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Leopold TYRMAND: PERSONAL SCORE

The Paris émigré monthly publishes an article by a well-known Polish writer on the reasons why he decided to remain in the West. He is best known for his huge thriller Zly (The Evil One). He is also a jazz expert. There is a brief glossary at the end of the less readily identifiable persons, places and events mentioned in the text.

"... In this way, Sancho," replied Don Quixote, "you show that you are a real boor and one of those who say: long live the stronger!...."

I,

In the second half of my life, I decided to devote myself more to ideals than to people. Until then, I had done the contrary and it got me nowhere, except to a belief in ever-present injustice. After all, I have met huge numbers of people in my life and the majority of them proved, after a while, to be not quite as they should. What "as they should," or "as one ought," means, I do not quite know; in Poland, we use such varied moral norms, for instance: "he is all right," or "he is not quite," or "you know what I mean," which can hardly be used within the framework of precise ethics. But I -- I make this reservation at the start -- may not be right. In my childhood, I read a great many books, from which it appeared that the good always wins. They did not prove a useful preparation for the future, because it has since proved more true that fairly objective evil usually wins. Therefore, I decided to close that period [of my life -- ed.] and offer my feeble opinions for public deliberation.

General-Minister Moczar probably believes that I am not returning to Poland ("I skipped," "decamped" or "flew the coop"),

because, toward the end of 1965, he decided to grant me a passport. He will surely not think that I did it because, for seven years, he did not grant me a passport without giving any reason for not granting it. If I had received a passport in 1958, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964 -- these are the full dates of my agonizing writing of requests, letters, suggestions, filling of forms, waiting, telephoning, ante-chambering and searching for so-called approaches -- I would have gone abroad, settled my affairs and would never have remained in the (excusez le mot) West, because I know full well where my place is and where my heart lies, as say soldiers in old songs. In 1963, however, after a lengthy non-receiving, I came to the conclusion that I was living in a prison. Logically, when someone has proof that he sits in jail, he tries to run as far away as he can when they open the gate, and never come back.

One can question the justice of my conclusions and say: Poland is no prison, because I could go to Cracow without a laissez-passer. But it seems to me that an enclosed space in which the stronger man prevails is a prison, even if it stretches from the Tatra to the Baltic. One could also add that I had an automobile, a nice apartment and was surrounded by interesting men and lovely girls, but this is not a serious argument. In certain US prisons, the standard of living reaches heights planned in Communism for the second half of the 21st Century, guys there have their apartments, movies, tennis, rare fruit and Old Spice aftershave, not to mention such small details as five squares a day and TV. Yet every lodger would skip at once, if he only could, even with the prospect of a hard life on a park bench. A prison, especially under totalitarian regimes, is mainly based on fear that they can do with me what they like and I cannot do anything -- either defend myself, or talk back, or flee.

I once stayed in Lukiszki Prison in Vilna; I was young, I had a lovely time, because a fight for some holy aim seemed to me a value in itself, but then a typhoid epidemic broke out and I understood to what extent I was being denied a chance to save myself, how greatly I was deprived of my will. I shall never forget that fear and something of it hovered in my soul still when, after months of humiliating attempts, I was received in 1959 by Comrade Alster, then deputy minister of security and chief of the passport section. I told him that, for two years, my requests, pleas and begging had gone unheeded, that I was surrounded by a white, Kafkaesque wall, that I even didn't want a passport any more, but only wanted to know why? Alster thought deeply and then said: "There is no reason why you may not receive a passport." I said: "Then why don't I get it?" He: "Because we don't care for you." And he added: "But I shall let you have it. Only you must promise me that you will give no interviews while abroad." I promised and the next day I had it, I went to London and I did not give a single interview, despite temptations, with sums capable of buying me a large number of shoes. I came back after a month, proud of having kept my promise. Next year I again submitted a request for a passport. I never again received either a reply or a passport. In the meantime, Alster had been kicked out and his place was taken by Moczar. It appeared that my problem had nothing to do with the constitution and everything with the so-called grace of the mighty.

For centuries, we have become accustomed to calling certain eschatological solutions a tragedy, therefore the fact that someone cannot travel abroad does not fit into that description. Yet elements of tragedy are subject to historic revaluation and the new inevitability of catastrophies, the supersonic vengeance of fate or cybernetic fatalism may shatter character and break

I once b) not very trustworthy men who had to be displayed abroad at least once: sportsmen, mathematicians, composers, always carefully selected, with families kept behind, in case they got any ideas; too to what extent I was being denied a chance to save myself, c) how a couple of hundred people out of 30 million who, within 10 years, after an endless writing of requests and waiting in the ante-chambers of the mighty, could finally, join a wife or a father kept elsewhere by the war; I know personally of a case where a paralyzed old lady, claimed ceaselessly by a son in Canada, received a passport a year after her death. Indeed, that I was surrounded by 99.99 per cent of the Polish nation was told to sit on the spot established by Lech, Czech and Rus. (1) Naturally, as a member of that nation, I did not even get the idea, in Stalin's times, that I could travel anywhere. There was no problem, no one traveled anywhere and life muddled along between Jastarnia (2) and Zakopane. Only you must promise me that you will give no interviews. The first months of the Communist idyll with the nation, even before Gomulka, were based on the fact that the Communists solemnly promised to arrange and issue what they were always supposed to arrange and issue. People realized in a flash that a unique chance had been presented to them, suddenly everyone had relatives in England, invitations from France, husbands in Italy; dollars were found to pay the passage, passports were being issued, people left and did not come back, but Communism did not care, it became humanized and was not offended. This was in 1956 and 1957. Then the security police pulled itself together, after the knocks it had received, and realized that one of the best weapons in the fight against the people, under modified conditions, is a passport. From that moment on, it ceased to be a constitutionally guaranteed document and became an object of punishment or reward. Things differed somewhat from the Stalinist times, the mass turn-

over was incomparably greater, but, by a funny coincidence, the people who received passports most easily were the same ones who had received them without trouble from Radkiewicz, and the ones who had most trouble or never got them at all were those who could not even dream about them before.

Toward the end of 1956, assuming from the publication of Zly that I had become a full-fledged citizen, I requested a passport. The Ministry of Culture, in a frenzy of atonement for what it used to do with such as I, mumbled something about a scholarship; this was pure eyewash, since such as I never got anything, either before, or during, or after, October, but I already had publishers in the West, so that I was financially independent of the shenanigans of those strange dignitaries-parasites who live off artists -- which, as we know, is an achievement never before noted in the annals of mankind, because artists always lived off dignitaries. I got my passport, went away and came back in 1957. The very next year, my request for a passport remained unanswered and unexplained. And this is how it all started.

After Under Communism, a man is held under a constant state of indictment: an unpaid gas bill is not simply an unpaid bill, but an element of a possible trial. If someone fails to receive something from an office, he starts searching for the guilt or mistakes with which he might be charged, even when as innocent as a newborn babe, painstaking as an adding machine and talented as Lenin, because the Communist government exists over and beyond guilt and mistake. Long training told me to think myself over: what do they think I did? There were countless eventualities: I did not have to "do" anything, my very existence was not as it should be. The words spoken by Alster hit the bull's-eye. Under Stalin, one could not be an open anti-Communist, but one could, openly and of his own free will, not be a Communist (do not confuse with "non- and Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz and Jan Kott;

Communists" on orders from the CC, making a lovely living out of it). The openness of such an attitude was a reagent of honor and honesty, even when the bravest tried to hide it. Both my work in Tygodnik Powszechny, my style of dressing and my generously proclaimed opinions placed me in hopeless positions, but in 1958, this was not enough for the refusal of a passport: in the meantime, great numbers of people started to dress like me, listen to jazz and express opinions similar to mine, even Grzegorz Lasota(3) and Stefan Staszewski.(4) But a year before, I had finished a novel for the Czytelnik Publishing House, it was called Seven Long Cruises and it was bought by a British publisher while I was still writing it. I mailed the manuscript on the same day to London and to Czytelnik. Czytelnik paid me and never printed it: the Gomułka-ist counter-reformation was just beginning and the decision on which book to publish was again in the hands of the wife of the minister of police and a certain Comrade Werblan; both perceived in the book pornography and a defense of private initiative. On the other hand, Mister Michael Joseph in London was not versed in such subtleties and printed the book. I was called in by Mister Galinski, who had just been given the job of minister of culture and the arts: he demanded that I withdraw the book from the British publisher, and when I asked what he had against it, answered that the heroes commit certain indecencies (he meant intercourse) in the Recovered Territories, which should be held holy by every Pole. I told him that if I should write, Mr. Joseph would think I did so under duress and would publish the book with a special wrapper, describing with delight my tortures in the dungeons of the UB; however, if I could go to London, but this raises the problem of my passport, at which Mr. Galinski cooled and turned indifferent. Thus, the years 1958 and 1959 were not too hard on me; I was certain I was not getting the passport as

a punishment for the book, which was finally published in England, was a failure and did not attract anyone's attention, because it was simply not a good book. My consolation was shattered by Alster, a sincere but perverse man, who, when asked during that conversation whether it was the book, perhaps, answered simply: "We are not interested in those things..." plunging me again into torments or relativism. What does interest them, then?

port. In October, it was also announced to us that every office is subject to checkers who rectify its mistakes. This is how my via dolorosa of appeals began. To the annual figure of ignored requests, was added a multiple figure of appeals, because one makes the request of one office and can send a complaint (or a denunciation, as the more sensitive souls put it) to any number of other offices. At the basis of this activity lies a healthy instinct: life under Communism is full of metaphysics, a deed is in no relation to the effect, one never knows, suddenly it appears that interconnections escaping all reason result in facts beyond rational explanation. In my life, the problem of the passport became a cross between a pilgrimage and a mission. I must have reached someone competent in the field of complaints, as I was advised by the people who watched with great interest my writhing like a worm after a passport. After all, my talk with Alster once resulted in an inexplicable turnabout in their attitude, let us search for the inexplicable elsewhere, like Winnie-the-Pooh who, unable to find his way home, decided not to look for it and thus found it. training told me to think myself over: what do they th How well do we, men of enlightened Communism, know humiliation by telephone. Communists have applied the telephone for state affairs in keeping with the magic properties of that invention: since someone is not visible, he does not exist. A telephone helps them in non-being, when decency would advise being.

