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"The Virtuous Republic, A Civic Conversation," Virginia Festival of the Book,
March 2006, with Mark McGarvie and Barbara Smith; Katherine McNamara,
moderator

"Race in America," Virginia Festival of the Book, March 2006, with Nick
Kotz and Cheryll Cashin; Faith Childs, moderator

from *Sono* : Ten Poems

Sarah Arvio

Traveling

I'd been ostracized, so I hid my head.
And what was the view from under the sand;
it was a view of the Interior,

it was an Interior Ostracism.
It might have been a desert or a beach.
What if I said the world was my ostrich,

when I'd hoped to say it was my oyster;
what special muscle did I like to eat?
And what oyster was my sovereign world?

Spin the globe to Africa or Austin . . .
Was I a gawker, was I a creeper,
was I a stiltman, was I a sleeper?

Was this my world; it might be the oyster's.
Having it all in the palm of the hand
or in the palm at the end of the mind.

This was traveling and seeing the world;
there were verbs: to oyster and to ostrich.
Sand of the desert and sand of the sea,

each had its beauty, each had its place.
And yes, sand in the meat of the oyster,
and yes, sand in the meat of my own mind.

I gathered around it and made my pearl,
as pure as something made of grit can be.
This was Australia or Austerlitz;

here was an extravagant *ostrakon*
with the shell as the sky and the blue-and-
pink stain as sunset and the rim, what else,

as heaven. And this: lie in the desert
a little longer. Or sleep on the beach.
Then leave your shells behind you in the sand.

Shadows

I saw some shadows moving on the wall
and heard a shuffle, as of wings or thoughts.
I rolled back the sheets and looked at the day,

a raw, blown day, white papers in the street.
Sheets were flapping in the sky of my mind,
I smelled the wet sheets, I tasted a day

in sheets hanging in the damp of a day.
White pages flapping: my life had been so new
when I didn't yet know how old it was.

I couldn't see the vistas on those sheets,
the dreamscapes sleeping deeply in those sheets;
I hadn't yet seen my shadow vita

or learned which host would trick me or treat me,
which of my hosts would give me something sweet,
some good counsel and a soft place to sleep,

or what was the name of my ghostwriter.
Who ghosted my life, whose dream would I ghost,
who wrote my name and date across these sheets,

and which sheets would be the wings of my thoughts,
and which would hold the words of my angels.
A host, and did I know I'd have a host;

no, a line of sheets is never a bed,
a gaggle of hosts is never a love,
a host is never as good as a home,

a ghost as good as a dog or a god.
But I had my heart, always had my heart
for god and a home as much as it hurt.

Thesaurus

Given a way would I be this; given
this thing would I be this. I never knew
how persons could be things, and yet we were

in the vast cosmic Thing; we were little
things. There were greater animations than
ourselves, and to them we were things. This was

a thought in the forest of—thesaurus
of—my nomenclature. How often had
I thought, am I alive or am I dead,

never knowing what either Thingness was.
These were the woods we were talking about,
these were the words we were talking about,

where the forest was always in the trees,
where what I saw was always what I was;
my words, some leaves, all bristling with my life,

animate and aimée, all that was all.
There was an aura, call it a halo,
call it the glow of the moment of grace;

there was something oracular and old,
there was the show and glow, there was hello,
there was yes, no, there was congenial

and genial and joy. There was genius,
a genie in the bottle, breath in the lungs,
there was more than just being as I was:

wind in the woods, a forest in my mind,
the mind of my life found in the forest,
the Thing being named my thing, as it was.

Grace

Somewhere over in the platonic place
where I was enshrined in my high ideal,
was there a pure depiction of myself

written in water or else on the wall,
a plural entity named for my grief
or named for my excursions into joy,

some Cerberus or trio of Graces
gracing my life with a howl or a dance,
some triangle of me, myself and I,

an altar to an alternating self
alone, alert beside the aqueduct—
an allusion to the trope of Sarah,

aleatory emblem of my all
as wind spit rain through the ancient arches
and cloud faces gleamed in the dark-lit sky.

There was now and then, there was yes and no,
there was gracious and there was also grave,
but was there a place for my gravity,

where the wall and the wind were in myself,
or a continuum of my own self,
graceful Cerberus, cerberean Grace

gravitating toward the heart of a want,
a place to create what I longed to be
—or the planet versus Platonism—

all the faces of my envisaged self,
engraved with weather, my wish and my will,
gravid with “luminous intensity.”

Grief

So, was there something grand in all this grief,
some grand canyon or great cathedral vault,
some grand arcades and avenues and walls,

ringing with echoes, hello and goodbye,
the hoofs of centaurs and centurions.
The little griefs were the gauge of our lives,

the glass of water waiting to be drunk,
the stick of wood wanting to be knocked,
a sliver of glass, a splinter of wood.

Luck, luck, it was always the same lament,
what I never got and what I gave,
what I never gave and what I got.

I had always wanted to grace myself
with a garden growing before my eyes,
a riot of grandeur and abandon.

