

whom he took to be hero and heroine, admiring, without awe, Shakespeare's cleverness in creating so hugely real an old man, so maddening, so injured, so inevitably broken and cracked. He did not see what Bill Potter, *anima naturaliter theologica*, automatically saw, the black and violent anti-theology of the play, not because he supposed it to be about redemption, but because he knew, at a point where he asked no questions, that the world was like that. *King Lear* was true. He noted down various phrases for sermons. Age is unnecessary. These are unsightly tricks. Return you to my sister. It was plainer to read, much plainer and more forceful than he remembered from School Certificate Shakespeare. He wished he could achieve such plainness. There was a kind of clerical slurring to what he said which he disliked, knowing that it set him wrongly apart, without knowing how to deal with it.

As he came to the end, he realised he had

learned something about pain. His body was strained and stiff. He felt stirred and apprehensive—something to do with the reading, more with Stephanie Potter. He remembered how she had cleared away, after the death of the cat, so fastidious and practical with her blood-stained hands, how she had rubbed and wrapped the kittens, had held the weeping child lightly against her own body, to comfort her. A ferociously sentimental old lady had said to him, that week, of her daughter's new baby, "Oh, I could *squeeze* 'im, I could just *squeeze* 'im." He recognised in himself the desire to squeeze Stephanie. While her father preached to him, he had imagined, with extraordinary clarity, that he might lean forward and take hold of her round, lazy ankle and grip, grip till the bones shifted. All through his reading, and after he turned out the red light and composed himself, bulky under the blankets, to sleep, this curiously precise image persisted in his mind.

## A Windblown Hat

Always time, there is enough of it:  
Running down the street after a bus  
A man loses his windblown hat.  
In the gardens that he passes the lawns sprout  
Insistent waves; weeds and nettles press.  
Always time, there is enough of it.

Across the road the library has shut  
But books are nagging in the crowded house:  
A man loses his windblown hat.

A printed form is found behind the pot;  
It hints at something vague but hazardous.  
Always time, there is enough of it.  
So many beginnings, cancel out the lot:  
The bin drinks down old papers, dead ideas  
And a man loses his windblown hat.

But in the end, you say, well I can wait;  
Something will replace the thing I miss.  
A man loses his windblown hat:  
Always time, there is enough of it.

George Szirtes

# Solzhenitsyn in Zurich

## An Interview



THROUGH THE WINDOW I can see two children's swings, one yellow, the other red. They hang 15 inches above the ground in the minuscule parsonage garden that surrounds the house where Solzhenitsyn and his family live. Beyond the derisory barrier enclosing this refuge, an indifferent Zurich twink-

les, red, orange and green in its blend of chill mist and dirty snow.

—Would you like some coffee?

On a low table, the author's wife marshals an array of Chekhovian snacks. We all pick up our little spoons and begin to stir. Solzhenitsyn, ensconced in a schoolroom chair of plain varnished wood, gently repels an assault by his three children.

"Go on", he tells the children, "leave us alone now . . ."

The interview is about to start. I try to recall some of the thousands of people whom Solzhenitsyn has wrested from the anonymity of the camps. All by himself he has rent the veil of secrecy and focused the spotlight of history on a vast universe, a continent from which no Columbus has ever returned till now.

The Soviet authorities can do no more to him. The four KGB agents who live only a few hundred yards from the house, where they can keep watch on the writer's comings and goings, have no power to dispel the incorporeal beings whom Solzhenitsyn has now invested with a kind of immortality. They all exist in 25 languages. Solzhenitsyn's work has so far been translated into German, English, French, Italian, Polish, Czech, Romanian, Slovene, Serbo-Croat, Hun-

garian, Hindu, Urdu and Bengali. A Chinese edition has just been published in Formosa, an Arabic edition is in preparation at Beirut, and so on. The first volume of *Gulag* has passed the million-and-a-half mark. Over ten million copies of the author's works have been sold within a dozen years, an unprecedented achievement in so short a time.

To its astonishment, the West discovered his genius, and, at one and the same time, the European dimension. Communists everywhere

ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN's new book, "*Lenin in Zurich*", his sequel to "*August 1914*", is a novel with annotations and careful bibliography. It is an attempt to present a new and perhaps truer Lenin. Here is not the Vladimir Ilyich of the "Little Lenin Library" and the Soviet hagiographers, or even the two-dimensional portraits of Western historical biographies. It is intended to be a psycho-portrait, adding imaginatively a third dimension of motivation, stream of consciousness, interior dialogue; and if some, in reading its centrepiece on the Lenin-Parvus relationship, will be reminded of incidents in other recent experiments in "historical fiction"—say, the grand meeting of J. P. Morgan and Henry Ford in E. L. Doctorow's "*Ragtime*" or the Lenin-Joyce-Tzara rendezvous in Tom Stoppard's play, "*Travesties*"—others may well find that Solzhenitsyn has succeeded in recreating a Lenin-in-the-round.

The scholars have accumulated the bare, hard facts about that most improbable of modern European revolutionaries, "Parvus" (Alexander Helphand, 1867-1923), and his mysterious and possibly decisive influence on the Bolshevik rising of October 1917. ENCOUNTER readers will recall the article by Joel Carmichael (March 1974), "German Money and Bolshevik Honour", which offered a documentary account and analysis.

Solzhenitsyn's novel, translated by H. T. Willetts, will shortly be published by The Bodley Head (London) and Farrar, Straus & Giroux (New York).

This interview was conducted by Georges Suffert, an editor of "*Le Point*" (Paris), with Solzhenitsyn in Zurich.