The Communist technique of ruling is constructed on the principle of avoiding the petitioner, the whole wisdom of governing lies in skilled evasion of the needs of the ruled, so that no one is given the opportunity to protest. Evasion is a maximal achievement, an incorporation of administrative genius: the Communists believe faithfully that on it is based the whole structure of stability and social peace. Thus, telephone calls went something like this: "Could I speak to Director Roszak?" The secretary: "Who's calling?" I give my name and it still carries some weight, after all, a number of people had read Zly in Warsaw. The secretary: "Please wait a moment." And asks Roszak whether he is in, he naturally says he is not, so the secretary says into the receiver: "The director is out." I ask: "When will he be in?" She: "Please wait..." and after a moment: "He did not say when he would be back," meaning he said he will never be "in" for me. In this fashion, I telephoned the CC of the PUWP every day for many months.

Finally, I was received in the name of the Cultural Department by an arrogant little drunkard called Danilowicz. As the personnel chief of Czytelnik, he was in charge of kicking me out of job and apartment for "wrong-think" back in 1946, on orders from Borejsza. I obviously stuck in his mind, because he gave me quite a treatment this time as well. In general, complaint departments are polite: Communism is an impersonal tyranny, where no one is responsible for anything or anyone else, therefore one can afford any promise and any disloyalty. Dignitaries to whom I appealed always told me: "Why didn't you come to me sooner, I never heard about this...." They lied, they knew very well, and I did not come to them because I could not reach them for years. And they always promised me something, because it does not cost anything. Danilowicz acted differently: he made it clear that,

since the security police refused me, it must have its reasons and in this way he excluded the CC from the holy war of man against the official book. My consolation was shattered by Alster. This was practically the last recourse left to a run-of-the-mill Pole: when they tell you "no" there, curtains. But for me the passport was by now an obsession. It was not a question of opportunity lost in the West: a British company which wanted to make a movie out of Zly backed out, tired of waiting for me; German and British publishers were bored with mailing fruitless invitations. All around me, my social equals traveled without obstacle, refusals of passport were sporadic and temporary. The persistence of my rejection had the characteristics of revolting uniqueness. My equilibrium was leaving me: the hierarchy of my aims and needs was getting muddled in a way dangerous to mental health. It was no longer work, achievements, accomplishments and all that makes up the life of a normal man which defined the sphere of my activities. It was a question of passport. There grew in me an irrational belief in the connection between a passport and the meaning of existence; as once before, in Lukiszki Prison, I was overwhelmed by the despair of being locked up: I believed in some imprecise deliverance, if only I could cross that absurd prohibition. The injunction to be active was linked for me irremediably with a passport: it seemed to me that an active, creative attitude toward one's own fate depended on that piece of cardboard. The fate of man -- I reasoned -- is determined by the guarantee of simple forms of existence, such as the possibility of entering and leaving wherever one pleased. My God -- I assured myself -- what a great deal can be done just by moving from place to place! I became superstitious: I was afraid to look at babies, so as not to dream about them, for this might mean new misery in that business, about which I was as anxious as

about a sick person. I try to counteract the intervention of a thousand signs of good and bad luck, charm them, disarm their cause and effect, I am shaken and helpless. So I am afraid of everything around me: to careless words, carefree laughter, for which I might be punished by a new, unsuccessful effort. Because I do not cease in my effort, my life advances from audiences to audience; the pauses may take a few months, but the taste and the sense of life are granted me only while waiting for an audience in the office of the Council of Ministers, of Kliszko's secretary, of the director of the Office for Cooperation with Foreign Countries, of the chairman of the League of Soldier's Friends, whom somebody knows from the Polish Actors' Union, someone told me that he might, because he has a brother-in-law who... The audiences are a potential of hope. I polish up arguments for every one of them -- rock-hard, irrefutable arguments, bright with hope. Well, I keep waiting in outer offices, ante-chambers, on chairs, benches, arm-chairs, I read old copies of Przyjazn (5) and Kraj Rad. (6) I ante-chamber. Ante-chambering in Communism is governed by the same philosophy as elsewhere, it is a school of feeling and an instrument of debasement, a source of downfall and of self-knowledge. I have learned how to cohabit with a blank wall and the nasty thought that this, which for others means a wait of six weeks, is for me an unreachable dream and the beauty of life. Slowly, my handicap turned into a paralysis: I stumbled about for the lack of a passport. I turned into a ridiculous personage whom secretaries and friends chase away; at the very sound of my name, they would moan with contempt: "That Tyrmand again! What a plague.... Every new person I met, every name I heard in conversation struck the only sensitive point in my brain: might he be able to help? Does he know anyone who might? I looked at everyone with the eyes of a prisoner searching for a file. Once, I got an attack

of hysterical joy: I received a negative reply to one of my innumerable petitions. A common, greyish printed piece of paper from the People's Militia, stating that the appropriate authorities had decided not to give one, basing their decision on paragraph four of the passport law. This paragraph four explains that the appropriate authorities have the right not to issue a passport if they find it advisable.

Jerzy Putrament is believed in the country and abroad to be the executor of Party directives concerning writers and literature. He looks like a gentleman farmer and a military man chased into the wrong era, this is how he acts, this is what his writing and his socio-political activities are like. Subtle consideration of right and wrong are not for him. What he says and writes is full of gross simplification, he is sanguine, he has no patience for ideological rigmarole. But there are many people walking around Warsaw, cut along lines quite different from him, who repeat: "Putrament settled it for me. Putrament helped...." Yet Putrament has no interest in helping those who are down and kicked: they are mostly people whose thinking is diametrically opposite his and who hold him in contempt, and he knows it. Nor is his position in the Party untouchable, but in the totality of Polish Communism, it is stabilized enough for him not to have to suck up to anybody. After a number of successive assaults, Putrament telephoned somewhere, something seethed above me, after which a high official of the Ministry of the Interior received me "for a talk." I do not know whether he was a man friendly to me, I do not know whether he wanted to use me for his own aims or to use my case in the internal showdowns of his department. He looked like a classical comrade from security in socialist-realist films: he was rough and not stupid. Besides, he was really important, right from the center of the executive, not one of those who allegedly

since the security police refused me, it must have its reasons. "can" do something, but who actually work in supply. And he told me that:

against the official.

- first: foreigners,

This was practically the last recourse left to a man of

- second: Piasecki

the mill Pole: when they tell you "no" there, curtains. But for me the passport was by now an obsession. It was not a question of opportunity lost in the West: a British company which wanted to make a movie out of Zly backed out, tired of waiting for me. No one will stick his neck out and say: What the hell, let him have it...."

invitations. All around me, my social equals traveled without obstacle, refusals of passport were sporadic and temporary. The over the mystique of commissions in Communism, probably the key persistence of my rejection had the characteristics of revolving problem in the collapse of the whole system. The first two points uniqueness. My equilibrium was leaving me: the hierarchy of my were equally essential. Boleslaw Piasecki, although the days when aims and needs was getting muddled in a way dangerous to mental health. It was no longer work, achievements, accomplishments and rowa(7) were over, still has major influence in that institution. all that makes up the life of a normal man which defined the They say that Moczar is not fond of him, but there are still in sphere of my activities. It was a question of passport. There the Ministry of the Interior veterans of the grand old days with grew in me an irrational belief in the connection between a passport and the meaning of existence: as once before, in Lubinski Prison, I was overwhelmed by the despair of being locked up. I wrote about him after October. Piasecki and his people hold believed in some imprecise deliverance, if only I could cross kangaroo courts, make up proscription lists of their enemies and, that absurd prohibition. The injunction to be active was linked as I was told in a rush of alcoholic sympathy by one of his closest friends, I am listed there in quite a prominent position. It is active, creative attitude toward one's own fate depended on that enough for a Piasecki man to sit on one of those commissions of piece of cardboard. The fate of man -- I reasoned -- is determined by the high official spoke; a contemptuous: "I would not give him...." is enough for the rest of the commission to agree eagerly possibility of entering and leaving wherever one pleased. My God every time and for the proscribed man to be kept waiting.

-- I assured myself -- what a great deal can be done just by moving from place to place! I became superstitious: I was afraid moral problem. Despite appearances, because it was just a question of cocktails, lunches and dinners with ambassadors and secretaries. Throughout Stalinism, the life of Western diplomats in

Warsaw was limited to their own ghetto and official contacts. In 1955, the embassies opened their doors wide and started to issue invitations. In October, journalists began to show up; I do not remember who started it, anyway, they would give my telephone number to one another and for a couple of years I would dine at the Bristol Hotel with the flower of international journalism. Later came friendships: there were many interesting, decent, intelligent men among the diplomats, it was difficult to reject a personal liking because of an instinct of self-preservation in a subject of totalitarianism. Attending receptions and showing off was turning into a moral attitude. I know people who refused invitations to July 14 celebrations even in the times of October. For me, it was a question of dignity: if the Hottentot-Stalinist system of interpreting the world sees devils in simple men, it would be cheap and mean of me to agree. I knew that my telephone was bugged, but how could I say "no" and let the man inviting me think that I am afraid and that I agree that he is a leper: it was insulting to him and to me alike, turned us both into subservient puppets in someone's dirty hands. I do not think I ever gave any information to a foreigner: opinions and jokes which he heard from me could be heard in every streetcar, they were told to him by various Schaffs and Rakowskis parading at every reception. Actually, at that time, the whole Warsaw "establishment" attended embassy receptions, I was no exception, life was becoming normalized and the Communist demonology was a butt of jokes. Yet I kept paying for it, according to the absurd, police bookkeeping.

Apart from offering some pointers, the talk with the important official produced no change. The years of waiting rolled on. I fell into strange conditions, I was ruled by surrealistic ideas. For instance, I daydreamed I was saving Ochab's life, runaway horses or something. Ochab, one of the more decent ones, grants

me one wish, so that he might fulfill it: I have a ready-made answer, although I know it is a dream as sky-high as asking for the hand of a princess. But Ochab gets busy, calls in Moczar, demands my file and then, angrily: why these persecutions? And more angrily still: let justice be done this minute! And I only smile with melancholy: I can just imagine the whole of Rakowiecka(8) rushing madly to prepare new evidence against me, feverishly fabricating new dossiers out of nonexistent facts; after all, the boys must defend themselves somehow from the accusation of law-breaking, and is there any better defense than a more precise breaking of it? They work as faultlessly that, in the end, even the feudal Ochab, so kindly to me, hesitates and does not know whether I did not, by some chance, perversely save his life in order to cheat and deprave everybody and to do untold harm behind a mask. I myself no longer know what my intentions are, what is good, what evil, who against what and where am I in all this? I know a case where a guy did not get a passport for a long time, finally someone important spoke on his behalf. Then a little telephone call to that guy: "Mister Kowalski?" The guy: "Speaking." And the voice: "Mister Johnny, luv, remember me, we took those cameras to Bulgaria together....I am in trouble now...." A click of a taperecorder being switched off, the line is out and the security police has proof in hand: Mr. Kowalski, on such and such a day, talked about his smuggling activities with an unknown accomplice. My own passport difficulties are beginning to raise suspicion, this is a time of comparative ease. Poles are less and less interested in suffering and persecutions, they no longer protest, they are afraid of wasting their lives on sterile protest, they give up and they enjoy the minimum: big beat, Westerns, Miss Dziedzic,(9) Kydrynski.(10) Someone who has been persecuted too long raises suspicion. "You never can tell," they say, "maybe he

stole? Maybe he killed someone?" His complaints and appeals seem fictitious, made up to awaken trust and commiseration for reasons of provocation, it is believed that he has been sent as informer and tries to win trust. This is the Communist idea of a genius: a victim cannot defend himself through his injustice, and injustice must be swallowed in silence and the regime praised, only then is there a chance that it will be made good. The scum of millenary, Oriental humiliation, Orthodox kissing of the kicking boot and other such degrees of human development have combined into the Marxist triumph of this principle.

