brief historical account of the Bogorodsko-Glukhovskoi Manufacturing Company. As she points out, Arsenty Ivanovich Morozov headed the company at the turn of the century, when it was at the peak of its success as an industrial enterprise, employing well over 10,000 people. Arsenty Ivanovich, who was also the head of the very large community of Old Believers in the region, made each new employee swear to – and abide by – the moral admonition: “Do not drink, do not smoke, do not steal.” See http://marisha-amber.livejournal.com/341433.html

The city of Noginsk (formerly Bogorodsk), which is the administrative center of the Noginsky District of the Moscow Oblast, is located 34 kilometers east of the Moscow Ring Road on the Klyazma River. Throughout the nineteenth century and for a good part of the twentieth century, the town was a major textile center, processing cotton, silk, and wool. In 1930, the town was renamed Noginsk after the Bolshevik leader, Viktor Pavlovich Nogin (1878-1924), who had served for many years as the Chairman of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Moscow Council of Workers’ Deputies.

In Russian Orthodox Church history, the Old Believers, (starovery) [староверы] or (staroobriadtsy) [старообрядцы], are Russian Orthodox Christians who maintain the liturgical and ritual practices of the Russian Orthodox Church as they existed prior to the reforms instituted by Patriarch Nikon of Moscow between 1652 and 1666. Resisting the
accommodation of Russian piety to the contemporary forms of Greek Orthodox worship, these Christians, together with their rituals, were anathematized in the Synod of 1666-1667, producing a division in Russia between the Old Believers and those who followed the state Church in its condemnation of the old liturgical rite. Russian speakers refer to this split as the “schism” (raskol) [раскол], etymologically indicating a “cleaving-apart.” For additional background information on Russian “Old Believers,” see endnote #144.

520 Pilnyak is referring here to The International Jew, a four-volume set of pamphlets that Ford published and distributed in the early 1920s. In spring 1920, Ford made his personal newspaper, The Dearborn Independent, chronicle what he considered to be the “Jewish menace.” Every week, for 91 issues, the paper ran a major story that exposed some sort of Jewish-inspired evil in its headline. The most popular and aggressive stories were then chosen to be reprinted in a four-volume collection called The International Jew. It is to be distinguished from The International Jew: The World’s Problem, which is the name of a collection of articles serialized in The Dearborn Independent.

521 The “Black Hundreds” (chernosotentsy) [черносотенцы] was the name given to an ultra-nationalist, right-wing movement in tsarist Russia in the early twentieth century (1905-1917). Its members were staunch supporters of the House of Romanov who opposed any retreat from the autocracy of the reigning monarch. Members of the Black Hundreds were also noted for their extremist Russocentric doctrines, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and incitement to pogroms against Jews.

522 In 1927, Ford and his personal newspaper were sued for defamation by the Jewish lawyer Aaron Leland Sapiro, who represented a group of California farmers. In The Dearborn Independent, they had been accused of seeking to control the nation’s wheat farming. The suit ended in a mistrial, and an out-of-court settlement was reached soon thereafter. At the time, Ford issued public apologies and claimed that he had destroyed extant copies of The International Jew.

523 Pilnyak is referring here to the James Scott Memorial Fountain, located in Detroit’s Belle Isle Park, which honors the infamous Detroit bootlegger. For background information on James Scott, see endnote #404.

524 Pilnyak once again uses here the same colorful Russian expression, “May the devil’s mamma take you!” (k missis chortovoi mamashi) [к миссис чертовой мамаши], that he has used on a number of occasions in this narrative already.

525 Pilnyak uses here the expression guliat’ po vetru [гулять по ветру], literally, “to take a walk downwind.” Figuratively, it means to take a break from one’s frenetic everyday life by heading out to nature or to a rural locale in order to free oneself from stress or to forget about one’s problems for a while. Here it seems to be intended more to match the American idiomatic expression “to take a walk” or “to take a hike,” that is, as a less than polite way of telling someone to go away, to leave.
This is the same unsubstantiated claim about a modern-day Betsy Ross that Pilnyak had made in the opening paragraph of his travelogue. See endnote # 5.

John Cabot [Giovanni Caboto] (1450-1500) was the Venetian navigator and explorer whose 1497 discovery of the coast of North America under the commission of Henry VII of England was the first European exploration of the North American mainland since the Norse visits to Vinland in the eleventh century. To mark the celebration of the 500th anniversary of Cabot’s expedition, both the Canadian and British governments agreed upon Cape Bonavista, Newfoundland, as Cabot’s first landing site. However, alternative locations have also been proposed: for example, Cape Breton Island (Nova Scotia), Labrador (Canada), and Maine (United States).

For background information on Bernarr Macfadden’s weekly magazine *Liberty*, see endnote #383.

Pilnyak describes these two oil-boom towns – one in East Texas (Gladewater), the other in Northern Louisiana (Lakeview) – in Chapter 31. For background information on them, see endnote #494.

Pilnyak is most likely referring here to the Pontiac Assembly Plant, one of four General Motors assembly plants in Pontiac, Michigan, located along Baldwin Avenue. It served as the main facility for the Pontiac Motor Division ever since it was first built in 1927. It is located across the street from the currently operational Pontiac Metal Center, which was the original location for the Oakland Motor Car Company, which Pontiac evolved into.

Pilnyak is referring here to the glass factory in Lancaster, Ohio, purchased in 1905 by Isaac Jacob (Ike) Collins (1874-1975), the glassware manufacturer who founded the Hocking Glass Company (named after the nearby Hocking River). That company merged with the Anchor Cap and Closure Corporation in 1937, becoming the Anchor Hocking Glass Company. Known mainly for its glassware, the Anchor Hocking Glass Corporation expanded into other areas of production such as tabletop, closure and sealing machinery, and toiletries and cosmetic containers. Their headquarters in Lancaster, Ohio, is a focus of Brian Alexander’s book *Glass House* (2017).

Pilnyak appears to have in mind the Conewago Falls in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, a historic river barrier 12 miles south of the city of Harrisburg at a wide spot where the lower Susquehanna River drops nineteen feet within a quarter of a mile. The Conewago Falls were inundated by design years ago with construction of the York Haven Dam, which, when it was completed in 1904, was for a time the third largest dam in the world. The Conewago Falls would often be portaged by Native Americans with their elm bark canoes transiting between Susquehannock (later, Iroquois and Lenape) Native American towns at points upriver to the oyster beds in Chesapeake Bay or vice versa. The Conewago Falls blocked river navigation on the Susquehanna River, and were one of the factors preventing barge or ship water transport from Baltimore and the Chesapeake Bay.
Pilnyak is quoting here from Chapter 3, “Steamboats” (Stimboty) [Симботы], of Pavel Svinin’s A Picturesque Journey in North America (Opyt zhivopisnogo puteshestviia po Severnoi Amerike) [Опыт живописного путешествия по Северной Америке] (St. Petersburg: tip. Drekhslera, 1815).

Pilnyak is quoting here from Chapter 1, “Introduction” (Vvedenie) [Введение], of Pavel Svinin’s A Picturesque Journey in North America.

Pilnyak is quoting here from Chapter 1, “Introduction” (Vvedenie) [Введение], of Pavel Svinin’s A Picturesque Journey in North America.

Pilnyak is referring here to the American custom in the early twentieth century of men switching from wearing straw hats, which were donned in mid-May as acceptable summertime wear (usually in connection to summer sporting events such as boating), and switching to felt or silk hats at the end of the summer. Straw boaters were considered acceptable daytime attire in North American cities at the height of summer (even for businessmen), but there was an unwritten rule that one was not supposed to wear a straw hat past September 15th. If any man was seen wearing a straw hat after that date, he was, at a minimum, subjecting himself to ridicule. It was a tradition, moreover, for youths to knock straw hats off the heads of wearers and stomp on those straw hats. This tradition became well established, and newspapers of the day would often warn people of the impending approach of the fifteenth of September, when men would have to switch over to felt or silk hats. Vladimir Mayakovsky comments on this odd hat-switching custom in his American travelogue. See Maiakovskii ob Amerike, pp. 80-81. See also endnote #413.

For background information on Edward L. Doheny, see endnote #423.

Pilnyak has in mind here not Westminster Abbey (the large, mainly Gothic abbey church that is the traditional place of coronation and burial site for English and, later, British monarchs), but rather the neighboring Palace of Westminster. The latter has long served as the meeting place of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, the two houses of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Commonly known as the Houses of Parliament after its occupants, Westminster Palace lies on the north bank of the River Thames in the city of Westminster, in central London. The first royal palace was built on the site in the eleventh century, and Westminster was the primary residence of the kings of England until fire destroyed much of the complex in 1512. After that, it served as the home of the Parliament of England (which had been meeting there since the thirteenth century) and also as the seat of the Royal Courts of Justice, based in and around Westminster Hall.

For background information on the royal Château de Chambord, see endnote #43.

For background information on Molière, see endnote #44.

Le Bourgeois gentilhomme is a five-act play, intermingled with music, dance and singing, that was first presented on October 14, 1670 before the court of Louis XIV at the Château de Chambord by Molière’s troupe of actors. Subsequent public performances were given at the
theatre of the Palais-Royal beginning on November 23, 1670. *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* satirizes attempts at social climbing and the bourgeois personality, poking fun both at the vulgar, pretentious middle class and the vain, snobbish aristocracy. The title is meant as an oxymoron: in Molière’s France, a “gentleman” was by definition nobly born, and thus there could be no such thing as a “bourgeois” gentleman.

The royal Château at Amboise is a castle in the Indre-et-Loire département of the Loire Valley in France. Confiscated by the monarchy in the 15th century, it became a favored royal residence and was extensively rebuilt. King Charles VIII died at the château in 1498 after hitting his head on a door lintel. The château fell into decline from the second half of the 16th century and the majority of the interior buildings were later demolished, but some survived and have been restored, along with the outer defensive circuit of towers and walls. It has been recognized as a monument historique by the French Ministry of Culture since 1840. The Château d’Amboise is situated at an elevation of 81 meters.

Duke of Orléans (Duc d'Orléans) was a title reserved for French royalty, first created in 1344 by Philip VI in favor of his son Philip of Valois. Known as “princes of the blood” (princes du sang), the title of Duke of Orléans was given, when available, to the oldest brother of the king. Thus, they formed a collateral line of the French royal family, with an eventual right to succeed to the throne should more senior princes of the blood die out. During the period of the ancien régime, the holder of the title often assumed a political role. The Orléans branch of the House of Valois came to the throne with Louis XII (15th century). Louis Philippe II, fifth Duke of Orléans, contributed to the destruction of the ancien régime. At the head of a retrospectively named “Orléanist” faction centered on the Palais Royal, he contested the authority of his cousin Louis XVI in the adjacent Louvre. His son would eventually ascend the throne in 1830, following the July Revolution, as Louis-Philippe I, King of the French. The descendants of the family are the Orléanist pretenders to the French throne, and the title has been used by several members of the House.

Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci (1452-1519), more commonly known as Leonardo da Vinci (or simply Leonardo), was an Italian Renaissance polymath whose areas of interest included invention, painting, sculpting, architecture, science, music, mathematics, engineering, literature, anatomy, geology, astronomy, botany, writing, history and cartography. He has been variously called the father of paleontology, ichnology, and architecture, and is widely considered one of the greatest painters of all time. Sometimes credited with the inventions of the parachute, helicopter, and tank, he epitomized the Renaissance humanist ideal.

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Rech’ Pospolitaia) [Речь Пospolitая], formally the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, was a dualistic state, a bi-confederation of Poland and Lithuania ruled by a common monarch, who was both the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania. It was one of the largest and most populous countries of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. At its peak in the early seventeenth century, the Commonwealth spanned some 450,000 square miles and sustained a multi-ethnic population of 11 million people. The Commonwealth was established by the Union of Lublin in July 1569, but the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were in a de facto personal union since 1386 with the marriage of the Polish Queen Hedwig and
Lithuania’s Grand Duke Jogaila. The First Partition of Poland in 1772 and the Second Partition of Poland in 1793 greatly reduced the nation’s size, and the Commonwealth disappeared as an independent state following the Third Partition of Poland in 1795.

Pilnyak is alluding here to a famous line from Alexander Blok’s poem, *The Scythians* (*Skify*) (1918), where the poet proclaims that Russia, whose historical identity is deeply rooted in both Europe and Asia, comprehends “both the sharp Gallic wit and the gloomy German genius” (*i ostryi gall’skii smysl i sumrachnyi germanskii genii* [и острый галльский смысл и сумрачный германский гений]). Readers of the poem tend to identify such figures as Doctor Faustus, Goethe, Schiller, Beethoven, and Nietzsche as embodying this “gloomy German genius.”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) was a German writer and statesman. His works include epic and lyric poetry, prose and verse dramas, memoirs, an autobiography, literary and aesthetic criticism, treatises on botany, anatomy, and color, and four novels. A literary celebrity by the age of twenty-five, Goethe was ennobled by the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, Carl August, in 1782, after taking up residence there in November 1775 following the success of his first novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*) (1774), an epistolary and loosely autobiographical novel. It was one of the most important novels of the “storm and stress” [*Sturm und Drang*] period in German literature, and influenced the later Romantic movement in European literature. He is perhaps best known for his two-part poetic drama *Faust* (1808-1832), which he started around the age of twenty-three and did not finish until shortly before his death sixty years later. He is considered one of the greatest contributors of the German Romantic period.

