

## *No Tears for Schmeck*

AS MÜLLER'S NAUSEA approached the point at which voiding was inevitable, a solemn, reverent silence filled the lecture hall. Professor Schmeck's voice, deliberately unaccentuated, cultured, slightly husky, had now (seventeen minutes before the end of the lecture) advanced to that gentle chant, soothing yet stimulating, which transports a certain type of female student (the hyper-intellectual, the kind that used to be known as a blue-stocking) to a pitch of excitement bordering on the sexual; at this moment they would have died for him. As for Schmeck, he used to describe—when speaking confidentially—this stage of his lecture as the point at which “the rational element, driven to its outer limits, to the very furthest edge of its possibilities, begins to seem irrational, and,” he would add, “my friends, when you consider that any decent church service lasts forty-five minutes, like the sex act—well then, my friends, you'll understand that rhythm and monotony, acceleration and retardation, climax—and relaxation—are an integral part of a church service, the sex act, and—in my opinion, at least—the academic lecture.”

At this point, somewhere about the thirty-third minute of the lecture, all indifference vanished from the hall, leaving only adoration and hostility. The adoring listeners could have exploded any minute into inarticulate rhythmic screams, and this would have incited the hostile listeners (who were in the minority) to screams of provocation. But at the very instant when such unacademic behaviour appeared imminent, Schmeck broke off in the middle of a sentence and with a

prosaic gesture introduced that sobering note which he needed to bring the lecture to a controlled conclusion: he blew his nose with a brightly coloured check handkerchief, and the compulsive glance with which he briefly inspected it before replacing it in his pocket had a sobering effect on every last female student whose lips may already have been showing traces of light foam. “I need adoration,” Schmeck used to say, “but when I get it, I can't take it.”

A deep sigh went through the lecture hall, hundreds swore never again to attend a Schmeck lecture—and on Tuesday afternoon they would be crowding round the door, they would stand in line for half an hour, they would miss the lecture given by Livorno, Schmeck's rival, so as to hear Schmeck (who never announced the times of his lectures until Livorno had settled on his). Whenever Schmeck was supposed to announce his lecture schedule for the university time-table, he had no compunction about going off to places so remote that he could not be reached even by cable. Last semester he had gone on an expedition to the Warrau Indians, for weeks he was hidden in the Orinoco delta, and when his expedition was over he cabled his lecture schedule from Caracas, and it had been identical with Livorno's (a fact which led someone in the Registrar's office to remark: “Obviously he has his spies in Venezuela too”).

The deep sigh seemed to Müller to indicate the right moment to do what he ought to have done a quarter of an hour earlier but hadn't had the nerve to: go out and get rid of the contents of his stomach. When he

stood up in the front row, his briefcase tucked under his arm, and made his way through the closely packed rows, he was fleetingly aware of the look of indignation, of surprise, on the faces of the students who grudgingly made room for him. Even the Schmeck opponents seemed to find it inconceivable that there could be anybody—and an out-and-out Schmeck supporter at that, of whom it was rumoured that he was angling for the post of chief assistant lecturer—who would deprive himself even partially of this perfidious brilliance. When Müller at last reached the exit he heard with half an ear the remainder of the sentence which Schmeck had broken off to blow his nose—“to the heart of the problem: is the mackintosh an accidental or typical manifestation? Is it sociologically significant?”

MÜLLER REACHED the toilet just in time, loosened his tie, ripped open his shirt, heard a shirt button tinkle as it rolled away into the next cubicle, let his briefcase drop to the tiled floor—and vomited. He felt the cold sweat getting even colder on the gradually returning warmth of his face; keeping his eyes closed, he flushed the toilet by groping for the lever, and was surprised to feel in some definitive way not only liberated but cleansed. What had been flushed away was more than vomit; it was a whole philosophy, a suspicion confirmed, rage—he laughed with relief, wiped his mouth with his handkerchief, hastily pushed up the knot of his tie, picked up his briefcase and left the cubicle. They had teased him a hundred times, but here was proof of how useful it was always to carry along a towel and soap. A hundred times they had made fun of his “plebeian” soap container; as he opened it now, he could have kissed his mother, for she had urged him to take it with him when he started university three years ago: soap was the very thing he needed now. He pulled uncertainly at his tie, left it the way it was, hung his jacket up on the doorknob, washed his face and hands thoroughly, wiped his neck briefly, and left

the washroom as quickly as he could: the corridors were still empty; and if he hurried he could be in his room before Marie. I’ll ask her, he thought, whether disgust, which we all know originates in the mind, can have such a drastic effect on the stomach.