If you want a big thing, oh take a grave,
if you want a grand thing, oh take a life,
try out a garden, try out a grave.

Ha-ha ha-ha, there was the big guffaw,
a hundred halos and a hundred hells,
a great load of guff and a lot of gall;

there was Dada, there was Dionysus,
daimon, duende, a darling or a dog,
god and love, or a horse or a hope;

there we were, gaga at all forms of god,
there was godliness and there was a dog,
yippling at my heels, yippee oh yippee.

Hope

I said this: would you give me back my hope
if I suffered hard enough, if I tried.

That hip-swinging hallelujah of hope,

that hip-hip-hooray we were talking about,
raying outward from the hip or the heart,
holistic, holy—those were all high things—

hyper-radical and hyper-real,
that gospel of helix and radiance.
Hail me, hail me, here I am alive,

falling from the lips of the lioness,
lambent and loved, gamboling like a lamb,
having gambled all my griefs and lost them.

Game of the gods, gamine of the cards,
inhaler of hashish and helium.
Here was the hub of the halo again,

the hub or nub of the halo or heart,
and the trope of turning to say hello;
we always said it “helio-hello.”

Hello to the little girl and lambkin,
garrulous, hilarious, all grown up,
nibbling on nothing and feeling okay,

and sweetly holding hands with the harpist,
turning toward the sun, turning toward the sound
—my warp of the world, my harp of the heart—

sounding like myself, as I always sound,
snappy and stylish and too sonorous,
a little savage and a little sweet.

Veronica (Vera Icon)

I was walking on Via Veneto.
Va-va-voom! he said, and I laughed out loud:
it was all in the verve of the gesture.

I was a green-eyed blonde, I was a girl.
Vainglory! Will you give me some of it,
garrulous, god-struck, full of vinegar.

This might have been a visionary stance,
a revision of Isis and Venus,
reversion to a vision of grandeur,

or desire in a raw and vital state,
another variant of verismo
and as vivid as a green valentine.

Viva! Some green blood running in my veins,
te quiero verde (I want you green),
which didn't mean I want you virtuous

if virtue meant veiling your truer thoughts.
Or maybe virtue was Veronica,
an adventure in the vernacular,

passing her handkerchief, tossing her cape.
One was a swinger, one was a saint,
one was devoid of all vanity and

one was standing in the path of the bull:
it was all in the quest for victory.
There was vanitas, there was veritas,

I hoped I had both guts and godliness.
Some of us had more and some had less—
this was the true truth we were green about.

Trauma

I was trammeled, I thought, by tragedy,
oh what, something long ago, some travail
of my soul or my body, or of both.

The “little tragedies of daily life”
tremoring through me—tremor wasn’t a verb,
tra-la-la wasn’t either, or trial,

though they trailed through my life, didn’t they,
a tracery of tears, a track of woes.
Woes, woes, ten little fingers and toes,

decades of them, this deed, that distortion,
a tort against the treasured harmony.
A twist or a twirl, a tic, a tic-tac-toe,

thrumming on the synapses, drumming out
a threnody of threats and tears, a thought-
torture, love, love, a tiny tortured heart.

My heart, my own little tap-tapping heart,
my tapped-out heart, their testament to me,
a test of wills, or a test of my will,

my willingness, my wish to weather on.
Oh waves, waves, all the ripples and rhythms,
the rituals of walking and reaching,

the verbiage, the verb-thoughts, try this, try that;
the rites of therapy and talking trash,
the tapestry of tears, the truth-trapeze.

But did I want the truth? Try me, I said.
This is, this was, this should never have been;
reason, thought-treason and some truisms.

Sistine

I was moving from crisis to crisis
all through my life, with a few calm days
between them like a caress or a charm

descending unexpected from above.
Up there, god's hand was pointing toward Adam
when it could be turning toward the Sybil.

Who cared for love when there was wisdom?
All that stuff in my satchel full of scrolls—
a chrysanthemum or a chrysalid,

for crying out loud, wasn't that enough.
Crystallizing the future as an eye,
lifting up the future as an eyelid,

always gazing with a critical eye.
But how sad not to have loved the Sun God
when he might have given me all I wished.

What was so bad about a night of sex?
Here I was, hanging shriveled in my cage,
saying I want to die—want to be dead.

Oh cry sister—or else just suck it up—
or spend some time with Savonarola.
Maybe it was just those sulfuric fumes

rising from deep in the Stygian swamp
that caused my sad moment of misjudgment.
When all the while a mere stanza or two

might have saved the day, saying I love you
—eternities ago—or maybe not.
Or was there still time for some kiss-and-tell,

or some scissoring schism of the heart.
Come down to Cumae and open my cage.
Sad! I had forever but not a kiss.

Song

I said I couldn't love and it was true,
not a ploy, or coy. I couldn't love or
sing. Not canti or canzoni or chants

or airs—not—I could do sex but not
without love, and I couldn't love so I
couldn't do sex. Oy, oy, as the Jews say,

no love and no song, that means no joy.
Happiness, you once said, is not a goal,
it's a happenstance. It happens to some

and not to others. It may have happened
sometime to Mina Loy, or to Myrna,
or to Terry Malloy, but not to me.

