

October Revolution turned out to be oddly similar to those which Tkachev's opponents had prophesied that his methods must inevitably produce: the emergence of an *élite*, wielding dictatorial power, designed in theory to wither away once the need for it had gone; but, as the Populist democrats had said over and over again, in practice more likely to grow in aggressiveness and strength, with a tendency towards self-perpetuation which no dictatorship seems able to resist. The Populists were convinced that the death of the peasant commune would mean death, or at any rate, a vast setback, to freedom and equality in Russia; the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, who were their direct descendants, transformed this into a demand for a form of decentralised, democratic self-govern-

ment among the peasants, which Lenin adopted when he concluded his temporary alliance with them in October, 1917. In due course the Bolsheviks repudiated this programme, and transformed the cells of dedicated revolutionaries—perhaps the most original contribution of Populism to revolutionary practice—into the hierarchy of centralised political power, which the Populists had steadily and fiercely denounced until they were themselves finally, in the form of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, proscribed and annihilated. Communist practice owed much, as Lenin was always ready to admit, to the Populist movement; for it borrowed the technique of its rival and adapted it with conspicuous success to serve the precise purpose which it had been invented to resist.

Ronald Bottrall

The Old Blowing-House

We were together sunk in a fern hollow
Where a bruised engine-house looked sheer
On to the sea, above us granite boulders
Strewn by giants. A sea of beaten copper
Overlooked by storm-clouds ribbed with blood,
My blood and do you remember a drop of it?

The sun shook there in a fretted ripple
And left a skein for your fancy to hold.
Is your hand still on the silken thread?
If you recall the moment does it glow
With gleam of pyrites or are the adits
Of our deep youth grown over? Now
I am alone and breathe an older dark.

Miners with candles at their heads
Probed dripping galleries under the sea
For tin and coughed out their lungs. You freshen
Another air free of the Wolf lighthouse
Spurting as cruelly as a wrecker's flare
In fearful monotonous intervals
Across the bulwark of Castle Kenidjack.

The compass needle trembles inanelly
And the weather-cock teeters in the wind
The wind, the pitiless Atlantic gale
Bends dwarf oaks into heaving arches and loosens
A stone from the engine stack that clattering
Rolls down to wound the gathering sea.

After the hurricane comes no clarity.
The pattern has faded like an old quilt
And the curve of the images recedes.
I have lost my land, lying castaway
On sand counted out and outnumbered.

Herbert Luethy

General de Gaulle

THE first volume (and the first act) was *L'Appel*, and General de Gaulle, quite legitimately, was its only actor, the only creator and the only character of his tale. The man, the style, and the events were in perfect harmony: history for a moment appeared simple and clear, draped to the size of a man who in turn was measured for it. It was like an *image d'Épinal* in its truth and its simple, shining purity. In London, filled with the remnants of armies and rulers in exile, the last capital standing on the edge of a blacked-out Europe, in the BBC's radiophonic Tower of Babel, murmuring with the voices of a threatened Empire and world, using every expedient, all waves beamed, speaking thousands of hours a day in every language to the triumphant enemy, to the stricken allies, to the uneasy Empire, to the sanguine Commonwealth, to America impatiently expected, to Russia wandering in the enemy camp, to the frightened neutrals, to Italy and Japan already on the point of springing to the attack—in short, speaking to the whole world to sow the seeds of courage on the one hand and confusion on the other—this was where a French officer brought to London by General Spears was to give a five-minutes' talk almost impromptu, in turmoil. In that huge broadcasting tower only two or three technicians, whose duty it was to keep a studio free for the time announced, noticed the incident and the unusual figure of that officer bearing the destiny of France on his shoulders; at the time very few listeners, even among those who later came to believe they remembered it, heard that unknown, predestined voice; no one thought to record for posterity that call, apparently thrown out into the void; no tape-recording in the otherwise well-stocked files of the BBC (or in those of the world's monitoring

stations) preserves its pitch or accent. It was the solitary action of a lonely man, a call drowned in the noises of catastrophe, which was to be the first date in the annals of *la France libre*, *la France combattante*, *la France libérée*, and even of the Fifth Republic. Apart from the noise and the microphones, we might think of the Nativity in the stable hay, unknown to the authorities and to the public, with only a few shepherds in the fields made aware of it by echoes from the sky. The Kings were to be slow to come and grudging in their offerings.

Volume II (but not Act Two) was *L'Unité*. Already the style becomes broken, and the clear skies darken. "Unity"—that can no longer be the solitary action of a single man; it is everybody's business. A strange title for the tale of the Dakar expedition, the heart-rending Syrian campaign, the "comedy" and "tragedy" of Algiers; and even the far-off realities of occupied France, hardly mentioned in the text (Vichy France, of course, but also *la France résistante*), do not fall easily under this heading. "I create the FFI [*Forces françaises de l'Intérieur*]" : certainly we remember the little phrase that put things in their right order, but we also know the clash which always arises between the creator and his creation. And yet, in a deep sense, *L'Unité* remains the assertion of a single man, for by his own will or that of history, it could only be based on himself. France's unity was the unity of its incarnation, and, first of all, in terms of international law, it was the unity of its representation before the world. The great debate, which is at the centre of *L'Unité*, was to impose this unity of representation on the reluctant Allies; all the rest is subsidiary. And this ceaseless struggle, concentrated on this decisive point, was that of national dignity itself. Just because France was under the jack-boot, it could only