IT WAS A MILD, DAMP DAY in early spring, and for the first time in three years of university he missed the last, the third, step at the main entrance—he had only reckoned with two—stumbled, and in catching himself and trying to get back into step he was conscious of the after-effects of the appalling quarter of an hour he had just been through. He felt giddy, and he was aware of his surroundings as a pleasant, dreamy blur. The faces of the college girls—majoring in literature, he would imagine—wore a look of impressionistic sensuality, they strolled languidly about under the green trees, carrying their books, and even the Catholic students with their coloured caps, who appeared to be holding some kind of meeting in front of the main building, seemed less objectionable than usual: their coloured ribbons and caps might have been wisps of a dissolving rainbow. Müller stumbled along, returning greetings mechanically, fighting his way against the stream which now, at half-past twelve, was pouring into the university like a stream of workers at change of shift.

NOT UNTIL he was in the street-car, three stops further on, did he begin to see properly again, as if he had put on glasses which corrected his vision; from one suburb to the city centre, from the centre out again to another suburb: almost an hour to think things out and “get everything into proper perspective.” It just couldn’t be true! Surely Schmeck was the last man to have to steal from him—Rudolf Müller, third-year student? Hadn’t he told Schmeck he was considering writing a series of essays to demonstrate “*The Sociology of Dress*,” taking as his first title: “*On the Sociology of the*

*Mackintosh*," and hadn't Schmeck enthusiastically agreed, congratulated him, and offered to supervise the whole series? And hadn't he read the first pages of his "*Sociology of the Mackintosh*" aloud to Schmeck in his study, sentences which today he had heard coming word for word from Schmeck's lips? Müller turned pale again, tore open his brief-case and rummaged through it: the soap container fell to the floor, then a book by Schmeck: *First Principles of Sociology*. Where was his manuscript? Was it a dream, a memory, or a hallucination, that he suddenly found himself looking at: Schmeck's smile as he stood in the doorway of his study, the white pages of manuscript in his hand. "Of course I'll be glad to have a look at your work!" Then the Easter vacation—first at home, then three weeks in London with a study group—and today Schmeck's lecture, "RUDIMENTS OF A SOCIOLOGY OF DRESS, PART ONE: *On the Sociology of the Mackintosh*..."

TRANSFER. He automatically got off, on again when his street-car arrived, gave a troubled sigh as the elderly conductress sitting on her throne recognised him. Would she make the same joke she had been making ever since she had seen his student's pass? She made the joke: "Well, well—if it isn't our gentleman of leisure, all through by 11.30—and now it's off to the gals, eh?" The passengers laughed. Müller blushed, made his way to the front, wished he could get out, run faster than the street-car and get home and into his room at last, so as to find out for sure. His diary would be proof—or would it help to have Marie as a witness? She had typed his paper for him, he remembered her suggesting she make a carbon copy, he could see her hand holding up the carbon paper, but he had waved it aside, pointing out that it was only a draft, an outline—and he could see Marie's hand putting the carbon paper back into the drawer and starting to type. "RUDOLF MÜLLER, *philosophy student*, 17 Buckwheat Street"—and while he was dictating the heading it struck him one could

also write a sociology of food: buckwheat flour, pancakes, roast beef—in the working-class district where he had grown up this was considered the pinnacle of epicurean delight, on a par in the scale of bliss with sexual pleasures—rice pudding, lentil soup; and before he had even begun dictating his essay to Marie he already had visions of following up the sociology of the mackintosh with a sociology of french fries. Ideas, ideas, all kinds, in fact—and he knew he had what it took to put these ideas into words.

THESE ENDLESS STREETS leading out of the city, Roman, Napoleonic—the house numbers were already in the 900s. Fragmented memories: Schmeck's voice—the sudden nausea on first hearing the word mackintosh—eight or nine minutes up there in the front row—the urge to vomit—then the thirty-third minute, Schmeck's handkerchief, his glance at the results of his noisy exertions—at long last the toilet—misty dampness in front of the university—the girls' faces, sensual, blurred—the coloured ribbons of the Catholic students like remnants of a dying rainbow; getting into the No. 12, transferring to the No. 18—the conductress' joke—and already the house numbers on Mainz Street were up to 980, 981. He pulled out one of the three cigarettes he had taken along in his breast pocket as his morning ration, groped for the match.

"Here, young fellow, give us a light too." He stood up, and with a wan smile walked to where the old conductress was squeezing herself down off her throne. He held the burning match to her cigarette butt, then lit his own cigarette, and was pleasantly surprised to find he felt no nausea. "Troubles, son?" He nodded, looked hard at her coarse, red-veined face, dreading the obscenity she might offer as consolation, but she merely nodded and said, "Thank you kindly," clasped his shoulder as the street-car swung into the terminus loop, got out ahead of him when the street-car stopped, and waddled along to the front car, where the driver was already unscrewing his Thermos flask.