Life without love is life without love, as
dry as a stick; it's sick, though saying so,
my love, is cloying. It's not worth a stick.

La, la, I sometimes almost broke into
song—a broken song, could you call it that?
We were drinking rob roys! Those were the nights.

I had inner singing and inner love
but not for me, not for you, I had love
for a boy I once knew but not for you,

never a loyal and unalloyed joy.
This was my stance, and maybe my stanza,
and this was the substance of my romance.

I never could love, now I was oily,
ogling their pants, their hearts, and their hairlines.
Oh how annoying, a blonde with no beau,

an old girl with no toy and no ally.
Oh boy, boy, I know I broke your heart
with my broken song. I know I was wrong.

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The Next Six Months

Mat Snapp

They were wondering things, and sitting with their feet up. They were young that summer. Old enough to have moved far away from everything they knew, old enough to have credit cards; young enough to drink ambivalently on weeknights. Three young people with names but no addresses, sun-kissed and grinning, miles from responsibility, hours outside of any obligation. All three of them one month past college and wondering things, sitting with their feet up.

Some of it they wondered out loud.

“What do you think about the water, how much of it is there? *Really?*” Alexander asked.

“I think there’s a lot of it, a whole lot.” Veronica nodded and watched the ocean, lapping against itself, against the sand, against the stone patio where they sat, watching the horizon wrap itself around them.

“Are you looking for a number in gallons?” Martina asked.

“Any usable comparison will do, I suppose,” he said.

“I think there’s a lot of it, a whole lot,” Veronica said again, smiling with her sunglasses crooked, her eyebrows raised.

“I think you’re right,” Martina said.

“And the sun, is it going to do this *every* night?” Alexander motioned to it like something hiding in a corner. It had slipped while they were sitting, falling out of the sky and behind the island of Lanai. For a moment, a bright one that they sat through with sunglasses, it looked perched on top of that floating green hill; perched like a round white cookie in the middle of a mint sundae.

“It must,” Martina said. She’d finished her cocktail and cracked the ice in her molars.

The ice was blue like the water over the reef, tainted that way from silly sugary sweet blue alcohol that made tourists wiggle. She'd taken the pink orchid from the rim of the glass and placed it behind her ear, the shiny black of her hair pulling the flower's color out like lipstick in the dark.

Hers was a wild search for things to make her parents question her sense of good judgement, a rebellious shred of youth she wasn't willing to surrender quite yet. Moving to an island instead of law clerking was one of these instances. In saying her goodbyes the night before her flight, Martina and a young man she enjoyed kissing drank too much red wine and skipped the intensely organized packing session she'd planned in order to listen to Chet Baker and make slow, sad love on her living room floor.

For this reason and others including the alarm clock being neglected, Martina arrived on her new island home with a headache, three swimsuits, eight pairs of socks, a handful of t-shirts and jeans, one pair of sunglasses and two copies of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*.

"No," Alexander said. "I mean, the earth is spinning and moving all the time. This we know."

"It most certainly is," Veronica pushed her sunglasses up to her forehead and rubbed salt from her eyes. Her eyes were green, like old five dollar bills, an odd color for someone with hair that light. The three had been in the water earlier because that's what one does when they are young and have a new body of water to splash about in. Salt from the water felt native like a thin coat of varnish.

"Spinning right now as a matter of fact," Martina added.

"Okay, and if we're spinning and moving still, which we've established, will the sun end up setting into the water south of Lanai in, I don't know, four months? Or does it just dive right there behind the island in the same place every night?" Alexander wore no shirt because it was finally legal and acceptable to do this. The tops of his shoulders and feet were pink like Easter. His hair, a shaggy brown mess, held sand at its roots - a perpetual fact of beach life he was excited to entertain.

"I can't think in three dimensions," Veronica said.

"I'd need a pencil," Martina said. "Or two tomatoes, my dad taught me the solar system with tomatoes."

"Tennis balls for me, and it was my science teacher, Mr. Canduce," Veronica said.

"Canduce, that's a hell of a name," Alexander said.

"He was a good teacher, used to bring raw oysters for lunch though, and that grossed me out. You don't show seventh graders how to eat oysters, especially not in Catholic school," Veronica said. She re-crossed her legs on the railing next to the table. All their other friends had called her Ronnie for short. Alexander called her Vee. She played volleyball through college and had shoulders that pop and legs that just didn't seem to end. They're so long, she often said to boys when she'd had too much to drink, that it takes two people to shave them.

Martina and Alexander laughed, thinking about seventh grade. He had played basketball in seventh grade because everyone was allowed to make the team. He'd scored ten points all season.

In college Alexander studied accounting and finance, but didn't major in it. He majored in hotel management instead, largely because a girl in his hall freshman year was too pretty to talk to. He took all the same classes with her, and finally they had a conversation about something other than the food and beverage program or finding the right contractors to maintain the grounds. The conversation went like this:

"I hate hotels, everything about them," she said. Her name was Amanda Reynolds. Amanda hated hotels.