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) was a German philosopher, cultural critic, poet, philologist, and Latin and Greek scholar whose work has exerted a profound influence on Western philosophy and modern intellectual history. He began his career as a classical philologist before turning to philosophy. He became the youngest person ever to hold the Chair of Classical Philology at the University of Basel in 1869, at the age of 24. Nietzsche resigned in 1879 due to health problems that plagued him most of his life, and he completed much of his core writing in the following decade. In 1889, at age 44, he suffered a collapse and a complete loss of his mental faculties. He lived his remaining years in the care of his mother until her death in 1897, and then with his sister, Elisabeth Forster-Nietzsche. He died in 1900. Nietzsche’s body of work touched widely on art, philology, history, religion, tragedy, culture, and science, and drew early inspiration from figures such as Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Goethe. His writing spans philosophical polemics, poetry, cultural criticism, and fiction while displaying a fondness for aphorism and irony. Some prominent elements of his philosophy include his radical critique of truth in favor of perspectivism, his genealogical critique of religion and Christian morality, his related theory of master-slave morality, his aesthetic affirmation of existence in response to the “death of God” and the profound crisis of nihilism, his notion of the Apollonian and Dionysian, and his characterization of the human subject as the expression of competing wills, collectively understood as the “will to power.” In his later work, he developed influential concepts such as the “superman” [*Ubermensch*] and the doctrine of eternal return, and he became increasingly preoccupied with the creative powers of the individual to overcome social, cultural, and moral contexts in pursuit of new values and
aesthetic health. For background information on the influence of Nietzsche’s philosophical ideas (Nietzscheanism), see endnote #139.

550 The Polish Corridor, also known as the Danzig Corridor, the Corridor to the Sea, or the Gdańsk Corridor, was a territory located in the region of Pomerelia (Pomeranian Voivodeship, eastern Pomerania, formerly part of West Prussia), which provided the Second Republic of Poland (1920-1939) with access to the Baltic Sea, thus separating the bulk of Germany from the province of East Prussia. The Free City of Danzig (now the Polish city of Gdansk) was separate from both Poland and Germany. A similar territory, also occasionally referred to as a corridor, had been connected to the Polish Crown as part of Royal Prussia during the period 1466-1772.

551 For background information on the American War of Independence, see endnote #131.

552 For background information on the Declaration of Independence, see endnote #1.

553 Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, the Marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834), was a French aristocrat and military officer who fought in the American Revolutionary War. A close friend of George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and Thomas Jefferson, Lafayette was a key figure in the French Revolution of 1789 and the July Revolution of 1830. Born in Chavaniac, in the province of Auvergne in south central France, Lafayette came from a wealthy landowning family. He followed its martial tradition and was commissioned an officer at age 13. He became convinced that the American cause in its revolutionary war was noble, and he traveled to the New World seeking glory in it. There, he was made a major general; however, the 19-year-old was initially not given troops to command. Wounded during the Battle of Brandywine, he still managed to organize an orderly retreat. He served with distinction in the Battle of Rhode Island. In the middle of the war, he returned home to lobby for an increase in French support. He again sailed to America in 1780, and was given senior positions in the Continental Army. In 1781, troops in Virginia under his command blocked forces led by Cornwallis until other American and French forces could position themselves for the decisive siege of Yorktown.

554 Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, better known by the alias Lenin (1870-1924), was a Russian communist revolutionary, politician, and political theorist. He served as head of the government of the Russian Republic from 1917 to 1918, of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic from 1918 to 1924, and of the Soviet Union from 1922 to 1924. Under his administration, Russia and then the wider Soviet Union became a one-party communist state governed by the Russian Communist Party. Ideologically a Marxist, Lenin developed political theories that have come to be known as Leninism. As a senior figure in the Marxist Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP), Lenin was arrested for sedition in 1897 and exiled for three years to Siberia, where he married Nadezhda Krupskaia. Following his exile, he moved to Western Europe, where he became a prominent party theorist through his publications. In 1903, he played a key role in an RSDLP ideological split, leading the Bolshevik faction against Julius Martov’s Mensheviks. Encouraging insurrection during Russia’s failed Revolution of 1905, Lenin later campaigned for the First World War to be transformed into a Europe-wide proletarian revolution, which as a Marxist he believed would
cause the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement with socialism. After the 1917 February Revolution, at which time the tsar was ousted and a Provisional Government was established, Lenin returned to Russia to play a leading role in the October Revolution, during which the Bolsheviks overthrew the new regime.

555 Lenin and the Bolsheviks called World War I the “Imperialist War.”

556 Pilnyak is quoting here from Vladimir Lenin’s “A Letter to American Workers” (Pis’mo amerikanskim rabochim) [Письмо американским рабочим] (1918).

557 The “First International” (1864–1876) is what the International Workingmen’s Association (IWA) was often called. This was an international organization that aimed at uniting a variety of different left-wing socialist, communist, and anarchist political groups and trade union organizations that were based on the working class and class struggle. It was founded in 1864 at a workmen’s meeting held in St. Martin’s Hall in London. Its first congress was held in 1866 in Geneva. In Europe, a period of harsh reaction followed the widespread revolutions of 1848. The next major phase of revolutionary activity began almost twenty years later with the founding of the IWA in 1864. At its peak, the IWA reported having eight million members, while police reported the number as five million. In 1872, the organization split in two over conflicts between communist and anarchist factions. It dissolved in 1876. Its successor, the “Second International,” was founded in 1889.

558 Lincoln’s reply to Marx and the IWA was delivered through an intermediary, Charles Francis Adams, Sr. (1807-1886), the U.S. Ambassador to England, who wrote that the American government “strives to do equal and exact justice to all states and to all men, and it relies upon the beneficial results of that effort for support at home and for respect and goodwill throughout the world. Nations do not exist for themselves alone, but to promote the welfare and happiness of mankind by benevolent intercourse and example. It is in this relation that the United States regard their cause in the present conflict with slavery-maintaining insurgents as the cause of human nature, and they derive new encouragement to persevere from the testimony of the workingmen of Europe that the national attitude is favored with their enlightened approval and earnest sympathies.” See Robin Blackburn, An Unfinished Revolution: Karl Marx and Abraham Lincoln (London: Verso, 2011), p. 214.

559 For background information on the French Revolution, see endnote #132.

560 Pilnyak is referring here to the large labor rally that was held in London just two days after a spirited “Emancipation” meeting took place in St. James Hall on March 26, 1863, an event that has been characterized as the greatest single demonstration of British working-class sympathies for the anti-slavery Northerners in the American Civil War. One of the key players in organizing the rally was George Odger (1813-1877), a pioneering British trade unionist and radical politician who was instrumental in convincing the editorial board of the influential labor newspaper, The Bee-Hive, to reverse its pro-Confederacy position and support the North. Odger, who headed the London Trades Council for much of the 1860s and 1870s, was named to the General Council of the First International when it was created in 1864.
In an effort to implement an eight-hour work day, several U.S. organizations central to the workers’ movement – primarily, the Trades and Labor Assembly, the Socialist Labor Party, and the Knights of Labor – declared that May 1st would officially be International Workers’ Day, beginning on May 1, 1886. For that first May Day celebration in 1886, 300,000 workers in the U.S. walked off their jobs.

The Knights of Labor, officially “The Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor,” was founded by Uriah Smith Stephens (1821-1882) in December 1869. It was the largest and one of the most important American labor organizations of the 1880s. Its most prominent leader was Terence V. Powderly (1849-1924). The Knights promoted the social and cultural uplift of the working man, rejected socialism and anarchism, demanded the eight-hour day, and promoted the producer’s ethic of republicanism. In some cases, it acted as a labor union, negotiating with employers, but it was never very well organized, and after a rapid expansion in the mid-1880s, it suddenly lost many of its new members and became a small operation again. Its frail organizational structure could not cope as it was battered by charges of failings in connection with the Haymarket Square riot. Most members abandoned the movement in 1886-1887, choosing to join groups that helped to identify their specific need. The Panic of 1893 terminated the importance of the Knights of Labor. Remnants of this labor organization continued in existence until 1949, when the group’s last 50-member local dropped its affiliation.

Pilnyak is referring here to a passage that appears in Chapter 1, “Introduction” (Введение) [Введение], of Pavel Svinin’s A Picturesque Journey in North America (Опыт живописного путешествия по Северной Америке) (St. Petersburg: tip. Drekhslera, 1815).

Anne (1665-1714) ruled as Queen of England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1702 until her death in 1714. Her brief reign was dominated by what came to be known in the British colonies as Queen Anne’s War (1702–1713): that is, the North American theater of the War of the Spanish Succession. This was the second in a series of French and Indian Wars fought between France and England (later Great Britain) in North America for control of the continent. In addition to the two main combatants, the war also involved numerous American Indian tribes allied with each nation, and Spain, which was allied with France. It was also known as the Third Indian War or, in France, as the Second Intercolonial War. I have not succeeded in finding any historical evidence that would substantiate Pilnyak’s claim that Queen Anne loaded two ships with prostitutes for the benefit of the exiled male criminals and social outcasts that Great Britain was shipping to the New World. Recently, however, an eighteenth-century jail book has been found that reveals how 226 British female criminals, many of them prostitutes, were sent aboard the Lady Juliana (labelled the “floating brothel”) to New South Wales in June 1790, reportedly as a measure to stop sexual activity between male settlers and to populate the country. See this online posting:
566 For background information on John Cabot and his explorations of North America, see endnote #527.

567 Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) was an English military and political leader who became an Independent Puritan after undergoing a religious conversion in the 1630s, taking a generally tolerant view towards the many Protestant sects of this period. He was an intensely religious man, a self-styled Puritan Moses, who fervently believed that God was guiding his victories. He was elected a Member of Parliament in 1628 and entered the English Civil War on the side of the “Roundheads” or Parliamentarians. Nicknamed “Old Ironsides,” he demonstrated his ability as a commander and was quickly promoted, becoming one of the principal commanders of the New Model Army, playing an important role in the defeat of the royalist forces. He was later selected to take command of the English campaign in Ireland in 1649-1650, defeating the Confederate and Royalist coalition in Ireland and occupying the country. He also led a successful campaign against the Scottish army in 1650-1651. In 1653, Cromwell was invited by his fellow leaders to rule as Lord Protector of England (which included Wales at the time), Scotland, and Ireland. As a ruler, he executed an aggressive and effective foreign policy. He died from natural causes in 1658 and was buried in Westminster Abbey. The Royalists returned to power in 1660, at which time Cromwell’s corpse was dug up, hung in chains, and beheaded. One of the most controversial figures in the history of the British Isles, Cromwell is considered by some historians to be a regicidal, if not genocidal, military dictator, while others consider him a hero of liberty and a class revolutionary.

568 For background information on the French Revolution, see endnote #132.

569 For background information on Puritans and Puritanism, see endnote #142.

570 Methodism (or the Methodist movement) is the name given to a group of historically related denominations of Protestant Christianity that derive their inspiration from the life and teachings of John Wesley (1703-1791). George Whitefield and Charles Wesley (John’s brother) were also significant leaders in the movement. It originated as a revival within the eighteenth-century Church of England and became a separate denomination after Wesley’s death. The movement spread throughout the British Empire, the United States, and beyond (due to vigorous missionary work), today claiming approximately 80 million adherents worldwide. Wesley’s theology focused on sanctification and the effect of faith on the character of a Christian. Methodist doctrines include an assurance of salvation, imparted righteousness, the possibility of perfection in love, works of piety, and the primacy of Scripture. Most Methodists teach that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for all of humanity and that salvation is available for all. This teaching rejects the Calvinist position that God has pre-ordained the salvation of a select group of people. Methodism emphasizes charity and support for the sick, the poor, and the afflicted through works of mercy. These ideals are put into practice by the establishment of hospitals, orphanages, soup kitchens, and schools to follow Christ’s command to spread the gospel and serve all people.
Pilnyak uses here the verbs *grafstvovat’* [графствовать] (literally, “to act like a count”) and *baronstvovat’* [баронствовать] (literally, “to act like a baron”) to pun on the Russian verb that means “to reign” – *tsarstvovat’* [царствовать] (literally, “to act like a tsar”).

What Pilnyak writes here is: *zemnogo pupa oni ne vdykhali* [земного пупа они не вдыхали] (literally, “they didn’t inhale the earth’s navel”). This seems to play on a couple of Russian idiomatic expressions that use the word “navel” figuratively, such as *pup zemli* [пуп земли] (literally, “the navel of the earth”), which is generally used to denote how certain people have a rather inflated, self-absorbed view of themselves as being “the center of the universe,” and *nadryvat’ pup* [надрывать пуп] (literally, “to tear one’s navel”) which is generally used to denote physical over-exertion, “sweating one’s guts out” or “busting a gut” while working extremely hard. It’s possible that Pilnyak is suggesting some of these idiomatic meanings when describing how American farmers worked the soil.

The Don Host Oblast (*Oblast’ Voiska Donskogo*) [Область Войска Донского] of Imperial Russia was the official name of the territory of the Don Cossacks, roughly coinciding with today’s Rostov Oblast of Russia. Its center was Cherkassk, later Novocherkassk. The province comprised the areas where the Don Cossack Host settled in Imperial Russia. Beginning in 1786, the territory was officially called the Don Host Lands, then renamed Don Host Province in 1870. In 1913, the oblast, with an area of about 165,000 square km, had about 3.8 million inhabitants. Of these, 55% (2.1 million) were Cossacks in possession of all the land; the remaining 45% of the population were townsfolk and agricultural guest laborers from other parts of Russia. This subdivision was abolished in 1920; from the major part of it, the Don Oblast of the R.S.F.S.R. was created, which was included in the North Caucasus Territory in 1924.

Pilnyak writes here that one must have *zaiach’i piatki* [заячьи пятки] (literally, “the heels of a hare”) to flee to the Don Host Oblast. The “hare” in Slavic folk culture is traditionally associated with cowardice, hence the expression *zaiach’ia dusha* [заячья душа] (literally, “the heart of a hare”), which is used to characterize someone who is timid by nature. But the word *zaets* [заец] (“hare”) is also used in the expression *ekhat’ zaisem* [ехать зайцем] (literally, “to ride as a hare”) to denote someone who quickly sneaks onto a means of public transportation – a train, a bus, a trolley, etc. – without having paid for a ticket: that is, someone who “travels as a stowaway” or “steals a ride.”