HOW SMALL THESE GREY HOUSES were, how narrow the streets. A parked motor-cycle was enough to block them; thirty years ago the apostles of progress had not believed that cars would ever become a commonplace. Here visions of the future had become the present, and died; everything which would later claim to be progressive and advanced was regarded with hostility; all the streets were alike, from Acanthus Avenue to Zinnia Road, wintergreen and leek, monkshood (first rejected because it smacked of clericalism but later approved by the Board as being strictly botanical and free of any clericalist taint) and privet—"all growing things" were to be found here in street names; surrounded by a Marx Avenue, at the centre an Engels Square (Marx Street and Engels Street had already been appropriated by older working-class districts). The little church had been built later, when it was discovered that the declared atheists were all married to devout wives—when one day (by this time the devout mothers had their grown-up sons and daughters on their side) the polling district had to report more votes for the Catholic Centre Party than for the Socialist Party, when old socialists, crimson with embarrassment, drowned their sorrows in drink and went over in a body to the Communist Party. For years now the little church had been much too small, on Sundays it overflowed, and the model for the new one could be admired at the rectory. Very modern. Beyond Marx Avenue, the neighbouring parish of St. Boniface had donated land for the new church of St. Joseph, patron saint of the working class. Construction cranes were already reaching up triumphantly into the spring sky.

Müller tried to smile, but couldn't quite, when he thought of his father; it always seemed to him as if the aura of the 'twenties, that ardent spirit of atheism and enlightenment, still hung in the air here, as if the climate of free love were still present, and, although it was never heard now, he seemed to hear echoes in these streets of "*Brüder, zur Sonne, zur Freiheit*"; his smile miscarried. Rosemary Street, Tulip Street, Maple

Grove—and another street cycle, in alphabetical order: Acacia Way, Buckwheat Street at last—"all growing things." There was No. 17, now he could smile, as he caught sight of Marie's bicycle: it was propped up against the iron railing which Uncle Will had built around the garbage can, the none-too-clean, wobbly bicycle belonging to Baroness von Schlimm (younger branch). His desire to show affection even to the bicycle was manifested in a gentle kick against the back tyre. He opened the door, called "Hallo, Auntie," into the narrow passageway, which smelled of french fries, picked up the parcel lying on the bottom stair, and rushed upstairs. The staircase was so narrow that his elbow always brushed the reddish-brown Hessian wall-covering, and Aunt Kate claimed to be able to determine the vehemence and frequency of his ascents from the traces of wear—in the course of the three years a strip had been rubbed bare, to a shade resembling a bald head.

MARIE. He never failed to be moved by the intensity of his feelings for her, and each time (by now they had met more than three hundred times, he kept track, so to speak, in his diary), each time she seemed thinner than he remembered her. During the time they were together she seemed to fill out, when he thought of her afterwards he remembered her as full, and he was consistently surprised when he saw her again in her original, unaltered thinness. She had taken off her shoes and stockings and was lying on his bed, dark-haired and pale, with a pallor which he still could not help feeling was a sign of consumption.

"Please," she said gently, "don't kiss me, all morning I've been listening to dirty stories about various kinds of love. If you want to be nice, rub my feet." He threw down his briefcase and the parcel, knelt down by the bed and took her feet in his hands. "How sweet you are," she said, "I only hope you don't get a male nurse complex—with your kind one has to be so careful, and please," she said, lowering her voice, "let's stay here,

I'm too tired to go out to eat. Anyway, our social worker, who looks after employee relations, always regards my absence at lunchtime as anti-social."

"For God's sake," he said, "why don't you quit the whole ghastly business. Those swine."

"Which ones do you mean? My bosses or the other girls?"

"Your bosses," he said, "what you call dirty stories are the outward expression of the only pleasure those girls have; your bourgeois ears. . . ."

"I have feudal ears, in case my ears require a sociological epithet."

"Feudalism succumbed to the bourgeoisie, it married into industry, thereby becoming bourgeois. You are confusing what is accidental in you with what is typical. To attach so much importance to a name by regarding it as valueless as you regard yours is a form of late-bourgeois idealism. Isn't it enough for you that soon—before God and man, as your kind would put it—your name will be Marie Müller?"

"Your hands do feel nice," she said. "When will you be in a position to support a wife and children with them?"

"As soon as you take the trouble to work out how much we'll have to live on when we're married and you go on working."

She sat up and recited in a school-girl sing-song: "You get 243 a month, that's the highest category; as an assistant lecturer you earn 200, of which 125 is available because it's earned in conjunction with your university training: that makes 368—but your father earns 710 net, *i.e.*, 260 more than the free limit, which means that you, since you're an only child, have your income reduced by 130; in other words, you're working as an assistant lecturer for nothing—net balance: 238. As soon as we get married, half of what I earn above 300—*i.e.*, exactly 2 marks and 15 pfennigs—will be deducted, so that your total net income will amount to 235 marks and 85 pfennigs."