"Why are you trying to manage them then?"

"I didn't know what else to study," she said.

"Ah."

Amanda Reynolds. The most gorgeous person he'd ever had a conversation with. And that's all she had been.

"You know what I'm thinking?" Martina said.

"I have no way of knowing that," Alexander said.

Veronica had been tracing circles on the wood grain of the table with her finger, moving the condensation from her drink round and round. The darker black of the night sky had begun creeping over their umbrella and would soon take the light from the clouds. An attractive employee of the waterfront restaurant, wearing plain white shoes, her legs tanned

like bottles of cocoa butter, lit tiki torches to the excitement of all who sat nearby.

"I'm thinking it will set in a different place later in the year. I hope it sets in the water eventually, I like it when the sun sets in the water," Martina said.

"We could just go down to Kihei and watch it set in the water, couldn't we?" Veronica said.

"We could, it wouldn't be the same, we don't *live* in Kihei. You have to watch the sun set where you live or it's not the same. It's just a postcard if you go somewhere else," she said.

"I'll bet you it sets farther north," Alexander said.

"How do you figure?" Martina pulled her feet from the railing and tilted her head to the side as if looking at the sun angled would give her insight to its eventual path. Her flip flops were covered in sand and would be for the next six months. She'd cut her big toe on the coral during the splashing, and had purposely gone without a band-aid.

"I'm not figuring anything, I'm just guessing, like you," he said.

"Okay, it's a bet," Martina put her feet back on the railing, cracked another cube of blue ice in her teeth.

"How will we know who wins?" Alexander said.

"We'll just have to keep an eye on the sunset. Watch it every night if we have to. See where she goes," Martina said.

"I can do that," Veronica said.

"I wonder what it looks like underwater," Alexander said. "When the sun sets into the water, I wonder what it looks like."

"Bright, I think, like a light bulb," Martina said.

"I can't think underwater," Veronica said.

THE PENTAGON PAPERS

The Senator Gravel Edition

*The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking
on Vietnam*

Introduction

Senator Mike Gravel

These are agonizing times for America. This nation has been torn apart by a war that has seared its conscience. We have spent lives and wealth without limit in pursuit of an unworthy goal, preserving our own power and prestige while laying waste the unfortunate lands of Southeast Asia.

For twenty years this nation has been at war in Indochina. Tens of thousands of Americans have been killed, half a million have been wounded, a million Asians have died, and millions more have been maimed or have become refugees in their own land. Meanwhile, the greatest representative democracy the world has even seen, the nation of Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln, has had its nose rubbed in the swamp by petty war lords, jealous generals, black marketeers, and grand-scale dope pushers.

And the war still goes on. People are still dying, arms and legs are being severed, metal is crashing through human bodies, as a direct result of policy decisions conceived in secret and still kept from the American people.

H. G. Wells, the English novelist and historian, once wrote:

The true strength of rulers and empires lies not in armies or emotions, but in the belief of men that they are inflexibly open and truthful and legal. As soon as

a government departs from that standard, it ceases to be anything more than “the gang in possession,” and its days are numbered.

This is nowhere more true than in the conduct of a representative democracy. Free and informed public debate is the source of our strength. Remove it and our democratic institutions become a sham. Perceiving this, our forefathers included with our Constitution a Bill of Rights guaranteeing the maximum competition in the marketplace of ideas, and insuring the widest opportunity for the active and full participation of an enlightened electorate.

The American people have never agreed that the performance of their elected officials should be immune from public discussion and review. They have never failed to support their government and its policies, once they were convinced of the rightness of those policies. But they should not be expected to offer their support merely on the word of a President and his close advisors. To adopt that position, as many do today, is to demonstrate a basic mistrust in the collective wisdom of the people and a frightening lack of confidence in our form of government.

Our nation was founded at the town meeting, where all citizens had a voice in the decisions of government. Support for policies was insured, for they were made by the people affected. But, with the passage of time, the center of decisionmaking has escaped the people, and has even moved beyond their representatives in the Congress. With its array of specialists, its technology, and its ability to define state secrets, the Executive has assumed unprecedented power of national decision. The widespread and uncontrolled abuse of secrecy has especially fostered distrust and created division between the government and its people.

We now find policies on the most fundamental of issues, war and peace, adopted without the support or understanding of the people affected by them. As a result of these practices, especially with respect to our involvement in Southeast Asia, our youth has virtually abandoned hope in the ability of their government to represent them, much less to stand for the ideals for which the Republic once stood. The trust between leaders and their people, without which a democracy cannot function, has been dangerously eroded, and we all fear the result.

For it is the leaders who have been found lacking, not the people. It is the leaders who have systematically misled, misunderstood, and, most of all, ignored the people in pur-

suit of a reckless foreign policy which the people never sanctioned. Separated from the public by a wall of secrecy and by their own desires for power, they failed to heed the voice of the people, who saw instinctively that America's vital interests were not involved in Southeast Asia. Nor could they bring themselves to recognize the knowledge and insight of that large number of private citizens who foresaw the eventual failure of their plans. As we now know, they were able even to ignore the frequently accurate forecasts of the government's own intelligence analysts.

