

'What's a man to do? Business first.'
'Quite true. Business first. I think I'll go on from here second-class. Thank God, I could travel first-class.

' . . . I beg pardon for interrupting, but — just a moment. I want to ask you something.'

'What?'

' . . . I'd like to know' — the train whistles now — 'What is your business?'

'My business? Ha! Ha! Well, I'm not peddling prayer books!'

I am already on the platform, and the man from Buenos Aires stands leaning out the vestibule, beaming on me with his smooth, self-satisfied countenance, a fragrant cigar between his teeth. As the train pulls away, the last words I hear him call back to me are, 'Ha! Ha! I don't peddle prayer books! I don't peddle prayer books!'

NIKOLAS GOGOL

BY PARIJANINE

FROM *L'Humanité*, April 4
(OFFICIAL SOCIALIST DAILY)

How intoxicating, how opulent, is a summer's day in Little Russia. How languishingly the hours burn when noon glows in its heat and silence, and when the azure sky, a measureless ocean, a dome voluptuously covering the earth, seems asleep, altogether drowned in its own softness, crushing all beauty into its aerial embraces! Not a cloud in the sky. In the fields, not the least sound. One might say all is dead save that, far above, in the depths of the firmament, a lark shrills, and his silvery songs come racing down the steps of the air to the amorous earth; or, oftener, it is the cry of a gull or the ringing tone of a quail hidden on the steppes. As idle and as thoughtless as men who stroll without purpose, the oak trees rise toward the vault of heaven. A dazzling column of sunlight illumines certain picturesque masses of the foliage, while others are surrounded with deep shadow like night. Or else, only the strong breeze makes them glow as if with plates of gold. Emeralds, topazes, ethereal forms of insects swarm over the herbs which the slender stalks of sunflowers overshadow. Great heaps of hay, golden

sheaves of wheat cover the field, and seem to wander in their wide expanse. Weighed down by the heaviness of the fruits, the great branches of the wild-cherry trees, of the plum trees, and the pear trees . . . the sky with its limpid mirror . . . the river bank from which the green shrubs rise proudly — what delight, what sweet languor in this summer's day in Little Russia. — *The Sorotchintsky Fair*.

WHEN he made his appearance in Petrograd in 1828, Gogol, a child of the South, as rich in hopes as in memories, ignored his true destiny.

It is a beautiful piece of marble, of which it is said, 'Shall it be a God, a table, or a basin?'

'It shall be a God,' cried the spirited South Russian. 'The God of humor, of irony, of good cheer — the God of living nature, the frank companion of the warm sunlight.'

You can see him, the son of a good family, greedy for success. You can see the features of this nineteen-year-old

youngster, sharp with the nose of the Gogol legend which pierces and dilates. That fleshy mouth, those clear eyes, the carefully brushed hair! That gleaming collar with high cravat, almost as dashing as a whole shawl would have been, that dandified frock coat, almost that of an impertinent person, 'the smoky color of Navarin with flame,' those smooth, soft pumps — such was his entrance into the world that was to be conquered.

St. Petersburg gave him a dull reception. In place of 'a radiant chamber facing toward the Neva,' ridiculous difficulties and, soon, misery beyond words kept him in a back court with walls and impenetrable mists. The man of destiny — he judged himself that — beat as a suppliant at the gates of salons and administrative offices. Under the cruel snow, he was compelled to wear his thin summer overcoat and while the frozen flakes whirled around him, he saw fall one by one his provincial illusions.

Oh, the simple joy of having a good coat in winter! Above all, the joy of not being the poverty-stricken wretch whom stupid people and prosperous people despise! Later, he was to tell those pleasures in that humble yet marvelous story of Akaki Akakievitch, who lived to know them, and who died from lacking them. This story of *The Coat*, finished abroad in 1840, marks the discovery of a literary genre and it marks, more than that, a great manifestation of the Russian soul — compassionate, never content, always in revolt.

A 'prominent man' asks: 'Who is he?'