Pilnyak is referring here to a passage that appears in Chapter 1, “Introduction” (*Vvedenie*) [Введение], of Pavel Svinin’s *A Picturesque Journey in North America* (*Opyt zhivopisnogo puteshestviia po Severnoi Amerike*) [Опыт живописного путешествия по Северной Америке] (St. Petersburg: tip. Drekhslera, 1815).
Pilnyak describes his acquaintance aboard the SS Bremen with Mr. Kotofson, a Russian émigré who became a millionaire in the U.S. through his successful meat packing business, in Chapter 4.

It is not entirely clear exactly what Pilnyak is referring to here, when he says that Americans have been allowing themselves lately the luxury of trying to buy the entire Athenian acropolis. In the context of the paragraph in which this statement is embedded, one where the main topic has been America’s democratic, non-gentry, non-feudal identity – reflected in the young country’s refusal to visit the past, to honor ancient traditions, and to philosophize about the human condition – it is possible that the purchase of the “entire Athenian acropolis” is to be understood as a *nouveau riche* effort on the part of otherwise successful Americans to buy the European culture, art, and learning that they so sorely lack. The New World’s purchase of ancient Greek ruins suggested by this statement might be directed more specifically at the efforts that were being undertaken by the newspaper magnate, William Randolph Hearst (1863-1951), after each of his frequent visits abroad, to bring back home to America with him some fragments of the very best examples of European architecture (he had the well-known habit of buying centuries-old ceilings abroad). “Neptune’s Pool,” the elaborate outdoor swimming pool ensemble that he assembled at Hearst Castle in San Simeon, California, features fountains, ornamental pools, sculptures, marble pavilions, alabaster lanterns, and the façade of an ancient temple, items that were transported wholesale from Europe and reconstructed at the site. At the turn of the century, Hearst’s mother, Phoebe, made several large gifts to the University of California at Berkeley and sponsored an international architectural competition for the Berkeley campus (a campus that has been called “A Western Acropolis”). And, in 1903, her son financed the construction on the Berkeley campus of the “Hearst Greek Theatre,” a pastiche of historic architectural styles that he had admired during his travels abroad (the Hearst theatre is said to be based directly on the ancient Greek theatre of Epidaurus). In his American travelogue, *Iron Mirgorod (Zheleznyi Mirgorod)* (Железный Миргород) (1923), Sergei Esenin writes: “Did you know that in the state of Tennessee they have a Parthenon that is newer and better than the Greek original?” He is referring here to the full-scale replica of the original Parthenon, an exact reproduction that was built in 1897 as part of the Tennessee Centennial Exposition in Nashville, a city known popularly as the “Athens of the South.” Pilnyak, who drove back from Hollywood to New York via Tennessee, may perhaps have visited this tourist attraction in Nashville and might be obliquely referring to it here.

Fyodor Ivanovich Chaliapin (1873-1938) was a famous Russian opera singer. Possessing a deep and expressive bass voice, he enjoyed an important international career at major opera houses and is often credited with establishing the tradition of naturalistic acting in his chosen art form. During the first phase of his career, Chaliapin endured direct competition from three other great basses: the powerful Lev Sibiriakov (1869-1942), the more lyrical Vladimir Kastorsky (1871-1948), and Dmitry Bukhtoyarov (1866–1918), whose voice was intermediate between those of Sibiriakov and Kastorsky. The fact that Chaliapin is far and away the best remembered of this magnificent quartet of rival basses is a testament to the power of his personality, the acuteness of his musical interpretations, and the vividness of his performances. He is perhaps best known for his performances in the title role of Modest Mussorgsky’s *Boris Godunov* (1873), which became his signature operatic character.
Igor Ivanovich Sikorsky (1889-1972) was a Russian-American aviation pioneer in both helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. His first success came with the S-2, the second aircraft of his design and construction. His fifth airplane, the S-5, won him national recognition as well as F.A.I. license Number 64. His S-6-A received the highest award at the 1912 Moscow Aviation Exhibition. In the fall of that year, this aircraft won for its young designer, builder, and pilot first prize in the military competition at Petrograd. After immigrating to the United States in 1919, Sikorsky founded the Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation in 1923, and developed the first of Pan American Airways’ ocean-conquering flying boats in the 1930s. In 1939, Sikorsky designed and flew the Vought-Sikorsky VS-300, the first viable American helicopter, which pioneered the rotor configuration used by most helicopters today. Sikorsky modified the design into the Sikorsky R-4, which in 1942 became the world’s first mass-produced helicopter. Sikorsky’s final VS-300 rotor configuration, comprising a single main rotor and a single anti-torque tail rotor, has proven to be one of the most popular helicopter configurations being used in most helicopters produced today.

To express the notion of a deadly plague “thriving” and “prospering” in Europe, Pilnyak puckishly uses here the verb *zdravstvovat’* [здравствовать], which means, literally, “to be well,” “to be in good health,” “to live long”).

For background information on Johann Augustus Sutter, see endnote #259.

For background information on Jack London, see endnote #301.

The Radio Corporation of America (RCA) was a major American electronics company that was founded in 1919. It was initially a wholly owned subsidiary of General Electric (GE). In 1932, however, GE was required to divest its control as part of the settlement of an antitrust suit. At its height as an independent company, RCA was the dominant communications firm in the United States. Beginning in the 1920s, it was a major manufacturer of radio receivers, and it also developed the first national radio network, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). It played a leading role in the introduction of black-and-white television in the 1940s and 1950s, and color television in the 1950s and 1960s. During this time, the company was closely identified with the leadership of David Sarnoff (1891-1971), who was general manager at its founding, became company president in 1930, and remained active, as chairman of the board, until the end of 1969.

Pilnyak has in mind David Sarnoff (1891-1971), an American businessman and pioneer of American radio and television. Throughout most of his career he led the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) in various capacities from shortly after its founding in 1919 until his retirement in 1970. He ruled over an ever-growing telecommunications and consumer electronics empire that included both RCA and NBC, and became one of the largest companies in the world. Named a Reserve Brigadier General of the Signal Corps in 1945, Sarnoff thereafter was widely known as “The General.” Sarnoff is credited with Sarnoff’s law, which states that the value of a broadcast network is proportional to the number of its viewers.
Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931), an American inventor and businessman, has been described as America’s greatest inventor. He developed many devices that greatly influenced life around the world, including the phonograph, the motion picture camera, and the long-lasting, practical electric light bulb. Dubbed the “Wizard of Menlo Park,” he was one of the first inventors to apply the principles of mass production and large-scale teamwork to the process of invention. As a result, he is often credited with the creation of the first industrial research laboratory. Edison was a very prolific inventor, holding more than a thousand U.S. patents in his name, as well as many patents in the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. More significant than the number of Edison’s patents, however, was the widespread impact of his inventions: electric light and power utilities, sound recording, and motion pictures all established major new industries worldwide. Edison’s inventions contributed to mass communication and, in particular, to telecommunications. These included a stock ticker, a mechanical vote recorder, a battery for an electric car, electrical power, recorded music, and motion pictures. His advanced work in these fields was an outgrowth of his early career as a telegraph operator. Edison developed a system of electric-power generation and distribution to homes, businesses, and factories – a crucial development in the modern industrialized world.

As the reader may recall, Pilnyak has taken to calling Henry Ford “Arsenty Ivanovich Ford,” giving him the first name and patronymic of Arsenty Ivanovich Morozov, the owner of the Russian textile mill in the city where the author attended secondary school. Pilnyak calls both Ford and Morozov by the same first name and patronymic because he considers both of them to have been so much alike: that is, both of these semi-literate men were feudal lords, petty tyrants, slave drivers, ignoramuses, and philistines. See Pilnyak’s discussion of Ford and Morozov in Chapter 32.

For background information on Edsel Ford, see endnote #191.

Margaret Bourke-White (1904-1971), with whom Pilnyak most likely became acquainted through Joseph Freeman, was an American photographer and documentarian. After graduating from Cornell University in 1927, Bourke-White moved to Cleveland, where she started a commercial photography studio and began concentrating on architectural and industrial photography. In 1929, Bourke-White accepted a job as associate editor and staff photographer at Fortune magazine, a position she held until 1935. In 1930, she became the first female photojournalist for Life magazine. Her photographs of the construction of the Fort Peck Dam were featured in the first issue of Life, dated November 23, 1936, including the cover. This cover photograph became such a favorite that it was selected as the representative for the 1930s in the United States Postal Service’s Celebrate the Century series of commemorative postage stamps. During the mid-1930s, Bourke-White, like Dorothea Lange, photographed drought victims of the Dust Bowl. Bourke-White and novelist Erskine Caldwell were married from 1939 to their divorce in 1942, and collaborated on You Have Seen Their Faces (1937), a book about conditions in the South during the Great Depression. She also traveled to Europe to record how Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia were faring under Nazi rule and how Russia was faring under communism. While in Russia, she photographed a rare occurrence, Joseph Stalin with a smile, as well as portraits of Stalin’s mother and great-aunt while visiting Soviet
Georgia. She died of Parkinson’s disease in 1971, about eighteen years after first developing symptoms of that debilitating disease.

Passaic is a city in Passaic County, New Jersey. Passaic is the tenth most densely populated municipality in the entire United States with over 22,000 people per square mile. Located north of Newark on the Passaic River, it was first settled in 1678 by Dutch traders and was known as Acquackanook Township. The city and river draw their name from the Lenape word pahsayèk, which has been variously attributed to mean “valley” or “place where the land splits.”

Pilnyak is referring here to the 1926 Passaic textile strike, a work stoppage by over 15,000 woolen mill workers in and around Passaic, New Jersey. The workers in several factories in the vicinity went out on strike over wage issues. Conducted in its initial phase by a “United Front Committee” organized by the Trade Union Educational League of the Workers (Communist) Party, the strike began on January 25, 1926, and officially ended only on March 1, 1927, when the final mill being picketed signed a contract with the striking workers. It was the first communist-led work stoppage in the United States. The event was memorialized by a seven-reel silent film, The Passaic Textile Strike (1926), directed by Samuel Russak and produced by Alfred Wagenknecht. The film was intended to generate sympathy (and funds) for the striking workers.

For background information on Vsevolod Meyerhold, see endnote #364.

Pilnyak creates here the verb stikhiiestvovat’ [стихийствовать] from the noun stikhia [стихия], which means “element,” and the verbal suffix -stvovat’ [-ствовать], which adds the sense of “being,” “acting,” or “doing” what the noun denotes.

Pilnyak is referring here to a passage that appears in Chapter 3, “Steamboats” (Stimboty) [Стимботы], of Pavel Svinin’s A Picturesque Journey in North America (Opyt zhivopisnogo puteshestviia po Severnoi Amerike) [Опыт живописного путешествия по Северной Америке] (St. Petersburg: tip. Drekhslera, 1815).

Pilnyak is referring here to a passage that appears in Chapter 1, “Introduction” (Vvedenie) [Введение], of Pavel Svinin’s A Picturesque Journey in North America (Opyt zhivopisnogo puteshestviia po Severnoi Amerike) [Опыт живописного путешествия по Северной Америке] (St. Petersburg: tip. Drekhslera, 1815).

Earlier in his travel account, when describing his experience in Hollywood as a co-writer and consultant on the film project about Soviet Russia, Pilnyak had invoked Greenland as an example of a real-world actuality that Hollywood was inclined to try to adjust to make it fit one of its own film scenarios. More specifically, the producer Irving Thalberg had wanted Pilnyak to devise some way that it would be plausible for the American hero in the film to attempt to escape from the Soviet Union. Such a scenario would be plausible, Pilnyak had noted, only “when lemons begin to ripen in Greenland.” Pilnyak appears to be invoking here a similar distortion of a real-world actuality when he speaks about the plausibility of someone creating a new “Eskimo Pie” ice cream bar: only a new kind of Greenland, he seems to be suggesting,
would make that a true possibility (advertising, money, and organized crime stand in the way of that ever actually happening). See Chapter 23.

597 From the behavioral model provided by the Russian landowner Arsenty Ivanovich Morozov, Pilnyak coins here a new verb (arsentivanchit’) [арсентиванчить] and a new noun (arsentivanstvo) [арсентиванство] to convey the feudalistic, autocratic attitude that Ford (who is, to Pilnyak’s mind, Morozov’s American equivalent) embodies.

598 The Mordvinians (or Mordovians) are the members of a people who speak a Mordvinic language of the Uralic language family and live mainly in the Republic of Mordovia and other parts of the middle Volga River region of Russia. The Mordvinians are one of the larger indigenous peoples of Russia.

599 The Panama Canal is an artificial 48-mile waterway in Panama, constructed during a U.S. engineering project that was completed in 1914, that connects the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific Ocean. One of the largest and most difficult engineering projects ever undertaken, the Panama Canal shortcut greatly reduced the amount of time needed for ships to travel between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, enabling them to avoid the lengthy, hazardous Cape Horn route around the southernmost tip of South America via the Drake Passage or the Strait of Magellan. The canal cuts across the Isthmus of Panama and is a key conduit for international maritime trade. There are locks at each end of the canal to lift ships up to Gatun Lake, an artificial lake created to reduce the amount of excavation work required for the canal, 85 feet above sea level, and then to lower the ships at the other end. The original locks are 110 feet wide. A third, wider lane of locks was constructed between September 2007 and May 2016. The new locks allow transit of larger ships, capable of handling more cargo. The United States controlled the territory surrounding the canal during its construction, and it continued to control the canal and surrounding Panama Canal Zone until the 1977 Torrijos-Carter Treaties provided for handover to Panama. As Pilnyak observes, there was talk already during the 1930s to expand the canal (for it to be able to accommodate larger ships) or to dig an entirely new canal. There were also numerous criticisms at the time of what were seen as the imperialistic intentions of the United States in the western hemisphere. In the minds of many people, Pan-Americanism, the principle of political, commercial, and cultural cooperation among all the countries of North and South America, was little more than a cover for U.S. hegemony in the hemisphere.