The barriers of secrecy have allowed the national security apparatus to evolve a rigid orthodoxy which excludes those who question the accepted dogma. The result has been a failure to re-examine the postulates underlying our policy, or to give serious attention to alternatives which might avoid the kinds of disastrous choices that have been made in the past decade.

Nothing in recent history has so served to illuminate the damaging effects of secrecy as has the release of the Pentagon Papers, the Defense Department's history of American decisionmaking on Vietnam. This study is a remarkable work, commissioned by the men who were responsible for our Vietnam planning but who, by 1967, had come to see that our policy was bankrupt. The study was thus a unique attempt, by the Administration that had developed the policy, to look at its foundations and to see what had gone wrong.

A special task force was assembled, composed of outside experts and civilian and military analysts from within the Defense Department. They were given access to all the documentary evidence available to the Pentagon. The result was the most complete study yet performed of the policymaking process that led to our deepening involvement in Vietnam, and the most revealing insight we have had into the functioning of our government's national security apparatus.

We were told that we had to make sacrifices to preserve freedom and liberty in Southeast Asia. We were told that South Vietnam was the victim of aggression, and it was our duty to punish aggression at its source. We were told that we had to fight on the continent of Asia so that we would not have to battle on the shores of America. One can accept these arguments only if he has failed to read the Pentagon Papers.

However, the public has not had access to this study. Newspapers in possession of the documents have published excerpts from them and have prepared their own summary of the study's findings. In doing this, they have performed a valuable public service. But every

American is entitled to examine the study in full and to digest for himself the lessons it contains. The people must know the full story of their government's actions over the past twenty years, to ensure that never again will this great nation be led into waging a war through ignorance and deception.

It is for this reason that I determined, when I came into possession of this material, that it must be made available to the American public. For the tragic history it reveals must now be known. The terrible truth is that the Papers do not support our public statements. The Papers do not support our good intentions. The Papers prove that, from the beginning, the war has been an American war, serving only to perpetuate American military power in Asia. Peace has never been on the American agenda for Southeast Asia. Neither we nor the South Vietnamese have been masters of our Southeast Asian policy; we have been its victims, as the leaders of America sought to preserve their reputation for toughness and determination.

No one who reads this study can fail to conclude that, had the true facts been made known earlier, the war would long ago have ended, and the needless deaths of hundreds of thousands of Americans and Vietnamese would have been averted. This is the great lesson of the Pentagon Papers. No greater argument against unchecked secrecy in government can be found in the annals of American history.

The Pentagon Papers tell of the purposeful withholding and distortion of facts. There are no military secrets to be found here, only an appalling litany of faulty premises and questionable objectives, built one upon the other over the course of four administrations, and perpetuated today by a fifth administration.

The Pentagon Papers show that we have created, in the last quarter century, a new culture, a national security culture, protected from the influences of American life by the shield of secrecy. As *New York Times* reporter Neil Sheehan has written, "To read the Pentagon Papers in their vast detail is to step through the looking glass into a new and different world. This world has a set of values, a dynamic, a language, and a perspective quite distinct from the public world of the ordinary citizen and of the other two branches of the republic, Congress and the judiciary."

The Pentagon Papers reveal the inner workings of a government bureaucracy set up to defend this country, but now out of control, managing an international empire by garrisoning American troops around the world. It created an artificial client state in South Viet-

nam, lamented its unpopularity among its own people, eventually encouraged the overthrow of that government, and then supported a series of military dictators who served their own ends, and at times our government's ends, but never the cause of their own people.

The Pentagon Papers show that our leaders never understood the human commitments which underlay the nationalist movement in Vietnam, or the degree to which the Vietnamese were willing to sacrifice in what they considered to be a century-long struggle to eliminate colonialism from their land. Like the empires that have gone before us, our government has viewed as legitimate only those regimes which it had established, regardless of the views of those governed. It has viewed the Viet Minh and their successors, the Viet Cong, as insurgents rebelling against a legitimate government, failing to see that their success demonstrated the people's disaffection from the regime we supported. Our leaders lived in an isolated, dehumanized world of "surgical air strikes" and "Viet Cong infrastructure," when the reality was the maiming of women and children and the rise of a popular movement.

The Papers show that there was no concern in the decisionmaking process for the impact of our actions upon the Vietnamese people. American objectives were always to preserve the power and prestige of this country. In the light of the devastation we have brought to that unhappy land, it is hard to believe that any consideration was given to the costs of our policies that would be borne by the very people we claimed to be helping.

But the American people too were treated with contempt. The Pentagon Papers show that the public statements of optimism, used to sustain public support for an increasingly unpopular policy, were contrary to the intelligence estimates being given our leaders at the time. While we were led to believe that just a few more soldiers or a few more bombing runs would turn the tide, the estimates were quite clear in warning that escalation would bring no significant change in the war.