In the meantime, I went on writing letters to the minister of the interior, Mister Wicha. I wrote about 10 of them. Wicha never answered one, although I surely enriched his knowledge of the world and of literature. Everything I learned from Kafka, Beckett, Celine and Brecht (a rebours) I synthesized creatively for the benefit of Mr. Wicha: man versus mechanized bureaucracy, the chams of possible transformation, the up-to-date schizophrenia of an alienated individual, paranoic fear of the impenetrable -- these modish motifs were endlessly repeated. I think it had some results -- I was refused a pass to Yugoslavia, where Zly was then being published; until then, I had been allowed to travel within the boundaries of socialism.

Independent of letters, I telephoned the office of Minister Wicha several times a week: I begged for an audience, for an opportunity to complain, till tears flowed. And wonder of wonders! In February 1964, I was told that the minister would receive me on such and such a day.

There are lots of unexploited currents in this story, linking an incalculable number of people who influenced it indirectly. For instance: "Romus" Bratny. I have always liked Bratny, although I should not have liked him: a former AK member who

joined the ranks, he writes lies, nothing that worries me worries him. Romus talks a lot and lightly, on the other hand, he never listens to what you are saying: he immediately answers questions not yet asked. But -- and there is no hiding it -- Romus is simpatico, he plays a fair game of tennis, he is seriously interested in sex and actually has never done anything nasty to anybody, or at least I have not heard of it. He always stuck, in written and spoken word, to his crooked views, he fought for this and that, sometimes even quite bravely and with honor -- as for instance, right after the events in Poznan, with Cyrankiewicz who wanted to muzzle writers and journalists who arrived for the autopsy. Anyway, in 1963, Romus became the main motive force of the Warsaw Kultura and there was already quite a stink about the affair: that the Partisans, that Moczar, that Kultura is supposed to be their mouthpiece. Romus called me up one day and we met on Marshal Pilsudski Square: he wanted to know simply what someone such as I, who say "no," think of this enterprise. I told him he has been destined for a historic role, namely that of humanizing Moczar and his men for -- as we know -- Moczar is a military type, semi-educated and anti-Semitic, if he wants to continue in his career, it would be better if he were subject to the pressure of individuals more highly advanced intellectually, among whom, on the spot, I included our Romus. "Besides," I added, "only you, no one else, a writer-huntsman, blue of eye, fair of hair, Slavonic smile, you fulfill the Aryan conditions and will not scare Moczar off with excessive intellectualism." To which Romus asked whether I would not like to have something published in Kultura? At that time, Kultura was already boycotted by the liberal circles, but this boycott brought heavy profits to guys whom I like least of all in Poland and whom I hold to be the ultimate stinkers -- various Starewicz, Zolkiewskis, Rakowskis

and their disciples. Moczar formulated a primitive and brutal program, proclaimed backward slogans, but in the bosom of the Party, he combatted those whose lengthy servility, vile sophistry, moral mangle and mendacity were long proven and indelible. I was just then finishing a book for the State Publishing Institute (PIW) called Social and Emotional Life and I had my doubts whether the institute would ever publish it, despite a signed contract and an advance of half the fee. So I thought: why not? This is the only occasion for getting at least a bit of the book in print. What do I risk -- that PIW, anti-Moczar as hell, renounces me? What do I gain? Passport concessions, and this is the main thing and my obsession. For me, the difference between Moczar and Zambrowski, Strzelecki and Starewicz is nil: they all have me equally by the throat. So I gave Romus a piece and Kultura proudly printed it. Consequences: As was to be expected, PIW published a furious letter, from which it appeared that they hardly knew me. Quasi-liberal circles decided that I was a traitor, that a stinking blot spread on my anti-Communist conscience, skillfully forgetting that when those "inflexible characters" wrote odes to the six-year plan, I drank tea for lunch, because I refused to write anything like it. Even Janusz Minkiewicz (11) was my moral judge in the Actors' Union and decided that I had been "bought," forgetting with age the prostitution he practiced under Bierut. And Romus the while went hunting with Moczar and allegedly asked him or someone near him about my passport. He was allegedly told that my tongue is too loose and that I fraternize with foreigners, which Romus loyally repeated to me, adding: "Why the hell do you go to those embassies?" But I had trouble talking to him about wit, because he was not at all interested in my explanations, as is his wont. Still, a few weeks later, Romus called me on the

phone, we met and he started telling me off: "Listen, you, everything was fixed, someone responsible promised me you would get it, but you went to another party day before yesterday, blabbed, and this someone blew his top and said he will never let you out as long as you live...." I thought about that and said: "What if I tell you that I did not go to a party day before yesterday?"

"Well, then three, four, five days ago" puffed Bratny. "And if I tell you that I haven't been for weeks, and when I go, I say 'Good evening,' or 'You are looking lovely today, madam,' because I know that walls have ears, would you believe me? What is with you, Romek, don't you know that a couple of cops live off writing reports on me, that this is what has to be straightened out, that even if I should vanish into thin air, someone who attends French parties on Saska Kepa will keep on writing reports about me, week after week...." But Romus stopped being interested, and a few months later, when we sat in his Volkswagen in front of St. Anne's Church, and when I tried to persuade him once again, a furious Romus told me something which I would be ashamed to repeat, because I still like him and from the bottom of my heart forgive him his insensitivity and his naivete.

I got ready for the meeting with Minister Wicha like for a wedding. On the dot, I rang downstairs, in the pass office. Wicha was a front, a puppet in the hands of Moczar, but if I could move him, perhaps for once he would have his way. On the telephone, a secretary told me firmly: "The minister is out." Me: "But I have an appointment." She: "I know. But the minister is away. I cannot help that. You will be received by the director of the cabinet." Despair twisted my stomach: a director of a cabinet is not the same thing, he has at his disposal a million excuses, which the minister does not. But what can I do. I call up. The secretary: "The director is out. But he said you should be received

by the chief of the Complaint Office. The extension is...." This was a blow, the pit of humility. The downfall from a minister to the complaint department turned me into a joke. I could as well consult my milkman as the chief of complaints. Actually, I should not have gone, I should have started firmly all over again the next day. But I was broken and twisted into the cogs. I went to see the chief.

This was a typical representative of Karczew(12) or Pelcowizna(13) in Polish administrative life. The late Gomulka period is marked by the gangsterism and mafia of the medium-level apparatus. In Stalin's times, terror, ignorance and brutality were ideological, tough little guys from Marymont(14) or Burakow(15) did not reach out for careers, because they were afraid of the consequences of power: special police centers were a gruesome and risky thing. Past merits, dumb fidelity and devotion -- these formed the cement of people's power then; anyone who wanted to drive splinters under fingernails had to be ready for an eventual reckoning. Under Gomulka, splinters are not driven, authority has been cheapened, offices have been filled by little black-marketeers from street stalls, the brother-in-law had to be given a job, there is a slot for Halina's cousin, he used to read Woprosy Leninizmu and was kicked out of the Polish Youth Union (ZMP); little things, little consequences, if you do not grease palms, you can, at worst, be kicked out, the stakes are low: a puny bribe, a tiny apartment, a short vacation in Rumania. "Mister Tyrmand, my friend," said this chief, "what has happened to you? I read this thing of yours, quite-quite...." He meant Zly, of course, not my petitions. So, once again, in the face of that idiot, I lifted the heavy cross of my story. When I ended: "So what is the matter? You know how things are, don't you? You blabbed a silly word somewhere and it got stuck. Happens all the time. But it will blow

over. A year or two, and you shall see, you will get a passport. There is no need to scream...". The downfall from a minister to the com. It was probably then that I told myself for the first time that, if I get it, I shall not come back. What is the matter? Seven stupid years? Because I blabbed? And it stuck? But what did I blab? What word is worth seven years of torment? Or maybe I did not blab, only someone thinks I blabbed and there is no force in the world which could explain, straighten it out. A year or two -- what importance have years in this splattered, twisted rig which is known as life in this country? This guy with a pompadour over his wise-guy forehead knows how it is and explains it all correctly. Everything must be according to his gospel. Everything, completely. New energy seemed to permeate my being, I started digging right and left. After a few weeks, I was received by the director of the minister's office, Colonel Janic. A Partisan, Moczar's right hand, he can do more than three Wichas put together, I went to this appointment like to a beheading. Janic had the reputation of a headhunter, an ideologist of the Party cadres, a theoretician of anti-Semitism and totalitarianism, he recently published a book which "neo-liberals" under Starewicz called Mein Kampf. I sat opposite an elderly gentleman with the appearance of a stocky fruit merchant from the suburbs: he spoke reasonably and nicely, I realized at once that something had changed. Something, somewhere, independently of human laws or the pragmatism of officialdom. The superiority of Janic over that secret police dignitary of a few years ago lay in the fact that Janic was above commissions: he received his orders from someone who was no longer interested in commissions. We spoke in generalities -- that it would be well to clarify, explain, reach a mutual understanding. He surely meant me as a non-Communist writer, because it had blow

nothing to do with the most important point. He simply did not realize that for me everything began and ended with a small, marine-blue booklet, that it was too late for bargains and agreements, platforms and games, who with whom and who against whom. A few days previously, I got a telephone call from a British lady journalist, someone I knew years ago. She wanted to see me, I tried to get out of it, I already had a persecution mania and a hundred similar phobias, but she said it was important and I could not refuse. We sat in the Café Europejska: she simply wanted to know about the divorce of mutual friends, who cuckolded whom and who was a swine. Then she added with glee: "You know something? I think I am being followed this time. Maybe they want to know whom I meet...". I almost choked: so many years, so much toil, such buried hopes, just because this old cow wanted to know who with whom! Every guy at every table seemed like an informer to me, a torturer whom I was ready to kill on the spot. On the one hand, the ruin of the most important, on the other -- how not to be loyal to those under surveillance? I wanted to run, like in the old Marx Brothers films, but my escape would be a blow in the face for her, for my country and a couple of other values. One cannot live on a red-hot grill, hopping from one foot on the other; but how can I explain this to Colonel Janic, who is a totalitarian and a security cop, but is nice and human to me, he is the first in that elephantine building on Rakowiecka who has talked to me like an equal and not like a philanthropist to a beggar or a biologist to a bacteria. Here the destruction of any moral criteria begins: one does not want to lie at first, but then one begins to lie; at first one does not want to be thought badly of, but then one could not care less what they think; at first one does not want to involve or to betray a friend, afterwards one involves and betrays; one still tries to separate one's