600 It is worth noting Pilnyak’s choice of language here, specifically the noun “fortuity” (sluchainost’) [случайность], which contains the same root as the noun “case” (sluchai) [случай], and the adjective “particular” or “special” (chastnyi) [частный]. When it is not used in the set expression “a particular case” or “a special case” (chastnyi sluchai) [частный случай], the adjective chastnyi [частный] usually means “private” (as opposed to “public”): for example, “private property” (chastnaia sobstvennost’) [частная собственность], “private hospital” (chastnaia lechebnitsa) [частная лечебница].

601 Since Pilnyak appears to be drawing a rough geographical outline of the United States, it is probably safe to assume that he has in mind here Portland, Maine (not Portland, Oregon) and Bellingham, Washington (not Bellingham, Massachusetts) when he identifies four cities that lie
on the periphery (at the four corners) of our country: Portland, Bellingham, Miami, and Tijuana.

602 President Herbert Hoover outlined his “20-year plan” to rebuild the nation’s economy in an address he delivered on June 15, 1931 to the Indiana Republican Editorial Association at Indianapolis, where he said: “We have many citizens insisting that we produce an advance ‘plan’ for the future development of the United States. They demand that we produce it right now. I presume the ‘plan’ idea is an infection from the slogan of the ‘5-year plan’ through which Russia is struggling to redeem herself from the 10 years of starvation and misery. I am able to propose an American plan to you. We plan to take care of a 20 million increase in population in the next 20 years. We plan to build for them 4 million new and better homes, thousands of new and still more beautiful city buildings, thousands of factories; to increase the capacity of our railways; to add thousands of miles of highways and waterways; to install 25 million electrical horsepower; to grow 20 percent more farm products. We plan to provide new parks, schools, colleges, and churches for these 20 million people. We plan more leisure for men and women and better opportunities for its enjoyment. We not only plan to provide for all the new generation, but we shall, by scientific research and invention, lift the standard of living and security of life to the whole people. We plan to secure a greater diffusion of wealth, a decrease in poverty, and a great reduction in crime. And this plan will be carried out if we just keep on giving the American people a chance. Its impulsive force is in the character and spirit of our people. They have already done a better job for 120 million people than any other nation in all history.”

603 For the story about this “poor, lyrical millionaire,” see Chapter 18.

604 For background information on Harry Reichenbach, see endnote #183.

605 As was noted earlier in endnote #557, the Address of the International Working Men’s Association, which Marx wrote between November 22 and 29, 1864, congratulating President Lincoln on his recent re-election, was presented to Charles Francis Adams, the U.S. Ambassador to England, on January 28, 1865. Pilnyak repeats here a brief extract of the letter that he quoted earlier (https://marxists.architecturez.net/history/international/iwma/documents/1864/lincoln-letter.htm).

606 The Russian expression “and not a camel” (a ne verbljiud) [а не верблюд] is generally invoked when the speaker feels put upon to prove what should be an obvious truth to everyone (e.g., that dogs do not climb trees).

607 Pilnyak is likely referring here to the “Middletown” studies: the sociological case studies of the White residents of the city of Muncie, Indiana, conducted during the 1920s and 1930s by Robert Staughton Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, a husband-and-wife team of sociologists. Their findings were detailed in two books: Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture (1929) and Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts (1937). The word “middletown” was meant to suggest the average or typical American small city, which they were examining in an effort to discover key cultural norms and thus to understand social change better. The first
study was conducted during the prosperous 1920s, beginning in January 1924, while the second was written, with far less fieldwork, late in the Great Depression in the U.S. Topics addressed in the first study included: working, home and family, youth, leisure time, religious activities, government and community. The stated goal of the study was to describe this small urban center as a unit that consists of “interwoven trends of behavior.” Or, put in more detail, to present a dynamic, functional study of the contemporary life of this specific American community in the light of trends of changing behavior observable in it during the last thirty-five years. The book is written in an entirely descriptive tone, treating the White citizens of Middletown in much the same way as an anthropologist from an industrialized nation might describe a non-industrial culture. In the 1920s, the Lynds found a “division into the working class and business class,” a division that constituted, to their minds, the “outstanding cleavage in Middletown.”

608 In this particular context – a gangster visiting a local shopkeeper to smoke a cigarette and to chat with him – the hermeneutic possibilities open for the reader (and the punning possibilities available for the ironic author) with the word combination schastlivyi sluchai [счастливый случай] are numerous: “good luck,” “lucky chance,” “joyful occasion,” “happy accident,” “fortuitous circumstance,” “lucky break,” and so on. It could be said that the word-conscious Pilnyak apparently created his own “luck” here – in both languages (English and Russian) – as he performs this improvisational riff on America’s alleged fixation with the notion of “fortuity” (sluchainost’) [случайность]. For more on this Russian word and its semantic possibilities, see endnote #599. The reader should also be warned that the word used to denote the small “shop” (lavochka) [лавочка] where this “fortuitous” conversation between a gangster and a local shopkeeper takes place can also be used parenthetically to refer to a “clique,” a “racket,” or a “gang” of underworld people engaged in shady activities. For example, the expression zakryt’ lavochku [закрыть лавочку] (literally, “to close up shop”), can mean figuratively “to put a stop to a shady business” or “to put a stop to a shady establishment”).

609 Mr. Jackson seems to be referring here the Homestead Act of 1862, which accelerated the settlement of the western territory of the United States by granting adult heads of families 160 acres of surveyed public land for a minimal filing fee and 5 years of continuous residence on that land. The Homestead Act of 1862 is recognized as one of the most revolutionary concepts for distributing public land in American history. Repercussions of this monumental piece of legislation can be detected throughout America today, decades after the cry of “Free Land!” has faded away. Over the course of the Homestead Act, the U.S. government distributed more than 270 million acres of land to homesteaders. Approximately 1.6 million homesteaders (about 40 percent) “proved up” on their lands by fulfilling all requirements and taking title from the government. Millions of people of different ethnic origins, ages, and backgrounds took advantage of homesteading, hoping to use the Homestead Act to help them fulfill their own personal visions of the American Dream of land and home ownership.

610 An artel [артель] was any of various cooperative associations that existed in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union. They began centuries ago but were especially prevalent from the time of the emancipation of the serfs (1861) through the 1950s. In the later Soviet period (1960s-1980s), the term was mostly phased out with the complete monopolization of the Soviet economy by the state. Artels were semi-formal associations for craft, artisan, and light industrial enterprises. Often artel members worked far from home and lived as a commune.
Payment for a completed job was distributed according to verbal agreements, quite often in equal shares. Often artels were seasonal.

611 Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), the eldest son of a wealthy German cotton textile manufacturer, was an important philosopher, social scientist, journalist, and businessman. He founded Marxist theory together with Karl Marx. In 1845, he published The Condition of the Working Class in England, based on personal observations and research conducted in Manchester, England. In 1848, he co-authored The Communist Manifesto with Marx, though he also authored and co-authored (primarily with Marx) many other works, and later he supported Marx financially so that the latter could conduct research and write Das Kapital (1867). After Marx’s death, Engels edited the second and third volumes. Additionally, Engels organized Marx’s notes on Theories of Surplus Value, which he later published as the “fourth volume” of Capital. He also made contributions to family economics.

612 Pilnyak is quoting here from a letter that Engels wrote to Marx from Manchester on October 7, 1858.

613 For background information on the American Federation of Labor, see endnote #414.

614 Pilnyak uses here the phrase vpriagat’sia v liamku [впрягаться в лямку], which appears to combine two Russian idiomatic expressions: vpriagat’sia v rabotu [впрягаться в работу], “to immerse oneself in work,” “to fling oneself into work,” and tianut’ liamku [тянуть лямку], “to toil,” “to sweat,” “to do drudge work.”

615 For background information on the term lumpenproletariat, see endnote #175.

616 Harry Guzik (1875-1949), the older (and less intelligent) brother of Jake “Greasy Thumb” Guzik, was a top lieutenant in the Capone organization. He was chiefly in charge of prostitution operations. Although he was sentenced to the Illinois State Penitentiary in 1921, the elder Guzik received an immediate pardon from the governor, Len Small, who was a protégé of Chicago’s corrupt mayor, “Big Bill” Thompson.

617 Literally, “[would fly] to the devil’s mother” (k chortovoi materi) [к чортовой матери].

618 For background information on the “Bolshevik” locomotives at the Ford automobile plant, see endnote #513.

619 Otto Moog was a German engineer who travelled to the United States in 1926 to witness first-hand the impressive engineering feat that Henry Ford had achieved with his mass production of automobiles. The highlight of his trip was a visit to Detroit, where he toured the Highland Park and River Rouge plants. In the travel account he published a year later, Druben steht Amerika (1927), Moog rhapsodized: “No symphony, no Eroica, compares in depth, content, and power to the music that threatened and hammered away at us as we wandered through Ford’s workplaces, wanderers overwhelmed by a daring expression of the human spirit” (72).
The “Mr. Childs” that Pilnyak mentions here is most likely William Hamlin Childs (1857-1928), a wealthy, prominent New York businessman and financier (he founded the Bon Ami Soap Company) who was a strong supporter of Theodore Roosevelt’s Non-Partisan League and a staunch opponent of what he considered to be the unnecessary tax burdens imposed upon American businesses. Nowhere in his travelogue does Otto Moog mention this conversation that he allegedly had with Mister Childs on a steamer while crossing the Atlantic Ocean.

For background information on the Order of the Knights of Labor, see endnote #562.

The “Black Friday” that Pilnyak is referring to here is Friday, May 9, 1873, the day when the Vienna Stock Exchange, no longer able to sustain the bubble of false expansion, insolvencies, and dishonest manipulations, suddenly collapsed. A series of Viennese bank failures ensued, causing a contraction of the money available for business lending. The resulting financial crisis, called the Panic of 1873, triggered a depression in Europe and North America that lasted from 1873 until 1879, and even longer in some countries. In Great Britain, for example, it initiated two decades of stagnation, known as the “Long Depression,” which weakened the country’s economic leadership. The Panic of 1873 was known as the “Great Depression” until the events in the early 1930s set a new standard.

Pilnyak is referring here to the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, which began on July 14th of that year after the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad cut wages for the third time in a year. The strike lasted for about 45 days. Workers in numerous cities in New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland went out on strike because of economic problems and pressure on wages by the railroads. Various city and state governments organized armed militias, aided by national guardsmen, federal troops, and private militias organized by the railroads, to fight against the workers. At its height, the strike was supported by about 100,000 workers. With the intervention of federal troops in several locations, most of the strikes were suppressed by early August. All told, an estimated 100 people were killed in the labor unrest. In numerous cities, workers burned down and destroyed both physical facilities and the rolling stock of the railroads – that is, engines and railroad cars. Workers in Reading, PA, for instance, the state’s third-largest industrial city at the time and the city that was home to the engine works and shops of the Reading Railroad, broke out into a strike that turned quite violent. State militia shot 16 citizens. Preludes to the subsequent massacre that ensued included fresh work stoppage by all classes of the railroad’s local workforce, mass marches, the blocking of rail traffic, and train yard arson. Workers in Reading burned down the only railroad bridge offering connections to the west, in order to prevent local militia from being mustered to actions in the state capital of Harrisburg or in Pittsburgh. Authorities used state militia, local police, and the Pinkerton National Detective Agency in an attempt to break the strike. Reading Railroad management itself mobilized a private militia whose members committed the shootings in the city.

Jason “Jay” Gould (1836-1892) was a leading American railroad developer. He has been referred to as one of the most ruthless robber barons of the Gilded Age, a speculator whose success at business made him one of the richest men of his era. He was hated and reviled, but some modern historians, like Walter R. Borneman and Maury Klein, working from primary sources, have attempted to discount his negative portrayal.
The McCormick Harvesting Machine Company, which in 1902 became part of the International Harvester Company, was founded by Cyrus Hall McCormick (1809-1884), an American inventor and businessman. Born and raised in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, McCormick and many members of his family became prominent residents of Chicago. Although he has sometimes been simplistically credited as being the sole “inventor” of the mechanical reaper, McCormick was one of several inventors who contributed successful models in the 1830s, and his efforts built on more than two decades of work by his father, as well as the aid of Jo Anderson, a slave held by his family. Even greater than his achievement as an inventor was McCormick’s success in the development of a modern company, with manufacturing, marketing, and a sales force to market his products. Pilnyak misspells his name as “McCorwick” (Mak-Korvik).

Pilnyak is referring here to the “Haymarket affair” (also known as the “Haymarket massacre” or “Haymarket riot”), the aftermath of a bombing that took place at a labor demonstration on Tuesday, May 4, 1886, at Haymarket Square in Chicago. It began as a peaceful rally in support of workers striking for an eight-hour day and in reaction to the killing of several workers the previous day by the police. An unknown person threw a dynamite bomb at the police as they acted to disperse the public meeting. The bomb blast and ensuing gunfire resulted in the deaths of seven police officers and at least four civilians; scores of others were wounded. In the internationally publicized legal proceedings that followed, eight anarchists were convicted of conspiracy. The evidence was that one of the defendants may have built the bomb, but none of those on trial had thrown it. Seven defendants were sentenced to death and one to a term of 15 years in prison. The death sentences of two of these defendants were commuted by Illinois governor Richard J. Oglesby to terms of life in prison, and another committed suicide in jail rather than face the gallows. The other four were hanged on November 11, 1887. In 1893, the new governor, John Peter Altgeld, pardoned the remaining defendants and criticized the trial. The Haymarket affair is generally considered significant as the origin of international May Day observances for workers.