"Congratulations," he said, "so you really got down to it?"

"Yes," she said, "and the most important

thing I worked out is that you're working for precisely nothing for this Schmeck-swine. . . ."

He took his hands off her legs. "Schmeck-swine, what makes you say that?"

She looked up at him, swung her legs round, sat up on the edge of the bed, he pushed his slippers toward her. "What's Schmeck been up to? Something new? Tell me—never mind my feet now—go on, tell me, what's he been up to?"

"Can you wait a moment?" he said, picked up his brief-case and the parcel from the floor, took the two remaining cigarettes from his breast pocket, lit them both, gave one to Marie, threw briefcase and parcel down beside Marie on the bed, went over to the bookshelf and pulled out his diary, a fat exercise book standing between Kierkegaard and Kotzebue, sat down at Marie's feet beside the bed.

"Listen," he said. "Here. *December 13*. During a walk with Marie through the park, suddenly struck by the idea of a '*Sociology of the Mackintosh*.'"

"That's right," said Marie, "you told me about it at the time, remember my objections?"

"Sure." He turned some more pages. "Here. *January 2*. Began work on it. Outlines, ideas—also viewed material. Went to Meier's Menswear and tried to get a look at their customer list, but no luck. . . . It goes on—January February, daily entries about the progress of the work."

"Yes, of course," said Marie, "and at the end of February you dictated the first thirty pages to me."

"Yes, and here, this is what I was looking for: *March 1*. Went to see Schmeck, showed him the first pages of my draft, read parts of it out to him. Schmeck asked me to leave the manuscript with him so he could look through it. . . ."

"That's right, and the next day you went home to your parents."

"And then to England. Came back yesterday—and today was Schmeck's first lecture, and the audience was more interested, more enthralled, more ecstatic than ever, because



the subject was so new, so thrilling—at least for the audience. I'll let you guess what Schmeck's lecture was about. Try and guess, my dear Baroness."

"If you call me Baroness once more, I'll call you—no," she smiled, "don't worry, I won't call you that, even if you do call me Baroness. Would it hurt your feelings if I called you that?"

"If you call me that, no," he said gently, "you can call me what you like—but you have no idea how wonderful it is when they call out after you, whisper as you go by, when they write it after your name on the bulletin board—'Rudolf, Son of the Working Class.' I'm a freak, you see, I'm the great phenomenon, I'm one of those of whom there are only five in every hundred, only fifty in every thousand, and—the higher you go, the more fantastic the ratio—I'm one of those of whom there are only five thousand in every hundred thousand: I am really and truly the son of a working man who is studying at a West German university."

"At the East German universities I guess it's the other way round; ninety-five per cent are from working-class families."

"Over there I'd be something absurdly ordinary; here I'm the famous example in discussions, arguments, counter-arguments, a real live unadulterated Son of the Working Class—and talented too, very talented; but you've still not tried to guess what Schmeck was paying homage to today."

"Television perhaps."

Müller laughed. "No, the big snobs are now in *favour* of television."

"Not"—Marie stubbed out her cigarette in the ashtray Müller was holding—"not the sociology of the mackintosh?"

"What else," said Rudolf in a low voice, "what else?"

"No," said Marie, "he *can't* do that."

"But he has done it, and there were sentences in his lecture which I recognised and remembered how much fun I had had formulating them..."

"Too much fun, it seems..."

"Yes, I know—he quoted whole paragraphs."

He got up off the floor and began pacing up and down in the room. "You know how it is when you try to figure out whether you're quoting yourself or someone else—when you hear something you think you've heard or said before, and you try and figure out whether you said it before yourself, or whether you only thought it, whether you recognise it or read it—and you go crazy because your memory's not functioning properly."

"Yes," said Marie, "I always used to worry about whether or not I'd had anything to drink before Holy Communion. You think you've had a drink of water because so often, so many thousands of times, you have had a drink of water on an empty stomach—but actually you haven't had anything to drink..."

"And yet you can't come up with any convincing proof—that's where a diary is so important."

"You needn't have worried about this particular question: it's obvious that Schmeck's robbed you."

"And done me out of my thesis."

"Oh my God," said Marie—she stood up next to the bed, put her hand on Rudolf's shoulder, kissed his neck—"oh my God, you're right, that's true—he's cut the ground from under your feet—can't you sue him?"

Müller laughed. "Every university on the face of the earth, from Massachusetts to Göttingen to Lima, from Oxford to Nagasaki, will burst out in one united, crazy laugh when a person by the name of Rudolf Müller, Son of the Working Class, gets up and claims to have been robbed by Schmeck. Even the Warraus will join in the derisive laughter, for they know too that the wise white man Schmeck is omniscient in the ways of mankind—but—and this is what would happen if I sued him—if Schmeck got up and said he had been robbed by a person by the name of Müller, they would all nod their heads, even the Hottentots."