nearest and dearest from the harm one does, but then one ceases to care what might follow him. Day by day lawlessness builds connections and situations and causes reactions of which Dostoevski did not dream. The idiotic matter of a foreign passport made me shamefully naked. I got a telephone call from a British lady journalist who got a passport and I left. Before my departure, I sent Colonel Janic my book, The Shores of Jazz. I do not know what an old Partisan can do with a book about jazz, but he said he would like to read it. I am not returning to Poland. However, it would be a gross oversimplification to blame only policemen for that. who was a swine. Then she added with glee: "You know something? I think I am being followed II. s time. Maybe they want to know whom I meet..." I almost choked: so many years, so much toil such buried hopes, just because this old cow wanted to know who with people in Communism. Whoever is not interested in these private accounts, or repelled by the narrowness of perspective, should not read on. I shall keep on talking about corruption and the ruin of the most important, on the other -- how not to my generalizations and manias stem only from this. Perhaps I was a mistake in history, perhaps I was out of my time and made a fool of myself, all right, but the attempt to try and act according to one's conscience has always been the touchstone of honesty. Actually, I was not alone: everyone over there conducts a private and personal struggle against the apparatus of pressure on minds, with the omnipresent lie, with super-appearances. Only, the majority have become reconciled to their defeat, a few to so-called honorable loss, and fewer still to a draw. I did not want to give in and surrender, it may be stupid, but this is what we fought for against Hitler -- at that time there was the rule that then one begins to lie: at first one does not want to be thought there is a point beyond which one cannot retreat. Someone will be offended: "Polish Communism does not murder people! How can it be compared to Nazism?" -- It is true, generally speaking, it does not murder. But it destroys their lives. Man has produced

social systems in which everything turned against man, except life, which remained impassive in man's struggle with the system, neither for, nor against. Only Communism turned life into its own non-impassive tool of oppression, a product of its system. Nazism murdered for the shape of a nose and this forced people into battle to the end, without a possibility of compromise; Communism creates only the appearance of possible agreement and destroys man for what is good in him, for independence of thought, for a feeling of dignity, for opposition to lies. Aiding one's neighbor under Communism is as much a moral choice as under Hitler: the eventuality of punishment is present, in return for inter-human solidarity. But no one thinks about that, everyone wants to live his life somehow. Only very few people are incapable of agreeing to the lack of meaning, sorrow and unrighteousness, yet this non-agreeing is not so simple, either. There are various kinds of non-agreeing, with some, one can make a good living. But among those who do not agree, there is only a small group which knows about that, and this is really an exclusive club. Writing about it is called denunciation in Poland today.

Currently and every day, the term "denunciation" is applied in my country to define all that troubles the profitable ideologico-intellectual swindles and any remark that perhaps one should not do it is labelled with the above definition. The reflection of private on public affairs is a motive force in careers in the US, but in Poland it is a stumbling block. Perhaps in the US they exaggerate, but very many Polish disasters come from the fact that Gomulka is hated more as a symbol than as a man. By introducing the personal tone into politics, people become immune to hate; I am certain that one Pole in every three would liquidate, with his own hands and without qualms, Bierut, Gomulka and Kliszko, but would hesitate about Cyrankiewicz: everybody knows that he does not murder. But it destroys their lives. Man has produced

eats a lot now, because he starved in Auschwitz, that he loves Mercedes automobiles and likes girls, preferably dentists. What in Poland today is called vilification created, back in the 17th and 18th Centuries, the literary traditions of France and England, where they realized fairly early the advantages of dragging the truth by the ears into broad daylight, whether one liked it or not, so of writing and publishing uncompromising judgments of men who do not seem very savory to other men. No one and nothing justifies hiding available truth. The paralysis and debility of Polish polemic tradition is a result of equivocation and hypocrisy, and not of delicacy of feelings: in the cafés of Warsaw and Cracow, they talk about their neighbor viciously -- but sneakily, in whispers. In words -- yes, but in writing -- "it is not done" -- this is the casuistry of cowardice. And it is a real disgrace to write about one's personal view of some whoremonger, about one's opinion about someone's double dealings. As if collective judgment had some patent on objectivity. is only a small group which knows The foundation of the intellectual establishment in Poland today is still based on the three moral principles of the early engagement of various artists in Stalinism. These are: is applied in my country he must define all that troubles the profitable ideological intelligence -- nobody is any better -- remark that perhaps one should not do it -- everybody does it. above definition. The reflection of private Even then, these were lies, richly supplied with interpretation and transformation for the use and comfort of the scum -- from ordinary informers to the apologists of every oppression. Because: ulka is hated more as a symbol than as a man. By introducing -- no one must, and millions of people proved it daily, agreeing to the ruin of their hopes and plans, just to keep their hands and their conscience clean, alms, Bierut, Gomulka and Kiszko, but would there were many better people in every walk of life,

eats a lot not everyone did it, for instance, I did not. loves Mercedes Today, after many years, these principles work in retrospect, creating one of the most powerful rules of life under Communism, or even beyond it. They have introduced an inhuman norm of valuation: those who were not mistaken cannot be right, true value lies in having served evil and then ceasing and proclaiming one's abused, cheated, angelic soul. To tell the truth, this is nothing new, the same problem troubled St. Luke and St. John, but, with its proposals about sin and the redemption of sins, the New Testament opened a gate to far-reaching villainy. However, in the era of existentialism and rock'n'roll, corrections are necessary and the question arises: what can be done with those who, from the beginning, refused to be evil or stupid and were finally proved right, as shown by the total acceptance of this truth by the prostituted archangels? Naturally, those stubborn ones are told the difficult truth, the immanent imperfection, the superiority of movement over immobility: 20th Century psychology has deprived the world of guilt, contemporary relativism no longer stems from philosophy but from sleight of hand, it is the result of a life-long exercise in pulling rabbits out of hats. But finally, one realized twice in this century that Nazism was an objective evil, even for the Germans, and Communism an objective evil, even for the Communists. Despite these improvements, the phoenix of depravity has proved as fire-proof as ever, and today, former Stalinists constitute the strongest Mafia in the world, better organized and functioning more smoothly than Cosa Nostra, international homosexuality, anglers and stamp collectors. Their holy union lies in a mutual washing off of guilt, in magnificently composed complaints about the evil fate of their raped and exploited innocence. The results are brilliant: 10 years after Khrushchev's speech, the Polish October and the Hungarian Uprising, no one is able to

get anywhere in the Bloc, in Western Europe, and in intellectual America if he did not previously lick Stalin's boots, did not help him in establishing a moral, intellectual and political order and later did not back out of it in the classic manner, by proclaiming this childlike naivete. In a word -- whoever does not possess the virtue of transfiguration, of a magic transformation of one's guilt and faults into one's own immaculate glory, this is nothing. The warchpriest of the virtues of transfiguration in Poland is Professor Jan Kott. He is an intelligent, talented and charming man. He originates from the prewar drawing-room Left. After the war, he immediately joined up with the Polish Workers' Party (PPR) and became a pillar of Kuznica (16): with his delving mind and sharp pen, he rapidly gained the status of a highly-prized essayist, columnist and critic. Right after the war, Marxism was still a wealthy opponent, not a suspect monopolist, and soon, Kott became known as a skilled polemicist of its defense, while Kuznica, an arrogant but interesting weekly, played an important part in Polish cultural life. Then Stalinism came and the destruction of creativity was undertaken by Jakub Berman, Wlodzimierz Sokorski and Stefan Zolkiewski, whose right hand was Professor Kott, author of books about various realisms. If, for five years, people such as I had no right to cross the threshold of publishing houses, one of the chief engineers of the mechanism of prohibitions and directives was that very same Jan Kott. In turn, October came and Kott climbed up to the rostrum in the Warsaw Polytechnic, where he enthusiastically spoke to people who knew little about his connections with Zhdanov. The characteristic of October was the loud and public rediscovery "all over again" of truths which anyone born after the fall of the Bastille had sucked with his mother's milk. Kott holds a record in this sport: they proclaimed with great heat that mistakes are the food of

progress, that the atmosphere clears when there is freedom of speech, that new things must be different, but not necessarily perfect, that it is not good when a single individual has the power to decide about everything. Naturally, they easily forget their adversaries of the times of Kuznica, who proclaimed, word for word, the same things in Tygodnik Warszawski, (17) or Tygodnik Powszechny or Gazeta Ludowa, (18) while Jan Kott and company answered them then, with equal enthusiasm, that freedom of speech pollutes the atmosphere, that the human mind is capable of eliminating every mistake and that there can exist an individual of genius and there is no use quarreling about it. And, in return for having reached, "through agony," neo-true truths, Kott and his like have placed themselves in positions of high rank once again, or in positions of a new monopoly, or what Artur Sandauer (19) called most aptly the sole right to repair the watch by those who broke it in the first place. Here matters become broadly generalized. Thinking logically, the bankrupt team should give way to a team which had been right. But we are in the very middle of 20th Century Communism and such simple solutions are excluded. The differentiation into teams is imprecise and unilateral: we only know what the losing team looks like. It was united by the program it proclaimed and spectacular careers in every field of culture, made up of men of serious -- despite mistakes -- caliber and talented hypocrites, cynical acrobats and arrivistes, all glued together into one highly visible poster. The other side of the picture was less clear. There was the Tygodnik Powszechny group, which happily managed to carry ideological probity through the worst, there were individual professors at various universities who never gave in, despite brutal pressure, there were isolated groups of writers, painters, composers who, within their conformist unions, resisted

progress, that the atmosphere clears when there is freedom of speech, that new things must be different, but not necessarily perfect, that it is not good when a single individual has the power to decide about everything. Naturally, the Octoberists, their adversaries of the times of Kuznica, who proclaimed for word, the same things in *Tygodnik Waszowski* (17) or *Powszechny* or *Gazeta Ludowa* (18), while Jan Kott and company answered them then with equal enthusiasm, the former team, struck with utmost fury by the Gomulka-ist reaction. It soon became obvious that the former team, regrouped and segregated into the bitter, the disappointed and the wiser, will play a new and a leading role. Nothing happens in a vacuum, we have all learned this from the Marxists, even the Communists most inclined to reconciliation were scared stiff of authentic Catholics and real liberals, therefore when the October wave raised high the old intellectual wise guys, scattering liberal and independent slogans, the ruling Communists, with relief, permitted them to imitate us. Particularly since the old apparat for culture remained in charge (even Mrs. Zatorska), (20) only the needle of the compass jumped to Gomulka-ist "independence," all that had to be done was to find and launch home-grown "independents," our own rebels and angry men revolted in the name of Lukacs, Brecht, Sartre and Mayakowski. But in order to pretend to be authentic, one must eliminate those who are more authentic, wipe them off the face of the world. And this happened. The press, the radio and television placed themselves at the disposal of those more gently rebelling, of former (and perhaps future) regular guys, angry now, but our own, fuming, but never seriously harmed. After a couple of years, even the most moderate journalist from Tygodnik Powszechny had the pages of the popular press and the air waves closed to him and was condemned to dead silence, while rebels such as Kott gave interviews, constituted an unhampered authority on non-agreement, sat on contest juries and expressed biting opinions, which were enjoyed both in Natolinian, as well as Pulavian and