Although there were two historical periods of “White Terror” in France – the first (in 1794-1795) launched during the Thermidorian reaction to the French Revolution’s Reign of Terror, the second (in 1815) launched as part of the Bourbon Restoration following Napoleon’s brief return to power during the Hundred Days – Pilnyak is no doubt referring here to the White Terror in his native Russia: that is, the organized violence carried out by the White Army during the Russian Civil War (1917-1923). It began as soon as the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917 and continued up until the defeat of the White Army at the hands of the Red Army in 1923. The White Army had support from the Triple Entente and fought the Red Army (which engaged in its own Red Terror) for political power.

Samuel Gompers (1850-1924) was an English-born, American labor union leader and a key figure in American labor history. Gompers founded the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and served as the organization’s president from 1886 to 1894 and from 1895 until his death in 1924. He promoted harmony among the different craft unions that comprised the AFL, trying to minimize jurisdictional battles. He promoted thorough organization and collective bargaining to secure shorter hours and higher wages, the first essential steps, he believed, to
emancipating labor. He also encouraged the AFL to take political action to “elect their friends” and “defeat their enemies.” He mostly supported Democrats, but sometimes Republicans. He strongly opposed socialists. During World War I, Gompers and the AFL openly supported the war effort, attempting to avert strikes and boost morale while raising wage rates and expanding membership.

For background information on Friedrich Engels, see endnote #610. Pilnyak discusses Engels’s ironic term, “bourgeois proletarian,” in Chapter 37.

Pilnyak uses here the word grivennik [гривенник], “ten-kopeck coin,” rather than “dime,” no doubt for the benefit of his Russian readers.

Pilnyak is referring here to the Xinhai Revolution, also known as the Revolution of 1911, which overthrew China’s last imperial dynasty (the Qing dynasty) and established the Republic of China. The revolution was named Xinhai (Hsin-hai) because it occurred in 1911, the year of the Xinhai (metal pig) stem-branch in the sexagenary cycle of the Chinese calendar. The revolution consisted of many revolts and uprisings. The turning point was the Wuchang Uprising on October 10, 1911, which resulted from the mishandling of the Railway Protection Movement. The revolution ended with the abdication of the six-year-old “Last Emperor,” Puyi, on February 12, 1912, which marked the end of 2,000 years of imperial rule and the beginning of China’s early republican era (1912-1916). The revolution arose mainly in response to the decline of the Qing state, which had proven ineffective in its efforts to modernize China and confront foreign aggression. Both the Republic of China in Taiwan and mainland China consider themselves to be the legitimate successors to the Xinhai Revolution, honoring the ideals of the revolution, which include nationalism, republicanism, modernization of China, and national unity. October 10th is commemorated in Taiwan as Double Ten Day, the National Day of the Republic of China. In mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau, the day is celebrated as the Anniversary of the Xinhai Revolution.

Pilnyak is referring here to the United States occupation of Nicaragua from 1912 to 1933 as part of the so-called Banana Wars, when the U.S. military forcefully intervened in various Latin American countries from 1898 to 1934. The formal occupation of Nicaragua began in 1912, even though there were various other assaults by the U.S. in Nicaragua throughout this period. American military interventions in Nicaragua were designed to stop any other nation except the United States from building a Nicaraguan Canal. Nicaragua assumed a quasi-protectorate status under the 1916 Bryan-Chamorro Treaty. But with the onset of the Great Depression and with Augusto C. Sandino’s Nicaraguan guerilla troops fighting back against U.S. troops, it became too costly for the U.S. government, and a withdrawal was ordered in 1933.

For background information on the correspondence between Marx and Lincoln, see endnotes #557, #560, and #604.

The Paris Commune was a radical socialist and revolutionary government that ruled Paris from March 18 to May 28, 1871. Following the defeat of Emperor Napoleon III in September 1870, the French Second Empire swiftly collapsed. In its stead arose a Third Republic at war
with Prussia, which laid siege to Paris for four months. France’s capital, which was a hotbed of working-class radicalism, was defended during this time primarily by the often politicized and radical troops of the National Guard rather than by regular Army troops. In February 1871, Adolphe Thiers, the new chief executive of the French national government, signed an armistice with Prussia that disarmed the Army but not the National Guard. Soldiers of the Commune’s National Guard killed two French army generals, and the Commune refused to accept the authority of the French government. The regular French Army suppressed the Commune during the “Bloody Week” that began on May 21, 1871. Debates over the policies and outcome of the Commune exerted a significant influence on the ideas of Karl Marx, who described it as an example of the “dictatorship of the proletariat.”

635 Pilnyak is referring here to the Workingmen’s Party, which was established in 1876. The party changed its name in 1877 to Socialistic Labor Party and again sometime in the late 1880s to Socialist Labor Party. The party advocated the ideology of “socialist industrial unionism” – a belief in the fundamental transformation of society through the combined political and industrial action of the working class organized into industrial unions. The Socialist Labor Party is the oldest socialist political party in the United States and the second oldest socialist party in the world still in existence.

636 Morris Hillquit (1869-1933) was a founder and leader of the Socialist Party of America as well as a prominent labor lawyer in New York’s Lower East Side. Together with Eugene V. Debs and Congressman Victor L. Berger, Hillquit was one of the leading public faces of American socialism during the first two decades of the twentieth century. In November 1917, running on an anti-war platform, Hillquit garnered more than 100,000 votes as the socialist candidate for Mayor of New York City. Hillquit would again run for Mayor of New York in 1932. He also stood as a candidate for the Congress a total of five times over the course of his life. Pilnyak, for some reason, transliterates Hillquit’s surname as both “Gilkvit” [Гилквіт] and “Khilkiut” [Хілкіут].

637 The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), members of which are commonly termed “Wobblies,” is an international labor union that was founded in Chicago in 1905. The union combines general unionism with industrial unionism, as it is a general union whose members are further organized within the industry of their employment. The philosophy and tactics of the IWW are described as “revolutionary industrial unionism,” with ties to both socialist and anarchist labor movements. In the 1910s and early 1920s, the IWW achieved many of their short-term goals, particularly in the American West, and cut across traditional guild and union lines to organize workers in a variety of trades and industries. At its peak in August 1917, IWW membership was more than 150,000. The extremely high rate of IWW membership turnover during this era (estimated at 133% per decade) makes it difficult for historians to state membership totals with any certainty, as workers tended to join the IWW in large numbers for relatively short periods of time (for example, during labor strikes and periods of generalized economic distress). Membership declined dramatically in the 1920s due to several factors. There were conflicts with other labor groups, particularly the American Federation of Labor (AFL), which regarded the IWW as too radical, while the IWW regarded the AFL as too conservative and divisive (dividing workers by craft). Membership also declined due to government crackdowns on radical, anarchist, and socialist groups during the First Red Scare
after World War I. The most decisive factor in the decline in IWW membership and influence, however, was a 1924 schism within the organization, a schism from which the IWW never fully recovered.

638 Pilnyak is referring here to the Workers Party of America, the name of the legal party organization used by the Communist Party USA from the last days of 1921 until the middle of 1929. As a legal political party, the Workers Party accepted affiliation from independent socialist groups, such as the African Blood Brotherhood, the Jewish Socialist Federation, and the Workers’ Council of the United States. In the meantime, the underground Communist Party, with overlapping membership, conducted political agitation. By 1923, the aboveground party sought to engage the Socialist Party of America in united front actions, but was rebuffed. Both the Workers Party of America and the Socialist Party of America engaged in separate labor party efforts prior to the presidential election of 1924. The Socialist Party of America participated in the Conference for Progressive Political Action, which dissolved itself into the Progressive Party. The Workers Party of America succeeded in dominating the national Farmer-Labor Party, but that organization quickly returned to its constituent parts. At its 1925 convention, the group renamed itself the Workers (Communist) Party, and in 1929 the Communist Party USA. The party’s youth affiliate was named the Young Workers League, Young Workers (Communist) League, and Young Communist League in tandem with the parent organization. As the Comintern entered the “Third Period,” the principle of a leftist united front was abandoned in favor of a single above-ground Communist Party. The above-ground Workers Party of America and underground party were gradually merged in a series of party conferences in the late 1920s.

639 The Communist Party USA (CPUSA) is a communist political party in the United States. Established in 1919 after a split in the Socialist Party of America, it has a long, complex history that is closely tied with the U.S. labor movement and the histories of communist parties worldwide. For the first half of the twentieth century, the Communist Party was a highly influential force in various struggles for democratic rights. It played a prominent role in the U.S. labor movement from the 1920s through the 1940s, having a major hand in founding most of the country’s first industrial unions (which would later use the McCarran Internal Security Act to expel their communist members) while also becoming known for opposing racism and fighting for integration in workplaces and communities during the height of the Jim Crow period of U.S. racial segregation. Historian Ellen Schrecker concludes that decades of recent scholarship offer “a more nuanced portrayal of the party as both a Stalinist sect tied to a vicious regime and the most dynamic organization within the American Left during the 1930s and ‘40s.” By August 1919, only months after its founding, the Communist Party claimed 50,000 to 60,000 members. Members also included anarchists and other radical leftists. At the time, the older and more moderate Socialist Party of America, suffering from criminal prosecutions for its anti-war stance during World War I, had declined to 40,000 members. The sections of the Communist Party’s International Workers Order organized for communism around linguistic and ethnic lines, providing mutual aid and tailored cultural activities to an IWO membership that peaked at 200,000 at its height.

640 James Hudson Maurer (1864-1944) was a prominent American trade unionist who twice ran for the office of Vice President of the United States on the ticket of the Socialist Party. In
April 1880, at age 16, Maurer joined the Knights of Labor labor union. He was also active during his younger years in the Single Tax movement associated with Henry George. In the early 1890s, he joined the People’s Party, a populist political organization that attempted to advance the cause of the nation’s farmers. He was introduced to socialist ideas near the end of the decade, spending nearly a year to read Karl Marx’s *Capital* before joining the Socialist Labor Party in 1899. Throughout his later life, Maurer was strongly supportive of the American Federation of Labor and he came to disapprove strongly of the Socialist Labor Party’s efforts to establish the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, which was a competing socialist trade union to the American Federation of Labor. In 1901, he left the Socialist Labor Party to join the Socialist Party of America over this issue. He ran for Governor of Pennsylvania on the Socialist Party ticket in 1906, garnering nearly 26,000 votes. In November 1910, Maurer was elected as a socialist to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, serving through 1912. During his term in the state legislature, Maurer fought for the passage of a plan for Old Age Pensions and attempted to prevent the establishment of a State Constabulary, which was seen as a mechanism for the armed and organized breaking of strikes. Also in 1912, Maurer was elected as President of the Pennsylvania Federation of Labor, a post that he held until 1930. Defeated in his bid for reelection to the Pennsylvania House in 1913, Maurer came back from the loss to win election to two more terms, in 1915 and 1917. During his second and third terms of office, Maurer was instrumental in working for the passage of child labor and workmen’s compensation legislation in the state.

641 When Maurer mentions in his speech that a strike might potentially take place in Reading, PA, he is forecasting what would come to be known as the Great Railroad Strike of 1877. For background information on this strike, see endnote #622.

642 Neftesindikat [Нефтесиндикат], the oil syndicate of the U.S.S.R., was the official foreign trade organization for the sale of the country’s oil and petroleum products. It was organized in July 1922 in order to implement the principle of the monopoly of foreign trade, centralizing operations related to the purchase of petroleum products from Soviet oil trusts and their implementation in foreign markets.

643 Pilnyak uses here the acronym *Promtorg* [Промторг], short for *Promyshlennaya Torgovlia* [Промышленная Торговля] (“Industrial Trade”), the government agency that was responsible for monitoring commodity trusts and controlling pricing in the U.S.S.R. during the 1920s and 1930s.

644 The Standard Vacuum Oil Company was a joint venture started by Standard Oil of New Jersey and Mobil Oil, following the break-up of Standard Oil in 1911 (due to the Sherman Antitrust Act), to make and market products in the Far East. Around the time of World War I, the market in the Far East was too large to leave unattended, but still small. Thus these two American oil companies started Standard Vacuum Oil as a joint venture.

645 In his description of this lawsuit, Pilnyak appears to be punning on the adjectival form *sobstvennyi* [собственный] (“one’s own,” “private,” “personal,” “proprietary”) and the nominal forms *sobstvennik* [собственник] (“owner,” “proprietor”) and *sobstvennost’* [собственность] (“ownership,” “property”). These words, all of which derive, of course, from
the word sebia [себя] (“oneself”), have rather different ideological connotations (especially during the 1930s) in the capitalist, individualist U.S. and in the socialist, collectivist U.S.S.R.

646 For background information on “White Guard” Russians, see endnotes #339 and #626.

647 Pilnyak uses here the Russian idiomatic expression, grechnevaia kasha, kotoraiia samoiu sebia khvalit [гречневая каша, которая самою себя хвалит], literally, “the buckwheat porridge that sings praises to itself.” This expression is used to mock an immodest person for praising himself or herself. Russians consider buckwheat porridge to be such a beloved, tasty food item, one whose gustatory merits are quite obvious to everyone, that they feel it doesn’t require any praise, especially praise coming from itself.

648 Pilnyak is referring to the aforementioned French billionaire. The author characterizes him here as a synovnii papasha [сыновний папаша], literally, a “filial daddy,” apparently because the love and devotion this father feels toward his son is what one would normally expect as being due from a son to his father.

