





Four Lithographs ADOLF DEHN

Left Above
Pomeranian Potato Diggers

Right Above
Loge

Left Below
Tango at Zellis

Right Below
Broadway Parade



The Ship

MARIA-TERESA LEON

THE police knew him and considered him an imbecile. "They think I'm stupid, but I spend the day distributing pamphlets." From early morning on he tried to make himself useful.

"Have you a mother?" they asked him.

"An aunt," he answered lightly.

His aunt was a housewife, a servant, like her nephew. They were revolutionaries.

Doors open and the children go out.

At eight-thirty, just before school, he mingled with them. He liked to go from corner to corner in the morning, with bundles of newspapers. He sold them without knowing how to read, while others studied—division of work. He ate dry bread, while the others unpacked their lunches at eleven o'clock. He stammered while the other children, mischievous and alive, spoke brilliant words like shining apples. But these children were bourgeois.

Before this, the children had walked by him, paying no attention to him, shoving him. Now, they stop to ask him the news. Things were different from the time when they knocked him around, and made fun of him. He no longer ran away from them, trembling with fear, to a straw mattress on the floor, to wait for his aunt to bring something to eat.

A political definition is a wonderful defense. Previously, it was painful for him to go out. Little things made him smile. Twenty-four families lived in this miserable hovel. If he didn't smile at the children, he got nothing. It was hard for him to sing while he chewed the sole of a rotted shoe. While his aunt called for money in the court-yards, Bartolo quivered with fear like a rat being chased.

Across the air-shaft a woman called: "You're putting on."

Putting on? The blood rose in his cheeks. The barber's wife spat slowly. "Get along, madame, with your little fellow . . . Don't you see that he's crying?" One time his aunt, excited from having been chased, threw him on his pallet.

He remembers clearly that it was the next day that he met the kid who sold packages of pins, safety-pins, address books, buttons. The kid was leaning against a wall, reading.

Bartolo asked him: "What are you doing?"

Without looking up, the child went on spelling out words. Little by little he read:

A slate,
Comrade,
For the worker's child,
Give him a slate.

Give him a piece of red chalk,
Give him a pen,
Give him an ink-well,
With ink of the same color—red
Comrade,
So that he can write an inscription.

What did he write, comrade?
"Lenin," answers the slate.

Bartolo had never heard anyone read aloud. The other child read badly, and was bothered because someone was listening to him. Letters are not nice things that can be touched like vines on walls. You have to serve an apprenticeship to be able to take them by surprise . . . From this work-shop, Bartolo learned the word: revolutionary.

Those who used to throw pebbles at his feet now respected him. This forced him into an act of bravery: he presented himself before the Youth Committee, with his stupid face covered with fear. But here they could use everybody. They gave him newspapers. He came home, after the daily misery, with hands full of bundles of papers. The aunt and the nephew sorted them and piled them in a corner. They watched out when anyone went by their room. As carefully as if their hands were wet they spread out a sheet on the table and the aunt deciphered the words.

She had almost forgotten how to read:

"Reaction raises itself against the working masses . . . 50,000 miners on strike . . . The Chinese Soviets win important victories. . . . The bourgeoisie, which exploits us, is preparing for war."

Words they could hardly fathom resounded in the room. They did not understand much of it, but they knew they were reading about themselves, about those who eat dry bread and wear clothes others have discarded.

The light flickered on the page. The child leaned on his aunt's hands. "Move away, let me see."

The slogans stood up like bayonets. Each one was an arm. The twenty-four families had gone to sleep long ago.

"Everything is tumbling. The ruling classes are falling, beaten by the crisis. Hunger marchers, unemployed workers, salaries cut to the bone, suicides—the harvest of capitalism is delirium. A single country is free from the plague of unemployment . . ."

"Aunt, read more clearly." They went on:

"A single country is free from the plague of unemployment. It covers one-sixth of the world. It is the country of the workers . . ."

Like an avalanche it dawned on them. It was the Soviet Union. They understood that. There were no masters there to give you dirty underwear to wash while they looked at you as if you were a stone. The aunt grew pale, broke out into sobs. She did not cry often, but now she cried because the Russian children skated joyously on the ice of a marvelous city where there were no rich and no poor.

"Is all this true?" "Yes, yes, aunt." They understood a great deal. They embraced from happiness. The aunt wore the same clothes to sleep in as she wore when she took in washing. She was damp, and dried out under the cover. She held a piece of gray embroidered

material on her breast. The child pressed himself against her. Sleep! The revolutionaries sleep well, certain that they will awake tomorrow morning.

Besides newspapers, Bartolo distributed illegal leaflets, pasted up stickers, threw stones at the cars of the police, and learned the "Internationale." Sometimes he was beaten up. Blood flowed from his nostrils while he thought of the country where the children play and skate on the ice of a city without police terror. He wanted to touch the political prisoners when they were released, he wanted to know the speakers he heard at meetings, he wanted to spread the latest news. Soon he would be a spring from which ideas of the Soviet would flow.

When he got to the entrance of the movie he didn't have a nickel to go in. The music had already begun and the loud-speaker filled the street. With him, other children, those who watch bull-fights, shouting, looked for cracks in the door. Some of them were selling candy, lines of police kept order. It was cold and all of them would rather have been inside, seeing this country. On the screen: the land covered with tractors, cream flowing from the electric churns, glorious apples, open faces laughing with joy at the miracle of being free. From the rotted house of poverty to the social hall, painted in white with a corner for books. Books! The sight of a radio made those in the balcony sob. Fertile soil, black, with waving wheat, without masters, belonging to all, bread, black and nourishing, for all who work.

Men, women, young men who go to the movies to see their fiancés, workers who have saved all week to see this picture, pack the hall, shoulder to shoulder. When the lights go on, the strongest turn away their heads as if this splendor were painful to them. As they come out Bartolo grabs many arms. "What happened in there?"

They were speaking about the Soviet boat which was in Spanish waters. Bartolo ran breathlessly home to his aunt. "They are coming. They are coming here in a boat!" Neither of them had ever seen the ocean.

All the newspapers said so. He asked thousands of questions of his comrades. Now, both of them were in the dark, dreaming. In the dark, things one has never seen are easier to see. They didn't know where the ocean was, but they decided the child would go to receive them. These were the Russian comrades. Their names were hard to remember. The sailors took him with them. His aunt was worried.

"Don't stop for anyone."

The child, just as in romantic novels, left