The Pentagon Papers show that the enemy knew what we were not permitted to know. Our leaders sought to keep their plans from the American people, even as they telegraphed their intentions to the enemy, as part of a deliberate strategy to cause him to back down. The elaborate secrecy precautions, the carefully contrived subterfuges, the precisely orchestrated press leaks, were intended not to deceive "the other side," but to keep the American public in the dark. Both we and the enemy were viewed as "audiences" before whom various postures of determination, conciliation, inflexibility, and strength were por-

trayed. The American public, which once thought of itself as a central participant in the democratic process, found itself reduced to the status of an interested, but passive, observer.

The people do not want, nor should they any longer be subjected to, the paternalistic protection of an Executive which believes that it alone has the right answers. For too long both the people and Congress have been denied access to the needed data with which they can judge national policy. For too long they have been spoon-fed information designed to sustain predetermined decisions and denied information which questioned those decisions. For too long they have been forced to subsist on a diet of half-truths or deliberate deceit, by executives who consider the people and the Congress as adversaries.

But now there is a great awakening in our land. There is a yearning for peace, and a realization that we need never have gone to war. There is a yearning for a more free and open society, and the emerging recognition of repression of people's lives, of their right to know, and of their right to determine their nation's future. And there is a yearning for the kind of mutual trust between those who govern and those who are governed that has been so lacking in the past.

If ever there was a time for change, it is now. It is in this spirit that I hope the past, as revealed in the Pentagon Papers, will help us make a new beginning, toward that better America which we all seek.

Mike Gravel
U.S. Senator
Washington, D.C.
August 1971

Preface to the Gravel Edition

The text of this book consists of public documents drawn from the official record of the Senate Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Grounds.

Early in June 1971, the *New York Times*, and then other newspapers, began printing reports on, and excerpts from, a lengthy Defense Department study of American decision-making on Vietnam. Shortly thereafter, the Justice Department succeeded in obtaining in-

junctions halting further publication of these stories. On the evening of June 29, 1971, while there was still doubt as to whether the newspapers would be permitted to continue publishing their stories, United States Senator Mike Gravel of Alaska attempted to read a collection of the Pentagon Papers in his possession on the floor of the Senate. However, his effort was frustrated by a parliamentary maneuver which prevented him from gaining access to the Senate floor.

As Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Grounds, Senator Gravel immediately convened a hearing, to receive testimony from Congressman John Dow of New York on the war-related lack of funds to meet our nation's needs for public buildings. As his opening remarks, and during the course of the evening, Senator Gravel read part of the Pentagon Papers into the record. The remaining portions of the Papers were incorporated into the record of the subcommittee and then were released to the press.

The material from the Pentagon Papers that was entered into the record, and is reprinted here, consisted of about 2900 pages of narrative, 1000 pages of appended documents, and a 200-page collection of public statements by government officials justifying U.S. involvement in Vietnam. According to information reported in the press, the Defense Department study included in total a narrative of about 3000 pages and documents amounting to about 4000 pages.

The material presented here includes a full history of U.S. decisionmaking on Vietnam from the early 1940s through March of 1968. Even though the documents included with the narrative were only a portion of those appended to the original study, they were of sufficient interest and importance to warrant inclusion in these volumes. (There are extensive quotations within the narrative from many of the other documents included with the original study.) In its published account of the study, the *New York Times* included a number of documents which did not appear in the subcommittee record. These have been reprinted here also, in proper chronological sequence, and their source is indicated. The collection of public statements was drawn from the U.S. Department of State Bulletins and the Public Papers of the Presidents, and was prepared in the form shown here by the Defense Department task force which performed the study.

The preparation of the subcommittee record was performed under the direction of Senator Gravel. The chapter sequence was arranged to provide a convenient, nearly chronological four-volume format. The documents and public statements pertaining to each period are appended to the material in each volume.

No material was added to or changed in the study or appended documents and statements. In some cases, material was illegible or missing. If this occurred within a direct quotation, the omission was indicated with a bracketed statement. If it occurred in narrative text, it was bridged by removing the entire sentence in which it appeared, when it was evident that no substantive material would be lost by this procedure; otherwise, the omission was indicated by a bracketed statement. All other bracketed insertions appear in the original study. Some maps were removed when they were not of sufficient quality to be adequately reproduced as unretouched facsimiles; these omissions have been indicated in the text. Footnotes in the original study, referring primarily to internal government reports, have been removed. A glossary of specialized terms and acronyms was added.

These volumes provide the most complete text of this history of American involvement in Vietnam yet made available, in a form which should make it fully accessible to the American people.