Gomulka-ist centers. They expressed a permissible alternative, the pressure of mass opportunism. Finally, there were youth groups, organized around interest centers such as amateur theatricals, or jazz music which played a huge, though uncoordinated role in October by organizing festivals, creating student theaters, founding short-lived publications and clubs, and these were the darlings, the ideals and the pets of Comrade Blatmanowa. (21)

Comrade Blatmanowa is that black-haired, intelligent, know-it-all prewar Communist, preferably from a wealthy family, collecting for International Aid to Revolutionaries, throwing placards on streetcar wires, fainting with admiration over Gorki, Sholokhov and the young Malraux, believing Pudovkin and The World Laughs to be the greatest cinema, who spent the war in Russia, returned to Poland with the Patriots' Union, frequently wearing the boots of a political education officer, and since 1945 has been populating the editorial offices, publishing houses, the CC, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Culture, the cinema and the radio. For Comrade Blatmanowa, Kott was the incarnation of intellectual slogans, the ruling Communists, with relief, permitted them to coquetry and charm, he wrote about Defoe and Diderot lightly, provocatively -- but strictly along the Party line. In October, Comrade Blatmanowa -- who for a quarter century lived with the image of Uncle Joe in her tender breast -- suffered an official shock and, with a violent spasm, thrust the monster from her bosom: Mrs. Zatorska, a classical example of super-Blatmanowa, allegedly said about Stalin: "That murderer! How he swindled us...." Natolin and neo-anti-Semitism did their work: some Blatmanowas emigrated to Israel, but the great majority switched to bitterness and revisionism, without losing their jobs. Today, Gomulka enjoys their cool support, and Kott their wild love: he has taken it upon himself to represent their honor and frustration, he enrolled in the opposition, but did not cease to be their conscience. One hears that there is no public opinion under Communism: naturally, it does not exist in the democratic sense, in the other sense, it depends -- in Russia, there is none, in Poland there is. It has been reduced to a couple of thousand people, and which were enjoyed both in Natolinian, as well as Pulavian and

in the eyes of Blatmanowas, who are its main component, Kott has grown to a post-Stalinist Gladstone. In the opinion of that opinion, Kott bleeds with the blood of a martyr exposed to dreadful dangers: this is how necessary, common usage saints are fabricated. The results are startling: the bloodthirsty oppositionist Kott lives in the same house as the Communist Premier Cyrankiewicz, he signs the letter of the 34, demolishes Gomulka and the cultural policy, gets a foreign passport and writes what he pleases. And if he is once refused a passport or an article, the family-society-Party-type rocket Blatmanowa enters the fray, the Warsaw cafés buzz with the sufferings of Kott, cry for vengeance from God, and within two weeks, "public opinion" manages to win what has been refused, confiscated, etc. And again Kott is the only hero, because those whose writings are confiscated for good, who do not get a passport for 20 years, are not defended by "public opinion," they are disregarded; the monopoly of Kott and his like lies in the interest of the Blatmanowas, and indirectly of the Politburo, so it can be publicly forged. When Kott got some award in Vienna, Kliszko, offended by the snub, withdrew his passport. But what are Blatmanowas for? The opinion of the whole free world was unable to get a passport for Pasternak, but "Polish public opinion" gets one without much trouble for Kott; someone will say that there is a difference between Khrushchev and Gomulka, but it seems to me that there is a difference between the objective function of Kott and of Pasternak. The name of Pasternak has played a decisive role in my attitude toward Kott. At a meeting of the Writers' Union during the case of the 34, Kott described how, in the late Forties, he went to Moscow as a representative of Kuznica and met Pasternak, who gave him a mysterious message for Polish comrade intellectuals: "Remember, you must be careful, vigilant, It only looks pretty on the

surface...." And Kott adds (I quote from memory): "But I was young. How could I know? I was inexperienced. Only years later did I understand that wise warning...." I sat among the audience and thought to myself that there are boundaries, after all, which one cannot cross. The then 30-odd year old journalist and scholar, expert on Polish language and Marxism, one of the better minds of his group, did not understand what every washerwoman and every school child had understood by then; I thought that the existence of Kotts is an insult to decency, the simplest and most obvious one which was so difficult to preserve under Stalin, and that a clerk cannot receive praise for everything, because he ceases to be a clerk and becomes a Hochstapler. "As long as all Kotts do not, in a clear, detailed and honest manner, settle their accounts with Stalinism, so long shall we feel cheated and mistreated and shall we not cease to think of them as profiteers who have risen to success over our bodies and who are actually nothing but plain cowards, for they started crying out when crying out was permitted, when it no longer led to Mokotow Prison nor to muzzling, as we have been muzzled, when, with harmless crying out and disagreement, one could make a pretty good living in Poland, even better than with the earlier servility.

"There are so many people with this sort of spiritual character and with such a dialectic of behavior in the Polish establishment, that they constitute a social phenomenon, narrow from the national point of view, but really present and visible. Their life was diametrically opposed to mine -- they received everything I was refused. Above all -- the right to develop which, under Communism, is reserved only for "our own people," or for those from whom they could draw some advantage. It may have been no more than a puny declaration that peace will win over war, or that the people are always right, but something had to be given.

Otherwise, the entire Party-state-public apparatus destroys one with the heartless rage of a mechanism. There are no mental or moral arguments: "not their own people" are earmarked for destruction. Actually, one can easily become "theirs," particularly in the beginning: it is enough to write once or speak "correctly" and one has already been classified as a yes. But if anyone recoiled or got stubborn -- he would be ground into the dirt with bootheels. Right after the war, Stanislaw Rembek wrote one of the best books ever about the German occupation, many say that it was the best. It was called, Verdict on Franciszek Klos. Who has heard about it today? No one. One hears about Andrzejewski, Rudnicki, Brandys, because they are "theirs," because they fit into a hierarchy established once and for all, despite all deviations, slips and family quarrels, because they drank together the Stalinist dish-water, choking and retching, and later spitting it out and being ashamed of themselves. In 1964, a certain movie director wanted to drag Rembek out of oblivion and make a film of his Verdict; from the point of view of present-day criteria, nothing condemned the book -- it is typically anti-German and about a Polish policeman, described without sympathy. But no go! The politruks in charge of remembering did remember, after 18 years, that Rembek was not one of "theirs" or "ours" -- this was enough to delete him from among the living, even if he had written a masterpiece.

It appeared in the Sixties that most lucrative, in the sense of profit and prestige, are bargains about one's soul -- in order to bargain about it, one first had to sell it to Stalin. Those who did not thus sell it are condemned to a deficit in the present system. Among those bargaining and wheedling, there is a variety of differences and shadings, they constitute a complicated phenomenon, but are penetrable if one tries. Naturally, the least penetrating are those who have been destined for it by the

force of things -- namely the emigration and the Americans. "Do you know," a certain secretary of the US Embassy told me in Warsaw in 1965, "what a nasty trick they pulled on this poor Kobzdej? They published an album of Polish art and included his pictures of the socialist realism period...." Indeed, there is some confusion in this matter, it is not Kobzdej who is a so and so for having painted thus, "they" are pigs for having recalled and published it. We come to a whirlpool of moral and ideological paranoia where the normal functioning of mind and conscience is no longer possible. The pressure of the *raison d'état* of former Stalinists is such that it drives out categories of straight thinking and one can hardly comprehend who or what makes a dumb American think that Kobzdej has been done wrong, and not certain principles and norms of behavior. The Kobzdej case is a fairly classical contribution to the customs of the era: it points to the power of instinct in the service to moral indifference, and years have shown that this is most highly rewarded. Aleksander Kobzdej is a talented painter, but at a time when no less talented painters organized clandestine showings in Cracow, Kobzdej was carefully engaged, i.e., he avoided painting portraits of leaders and banners, but painted scenes of the "Pass the Brick" school, drew Vietnamese fighting for freedom, attended banquets in Moscow and Peking. He drank cosily with the leading echelon and risked cute discussions about art with CC secretaries, perversely defending formalism between one vodka and the next. These tactics led to lovely relations with everybody and uncounted advantages making life easier; and above all, to approved contacts with the Franco-Italian Communist jet set and influential critics in the Western Left, adoring artists from Poland who are just a bit different from the template in force and yet make a good living. And once it had been permitted, Kobzdej emerged as an integral abstractionist

and things really moved: relations with the rulers ensured relations with abroad, these in turn ensured prizes and awards, resulting in excellent relations with the rulers. On the other hand, I know painters who at one time would recoil even from painting a bricklayer, afraid of being suspected of opportunism. In this way, they managed to avoid today's awards for independence.