"He ought to be exterminated," said Marie.

"At last you're beginning to think in non-bourgeois terms."

"I don't understand how you can still laugh," said Marie.

"There's a very good reason for the fact that I can still laugh," said Müller. He went over to the bed, picked up the parcel, took it over to the table and began to undo the string. He patiently untied all the knots, so slowly that Marie jerked open the drawer, took out a penknife, and silently held it out to him.

"Exterminated, yes," said Müller, "that might be an idea—but not for anything in the world would I cut this string: that would be cutting right into my mother's heart—when she opens a parcel she carefully unties the string, rolls it up and puts it aside for future use—the next time she comes here she'll ask me about the string, and if I can't produce it she will predict the imminent end of the world."

Marie snapped the knife shut again, put it back in the drawer, leaned against Müller while he unwrapped the paper from his parcel and carefully folded it up. "You haven't told me yet why you can still laugh," she said, "after all, that was the vilest, filthiest, most disgusting trick that Schmeck could play on you—when you think how he wanted to make you his chief assistant and how he's prophesied a brilliant future for you."

"Well," said Müller, "do you really want to know why?"

She nodded, "Tell me," she said.

He put down the parcel, kissed her. "Damn it all," he murmured, "if it weren't for you I would have done something desperate."

"Do it anyway," she said quietly.

"What?"

"Do something desperate to him," said Marie, "I'll help you."

"What do you want me to do, really kill him?"

"Do something physical to him, not mental—half kill him."

"How?"

"Maybe beat him up—but let's have something to eat first. I'm hungry and I have to go off again in thirty-five minutes."

"I'm not so sure you will go off again."

He carefully folded up a second layer of paper, undid a piece of thinner string tied round the core of the parcel, a shoebox, removed the sheet of notepaper stuck between string and box-lid ("Every parcel should contain the address inside as well as out"), and at last, while Marie sighed, he took off the lid of the shoebox: salami, ham, cake, cigarettes, and a package of glutamate. Marie picked up the notepaper from the table and read out in a low voice: "*My dear boy*, I am glad you could make the long journey to England so cheaply. It is wonderful what they are doing these days at the universities. Tell us about London when you come home. Remember how proud we are of you. Now you are really working on your Ph.D. thesis—I just can't believe it. *Your loving Mother.*"

"They really are proud of me," said Müller.

"And they have every reason to be," said Marie. She put away the contents of the parcel in a little cupboard below the bookshelves, took out an opened package of tea. "I'll run down and make us some tea."

"IT'S FUNNY," said Marie, "but when I propped my bike up against the railing today at noon, I knew then that I wouldn't be going back after lunch to that plastics nightmare. One does have premonitions like that—once when I came home from school I threw my bike against the hedge just like I used to every day. It always sank half-way in, tipped over, the handle-bars would get caught in a branch and the front wheel would stick up in the air—and as I threw my bike in there I knew I wouldn't be going back to school next day, that I would never be going back to any school. It wasn't just that I was fed up with it—there was much more to it than that, I simply knew that it would be wicked for me to go to school for even one more day. Father couldn't get over it, you see it was exactly four weeks before my

graduation, but I said to him: 'Have you ever heard of the sin of gluttony?' 'Yes,' he said, 'I have, but you haven't been guilty of gluttony as far as school's concerned.' 'No,' I said, 'it's just an example—but when you swallow one more mouthful of coffee or one more piece of cake than at a given point you ought to drink or eat, isn't that gluttony?' 'It is,' he said, 'and I can imagine such a thing as spiritual gluttony, only'—but I interrupted him and said: 'There's not room for another thing in me, I already feel like a stuffed goose.' 'It's a pity,' said Father, 'that this has to happen to you four weeks before your graduation. 'It's such a useful thing to have.' 'Useful for what?' I asked, 'you mean university?' 'Yes,' he said, and I said: 'No, if I'm going to work in a factory, then it's going to be a real one'—and that's what I did. Does it hurt you when I tell you things like this?'

"Yes," said Müller, "it hurts very much to see someone throwing away something that for countless people is the object of all their dreams and aspirations. It's also possible to laugh about clothes, or to despise them, when one has them hanging in the closet or is in a position to buy them any time—it's possible to laugh about anything one has always taken for granted."

"But I didn't laugh about it, and I didn't despise it, and it's true that I preferred to work in a real factory rather than in a university."

"Oh I believe you," he said, "I do, just as I believe you're really a Catholic."

"By the way, I got a parcel from home yesterday too," said Marie. "Guess what was in it."