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Further reading, selected:

The Pentagon Papers, Gravel Edition <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/pent1.html>

The Pentagon Papers Case <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB48/>

NEW YORK TIMES CO. v. UNITED STATES, 403 U.S. 713 (1971) <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/cgi-bin/getcase.pl?friend=nytimes&court=us&vol=403&invol=713>

James C. Goodale, "The First Amendment and Freedom of the Press"
<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itdhr/0297/ijde/goodale.htm#pentagon>

Mike Gravel 2008 <http://mikegravel.us/>

Daniel Ellsberg, Web site <http://www.ellsberg.net/>; conversation with,
<http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people/Ellsberg/ellsberg98-0.html>; "Iraq's Pentagon Papers"
<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-op-ellsberg11jun11,0,977634.story?coll=la-home-commentary>

Vietnam Veterans of America/Pentagon Papers
http://www.vva.org/whatsnew/pentagon_papers.htm

Bob Dylan, "Subterranean Homesick Blues," YouTube
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srgi2DkDbPU>

FOUR POEMS

Mike Chasar

The Good Life

Each beach—the white band of sand, the long, thin
final edge of land—

is neither as long,
nor as white, nor as final as I'd first planned. I thought

that it would stretch as far as the eye could see
(my opus, my work,

my legacy). But no,
just as the sand's not as white as it might be—

sullied by seaweed and shells and stones and bones
and other things the world

has hurled at me—
so it seems that my beach is always within eye's reach

and that someone else's shore, furthermore, is better,
their sand's more fine

or it's just simply wetter
in the end than mine. And with the way the waves

keep changing the work I've done, there's barely time
to drop in a whine
or to simply go on out and tan.
Smoky, what is this 'good life'? I'm so unsure that this
is the shore I set out to build way back when when I began.

Foxhole Friendship

Freddy Freddy Freddy Freddy Freddy. The closer the end
the fewer the friends. Oh

I contend we all
drift apart lose touch get so busy have too many other

things to do (let's not pretend) that sooner or later,
your division divides

(though no one intends it).

Sooner or later the phone calls stop and the letters dry,

no one expresses a genuine interest in 'just stopping by.'
So what do we do?

When 'bro' turns to 'friend,'
and 'friend' becomes 'bud' and 'bud' 'a guy I once knew,'

we just let it go—we surrender the foxholes and fronts,
the gusto, grief and growth.

Bravo.

At Christmas we muster an echo of each other's hellos

'til time and distance and death cap the rest of the game.
When one of us dies

the other's left asking,

"Now what was his name? What was. His. Name."

The Sheep

Remember: the bite of the howling wind makes thin
the fullest of wool

and meek sheep leap bleating
from all of their too-cold, toehold strongholds as you

leapt bleating from me. Remember how
the heat-seeking hooves

rattle floors and doors
and windows and roofs? And remember how down-

town blanches faced with such unplanned avalanches?
Remember the riot,

the sudden break
in the reading room quiet, the terrible hubbub as they

break in and repose on the living room carpet like hay?
Remember, Fred,

when everything's said,
when this woolly stampede and its cleanup are through,

winter is never fully the wolf that it seems at the time.
This is what hindsight will do:

I will wait
in the hills like an armchair and keep a light on for you.

The Herat of the Matter Peter Church

The road out of Farah is hardly a road. It's a bumpy scrabble track over a vast desert basin where the mountains on the horizon never grow or shrink. You cross the desert to get to the Ring Road. That takes three hours—past isolated clutches of low, domed mud huts off on the expansive horizon; along the dry-as-a-bone River Farah; past a few miraculous

poppy fields. They're miraculous because water in Farah is rare in the best of times, and even more so when there's been a seven year drought. What vegetation exists in this desert looks dead. And yet somehow farmers coax poppy from it.



photo Peter Church

Night Watch

Occupations of Farah stretch back at least 2,500 years. The massive, weathered earthen walls of an ancient citadel called Shar-e Farahdun remain atop a low rise a short distance from Farah's bazaar, or main street, where men in turbans lie languidly in the shade of shops that all seem stocked with the same goods. The citadel is said to have been built by a Zoroastrian warrior in the time of Darius the Great (reigned 522-42 B.C.E.), though in the '80s, the mujahadin used it as an arms depot. Its expansive interior remains littered with unexploded ordinance, which doesn't stop locals from gathering there for dog-fights and picnics.

Shir, or “Lion,” is behind the wheel. The desert meets the sky in a circle all around us. His face is weather-beaten; his eyes are icy blue—they make you think of water. His smile is warm and his voice sounds like the low register of a cello. He is only about thirty-five but could pass for sixty. On his left hand is a tattoo—*madar*, mother. He is proud of his four children. He is uneducated but incredibly curious. He thinks for long stretches, cobbling together questions with his meager English. They usually begin, “In your country . . .?” I meet him with my meager Dari, and we laugh. The questions come steadily but well-spaced: In your country, roads like this? In your country, weather like Farah? In your country, there are mountains?

How do I explain America? Yes, some roads are like this, I say. Should I try to describe the New Jersey Turnpike? Yes, some weather in America is like in Farah. Should I try to explain the Pacific Northwest? Summer thunderstorms over the Great Plains? A New England autumn? Yes, there are mountains in America, but not big like Afghanistan mountains, I say. Shir smiles.