649 For background information on the 1926 Passaic textile strike, see endnote #590.

650 Pilnyak is referring here to the Columbine Mine massacre that occurred on November 21, 1927 in Serene, Colorado, a small company town owned by the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company. A fight broke out between Colorado state police and a group of striking coal miners, during which the unarmed miners were attacked by police who were very heavily armed (their firearms included automatic pistols, rifles, riot guns, and tear gas grenades). Six strikers were killed, and dozens more were injured. The miners testified that machine guns were fired at them, but the state police disputed that claim.

651 “Suffocating gas” is a gas (such as chlorine or phosgene) that causes intense irritation of the bronchial tubes and lungs, resulting in pulmonary edema. “Tear gas,” formally known as a lachrymator agent or lachrymator, sometimes colloquially known as “mace,” is a chemical weapon that causes severe eye, respiratory, and skin irritation, pain, bleeding, and even blindness. In the eye, it stimulates the nerves of the lacrimal gland to produce tears. Lachrymatory agents are commonly used for riot control. Their use in warfare is prohibited by various international treaties. During World War I, toxic lachrymatory agents were increasingly used.

652 Pilnyak is referring here to the attack by policemen and state troopers upon hundreds of union miners and their wives and children on August 22, 1927 in Cheswick (Pilnyak mistakenly calls it Ashwick), a borough in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. This clash resulted in a brutal attack that featured not only police “billy clubs,” but also gas bombs. Pilnyak might have read about this attack in an article, titled “What to Expect from Gov. Fisher,” that appeared in The Labor Defender, vol. 2, no. 12 (December 1927): 186-187. The article’s author, Don Brown, seriously doubted that Governor Fisher would take any punitive action against the overly zealous law enforcement personnel, seeing as how the governor was himself formerly a lawyer for, and a stockholder in, the Clearfield Bituminous Coal Corporation.
Pilnyak is likely referring here to the lengthy 1927 Indiana bituminous coal strike that was undertaken by members of the United Mine Workers of America against local mining companies. Although the struggle raged throughout most of the nation’s coal fields, its most serious impact was felt in western Pennsylvania, especially Indiana County. The strike began on April 1, 1927, when almost 200,000 coal miners went out on strike against the coal mining companies operating in the Central Competitive Field, after the two sides (management and labor) could not reach an agreement on pay rates. The 1927 strike was one of the longest and most bitter strikes in Pennsylvania coal-industry history. The walk-out effectively closed down all mining activity in the bituminous fields of western Pennsylvania. As time passed, other miners joined the strike, particularly those who worked for the Clearfield Bituminous Coal Corporation, in Rossiter, PA, which became the focal point for the entire strike. From the outset, the striking miners endured intense hardships. The operators used strikebreakers, private police, injunctions, and many other anti-union tactics that had been developed during a century of industrial conflict in America. Owners also evicted 12,000 miners and their families from company housing between July and December 1927. The miners in Rossiter began to agitate, marching to other mines and encouraging workers there to join the strike. All in all, however, the strike proved to be a disaster for the union, for by 1929 there were only 84,000 paying members of the union, down from the 400,000 who had belonged to the union in 1920.

For background information on Andrew Mellon, see endnote #427.

Hiram Warren Johnson (1866-1945) was a leading American progressive and isolationist politician from California. He served as the twenty-third Governor of California from 1911 to 1917, and as a United States Senator from 1917 to 1945. He was Theodore Roosevelt’s running mate in the 1912 presidential election on the Progressive (also known as the “Bull Moose”) Party.

David Aiken Reed (1880-1953) was a Republican politician from Pittsburgh who represented Pennsylvania in the United States Senate from 1922 to 1935. Reed was appointed to the Senate on August 8, 1922, to fill a vacancy created by the death of William E. Crow. He was subsequently elected on November 7, 1922, to serve out the remainder of Crow’s term and a six-year term in his own right, beginning in March 1923. Along with Congressman Albert Johnson, Senator Reed co-authored the Immigration Act of 1924, which was designed to restrict the movement of Eastern and Southern Europeans into the United States and to prohibit Asian immigration in its entirety. Reed was re-elected in 1928, but was unsuccessful in seeking re-election in 1934. His tenure in the U.S. Senate ended with the expiration of his term on January 3, 1935.

The Evening World was a newspaper published in New York City from 1887 to 1931. The first issue was published on October 10, 1887, and the final issue was published on February 26, 1931. The newspaper was published daily, except for Sunday. In 1931, it was merged with New York World and the New York Telegram, becoming the New York World-Telegram.

Fannie Hurst (1885-1968) was an American novelist and short story writer whose works were highly popular during the post-World War I era. Her work combined sentimental,
romantic themes with social issues of the day, such as women’s rights and race relations. She was one of the most widely read women authors of the twentieth century and, for a time in the 1920s, was one of the highest-paid American writers, along with Booth Tarkington. Hurst also actively supported a number of progressive social causes, including feminism, African American equality, and New Deal programs. She is quoted here from the article, “LABOR: Horror in Pennsylvania,” that appeared in *Time Magazine* (February 13, 1928), where the original reads: “This uncivilized spectacle of families evicted from their homes and living like dogs among slops in kennels opposite the very thresholds of their vacant homes is wrong. . .”

659 The Russian expression that Pilnyak uses here for “direct route” (*priamaia doroga*) can also be used figuratively to mean the “straight and narrow path.”

660 Increases in the amount of imports of Russian lumber and pulpwood during 1930 aroused alarm on the part of American business concerns that were engaged in the production of these commodities. Pressure was brought to bear on Congress and the Treasury Department to obtain the limitation and even the total exclusion of such imports. It was asserted that since all Soviet labor was in the employ of the government, which fixed prices and wages, Soviet goods were *ipso facto* products of involuntary labor. The contention also was made that Soviet products were dumped in this country at prices below their cost of production. This led to passage of the Tariff Act of 1930, otherwise known as the Smoot-Hawley Tariff, an act implementing protectionist trade policies, which was sponsored by Senator Reed Smoot of Utah and Representative Willis C. Hawley of Oregon. The act, which was passed into law on June 17, 1930, raised U.S. tariffs on over 20,000 imported goods. Under the 1930 Tariff Act, the importation of articles produced by convict, forced, or indentured labor was prohibited. On February 10, 1931, the U.S. Treasury laid a conditional embargo on lumber and pulpwood from northern Russia, placing on the importer the burden of proof that such shipments were not produced by convict labor.

661 Christians in the West (Catholics and Protestants) celebrate the birth of Christ on December 25th, while Christians in the East (Orthodox Christians) celebrate this important religious holiday on January 7th.

662 “Jim Crow” was a pejorative expression meaning “Negro.” Jim Crow laws – sometimes, as in Florida, part of state constitutions – mandated the segregation of public schools, public places, and public transportation, and the segregation of restrooms, restaurants, and drinking fountains for Whites and Blacks. The origin of the phrase “Jim Crow” has often been attributed to “Jump Jim Crow,” a song-and-dance caricature of Blacks performed by White actor Thomas D. Rice in blackface, which first surfaced in 1832 and was used to satirize Andrew Jackson’s populist policies. As a result of Rice’s fame, “Jim Crow” by 1838 had become a pejorative expression meaning “Negro.” When southern legislatures passed laws of racial segregation directed against Black Americans at the end of the nineteenth century, these statutes became known as Jim Crow laws. Segregation of public (state-sponsored) schools was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1954 in Brown v. Board of Education. In some states, it took years to implement this decision. Generally, the remaining Jim Crow laws were overruled by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, but years of
action and court challenges have been needed to unravel the many means of institutional discrimination.

George Padmore (1903-1959) recounts this ghastly incident involving Timothy Rouse in his book, *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* (1931). Padmore, who was born Malcolm Ivan Meredith Nurse in Trinidad, was a leading Pan-Africanist, journalist, and author. He left Trinidad in 1924 to study medicine in the United States, where he also joined the Communist Party. From there, he moved to the Soviet Union, where he was active in the Party and worked on African independence movements. He also worked for the Party in Germany, but he left after the rise of the Nazis in the 1930s. He left the Communist Party in 1934 because of the abuses and widespread purges under Stalin, although he continued to support socialism. Padmore lived for a time in France, before settling in London. Toward the end of his life, he moved to Accra, Ghana.

Pilnyak is likely referring here to the American Negro Labor Congress, which was established in 1925 by the Communist Party as a vehicle for advancing the rights of African-Americans, propagandizing for communism within the Black community, and recruiting African-American members for the Party. The organization attacked the segregationist practices of many of the unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. It also campaigned against lynching, the disfranchisement of Black Americans, and Jim Crow laws. In 1930, the group was renamed the League of Struggle for Negro Rights.

Pilnyak is referring here to a passage that appears in Chapter 1, “Introduction” (*Vvedenie* [Введение]), of Pavel Svinin’s *A Picturesque Journey in North America (Opyt zhivopisnogo puteshestviia po Severnoi Amerike)* [Опыт живописного путешествия по Северной Америке] (St. Petersburg: tip. Drekhslera, 1815).

For some reason, Pilnyak lists the names of these forty major companies (American Foreign Power, Auburn, Westinghouse, etc.) in English, rather than in either transliterated or translated form, as he usually does for the benefit of his Russian readers.

Although Pilnyak says here that seven of these stocks did not have any value or worth (*ne imeli tseny*) [не имели цены], it would be more accurate to say that they simply did not have any price quotes on that particular day. He also quotes here the day’s low price for these stocks on November 13th, not their closing price.

New Amsterdam was a seventeenth-century Dutch settlement that served as the seat of the colonial government in New Netherland. This trading post became a settlement outside of Fort Amsterdam, which was situated on the strategic southern tip of the island of Manhattan and was meant to defend the fur trade operations of the Dutch West India Company in the North River (Hudson River). In 1624, it became a provincial extension of the Dutch Republic and was designated as the capital of the province in 1625. By 1655, the population of New Netherland had grown to 2,000 people, with 1,500 living in New Amsterdam. On September 8, 1664, New Amsterdam was renamed New York, in honor of the Duke of York (later James II of England), in whose name the English had captured it. After the Second Anglo-Dutch War of 1665-1667, England and the United Provinces of the Netherlands agreed to the status quo in
the Treaty of Breda. The English kept the island of Manhattan, the Dutch giving up their claim
to the town and the rest of the colony, while the English formally abandoned the island of Run
in the East Indies to the Dutch, confirming their control of the valuable Spice Islands. Today
much of what was once New Amsterdam is now New York City.

669 In his parenthetical remark about Wall Street, Pilnyak uses here the adjective zastennyi
[застенный], which can be read to mean, literally, “beyond” or “behind” (za) [за] the “wall”
(stena) [стена] or “walled in,” as in a “walled city” (zastennyi gorod) [застенный город]. But
zastennyi might also be read as an adjective that Pilnyak creates out of the verb zastit’
[застить], especially when that verb is used with the word for “light” svet [свет] to mean “to
stand in somebody’s or something’s light.” In this sense, Wall Street is hidden or blocked by
the massive skyscrapers that surround it (they stand in its light).

670 Pilnyak is using here the plural form of the word roman [roman], which can mean not only
“novel,” but also “romance” or “love affair.” One contemporary critic has remarked wittily
that with its harsh treatment of American society, O’kei, Pilnyak’s self-styled “American
novel” (Amerikanskii roman) [Американский роман], does not resemble much of a “love
affair” (liubovnyi roman) [любовный роман] with America. See Aleksandr Etkind,
Tolkovanie puteshestvi. Rossiia i Amerika v travelogakh i intertekststakh [Толкование
путешествий. Россия и Америка в травелогах и интертекстах] (Moscow: Novoe

671 For background information on Ivan Bunin and The Gentleman from San Francisco, see
endnote #10.

672 Pilnyak uses here the word obval [обвал] (“cave-in,” “collapse,” “rock fall,” “avalanche,”
“landslide”) to describe, in geological terms, the financial collapse that led to the Great
Depression. As we have seen, Pilnyak links its root, val [вал] (“embankment”), both
semantically and phonetically, with “Wall” Street (valovaia ulitsa) [валовая улица], considered
both as a historical marker in the development of New York (a waterfront street in the city) and
as a symbol of American finance (the home of the stock exchange).

673 For background information on J. P. Morgan, Jr., see endnote #429.

674 Pilnyak is referring here not to the original founders, but to the current heads of Kuhn, Loeb
& Co., a bulge bracket investment bank that was founded in 1867 by Abraham Kuhn (1819-
1892) and Solomon Loeb (1828-1903). Under the leadership of Jacob H. Schiff, it grew to
become one of the most influential investment banks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries, financing America’s expanding railways and growth companies, including Western
Union and Westinghouse, and thereby becoming the principal rival of J. P. Morgan & Co.

675 For background information on Herbert Hoover, see endnote #416.

676 For background information on Andrew Mellon, see endnote #427.
Henry Lewis Stimson (1867-1950) was an American statesman, a lawyer, and a Republican Party politician and spokesman on foreign policy. He served as Secretary of War (1911-1913) under William Howard Taft, and as Governor-General of the Philippines (1927-1929) under Calvin Coolidge. As Secretary of State (1929-1933) under Herbert Hoover, he articulated the Stimson Doctrine, which announced American opposition to Japanese expansion in Asia. He again served as Secretary of War (1940–1945) under Democrats Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman, and was a leading hawk calling for war against Nazi Germany. During World War II, he took charge of raising and training 13 million soldiers and airmen, supervised the spending of a third of the nation’s GDP on the Army and the Air Forces, helped formulate military strategy, and oversaw the Manhattan Project, which built the first atomic bombs and made possible the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

William N. Doak (1882-1933) was an American labor leader who served as the Vice-President of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. On December 9, 1930, Doak was appointed by President Hoover to serve as the Secretary of Labor, succeeding Senator James J. Davis. As the Secretary of Labor, Doak directed the Bureau of Immigration to launch intensive raids to identify immigrants liable for deportation. Doak believed that removal of illegal aliens would reduce relief expenditures and free jobs for native-born citizens during the Great Depression. Although there is no evidence that Doak made an effort to single out any specific ethnic group, his directive resulted in the targeting of the Mexican community. In 1931, the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement (the Wickersham Commission) found the methods employed by Doak’s underlings to be unconstitutional. Doak retired at the end of President Hoover’s administration on March 4, 1933. Pilnyak mistakenly identifies Doak as the Minister of Labor and Immigration (министр труда и иммиграции), not the Secretary of Labor.