'Your Excellency,' replies his lackey, 'he is some sort of petty official.'

'In that case, he can wait,' replies His Excellency.

But the little official, the innocent Akaki Akakievitch (a name made to

amuse 'clever people') was to die and return as a phantom to torment His Excellency.

Gogol, in his misery, had made a new discovery. The literary method of 1830, essentially romantic, is the study of national characteristics and customs. Gogol discovered Little Russia. He was to make what is to-day known as *littérature régionaliste*. Observe that it is a double discovery, for it reveals to him his own genius, his true vocation. He writes his delicious, facetious, idyllic, and satiric *Evenings at the Farm of Dikannka* and, to begin with, *The Sorotchintsky Fair*, of which I have already quoted the first page — the opening, it may be well to add. This *Fair* and the *Watch of Saint Jean*, and the *Night of May*, and *Stolen Documents* constituted his first volume (1831). Gogol, yesterday unknown, was greeted by Pushkin in all his glory, as his heir.

If the style of Pushkin makes one think of that of Voltaire, the style of Gogol presents analogies to that of Flaubert. It is a gigantic link between two contemporaries. There are not, I dare say, more than two impeccable prose stylists in all the finer Russian literature; and those two are certainly Pushkin and Gogol.

But the grand style is no more than an instrument by which a profound sensitiveness and strong thought immortalize themselves. Gogol after he became master of his art, wrote his comedy *The Inspector* and his novel, or, as he insisted, his poem, *Dead Souls*. The circumstances make it necessary in Russia for every writer of note to become a famous citizen. Gogol is going to live and die with the tragic evolution of his thought intimately associated with the religious, political, and social destinies of his country. He is going to make of himself an accuser and a prophet.

LABOR AND POLITICS IN ENGLAND

BY G. H. D. COLE

[The refusal of the British railway unions and transport unions to stand by their 'Triple Alliance' ally, the miners, in the coal strike, has caused a profound shock to organized labor in the United Kingdom. Mr. Cole is a well-known English student of labor questions, and a prolific writer upon guild socialism and labor topics.]

From *The Outlook*, May 2

(LONDON MODERATE CONSERVATIVE WEEKLY)

THE collapse of the Triple Alliance strike-threat was followed by a big revulsion of feeling in the Labor world. It was recognized that Labor's big gun had failed to go off at the critical moment; and this caused Trades Unionists to think more seriously than before about the basis of their organizations and the methods of working necessitated by the growing magnitude of the modern Trades-Union movement.

Great hopes had, indeed, been built in some quarters upon the apparently imposing strength of the Triple Alliance. But from the first there were many who discounted this apparent strength, and knew full well that the conditions which had from the first been regarded as necessary in order to make the Alliance an effective instrument of industrial action had never been fulfilled. The idea of the Alliance arose naturally in the minds of the leaders of the three groups concerned, as a result of their experience in the years before the war. They found, in 1911, that a succession of transport strikes repeatedly threw the miners out of employment, and they found in 1912, and in South Wales in 1911 also, that a mining strike produced a similar reaction upon railwaymen and transport workers. This being so, it was natural that the idea should arise in their minds of

forming a single body for coöperative action, embracing all three groups. If, it was urged, they could so arrange as to make their various agreements lapse at the same moment, they would be able to make one strike grow where three grew before, and very probably, with the added strength which united action would bring, to obviate the necessity for any strike at all. Thus, their central idea was that all three bodies should take action together, but that each should take action for the remedying of its own particular grievances. The idea was not primarily that when one body became involved in a dispute, the other bodies should call out their members in sympathy with it.

From the first, it was evident that there would be very great difficulties in realizing the conditions which were regarded as essential to ensure the success of the Triple Alliance. It is not easy to arrange that agreements in a number of different industries shall lapse simultaneously, or that disputes shall arise only at the moment chosen by those organizations. A dispute may be precipitated from the other side; and, in fact, the strikes which have taken place in all three industries, since the conclusion of the Alliance, have occurred, not at moments of the Unions' choosing but when a dispute has been