"Salami, ham, cake, cigarettes," said Müller, "and no glutamate—and needless to say you cut the string with scissors, screwed the paper up into a ball and..."

"Exactly," said Marie, "exactly, only you've forgotten something..."

"No I haven't," said Müller. "I haven't forgotten anything, you interrupted me, that's all—then you immediately bit into the salami, then the cake, and right after that you lit a cigarette."

"Come on, let's go to the movies, and then we'll half kill Schmeck, this evening."

"Today?" said Müller.

"Of course today," said Marie, "when ever you think something is right, you should do it at once—and a woman should fight at her man's side."

IT WAS DARK BY THE TIME they came out of the movie, and they found the bicycle parking attendant in a state of sullen resentment; Marie's ramshackle bicycle was the sole remaining one in his charge; an old man, his coat almost trailing on the ground rubbing his hands to warm them, walking up and down muttering curses under his breath.

"Give him a tip," whispered Marie. She remained nervously by the chain separating the parking lot from the square in front of the opera house.

"My principles forbid me to give tips except where they form part of the wages. It's an offence against human dignity."

"Perhaps you've got a mistaken idea of human dignity. Seven hundred years ago my ancestor, the first Schlimm, was given a whole barony as a tip."

"And maybe that's why you have so little sense of human dignity. Christ," he said, lowering his voice, "what do you give in a case like this?"

"Twenty or thirty pfennigs, I should think, or about the same in cigarettes. Go on, please, you go first, help your assistant. I'm so embarrassed."

Müller hesitantly approached the attendant, holding out the stub as if it were a pass he didn't quite trust, then, when the old man's furious face was turned toward him, quickly drew the cigarette pack from his pocket, saying: "Sorry, I'm afraid we're a bit late"—the old man took the whole pack, stuck it into his coat pocket, gestured in wordless contempt toward the bicycle and walked past Marie in the direction of the street-car stop.

"When you're in love with light-weight men," said Marie, "you have the advantage of being able to take them on the luggage



carrier." She rode in and out between waiting cars till they got to the front at the red light. "Look out, Müller," she said, "see you don't scratch their paint with your feet, they're very touchy about that, they worry about it more than if their wives get a scratch." And when the driver of the car waiting beside her rolled down his window, she said in a loud voice: "If I were you I would write a sociology of the various makes of cars. Driving is the training ground of one-upmanship—and the worst ones are the so-called gentlemen behind the wheel: their false democratic courtesy is positively nauseating; it is a hypocrisy *par excellence*, because it means they expect a medal for something that should be taken for granted."

"Right," said Müller, "and the worst thing about them is, they all think *they* look different from the others, while actually. . ."

The driver quickly wound up his window again.

"Yellow, Marie," he said.

Marie pushed off, going straight across in front of the cars to the right-hand lane, while Müller conscientiously stuck out his right arm.

"I see I've found a good assistant," he said, as they turned into a dark side street.

"Assistant," said Marie, over her shoulder, "is a weak translation of *adjutorium*—which contains much more: counsel, and some pleasure too. Where does he live?"

"Mommsen Street," said Müller, "No. 37."

"That's wonderful—he's stuck with a street name that must annoy him every time he reads it, says it, writes it—and I hope he has to do each of those things three times a day. I'm sure he hates a classicist like Mommsen."

"He hates him like poison."

"Serves him right that he has to live in Mommsen Street. What's the time?"

"Half-past seven."

"A quarter of an hour to go."

She turned into a still darker side street leading to the park, stopped, Müller jumped off and helped her to guide the bicycle through the barrier. They walked a few

yards along the dark path, stopped beside a bush, and Marie threw her bicycle against a shrub, it sank half-way in, got caught on a twig. "Almost like home," said Marie, "there's nothing like shrubbery for bikes."

Müller put his arms around her, kissed her neck, and Marie whispered:

"Don't you think I'm a bit too skinny for a woman?"

"Be quiet, assistant," he said.

"You're terribly scared," she said, "I didn't know one could actually feel a person's heart beating—tell me, are you scared?"

"Of course I am," he said, "it's my first assault—and I find it quite incredible that we're really standing here for the purpose of luring Schmeck into a trap, to beat him up. I just can't believe it."

"You see, you have faith in intellectual weapons, in progress and so on, and one has to pay for such mistakes; if there ever were such things as intellectual weapons—they're no use nowadays."

"Try and understand," he whispered, "the mental process: here I am. . ."

"You poor fellows, you must be schizophrenics. I do wish I wasn't so thin. I read somewhere that thin women aren't good for schizoids."

"Your hair actually smells of that filthy plastic, and your hands are quite rough."

"Yes," she whispered, "you see, I'm one of those girls you come across in modern novels. Heading: Baroness turns her back on her own class, decides she is really going to *live*. What's the time now?"