The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) is a service organization with a lineage-based membership for women who are directly descended from a person involved in the United States’ struggle for independence. In 1889, the centennial of President George Washington’s inauguration was celebrated, and Americans looked for additional ways to recognize their past. Out of the renewed interest in United States history, numerous patriotic and preservation societies were founded. On July 13, 1890, after the Sons of the American Revolution refused to allow women to join their group, Mary Smith Lockwood published the story of patriot Hannah White Arnett in the Washington Post, asking, “Where will the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution place Hannah Arnett?” On July 21st of that year, William O. McDowell, a great-grandson of Hannah White Arnett, published an article in the Washington Post offering to help form a society to be known as the Daughters of the American Revolution. The first meeting of the society was held on August 9, 1890, and the first DAR chapter was organized on October 11, 1890, at the home of Mary Smith Lockwood, one of the DAR’s four co-founders. In this same period, such organizations as the Colonial Dames of America, the Mary Washington Memorial Society, Preservation of the Virginia Antiquities, United Daughters of the Confederacy, and Sons of Confederate Veterans were also founded. A non-profit group, the DAR works to promote historic preservation, education, and patriotism. The organization’s membership is limited to direct lineal descendants of soldiers or others of the revolutionary period who aided the cause of independence. Its motto is “God, Home, and Country.”
John Bassett Moore (1860-1947), an authority on international law, was a member of the Hague Tribunal and the first American judge to serve on the Permanent Court of International Justice (the “World Court”). He was on the Hague Tribunal from 1912 to 1938, and was a judge of the Permanent Court of International Justice from 1920 to 1928. Moore was a proponent of neutrality, believing that the post-World War I system of alliances would tend to broaden wars into global conflicts. He was also a strong believer in the principle of separation of powers under the United States Constitution, asserting in 1921, “There can hardly be room for doubt that the framers of the constitution, when they vested in Congress the power to declare war, never imagined that they were leaving it to the executive to use the military and naval forces of the United States all over the world for the purpose of actually coercing other nations, occupying their territory, and killing their soldiers and citizens, all according to his own notions of the fitness of things, as long as he refrained from calling his action war or persisted in calling it peace.”

The newspaper excerpt is referring to Hamilton Fish III (1888-1991), a soldier and Republican politician from the state of New York. Born into a family long active in the state, Fish was a member of the United States House of Representatives from November 2, 1920 until January 3, 1945. In his nearly 25 years as a congressman, Fish would become known as a strong anti-communist and a bitter opponent of his erstwhile friend, Franklin D. Roosevelt, which raised his profile and made him an ally of the anti-Roosevelt members of Congress. He was unapologetically opposed to Roosevelt’s New Deal policies. A non-interventionist until after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Fish was also responsible for a number of legislative and diplomatic moves aimed at helping Jews get out of Hitler’s Germany. Fish’s congressional career finally ended in 1944, when, in part under the influence of New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey, he won the Republican Party primary in his district but lost the general election.

On May 5, 1930, Fish, a fervent anti-communist who once described communism as “the most important, the most vital, the most far-reaching, and the most dangerous issue in the world,” and who believed that there was extensive communist influence in the United States, introduced House Resolution 180, which proposed establishing a committee to investigate communist activities in the United States. The resulting committee, commonly known as the Fish Committee, undertook extensive investigations of people and organizations suspected of being involved with or supporting communist activities in the United States. Among the committee’s targets were the American Civil Liberties Union and Communist Party presidential candidate William Z. Foster. The committee recommended granting the Department of Justice more authority to investigate communists and strengthening the immigration and deportation laws to keep communists out of the United States.

The Bank of United States, founded in 1913 by Joseph S. Marcus (1862-1927), the former president of the Public Bank, was a New York City bank that failed in 1931. The Bank of United States experienced a series of bank runs late in 1930. On December 10, 1930, a large crowd of bank depositors gathered at the bank’s Southern Boulevard branch in the Bronx, seeking to withdraw their money. The ensuing bank run on its Bronx branch is said to have started the collapse of banking during the Great Depression. The New York Times reported that the run was based on a false rumor spread by a small local merchant, a holder of stock in the
bank, who claimed that the bank had refused to sell his stock. As the news spread, there were smaller runs at several other bank branches in the Bronx as well as in the East New York section of Brooklyn. The next day, fearing a run on the bank, the directors decided to close the bank and asked the Superintendent of Banks to take over the bank’s assets. Among the 608 banks that closed in November and December 1930, the Bank of United States accounted for a third of the total $550 million deposits lost. It is thought that with its closure, bank failures reached a critical mass. People flocked to withdraw their money from other banks. In turn, the banks called in loans and sold assets in order to stay liquid. In that month alone, over 300 banks around the country failed.

684 James John Walker (1881-1946), often known as Jimmy Walker and colloquially as Beau James, was mayor of New York City from 1926 to 1932. A flamboyant politician, he was a liberal Democrat and part of the powerful Tammany Hall machine. During a corruption scandal in 1932, he was forced to resign. A romanticized version of Walker’s tenure as mayor was presented in the film Beau James (1957), starring Bob Hope. This was a somewhat accurate depiction of Walker, who during his time as mayor had become a symbol of Jazz Age romanticism. The film was based on a biography of Walker, also titled Beau James (1949), written by Gene Fowler.

685 The Manufacturers Trust Company, which came into existence in Brooklyn in 1853 as the Manufacturers National Bank, was combined with the Citizens Trust Company in 1914. The name subsequently changed to Manufacturers Trust Company. In 1918, the bank extended its field of operation into the borough of Manhattan by purchasing control of the West Side Bank. Shortly thereafter, a new office was established in the heart of New York’s financial district. In 1921, the institution acquired the Ridgewood National Bank, bringing total deposits to $40 million and giving the bank its first location in Queens. During the course of the 1920s, Manufacturers Trust Company continued to merge with (or acquire) a number of other banks (for example, the North Side Bank of Brooklyn, the Industrial Bank in Manhattan, the Columbia Bank, the Yorkville Bank, the Gotham National Bank, the Fifth National Bank, the Standard Bank, the Commonwealth Bank of New York, the United Capitol National Bank and Trust Company, the State Bank and Trust Company, etc.). By 1929, the total number of bank offices for the Manufacturers Trust Company totaled 47.

686 A Federal Reserve Bank is a regional bank of the Federal Reserve System, the central banking system of the United States. There are twelve banks in total, one for each of the twelve Federal Reserve Districts that were created by the Federal Reserve Act of 1913. The banks are jointly responsible for implementing the monetary policy set forth by the Federal Open Market Committee. The financial crisis known as the Panic of 1907 was headed off by a private conglomerate (led by J. P. Morgan), who set themselves up as “lenders of last resort” to banks in trouble. This effort succeeded in stopping the panic and led to calls for a federal agency to do the same thing. In response to this demand, the Federal Reserve System was created by the Federal Reserve Act of December 23, 1913, which established a new central bank intended to serve as a formal “lender of last resort” to banks in times of liquidity crisis, panics where depositors tried to withdraw their money faster than a normal fractional-reserve-based bank could pay it out. The legislation provided for a system that included a number of
regional Federal Reserve Banks and a seven-member governing board. All national banks were required to join the system and other banks could join.

Bankers Trust Company was incorporated on March 24, 1903, with an initial capital of $1.5 million. Despite technically having numerous stockholders, the voting power was held by three associates of J. P. Morgan. Thus, it was widely viewed as a Morgan company, one in which J. P. Morgan himself held a controlling interest. Edmund C. Converse, a steel manufacturer turned financier and then president of Liberty National Bank, was chosen to serve as Bankers Trust’s first president. Bankers Trust quickly grew to become the second largest U.S. trust company and a dominant Wall Street institution.

For background information on Hamilton Fish III, see endnote #680. For background information on the congressional committee that Fish headed, see endnote #681. Fish, incidentally, was not a Senator (as this newspaper clipping claims), but a Congressman.

Sen Katayama (1859-1933), born Yabuki Sugataro, was an early member of the American Communist Party and the co-founder, in 1922, of the Japan Communist Party. After 1884, he spent most of his life abroad, especially in the United States and the Soviet Union, where he was very active in the international socialist community and, after 1920, the communist community. Katayama had a weak base inside Japan, and was little known there. However, in the rest of the world, he was widely hailed as a leading spokesman for the Japanese socialist and communist movements.

The newspaper article is referring here to William N. Doak. For background information on President Hoover’s new Secretary of Labor, see endnote #677. Once again, Pilnyak mistakenly identifies Doak here as the Minister of Labor and Immigration (ministr truda i immigratsii) [министр труда и иммиграции], not the Secretary of Labor.

The reference here is to Arnold Rothstein (1882-1928), nicknamed “the Brain,” a Jewish-American racketeer, businessman, and gambler who became a kingpin of the Jewish mob in New York City. Rothstein was widely reputed to have organized corruption in professional athletics, including conspiring to fix the 1919 World Series. According to crime writer Leo Katcher, Rothstein “transformed organized crime from a thuggish activity by hoodlums into a big business, run like a corporation, with himself at the top.” According to Rich Cohen, Rothstein was the person who first realized that Prohibition was a business opportunity, a means to amass enormous wealth. Rothstein, he claimed, “understood the truths of early twentieth-century capitalism (giving people what they want) and came to dominate them.” Rothstein, who refused to pay a large debt resulting from a fixed poker game, was murdered in 1928. His illegal empire was broken up and distributed among a number of other underworld organizations. This led, in part, to the downfall of Tammany Hall and the rise to prominence of reformer Fiorello La Guardia.

Anthony “Big Mops” Volpe (1892-1965) was an Argentinian-born gangster who served as the bodyguard for (and a close henchman of) Al Capone. Once listed as number two on the public enemies list, Volpe waged a lengthy battle to avoid being deported by the U.S. government.
The Matteawan State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, which was established in Dutchess County, New York, in 1892, functioned as a hospital for insane criminals. The new hospital confined and treated individuals who were committed to it by criminal courts as well as prison inmates who were declared insane while serving their sentences at state institutions. The Superintendent of State Prisons had control over the hospital.

The Detroit newspaper reporter is referring here, in a highly sarcastic way, to how President Hoover gravely failed to appreciate the amount of hardship and suffering that many Americans were experiencing during the Great Depression. By November 1930, conditions had become so bad that the street corners of New York City were crowded with nearly six thousand destitute individuals who, to avoid the shame of panhandling, had taken to selling apples for five cents apiece. Bette Davis would later immortalize these “Apple Annies” in Frank Capra’s film comedy, Pocketful of Miracles (1961). Pro-business Hoover, however, who stubbornly insisted during the Great Depression that “nobody is actually starving” and that hoboes “are better fed than they have ever been,” claimed that the unemployed people selling apples on street corners were simply entrepreneurial vendors who had “left their jobs for the more profitable one of selling apples.”

Mafalda Capone (1912-1988) was the youngest Capone sibling and the gangster’s only sister. Born 13 years after Al, she grew up spoiled and retained a reputation as a profane and sharp-tongued woman throughout her life. Born in New York, Mafalda arrived in Chicago with the rest of her family as a toddler. She attended the old Lucy Flower Vocational High School on the West Side, once one of the city’s best (it was closed in the late 1990s). On December 14, 1930, she was married at the Church of St. Mary of Czestochowa in Cicero, Illinois. Located in the family-run town, but safely within the Polish section of town, near the Chicago border, St. Mary’s Church provided a safe locale for the wedding event of the year. Mafalda wore a satin gown with a 25-foot train and carried a bouquet of 400 flowers down the aisle, where she was given away by her brother Ralph. At the time, her brother Al feared arrest in Chicago, so he didn’t attend. The groom was John Maritote, the younger brother of a Capone organization affiliate, Frank “Diamond” Maritote, who later went to prison in the Bioff/Brown Hollywood extortion case in 1943. Mafalda was a loyal Capone family apologist throughout her life, although she was never known to be involved directly in any racketeering activities. Later in life, she ran a successful bakery and catering service.

This newspaper article is commenting on the State of the Union address that President Hoover delivered to Congress on December 2, 1930. One of the bits of advice that Hoover gave to his fellow Americans during this address was that “the vast majority whose income is unimpaired should not hoard out of fear but should pursue their normal living and recreations.”

The author of this newspaper piece is referring here to the demonstration on the steps of the U.S. Capitol that was organized by the National Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born to coincide with the opening session of the 71st Congress on December 2, 1930. This demonstration, which took place the day before President Hoover was to deliver his State of the Union address, included more than 500 protestors, who called for abolishing all quotas on immigration, an end to barriers against Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, and Mexican immigration,
and an end to discrimination by states, counties, or cities against the foreign born. Capitol police repeatedly attacked the group with tear gas as it assembled twice on the steps of the Capitol. Seven protestors were arrested and four were hospitalized as a result of these clashes with the police.

698 The magazine *The Young Worker* (subtitled: “A Magazine for the Militant Young Workers of America”) was the official organ of the Young Workers League of America, established in 1922. The name of the youth league became the Young Workers (Communist) League in 1926 and the Young Communist League, U.S.A. in 1929. The stated aim of the League was the development of its members into communists, through studying Marxism-Leninism and through active participation in the struggles of the American working class. The Young Communist League recognized the Communist Party as the party for socialism in the United States and operated as the Party’s youth wing. Although the name of the group changed during its existence, its origins trace back to 1920, shortly after the establishment of the first communist parties in the United States.