I have always been afraid of being suspected of compliance. I was always against the stronger, which does not mean against the strong. Those who are stronger are always worse, because of their superiority. I have always been on the side of the weaker, who had trouble defending themselves, not because I prefer them but because, through helping them, one becomes strong and I like the strong. Kott and his like are on the side of the stronger, though they may not realize it. Under Stalin, the strongest was the apparatus of power, with the police as the chief executor. Under Gomulka, the strongest is the middle administrative apparatus -- deputy ministers and directors. This group wants change without giving up their own jobs and has a chance of seeing their desires come true, because having filled their slots for 20 years, they have become experts difficult to replace in the jungle of Communist production and administration. They are getting sick of Gomulka, while the Kotts are a pleasant alternative which one may well accept without giving up one's prized possessions. It has always seemed to me that one is against something when one has to pay for it -- by lost opportunities, poverty, idleness, the despair of time wasted: I have been taught this by the totalitarianism under which I lived. Charlie Marx (as students say) once took a stand in defense of a man, after which, in the name of the said Charlie, they built up a system in which man is more helpless than ever before in history. And this not only in the face of overpowering, insane, bureaucratic structures, but also

in the face of human hypocrisy and swinishness, beside which the excesses of capitalist laissez-faire seem to me a friendly, simple-minded idyll. Under Communism, the system of values and the mechanism of fate gives priority to small and vile characters who are then raised high according to various forms of success. This has a funny influence on individual minds. I know of a case where a collaborator of Trybuna Ludu, while in the West, asked the Congress for Cultural Freedom for aid in extending his stay abroad. Here, the Polish method of living opportunistically turns into a common whorehouse and it will be interesting to see how far it can go. Man feels kicked down and beaten, what was it all for, this stubborn maintenance of something, this struggle with oneself about what is permissible and what is not. Reasons rot, collapse, there is nothing to get hold of, not even an honest enemy. Such feelings as mine, when I see Prof. Schaff in the arms of Western intellectuals, must be experienced by an old Polish Communist, exhausted by poverty and inhuman overwork, when he sees Boleslaw Piasecki in an expensive fur coat and a German limousine in the center of Communist Warsaw. Life taught me, long ago, that there is no reward for integrity. But recently, rewards for a lifetime of trickery have multiplied too much for me to be able to watch the process without disgust and protest.

III.

Allegedly, Bismarck once said that one is not intelligent unless one was a socialist at 18. I am not intelligent, since at that age I liked neither socialists nor Communists, nor their revolutionary romanticism, nor their simplified morality. But I never got carried away: when I lay in the between-the-wars sun at the Legia swimming pool in Warsaw, among other 18-year-olds, I laughed at the stories in the reactionary yellow press about

the labor camps in Kolyma and the dozen prisoners licking at one salted herring. "What nonsense," we repeated then. "Why do they use such cheap anti-Bolshevik tricks."

A year later, several million Poles readily learned that what the Warsaw yellow press wrote was the truth. But I was primitive enough not to be able to accept the berserk lies with which the world had filled up. In my obtuseness, I could not agree that night should be called day, a tree a railroad engine, crassness culture, lack of goods an abundance of goods, truth untruth and decency a crime. And this is how it stayed for the next 25 years. People around me would also never agree to this, but later, exhausted by loneliness, they gave up the struggle. With time, various beliefs got muddled and confused, which was "their" greatest triumph.

After Lvov came Vilna, and this organization was called For Your Freedom and Ours and I slept on a mimeograph -- this was the year 1940. We were not among those who did not cover the fourth button from the top on a dyed military overcoat(22) and who saluted each other on the main street; our conspiracy was better organized, and as camouflage, I worked as sports reporter for Komsomolskaya Pravda. Perhaps we could have gone on conspiring, but we decided -- Leszek, I and a certain colleague of ours, Kretowicz -- to go to Sweden. With this in mind, we got in touch, through the organization, with Colonel Babinicz, a specialist in these matters, we were assured. He received us at home with coffee and cookies, two days later came the NKVD and took Leszek, me and friend Kretowicz straight to Lukiszki Prison. I got my sentence: 25 years for counter-revolutionary activity, so I sat down in an overcrowded cell and started waiting for the Germans, who really did come and set me free, but the Russians had already managed to deport Leszek Zawisza, my best friend, to Siberia, so

that today he is a highly respected architect in Venezuela. I met Mister Babinicz again later, still using the same name, in the Writers' Union: he writes on educational matters in the Kielce region in papers and books. He gave me a long look, but did not recognize me, or at least did not let on that he recognized me. I also never recognized him after that.

I continued to work in conspiracy here and there, toward the end in Norway. After the war, those from London who were going back from Oslo wanted to take me with them. We shall get you a scholarship in Edinburgh, said Captain Piersciankowski or Lieutenant Sulek. I do not remember which. But I did not feel like studying. I felt like writing. In 1945, I was in Poland as a delegate of a Norwegian ministry, I was not in danger and could have a look around. I looked around, things had changed somehow. Oppression and lies were still the motive force of the whole undertaking, but no one would insist I continue to sit out my 25-year sentence in Lukiszki Prison. Russian Communism is a deadly serious affair, there are no jokes. Polish Communism has not been very serious right from the start. Indeed, people were ground into cement on Koszykowa with hob-nailed boots and a gigantic metal works was built, but there was always an undertone of a cynical giggle, a snicker. Then, at the beginning, Communism was made up to look like a people's democracy, though dressed up like something else, but one could sense that things were different. One felt one could come and do something, meaning be a creative opponent and this is where the big mistake lay, because every Communist -- Polish, Czech or Cuban -- is, in the end, as Soviet a matter as not to know the meaning of the word opponent. It only knows supporters, lackeys and enemies. And I missed that.

I went back to Norway, settled a few things and returned to Poland. In the beginning, things were not too bad. Borejsza(23)

kicked me out of a job for having written a completely true story, which Rzeczpospolita (the official paper then) published, quite by mistake. Such mistakes could still happen. Then I was kicked out of Przekroj for having written a true account of a boxing match. On that occasion, I was also kicked out of the Journalists' Union: it transpired that the members of that organization were no longer permitted to write true accounts, something I had not realized yet. I was still employed in Express Wieczorny and I had a book published which merited an exalted fate: it was placed on the Party index, dug out of libraries and burned. The cause was not its feeble contents but the cover, with an AK (Home Army) emblem, which the book-jacket artist had put on it. Finally, I presented myself at Tygodnik Powszechny and for three years my existence had some meaning. Those were the happiest years: I felt the sane joy of not participating in some criminal folly, in which so many people plunged up to their necks. I wrote theatrical reviews from Warsaw, the censor confiscated two out of three, but it was beautiful. The literary owners of the People's Poland and playboys from the Polish Youth Union (ZMP) could never forgive me. Galczynski, Borowski, Zukrowski and many others started in Tygodnik Powszechny after the war, after which they moved over to the Communists. I did it the other way around, from Borejsza to Father Piwowarczyk, alone, watched by everybody. When Tygodnik was handed over to Piasecki, I could not get a job. Neither as a sports reporter nor as a writer. My offer to the Warsaw Gastronomic Enterprises was rejected by the Security Police: the steak and green peas, when served by me, smacked of political demonstration. From the perspective of today, I can state with distaste that I felt best under Stalinism: I felt I was morally right and socially useful. I refused to sign the Stockholm Appeal, to participate in sham elections or in a May Day parade. I was refused aid by the

Writers' Union when dangerously ill. But my relations with the people were marked by purity and openness, the lines of division were clear and provable. The integrity of intention was called saving face. Gustaw Holoubek(24) said of me once that I was saving my pretty little mug: this was funny, but easily forgiven. Life under Stalinism was hell, but not for all: for instance, not for those who had decided to defend their own value. They did pay, it is true, with a ruination of their life ambitions, but, on the other hand, they were in accord with the great masses surrounding them, and that was magnificent.

Then October came. Under Communism, one lives constantly despite or against something: the years 1955-1956-1957 differed in that one lived within and with. As an individual and a citizen, I had the right to enter publishing houses and offer them books, to write new ones, as well as newspaper articles reflecting my views, and to speak in public according to my beliefs. I was still an opponent, but I believed that the Communists should remain in power, what else was there? At that time I had things published that I had written before, I wrote new things and had them published, too. After which came the absolutism of enlightened Communism and the double-dealings of the cultural neo-Directory. The system was improved, the hand was wrapped in nylon.

This was also a time when I received a letter every day, asking where Zly could be bought. The last edition, published in 1957 was still being sold under the counter, but already there were signs of vengeance around me. Some "Silesian booksellers" proclaimed that they would not sell Zly in their shops, they condemned it as a cheap thriller and called for non-reprinting. In the first phase of success, I expected to receive the Warsaw City Prize; however, in 1958, the Cultural Department of the Municipal City Council ordered the withdrawal of the book from city libraries,

accusing me of slandering my native city. East German publishers dropped their option, under pressure from the cultural attaché in Berlin. The Czytelnik Publishing House was put under the management of Mrs. Wicha, and the Wicha family left a hard mark on my fate, I even daydreamed about my being their favorite dinner-time conversation piece: "How did kicking Tyrmand go today, honey?" Mrs. Wicha firmly refused to re-print Zly, motivating her decision with the paper shortage, of which there was never any lack for the reprinting of her private and Party proteges, even when tens of thousands of their unsold copies piled up in the warehouses. I once received a letter from someone in Zarow near Swidnica, begging me to copy out, on a typewriter, a couple of pages missing from a copy of Zly which was the only one in Zarow and read to death by all he lent it to. I tried in vain to move Mrs. Wicha with this letter, because she looks like a well-fed schoolteacher, inclined to kindly gestures, but this appearance is misleading: in fact, she has been soldered out of steel and duplicity. And someone I knew in Czytelnik told me kindly: "Are you a child or something? This is not a question of Zly, but of yourself. If anyone else had written it, 30,000 copies yearly would come out. But you? Why don't you wake up?"

I woke up, or rather I was awakened. Seven Long Cruises was confiscated. In 1959, I finished a novel, Philip, for the Literary Publishing House in Cracow. The book was taken care of by Mrs. Zatorska, who has played the role of a prison guard in my life, exceeding her duties and hitting a manacled prisoner across the face. Way back in the Central Publishing Office, she wouldn't have permitted Zly to be published over her dead body, soon she was herself judged a spawn of Stalinism, yet a year later she was again firmly in the saddle as the Director of the Publishing Department in the Ministry of Culture. And once again, she started

her sinister activities. I met Lec(25) once on Krakowskie Przedmiescie and asked him: "What's your hurry?" to which Lec: "I must wash up. I have been talking to Zatorska." He hit the bull's eye, Zatorska -- Fela in more intimate thoughts, and there are few writing people in Poland who do not have intimate thoughts about breaking her arms and legs -- is somehow sticky: huge, sweet eyes, delicate lips, and on those lips, a smile so hypocritical and so cruel, that weaker individuals hope for immediate escape. Fela comes from a fabulously rich family, no wonder then that her faith has something of an expiation in it, seeing in mistreatment of the infidels the best means to redemption. When I first met Fela eye to eye, I knew there was no chance of a draw, that someone here would have to be carried off out of the ring. Fela told me that as long as she had something to say about that, such pornographic smut as Seven Long Cruises would not be published, nor would as nasty and immoral a banality as Philip; but she committed the typical mistake of an enraged tiger, adding that she had not forgotten what I had written about her in October, in the quarterly Homo Dei - Ateneum Kaplanskie.(26) This was a remarkable feat of memory and a finishing blow at that moment: I completely forgot that, in a letter to the late Father Pirozynski, then editor of the magazine, I mentioned Mrs. Zatorska in one unflattering phrase. Tactically, however, this was a mistake: books are not confiscated for purely personal reasons.

