

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

at dawn. Calm, very calm, more alone than ever, his aunt said nothing.

A child who goes away towards his future, always goes towards important things. It used to be to chase lions, free princesses. His way today leads him towards the men of the country of revolution. Like the heroes of old, he fought against fear, the night, the rustling of leaves, sore feet, the police guarding the roads. All over the world, rivers flow into the oceans and lose themselves. Just so he gave himself into the hands of the comrades. He passed through many villages. What did the ideas of world revolution in the mind of a child mean to the inn-keepers? Many times he saw chickens go to roost and wake up. In the villages they pray in the evening and in the cities they dance for a rest from having done nothing. They go to theater, too. At nightfall they call out the names of the revolutionary

papers louder than the bourgeois papers. Bartolo had never known that a field of wheat lies next to olive orchards, and that between towns the land is empty. As he was a child of the city he did not know the names of the birds nor of the plants he stepped on. But he knew the electric advertisements which advertised the things he could never buy. He walked, eyes straight ahead, wide-open. Walking to the sea, he reached the sea. The street ended suddenly before an ocean of masts and smoke-stacks.

The peanut-vender assured him that it was the port which was so brilliantly lighted up that he could hardly see it.

"Where is the Russian boat?" he asked two or three people. How could they go about their business, if *they* were there? When he stopped, satisfied, his head trembled more than ever.

A child has crossed Spain, on foot, just for a boat. There was its smoke-stack. Men, leaning on their guns, looked at him. A rough hand grabbed him. "You can't pass here."

"I am going that way," he said, pointing simply towards a red flag.

Capitalist guns barred the way between the Spanish workers and the sailors who were unloading the ship.

The proletarian island was heating up its boilers.

He went away. How his feet hurt! A gray cloud of sea-gulls hid the port. He felt like an empty sack, worthless.

The ship got smaller and smaller on the horizon.

Bartolo stood on the shore, sobbing.

You, Russian comrades, you never knew it. This Spanish child crossed Spain to see your ship. Don't forget this child, comrades.

Stupefy and Conquer

MICHAEL PELL

THE WORLD has not as yet accorded sufficient recognition to Imperial Japan for certain of her contributions to modern military science. First, there is the matter of attacking a nation without the formality of declaring war. Some people credit Mussolini with this innovation, but it was employed by the Japanese in Manchuria in 1931, and long before that, in 1904, when Japanese cannon replaced the diplomat's pen in delivering the War Declaration to a surprised Czar.

Now the Japanese have made another improvement on time-honored imperialist method and military science. After costly and tedious efforts to bribe and alienate sections of the Manchurian population, after ruthless use of fire and sword, the Japanese Empire-builders found the old dictum of Divide and Rule no longer adequate. So they improved it to Divide, Stupefy and Rule. Other imperialists have long employed ideological means of stupefaction, but the Japanese have resorted to opium as a potent physical weapon of subjugation through stupefaction.

The opium-eater lacks the spirit to fight against foreign oppression. The dope deadens his interest in the affairs of his nation or class. All his desires center on procuring more and more of the drug: those who control the supplies can dictate the terms. If the victim is a scholar, he can be browbeaten into the role of reliable apologist for, let us say, the Manchukuo puppet regime. If a worker, he may be cowed into becoming a spy on his fellows. If a peasant, he can be prodded into favoring the North China "autonomous" regimes set up by Imperial Japan. If he is a warlord, or Buddhist priest, or Mongol prince, a generous gift of high-quality opium will render him quite amenable to the proposals of the apostles of the Mikado.

In 1932 the League of Nations sent the Lytton Commission to Manchuria. There, through V. K. Wellington Koo, Assessor, the Commission was presented with detailed official data on the Japanese narcotic activities. The information contained thirty-five pages of names and addresses of Japanese and their agents throughout China who had been caught smuggling, manufacturing and selling drugs. Moreover, the names of Japanese ships engaged were given, as well as a list of those Japanese diplomatic officials secretly participating in the dope traffic. The officials and the ships still continue to carry on the trade.

In January, 1935, the Prime Minister of Manchukuo, in a formal proclamation on the Opium Law, declared:

... the policy of the Government in regard to this question, is the strict prohibition of opium-smoking by the general public, permitting smoking only by the addicts and at the same time establishing special infirmaries to take care of the addicts.

Yet two months later a special correspondent of The London Times, after a trip through Manchuria, reported:

In point of fact, at present licensed opium dens are open to all comers, and no license of any sort is necessary to smoke in them. . . . There is nothing in the system as at present administered to prevent anyone, even a boy in his teens, from acquiring, with no trouble and little expense, a habit which is likely to ruin his life.

The New York Times evidently prefers to believe the Prime Minister of Manchukuo. In the rotogravure section, December 15, 1935, it prints a full page illustrating how well Chinese children fare in Manchukuo. The Times did not reprint photographs published two months earlier in The Chinese

Recorder (Shanghai), which give a quite different impression. One of those photos carries the caption:

Picture shows an addict sunning himself on a street corner in Mukden a few days before his death. Near this corner are nearly two hundred firms doing dope business under the protection of extra-territoriality. They barter for almost anything. Victims are urged to come up to their last gasp. When nothing is left except a bit of land, the victim barbers that away. Thus the land comes into the possession of the Japanese. When dead, and often when dying, the clothes are stolen from the bodies of the victims.

Other photographs show how a rope is tied around the wrists of gasping and lifeless addicts and their carcasses dragged off to the human dump heaps where they are left to rot. Some time ago, when the writer visited the Manchurian frontier town of Shanhai-kwan, he was told by residents how Chinese peasants who had become hopeless addicts bartered their daughters to Japanese agents. The girls were then sold to brothels and gambling dens where their duties besides the regular ones, include inducing customers to use drugs.

The apparatus set up by the Japanese military for their program of spreading the dope habit is carefully obscured. Police terror and censorship make accurate information difficult to obtain. Even Americans stationed in Manchuria are afraid to speak. Frank Rawlinson recently related in The Christian Century (Chicago) that a missionary replied to his request for information about the narcotic problem that it was not safe to answer his questions, since all letters are censored. The missionary, in the same letter, alluded to the arrest of several members of his hospital staff in Manchuria.

Notwithstanding Japanese efforts, certain