699 For background information on the Bank of United States bankruptcy, see endnote #682.

700 The three young men who were executed by electrocution at Sing Sing Prison on December 12, 1930 were James Bolger, 19, James Butler, 20, and Italo Ferdinandi, 22. They were convicted in the February 1930 hold-up killing of a 50-year-old druggist named Charles Bauer in Westbury, New York.

701 Doctor Arthur Frederick Torrance (1887-1944) was an explorer and physician/scientist, well-known during the 1920s and 1930s, who had served at the British Royal Academy for Tropical Diseases. In November 1941, while on his honeymoon, he was arrested in Monterrey, Mexico, and charged with the murder of his 65-year-old bride, the former Ada Loveland, the wealthy widow of a senior executive at a Kalamazoo paper company.

702 The Society of Tropical Medicine of Philadelphia, which was founded by a group of 28 physicians on March 9, 1903, changed its name just 12 days later to the American Society of Tropical Medicine (ASTM). The impetus for the creation of the ASTM was a need for greater understanding of tropical diseases, spurred by growing American interests in the tropics and new medical discoveries made in the late nineteenth century. The Society grew slowly but steadily over the ensuing decades, reaching 516 members by 1941, and subsequently 1,213 members by the end of American involvement in World War II. In 1951, the ASTM merged with the National Malaria Society to form a new society, the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene.

703 For background information on the Tombs, see endnote #480. Pilnyak mistakenly transliterates the “Tombs” as *Туль* [Ту́ль]. Earlier, in Chapter 31, he had rendered the nickname of this prison the way it is written in English: that is, as *Tombs* [Томбс].

704 Sam Nesin, Robert Lealess, and Milton Stone were the co-defendants arrested on charges of unlawful assembly for a communist demonstration they had organized in front of New York City Hall that turned into a riot at City Hall Park on October 16, 1930. Pilnyak incorrectly
renders the names of the second and third co-defendants as, respectively, Robert Lissin and John Stone.

705 For background information on Hamilton Fish III (who was not a Senator, as the newspaper reports, but a Congressman), see endnote #680. For background information on the Fish Committee (which was not a Commission, as the newspaper reports, but a Committee), see endnote #681.

706 The reference here is to the Mexican-American War (also known as the American Intervention in Mexico), an armed conflict between the United States of America and the United Mexican States from 1846 to 1848. It followed in the wake of the 1845 U.S. annexation of Texas, which became the 28th state on December 29, 1845. A few months later, as the result of a dispute over lands located between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande River, President James K. Polk moved U.S. troops, commanded by Major General Zachary Taylor, into the disputed territory. Mexican forces attacked an American outpost, killing 12 U.S. soldiers and capturing 52. These same Mexican troops later laid siege to an American fort along the Rio Grande. Polk cited this attack as an invasion of U.S. territory, and Congress declared war against Mexico. U.S. forces quickly occupied Santa Fe de Nuevo México and the Alta California territory, and then invaded parts of Central Mexico. The U.S. army, under the command of Major General Winfield Scott, captured the capital, Mexico City, marching from the port of Veracruz. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the war and specified its major consequence: Mexico’s cession of the territories of Alta California and Santa Fe de Nuevo México to the United States. The U.S. agreed to pay $15 million as compensation for the physical damage caused by the war. In addition, the United States assumed $3.25 million of debt owed by the Mexican government to U.S. citizens. Mexico acknowledged the loss of Texas and thereafter cited the Rio Grande as its national border with the United States.

707 For background information on Jack Diamond, see endnote #398.

708 James Grover McDonald (1886-1964) was a United States diplomat who served as the first U.S. Ambassador to Israel. Born in Coldwater, Ohio, McDonald completed a master’s degree in History, Political Science, and International Relations at Indiana University in 1910. Following a teaching fellowship in history at Harvard University, McDonald returned to Indiana University, where he taught from 1914 to 1919, before moving to New York City to work for the Civil Service Reform Association and the Foreign Policy Association, which he chaired from 1919 to 1933.

709 The Foreign Policy Association (formerly known as the League of Free Nations Association) is a non-profit organization, founded in 1918, that is dedicated to inspiring the American public to learn more about the world. The Foreign Policy Association aims to spread global awareness and understanding of foreign policy issues.

710 During the Victorian era, a garland of orange blossoms [couronne de fleur d’orange] was traditionally worn by brides at their wedding. As Mandy Kirkby writes in *A Victorian Flower Dictionary: The Language of Flowers Companion* (NY: Random House, 2011), “Of all the flowers – majestic, resplendent with color or redolent of far-flung places – that could adorn a
bride on her wedding day it is the sweet-scented, pretty orange blossom that is the favored floral emblem. The spotless white of its blooms speaks directly of a woman’s pure character; the uncomplicated loveliness of its form signifies hope for a happy future; and the fruit symbolizes the children that the union will bring” (107).

711 Pilnyak is quoting here from an interview that Capone granted to Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., for Liberty Magazine. It appeared in the October 17, 1931 issue of Liberty, under the title, “How Al Capone Would Run This Country!”

712 “Macadam” is the name given to a type of road construction, pioneered by Scottish engineer John Loudon McAdam (1756-1836) around 1820, in which single-sized crushed stone layers of small angular stones are placed in shallow lifts and compacted thoroughly. A binding layer of stone dust (crushed stone from the original material) may form. It may also, after rolling, be covered with a binder to keep dust and stones together. A “macadamized” road is one that has been constructed or finished by compacting into a solid mass a layer of small broken stone on a convex well-drained roadbed and using a binder (such as cement or asphalt) for the mass.

713 Pilnyak is referring here to the series of coal strikes that took place in several Midwestern states during the summer of 1931, culminating in the so-called Harlan County War, or Bloody Harlan. This was a labor conflict, marked by coal mining-related skirmishes, executions, bombings, and strikes (both attempted and realized), that took place in Harlan County, Kentucky, a conflict that lasted for nearly a decade, stretching from 1931 to 1939. The incidents involved coal miners and union organizers on one side and coal firms and law enforcement officials on the other. The question at hand was the right of Harlan County coal miners to organize their workplaces and better their wages and working conditions. Before its conclusion, state and federal troops would occupy the county more than half a dozen times, an indeterminate number of miners, deputies, and bosses would be killed, union membership would oscillate wildly, and workers in the nation’s most anti-labor coal county would ultimately be represented by a union.

714 For background information on Theodore Dreiser, see endnote #134.

715 “J’accuse” was the title of an open letter published on January 13, 1898 in the newspaper L’Aurore by the influential French writer Emile Zola (1840-1902). In the letter, Zola addressed the President of France, Félix Faure, and accused the French government of anti-Semitism in the unlawful jailing of Alfred Dreyfus, a French Army General Staff officer who was sentenced to lifelong penal servitude for espionage. Zola pointed out judicial errors and the lack of serious evidence. The letter was printed on the front page of the newspaper and caused a stir in France and abroad. Zola was prosecuted for libel and found guilty on February 23, 1898. To avoid imprisonment, he fled to England, returning home in June 1899. The term “J’accuse” (“I Accuse”) has subsequently become a stock phrase used to express outrage beyond all words in condemning a major social injustice. In 1915, for instance, the German writer Richard Gelling, an avowed pacifist, wrote a book titled J’accuse to condemn the actions of the German Empire. And, in 1919, the filmmaker Abel Gance titled his cinematic denunciation of World War I J’accuse. Pilnyak is using the term here to characterize Theodore Dreiser’s condemnation of the grossly unfair treatment of striking coal miners in Harlan
County, Kentucky, which was investigated in 1931-1932 by the committee he headed, under the auspices of the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners of the American Communist Party. Dreiser authored the “Introduction” for that report: Harlan Miners Speak: Report on Terrorism in the Kentucky Coal Fields (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1932).

716 As was noted earlier, Pilnyak ascribes to Dreiser here the very same question that Thomas and Walter, two young Black intellectuals from the Harlem Renaissance, had debated earlier in Chapter 26: namely, will there still be scoundrels in a society living under socialism and/or communism? For some speculation on the identities of these two Black intellectuals, see endnote #365.

717 Pilnyak says literally here: “We had a constitution” (u nas byla konstitutsiia) [у нас была конституция].

718 Rather than use the noun merzost’ [мерзость], which is usually rendered as “vileness,” “loathsomeness,” or “villainy,” Pilnyak creates here the noun merzavstvo [мерзавство] from the Russian word he has been using throughout this section for “scoundrel” (merzavets) [мерзавец]. He does this by adding to this new coinage the suffix “-stvo” [-ство], which – much like the English suffixes “-hood,” “-ness,” “-ity,” “-ism” – usually produces an abstract noun denoting a relation, a social status, a scientific discipline, a personal quality or a psychological/emotional state: for example, bratstvo [братство] (brotherhood), geroistvo [геройство] (heroism), sirotstvo [сиротство] (orphanhood), iazichestvo [язычество] (paganism), litsedeistvo [лицедейство] (hypocrisy). This is why I have decided to render it here as the somewhat odd-sounding “scoundrelism.” As we will see, Pilnyak does use the word merzost’ (“loathsomeness”) later in this same paragraph and early in the next one.

719 For Pilnyak’s Russian readers, Dreiser’s question (“What about hunchbacks?”) is likely to call to mind their native idiomatic expression, gorbatogo mogila ispravit [горбатого могила исправит], literally, “[only] the grave will straighten the hunchback,” which is similar to the American idiom, “a leopard cannot change its spots,” meaning that a person’s deep-rooted character (especially his or her shortcomings) are impossible to correct, that a person’s essential nature cannot change. If the reader does recall this Russian idiom, then Dreiser’s strong pessimism about the likelihood that socialism and/or communism will ever totally eliminate “scoundrelism” is likely to seem warranted.

720 For background information on the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), see endnote #583.

721 What Pilnyak says here (“I ia konchil moi amerikanskii roman. O’kei!”) [И я кончил мой американский роман. О’кэй!] could also be read as him saying that it was his love affair with America – his American “roman” – that he had ended. And that this was “okay” with him!

722 The reference here, of course, is to Henry Hudson (1565-1611), the famous English sea explorer and navigator who is best known for his explorations of present-day Canada and parts of the northeastern United States during the early seventeenth century. In 1607 and 1608, Hudson made two attempts on behalf of English merchants to find a rumored Northeast
Passage to Cathay (present-day China) via a route above the Arctic Circle. In 1609, he landed in North America and explored the region around the modern New York metropolitan area, looking for a Northwest Passage to Asia on behalf of the Dutch East India Company. He sailed up the Hudson River, which was later named for him, and thereby laid the foundation for Dutch colonization of the region. Hudson discovered the Hudson Strait and the immense Hudson Bay on his final expedition, while still searching for that Northwest Passage. In 1611, after wintering on the shore of James Bay, Hudson wanted to press on to the west, but most of his crew mutinied. The mutineers cast Hudson, his son, and seven other crew members adrift. They were never to be seen again. Besides being the namesake of numerous geographical features, Hudson is also the namesake of the Hudson’s Bay Company, which explored and traded in the vast Hudson Bay watershed in the following centuries.

To refresh the reader’s memory, here is what Pilnyak wrote earlier in the narrative (at the beginning of Chapter 28) about the fate of a wolf in New York City: “Indeed, just imagine for a minute that human life has left New York. But New York would live on in the very same way that it lives when human beings are there – there is not a single animal, not a single wolf, that would go to this craggy locale, craggy and pitted with caves that are so large that they continue beneath the Hudson River. No animal would go to this locale, one that has suffocated from gas, a locale without a single blade of grass on the concrete and iron. It would be terrifying for a wolf on these rocks. The wolf would find it stifling and hard to breathe from the gas and coal suffocation. The nerves of the wolf would be frayed from the rumble of the city and from the millions of those radio waves, both long and short ones, that permeate and enmesh the city, enmeshing it with advertising, with music, with the speeches of President Hoover about prosperity. The wolf, for all we know, would contract a case of bear’s disease from all the things that are taking place in this craggy, unnatural locale, which is situated on the Indian island of Manhattan! We must assume that the wolf would run for his life, fleeing from this locale at breakneck speed, from one end of America to the other. He would race across Canada in one fell swoop. He would turn up exhausted, with his tongue hanging down below his ear, in Alaska. But in Alaska the wolf would find the common life and native customs depicted by Jack London and improved upon by O. Henry.”

I have not succeeded in identifying the brand of flour (Sapau) [Canay] that Pilnyak sees advertised here while he is walking along Broadway.

Pilnyak described this “fat, rheumy-eyed hog” from the Chicago slaughterhouses earlier in his narrative, near the end of Chapter 13, when he explained how the distressed animals that have been transported to the slaughterhouse are calmed down and reassured by a “betrayer-hog” (what Americans would call a “Judas” hog). “The droves of animals beneath the ground are filled with deathly horror,” he explained. “Then the calm hog (or goat, or bull) approaches the enervated animals in their mortal anguish; the calm hog affectionately nudges the pigs, calms them down, and leads the reassured animals behind him. The pigs follow him. The calm hog leads them into the narrow labyrinth of a corridor. In a dark spot in the corridor, where the pigs walk single file one after another, the calm hog suddenly jumps off to the side and disappears. Nooses then spring upon the pigs that have been following him, and the pigs fly up on metal cables to a conveyor belt, to their death. And the calm hog in his calmness proceeds to a new railway car to calm down a new drove of animals!” See also endnote #122.
Pilnyak repeats here, nearly verbatim, the opening paragraph of his travelogue-novel. See Chapter 1 and endnote #5.