"Almost quarter to."

"He's bound to come soon. It's so satisfactory to be going to trap him in his own vanity. You ought to have heard his voice when he was talking to that radio reporter: 'Regularity, rhythm, that is my principle. A light meal—just a snack, actually, at 7.15—and some strong tea—and at a quarter to eight my evening walk through the park—you're sure you know what we're going to do?'"

"Yes," said Müller, "as soon as he comes round the corner you lay your bike down right across the path, and when I go *Tss*

Tss, you run and lie down beside it—he'll come running over to you."

"And you come up from behind, beat him up thoroughly, hard enough so he needs some time to come to, and we clear off..."

"That doesn't sound quite fair."

"Fair," she said, "that's just one of those mental images."

"And what if he calls for help? Or if he manages to get the upper hand? He weighs at least a hundred pounds more than I do! And, as I say, I don't like the sound of 'from behind.'"

"Of course, people like you always have your mental images. Fair election campaign, etc.—and obviously you always get defeated. Remember I'm coming to help you, that I'll hit him good and hard too—and if we have to we'll just abandon the bike."

"As a *corpus delicti*? It must be the only bike in town whose appearance is unmistakable."

"Your heart's beating stronger and stronger, faster and faster, you really must be dreadfully scared."

"Aren't you?"

"Sure I am," she said, "but I know we're in the right and that this is the only way of seeing some kind of justice done, considering the whole world's on his side, including the Hottentots."

"Christ," whispered Müller, "there he is now."

Marie jumped on to the path, snatched her bicycle from the bushes, laid it down in the middle of the damp path. Müller watched Schmeck walking along the lane, hatless, his coat open and flapping. "Damn," he whispered to Marie, "we forgot the dog, look at the creature, a German shepherd, almost as big as a calf." Marie was standing beside him again, looking over his shoulder toward Schmeck—"Solveig, Solveig," he called hoarsely, fending off the dog who was leaping joyously up at him; then he picked up a stone from the path and threw it toward the bushes, where it dropped scarcely ten yards from Müller.

"Damn," said Marie, "it's useless trying anything with that dog; he's vicious, and

trained to attack people—I can tell. We'll get complexes because we didn't do it after all—but it's quite useless." She walked over to the path, picked up her bicycle, nudged Müller and said softly: "Well come on, we have to leave, what's the matter?"

"Nothing," said Müller; he took Marie's arm, "I had just forgotten how much I loathe him."

Schmeck was standing under the street lamp stroking the dog, who had laid the stone at his feet. He looked up as the couple entered the circle of light, glanced one more at the dog, then suddenly up again, and walked toward Müller with outstretched hands. "Müller," he said warmly, "my dear Müller, fancy meeting you here"—but Müller succeeded in looking at and yet through Schmeck; mustn't meet Schmeck's eyes; if I meet them, he thought, I'm lost, I mustn't behave as if he isn't there—he is there, and I'll extinguish him with my eyes—one step, two, three—he felt Marie's firm grasp on his arm, he was panting as if after some enormous exertion.

"Müller," called Schmeck, "it is you—can't you take a joke?"

The rest was easy: just keep walking, fast and yet not too fast. . . . They heard Schmeck called again, *Müller*, first loud, then softer: *Müller, Müller, Müller*—and at last they had turned the corner.

Marie's deep sigh startled him; when he turned to her he saw she was crying. He took the bicycle from her, leaned it against a garden fence, wiped her tears away with his finger, put his free hand on her shoulder. "Marie," he said softly, "what's the matter?"

"You scare me," she said, "that wasn't an assault, that was murder. I'm scared he's going to wander around for all eternity in this wretched little park whispering *Müller, Müller, Müller*—it's like a nightmare: Schmeck's ghost with the dog, in the damp bushes, his beard growing, getting so long that it drags behind him like a frayed belt—and all the time he's whispering: *Müller, Müller, Müller*. Oughtn't I to see if he's all right?"

"No," said Müller, "no, don't, just leave

him alone, he's perfectly all right. If you feel sorry for him, give him a mackintosh for his birthday. You can't even begin to think what he's done to me. He turned me into the miracle Son of the Working Class, I was its *protégé*, as they call it, and no doubt he expects the mackintoshes as a form of tribute—but I'm not going to pay him this tribute, not if I can help it. Tomorrow morning he's going to say casually to Wegelot, his chief assistant, just as he's leaving the room: 'By the way, Müller's gone over into the reactionary camp after all, he's transferred to Livorno, he called me up yesterday saying he wanted to leave the seminar'—and then he'll close the door again, go over to Wegelot and say: 'Pity about Müller, very talented, but his draft thesis was simply terrible, quite hopeless. I suppose it's difficult for these people who have to fight not only the world around them but their own milieu as well. Pity'—then he'll bite his lip again and leave the room."