Philip was an ideologically engaged book: it called for a purposeful consumer attitude which, under certain conditions, constitutes the only successful opposition, and within a Gomulkaist system insane with hypocrisy, it offered a behavioral pattern which the high and mighty abhorred. Do not give in, unmask, keep the faith -- this was the premise of Philip -- and the Nazi metaphor was the literary necessity of the moment. In the name of

not giving in, then, I went to my organizational leader in the Writers' Union, namely Chairman Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz. I was never very fond of him and I must say to be just that he was not fond of me, as shown in his notorious column on Zly, where he messed me up subtly and successfully. I have always imagined that, as soon as the Rusky army rolled over the Mazovian plains, Mr. Jaroslaw put on his red fez, sat at a window and thought deeply about how to save his landed property in Stawiska (a gift of prewar plutocrats for ideological aesthetism close to their own) from revolutionary rape and nationalization. For his inventiveness, he received, 10 years later, the medal of Reconstructed Poland and the nicest honors Communists are capable of offering a writer, and this in such a distinguished manner that one can still insist some on the so-called independence of conscience and fidelity to ideals and the Muses. I remember how he opened a congress of intellectuals in Wroclaw in 1948; even then everybody knew that the undertaking stank, but Iwaszkiewicz bore the stink with post-nobility nonchalance and everything rolled smoothly from then on. Toward the end of the Fifties, there was in Warsaw a literary salon run by Mrs. Irena Krzywicka. (27): people who made the best living in Poland would gather there, to complain about their evil fate, pets of the regime moaning about the regime and the nonsense (!) of life, diplomats who led a lovely life outside the Polish frontiers under Uncle Joe, literary critics with acrobatic talents, journalists washing their lips from early-morning kisses with late-night invectives about the CC, film-makers who made millions on movies no one attended, satirists and cartoonists who built their fortunes on maligning Tito and the Kulaks and were now mutually adjusting their make-up "à la vierge." I do not deny that decent and amusing people could also be seen there, but for me, Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz

symbolized that salon and I never took advantage of an invitation to attend.

I was received in the editorial office of Tworczosc, where I explained my problem: Zatorska refuses to publish the book, blaming the censor, but in fact, the book has never been submitted to the censor. Iwaszkiewicz stated that this is typical chicanery, that we all know what Zatorska is like, that he would be seeing Krasko tomorrow about union matters and would speak to him about it. I should come and see him the day after. I came and was told that Krasko even refused to listen about Philip, that he shouted that the book would never appear, that there is no use fighting because it is not only bad, but also cynical and immoral. I bent my head in humility, but as fate would have it, two days later, I was told that Comrade Krasko would receive me, something I had been trying to achieve with telephone calls and begging for many months. The chief of the cultural department of the CC, Comrade Krasko, is a melancholy, dark-haired personage with the sad look of a Wilnian torn by doubts: in Poznan, he wanted to take upon himself the sins of all the progressives, from Engels to Jedrychowski, in the face of a furious mob, showing that he had some guts. He has the reputation of a guy who would do good if he could, which does not mean that, for him, the problem of Philip would be more than a couple of telephone calls and everything is settled. I started out humbly that Chairman Iwaszkiewicz talked with you yesterday, did he not? "He did" admitted Krasko. Me: "So you know the story?" Krasko: "I don't know what you are talking about." Me: "I wrote a book..." He: "Never heard of it." Me: "So the chairman did not mention it?" He: "Not your book, he didn't." Me, hastily: "Well, he must have forgotten. Let me explain...."

There are people in Warsaw to whom I recounted these two

conversations in the Czytelnik Café. They can bear witness. If they want to.

Philip was published in the end, though the number of copies was reduced by half by Fela. It was sold out in three days and today it cannot be found in Poland, Fela made sure of that. Her vengeance reached farther, to other democracies, and publishers in Hungary told me that they were refused publishing permits on request from Warsaw. On the other hand, I was attacked by critics instructed by Mrs. Zatorska. I have always had bad luck with critics of former fascist leanings, devotionists of successive religions, various kinds of Lichanskis (28) and Hierowskis, (29) disastrously dressed, burdened with children and a petty-bourgeois existence who could never forgive me that for 20 years I was their simple opposite. They have always accused me with venom of "permitting myself" to be independent out of fancy and a desire to show off, they did not perceive or did not want to perceive the risks I took and the blows I received, they only saw the colorful effects of the struggle, and that made them wither with envy.

Philip, recalling such an attitude, was an ideal target for attack. So I was worked over by Andrzej Kijowski, an intelligent journalist and brilliant stylist, but still one of those brave men who started protesting loudly and courageously when it was permitted and there was no danger in being different. Before that, Mr. Kijowski was a heated advocate of socialist realism in Zycie Literackie and used his talents in defense of works which today he would be ashamed to admit he had ever read. Obviously, he was bugged by something, whether by these memories or by his life, gray with decency, anyway, he leaped on me with rare fury in Tworczosc, and I must say that, in the specialty of personal insults in the Communist press, I can aspire to quite a high position. In his excitement and frenzy, Mr. Kijowski lied, twisted and falsified the story line,

denied in one phrase what he had just stated in the preceding one, a thing which he does try to avoid when he is feeling normal, but, above all, he called me names. This showdown gave me food for thought: generally speaking, editors-in-chief in Communist papers do not permit such violence of invective and tone, unless there is a directive to "finish the guy off." But the editor-in-chief of Tworczosc was Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz and I was by then a legalized outcast, an outlaw at whom anyone could take pot shots. I was not granted a passport, my old books were not being reprinted, my new ones were not being published. "They would not print anything about you," said a friend of mine who was considering making a fool of Kijowski. He was right. They did not print anything about me, and if they did, it was only an attack or invectives. A journalist from Zycie Warszawy, who wanted to put in a short notice about the Portuguese edition of Zly, was reminded that nothing positive about me is to be published. I was invited to take part in a TV panel "We Are All Judges"; a day before the program, the chief of the series called me up in a panic: "I am terribly sorry, but the head office of Warsaw TV demanded that you be dropped! I cannot understand this, I have been running the series for years, hundreds of people have sat on the panel and this has never happened before...." Poor guy, he did not know I was on a radio and TV black list, even though Chairman Sokorski solemnly denied to me that there was any such thing. The truth was, I should not have been, this was the ungrammatical principle followed as far as my existence was concerned. Who by? Here a pseudo-riddle, to which there allegedly is no answer, begins. The worst Stalinist executioner of the like of Chairman Sokorski, marinated in politics, culture or the judiciary, no longer thinks of struggles of principles in the Sixties, all they care is how to turn their merits into cash, take Italian tours, buy silk scarves in London and

snatch allotments for automobiles shown at the Poznan Fair. They do not destroy me for what I represent, as under Stalin, but for existing and spoiling their easy accounts. I am not one of theirs and someone must be destroyed if one does not want to be destroyed oneself, this is the method of eliminating the exploitation of man by man. The small-mindedness of this persecution in no way reduced its destructive force, it only determined my condition: I was ridiculous, troublesome and annoying, even to those closest to me, already used to my non-stop disasters. I could well imagine what would have gone on in the cafés if Prof. Kott had been eliminated from a TV program: all the Blatmanowas, plus a corps-de-ballet of former Stalinists would have danced Grottger's Polonia(30) in front of the CC building.

Books published in October gave me a couple of years free of financial problems. In 1960, I was again faced with the problems of making a living. As all other writers, I would attend public readings of my works: local authorities, however, intimidated the cultural institutions which arranged them, the press did not publish announcements that such a reading would take place and the Cracow Jaszczury students' club was simply forbidden to organize evening meetings for me. A writer has another source of income in the movies which -- like everything else in Poland -- are the property of the Politburo, but have been rented out to a couple of persons. The chief is Minister Zaorski,(31) an accountant by trade, who came to the cinema as an auditor of the Highest Chamber of Control (NIK) and stayed on. After years of management, he acquired some taste and sharpened his criteria, but this is still not enough for artistic leadership, and although he enjoys the reputation of "better he than others," his objective achievement is the total collapse of the Polish New Wave of the late Fifties from the heights of world cinema to the role of a Cinderella not

even invited to festivals. However, a more pernicious phenomenon is the movie lobby in the CC -- its two leading powers are Aleksander Ford and Jerzy Toeplitz. Ford, a Lodz Iago, a vile schemer, owes his "successes" to the faultlessly topical subject-matter of his movies and his position -- to machinations, denunciations, pathological destruction of younger and more talented directors. Toeplitz is a Communist Tartuffe: he continues to proclaim in Poland the Zhdanov catechism and Stalinist Party evaluations, blocking the road to experimentations, while in Cannes, New York and Venice, he makes speeches from which it appears that he is the only fighter for the freedom of movies behind the Iron Curtain. In 1963, movie director Rybkowski dared make a movie from my script: the results were disastrous. Ford protested to Starewicz and demanded that the movie not be shown. Starewicz promised Ford that never again would any of my scripts be filmed and he limited the showing of the movie to the larger cities and to a couple of weeks, removing it while lines still stood at the box office, although this was due mainly to Beata Tyszkiewicz taking her clothes off with incomparable grace and to Andrzej Lapicki watching her from his bed with incomparably hungry eyes. Starewicz called a meeting of movie critics and told them how they were to write: every review then showed clearly that I forced, pistol in hand, the director, the actors and the cameraman to make the worst movie since the days of Mieszko and Dabrowka (32) and all this with ideological perversion in mind. Two braver critics, who dared write something different, really got in trouble afterwards. Again, I cannot explain the eruption of venom against the film in any other way than personally: the movie was entitled Really Yesterday and was about a nice variety of careerists. In a country rife with equivocal and amazing careers, when former Falangists(33) make fortunes as protégés of

Jews, where former national-democrats from Poznan(34) are deputy ministers, prewar small dealers are theoreticians of art and recent slum landlords write the Communist Credo -- people should have been grateful for my gentle metaphor. If Czeszko(35) had written it, he would get a medal for a tactful unmasking.