"Are you quite sure that's how it's going to be?"

"Quite sure," said Müller, "come on, let's go home. No tears for Schmeck, Marie."

"The tears weren't for Schmeck," said Marie.

"For me then?"

"Yes—you're so terribly brave."

"Now that really does sound like a modern novel. Are we going home?"

"Would you think it terrible if I said I would like one (in words, one) hot meal?"

"All right," Müller laughed, "let's ride to the nearest restaurant."

"We'd better walk. There are a lot of policemen around at this hour: the park, not

many lights, spring in the air—attempted rapes—and a summons would cost us as much as two bowls of soup."

Müller wheeled the bicycle. They walked slowly along the lane beside the park. As they stepped out of the light from the next street lamp they saw a policeman in deep shadow beyond the barrier leaning against a tree.

"You see," said Marie, loud enough for the policeman to hear, "we've already saved two marks for the summons, but as soon as we get out of sight you can hop up again."

When they had turned the next corner Marie got up on her bicycle, propping herself against the curb to let Müller get on. She pushed off quickly, leaned back and called out: "What do you want to do now?"

"How do you mean?"

"I mean, what d'you want to do."

"Now, or generally speaking?"

"Now *and* generally speaking."

"Now I'm going to have something to eat with you, and generally speaking I'm going to see Livorno tomorrow, register for his course, ask for an interview, and offer a suggestion for a thesis."

"On what?"

"*Critical Appreciation of the Collected Works of Schmeck.*"

Marie rode up to the curb, stopped, turned round in the saddle: "On what?"

"I just told you: *Critical Appreciation of the Collected Works of Schmeck.* I know them almost by heart—and hatred makes good ink."

"Doesn't love?"

"No," said Müller, "love makes the worst ink in the world. Ride on, assistant."

Translated by Leila Vennewitz

Arnold Beichman

# Letter from Columbia

## *The Progress of a Putsch*

*"A state never is, nor, until mankind are vastly improved, can hope to be, for any long time exempt from internal dissension; for there neither is nor has ever been any state of society in which collisions did not occur between the immediate interests and passions of powerful sections of the people. What, then, enables society to weather these storms, and pass through turbulent times without any permanent weakening of the ties which hold it together? Precisely this—that however important the interests about which men fall out, the conflict does not affect the fundamental principles of the system of social union which happens to exist; nor threaten large portions of the community with the subversion of that on which they have built their calculations, and with which their hopes and aims have become identified. But when the questioning of these fundamental principles is not an occasional disease, but the habitual condition of the body politic; and when all the violent animosities are called forth, which spring naturally from such a situation, the state is virtually in a position of civil war; and can never long remain free from it in act and fact..."*

JOHN STUART MILL, *Coleridge* (1840)

THE LEAST IMPORTANT question facing Columbia University this spring is whether or not another shutdown will take place; certainly a student attempt will be made to prevent the University from functioning, and thus to transform it into the "East Coast San Francisco State." Columbia's acting president has stated that he would not "allow" a major disruption but has declined to say in advance what he would do to prevent it. The most important question (and not merely for Columbia but for most of the large prestigious American universities) is what to do about the latest fact of American politics

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and culture: the rise of a cohesive radical student movement, unrelated to adult and traditional politics, as a *permanent* apparatus on the American campus.

What creates this cohesion is not some highly structured political philosophy or platform. Rather the cohesion comes from a mood, the self-validating premises of youth, a battery of marching slogans, and a life-style and culture exemplified in particular kinds of clothes, hair-do's, eye-glasses, music, and vocabulary which has altered psychological distances. Above all, this cohesion is strengthened by the certainty that whenever a university is transformed into a campus jungle there will always be one group of faculty members to support the "non-negotiable" student demands and another faculty group of benevolent neutralists, who will be seeking peace and fellowship and honourable compromise.

By now it should be obvious that the day-to-day and coast-to-coast presence and activity of revolutionary-minded, activist students is no longer a temporary affair. It should be further obvious, but it is not, that the objective of the radicalised students (and some faculty) is total change, total seizure, total paralysis, total alienation, total totality. And while some people seem to have problems about defining the ultimate aims of the proposed revolution, it would appear to be simply this: to overthrow existing democratic societies in the name of more democracy. Or in the words of Robespierre, one of the founding fathers of totalist democracy, "*Le gouvernement de la Révolution est le despotisme de la liberté contre la tyrannie...*" These radicalised students have decided that the university must be made the permanent base and concentration centre for an American revolution of "the Left."

As a result, negotiating "demands" with the Students for a Democratic Society has proved to be a pointless exercise except as it represents a struggle for the loyalties of the great middle of the 7 million college and university students now enrolled in U.S. educational institutions.