In 1964, at a meeting of the Warsaw branch of the Writers' Union, when the names of people behind with their dues was read publicly and my name was heard -- it was greeted with loud laughter. This was supposed to mean a big joke -- I, favorite of the reading public, author of lucrative light novels, owner of an automobile (a stumbling block), must have been behind with my dues only on a cute whim. I smiled, too, and thought that this time it was really the end. There is absolutely no point in sitting here, in this hall, in this city, among those "colleagues." I was scraping the bottom of the barrel, I did not have money to pay the rent, for a holiday, I maintained my car with money saved on meals -- what was the point of sticking in this nonsensical lie, in an upside-down image of life? Unlike 95 per cent of the merrily laughing audience, I have never got anything from the Union: I did not take grants, nor did I write, in return for such "loans," poems about the beauty and sweetness of Stalin. I have been a member of the Writers' Union since 1948, but even at times of greatest destitution, the only aid was the right to club dinners, with which the Union maintained my spirits. At one time, it could have even helped, and did not. This was when the Ruskys published Zly in 180,000 copies and did not pay a penny. There is an old method of getting money out of the Russians: one goes with a Union delegation or on a Union scholarship to Moscow and the Writers' Union there kindly forces the publisher to fork out the monies due, in this way anyone who was owed anything over there trucks TV sets and refrigerators from the GUM to Polish

second-hand stores. The only trouble was that such as I never got any scholarships and the idea to send me with a delegation seemed completely sick to the high and mighty of the Writers' Union. On the other hand, delegations make the trip twice a year and everybody had already been, with the exception of those who could not make it to the train. In 1964, I managed to beg Putrament to put me on the list; I was on the brink of going when I was called by the Union secretary, Mr. Gisges, who told me that he was "unspeakably sorry" but my name had been crossed off the list by the CC. Mr. Gisges went instead.

Those who were laughing did not realize that I was truly stuck in unyielding manure and I could not stand it. I plunged deeper and deeper into the barrel of absurdity: to have the reputation of being worse than one is and to get nothing for it is contrary to basic reason. To live in constant retreat, within ever-shrinking chances and not have even the meanest compensation was becoming unbearable. One can live without victories, one can bear for long a string of defeats, but to be deprived of the right to amends -- this was ridiculous. Months and years spent idly, waiting for a passport, for the publication of a book, for the passage through censorship of another, or the re-issue of a third, against which no one had any objections but which still would not be reissued -- this was reality. Someone will say: this is what happens to everybody under Communism, you are no exception. This is an imprecise truth, under Communism, the Orwellian statement about some being more equal than others still holds true. "Their own" insubordinates, disappointeds and disenchanteds are punished, but gently; kicked, but carefully; if they fall down, they are picked up, brushed off, washed and dried. But there are some in Poland who are being done in and I was one of them. Someone would say: "you proclaim to be an anti-Communist,

why shouldn't they do you in? No one forced you to come back in 1946, you chose life in totalitarianism on your own, why do you cry, 20 years later, that totalitarianism is nasty?" To this I can only say humbly: you are right. And under Stalin, I did not hold it against anybody, but in the meantime, a lot has changed. In the meantime, ideological persecution has changed into mechanical squashing, and I fell in love with the country as it is. In the meantime, there was born my condition of a Pole from that Poland and no other, a man of Warsaw joys and trials, unknown to anybody outside that city. Millions such as I lived, spat, built, spewed hatred and still lived toughly in that reality, in which we are the basic element of all achievements and changes. If it were not for us, there would have been no October, no Gomulka and no revisionists; socialism would not require improvement, Berman and Radkiewicz would still be right; we were the genesis of the transformations and not the Party Talmudists. I have become an agglomerated Pole, made up of the Poniatowski Bridge(36) and the butter shortage, Praga II(37) and Soviet crimes, the Gromada Cooperative(38) and Antoni Slonimski, Cardinal Wyszynski and the Czerwono-Czarni,(39) the Freedom Fighter Memorial and track and field athletes, the Artists' Union Café(40) and the Goplo Bar. Poles -- a nation waiting on misty mornings at rural bus stations, with paper suitcases and kids in warm underwear -- belong to me as much as to Moczar. Together with this nation, I gained experience about unshaven wise guys in filthy offices, as well as the knowledge of how to have 20 people use a single bathroom and how to enter trains by the window. Together with them, I have stood in line for lemons for 20 years, and through this, they became my lines more than those of Szyr, Lesz and Jaszczuk, who caused them, but did not join them, because earlier, they had special shops behind yellow curtains, and later housekeepers. Some 30 million

people, including myself, had the right to love and hate Communist Poland, which is our and my Poland, even though we did not want it this way, but such things happen in the best of families, and in connection with this, no one has the right to squash me in the name of lousy totalitarianism. I was once told about Kliszko washing his non-iron shirt in the luxurious bathroom of Claridge's or the George V Hotel in Paris before his meeting with De Gaulle. There, within one hour, the luxuries of the Champs-Élysées and now a shirt (Viennese) from a second-hand shop in Warsaw. There are many reasons for which Poles from Poland, even Kliszko, wash their own shirts on entering capitalism, but the first reason is that we believe it a mortal sin to spend hard currency on something we can get in Polish zlotys or do ourselves. Kliszko is one of my chief torturers, his instructions muzzle such as I, but if we were to stand together in that bathroom: Kliszko, Anders and I, or Kliszko, I and Johnson -- the basic community would be Zenek and I, the executioner and the victim. This is a union of common awareness, invisible to outsiders, something that we know, a common denominator of conditioned reflex making us wash a shirt when no one sees and hanging it to dry in a closet (over a newspaper to catch the drips), so that the service people should not notice it and think badly of us. In gas stations in Poland, it has happened to me that the guy holding the nozzle would say to me: "Mr. Tyrmand, luv, I would so like to read you." Me: "They won't allow it." He: "Who?" Me: "The censorship." He: "What censorship?" Me: "They." And he knows who "they" are, so he says: "You just let them have it. What is this, can't you write so that they would allow it? So that I could read some?" Those Poles, dear God, a heroic and stubborn nation which does not even know what censorship is! I could quote to this guy holding the nozzle the opinion of another Pole, commenting on my book, which PIW refused to

publish and will never publish now: "You are making the same mistake again. You are pointing out the real faults. Under Communism, you may point out only general faults, or unreal ones, censorship allows that and the people do not feel too offended. But you want to write about concrete vile faults, about those which cannot be covered up by appearances, by the relativity of historic transformations or by the so-called knowledge of life. And you wonder why they don't publish you...." I am afraid that those two would not understand each other, although they are both Poles, want the same things and dislike the same things. And yet, everything I ever got in life, I got from Poles. It was they who gave me the one moment unique in the life of a writer when, years ago, in the Mokotow Housing Area (MDM), a long line stood waiting in front of a shop, and a guy in a beret was passing me and asked the last man in the line: "What are they selling? Ham?" and the last in the line answered: "They are selling Zly. One apiece." And the guy in a beret lined up.

* * *

Gypsies in Poland today do not start with: "You will be rich, you will win a lottery...." only with: "You will make a trip abroad...."

I have. I will not be a flashy refugee of the Fifties. I did not save my bare life from the claws of the Security Police, I do not give interviews about how I was forced to torture others. Communism in Poland today has little in common with physical terror. Instead, it brings to mind a broken down plumbing system: you turn a faucet and the water does not flow down the drain but spreads on the floor. There is no plumber clever enough to fix it and yet, for certain reasons, the system cannot be exchanged. One can only move away from it or, as the purists would have it: run away. Therefore, all who still want to open a normal faucet

in their lives move away: architects, artists, musicians. The third, fourth or nth emigration. I would call it a Communist one, for many are Party members and holders of consular passports. It is as hard to bear and as sad as any other emigration. Its atmosphere has been described by a girl in Paris who told me last year about another girl:

"I found her a fantastic job, taking care of a man ill with cancer: 20 Francs a day and food. Only, it won't last long...."

Footnotes:

- 1) Legendary founders of Poland, Bohemia and Russia.
- 2) Baltic seaside resort.
- 3) Grzegorz Lasota, young Party-lining critic.
- 4) Stefan Staszewski, journalist, former chief of PAP, the Polish Press Agency.
- 5) Przyjaziń, Polish-Soviet Friendship Society Weekly.
- 6) Kraj Rad, Polish-language Soviet fortnightly.
- 7) Julia Brystygierowa -- Communist hard-liner -- colonel in the Security Police.
- 8) Rakowiecka Street -- address and hence popular appellation of the Ministry of the Interior and Security Police.
- 9) Irena Dziedzic, favorite TV announcer.
- 10) Lucjan Kydrynski, most popular MC, specializing in song festivals.
- 11) Janusz Minkiewicz, satirist with a very unfortunate Stalinist past.
- 12) Karczew, small town near Warsaw, symbol of the backwoods.
- 13) Pelcowizna, a rough, very poor suburb of Warsaw.
- 14) Marymont, red light district.
- 15) Burakow, poor Warsaw suburb.
- 16) Kuznica, literary monthly closed in 1950.
- 17) Tygodnik Warszawski, a Catholic weekly closed in the late Forties.
- 18) Gazeta Ludowa, publication of Mikolajczyk's Peasant Union (PSL), closed in 1949.
- 19) Artur Sandauer, literary critic, sometimes very outspoken about censorship and the cultural policy.
- 20) Helena Zatorska, chief of Publications Department in the Ministry of Culture and the Arts.
- 21) Blatmanowa, a made-up name symbolizing an exalted leftist blue stocking.
- 22) These were military overcoats, dyed and with the metal buttons covered in cloth, which were then sold to civilians.

- 23) Jerzy Borejsza (died 1952), founder and first manager of the Czytelnik Publishing House.
- 24) Gustaw Holoubek, a well-known actor, Poland's answer to Olivier.
- 25) Stanislaw Jerzy Lec (died 1966), author of satirical aphorisms, his best-known being Unkempt Thoughts.
- 26) Homo Dei - Ateneum Kaplanskie, Catholic bi-monthly, published by the Redemptorist Fathers.
- 27) Irena Krzywicka, journalist and writer.
- 28) Stefan Lichanski, minor literary critic, non-Communist.
- 29) Zdzislaw Hierowski, Silesian writer and critic.
- 30) Grottger's Polonia, a cycle of 19th Century drawings by Artur Grottger, representing the sufferings of Poles under Russian oppression.
- 31) Tadeusz Zaorski, deputy minister of culture.
- 32) Mieszko and Dabrowka, first rulers of Poland, whose conversion to Christianity was just celebrated by the Millennium.
- 33) Falanga, a fascist organization founded before the war by Boleslaw Piasecki.
- 34) Jozef Winiewicz, deputy minister of foreign affairs.
- 35) Bohdan Czeszko, writer and journalist, deputy editor-in-chief of the Warsaw Kultura.
- 36) Poniatowski Bridge, best-known Warsaw bridge.
- 37) Praga II, new housing development on the right (east) bank of the Vistula.
- 38) Gromada Cooperative, a popular travel agency.
- 39) Czerwono-Czarni, a big beat ensemble.
- 40) Artists' Union Café, a popular café with snob appeal.