We drive past herds of Dromedary camels and goats grazing on what small offerings the land provides, some lonely shepherd in their midst, not a spot of shade in sight. What does he eat? Where is he from? Where is his family? Where does he sleep at night? Past an abandoned *carwan-sarai*—caravan house—a large, fort-like enclosure left from the days (not so many years ago) of camel caravans between Herat and Kandahar. The carwan-sarai are spaced every thirty miles or so, a day’s walk. In its day, Farah would have been a minor way-station on the Silk Road network between Persia and India, between which traveled textiles, spices, and treasures. Today Farah a conduit for another kind of traffic: opium to Iran, arms to Kandahar.

In your country, you have camels? In your country, there are Muslims? In your country, how many mosques? In your country, how much for a wife? In your country, people are rich or poor?

No, we don’t have camels in America. What’s the word for “zoo”? Yes, in my country there are many Muslims and many mosques. In my country Musselman (Muslims) and Massi (Christians) live together. In my country, wedding is not like in Afghanistan, I say. In America some people are rich and some are poor. How do I explain relative standards of living? How do I explain taxes and welfare to someone who has lived in a dusty corner of a country without anything worth calling a government since he was a boy?

At the Ring Road we turn north to Herat. The condition of the Ring Road varies between concrete in severe disrepair, asphalt newly laid by a Turkish construction company, and just plain old bombed-out: craters in the road and the leftovers of bridges. We have to detour around sections under construction or destroyed.

All along this stretch of the Ring Road are piles of rocks, some painted white and some, red. Afghanistan is one of the most heavily mined countries on Earth. There are de-mining efforts all across the country, but hundreds of people die every year as a result of mines nevertheless; though, every year a handful of people in France are killed by unexploded WWII ordinance as well. The white rocks indicate areas that have been de-mined



Photo Peter Church

Ring Road

and the red rocks indicate areas that have not been.

The detours lead us off the road, often through patches of white rocks. But no de-mining campaign is 100 per cent effective, and it only takes one overlooked mine to ruin your day. Shir reads the concern on my face, smiles, and says what Afghans always say: No problem. Just stay in the tracks, I think to myself.

The completion of the Ring Road is, or will be, probably one of the most important means of unifying this country that has always been divided by geographic obstacles, to say nothing of the political-ethnic divisions that those geographical obstacles aid. The Ring Road may be no wider than a two-lane country highway, but it's a road of lofty intent. It's meant, in part at least, to help build an Afghan national identity, just as the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad did for America in 1869, bringing physically together a nation of distances and obstacles that had been embroiled in a bitter Civil War only four years earlier. Here, though, better roads also mean easier drugs and arms trafficking. I doubt there will be a golden spike.

To illustrate the importance of completing the Ring Road: Herat is about 180 miles from Farah, but it takes roughly seven hours to get there.

Founded by Alexander the Great in the 4th century B.C.E., Herat has been an active center of culture and commerce ever since. Today it is perhaps Afghanistan's nicest city. It has only a quarter of the population of Kabul, less pollution, more trees, more public parks, and more historic architecture in tact. During the Soviet jihad this was Ismael Khan's stronghold, and he defended it fiercely.

The old section of Herat is dominated by the famous Mosjid-Jamé, or Friday Mosque, also commonly called the Blue Mosque of Herat, built in 1200 on the sight of a 10th century mosque. Genghis Khan laid waste to Herat in the 1220s and legend has it that the only people in Herat to survive his slaughter were the six hiding in the Blue Mosque. Tamerlane made Herat the capital of the Timurid Empire in 1383, sparking the Timurid Renaissance, when Herat would become a major center for learning and the arts. The Timurid Renaissance was driven largely by Tamerlane's daughter-in-law, Queen Gaward Shah, who sponsored a great deal of building and learning.

In the north of Herat stand four tall minarets at the corners of what was a madrassa inspired by Queen Gaward Shah, built shortly after she was poisoned at the age of eighty in 1457. In a country where the average lifespan today is forty-three years, eighty remains an impressive age to achieve. The minarets are an impressive three hundred-some feet tall but in sad repair, and, helping to hasten their collapse, are constantly shaken by the traffic that passes at their base.



Photo Peter Church

The Minarets of Queen Gaward Shah

Between the Blue Mosque and the minarets is the Citadel of Herat. Built in 1305, it became the center of the Timurid Empire for most of the 15th century. You go down the street and there it is, seven hundred years of history sitting unceremoniously behind a narrow lane of welding shops, smithies, carpenters, and other merchants. Genghis Khan fought here before it was built. After building it, Tamerlane fought in its shadow. A restoration project begun in the 1960s and suspended by 25 years of war is beginning to be taken up again. Small patches of blue tile still cling to the Citadel's upper heights. A young man who spoke some English approached me, and I asked him about the citadel. He told me that it is very old, older than the automobile. I asked him if he was sure about that. He opened his eyes and said earnestly, Yes, for sure. I told him that the automobile is only about 120 years old. He was surprised to find out.



Photo Peter Church

Burqas

In the afternoon I wandered through the narrow back alleys around the Blue Mosque and through the maze of covered market-squares hidden down narrow alleys behind

the shops lining the streets. I was looked on with curiosity everywhere, and invited to drink tea at almost every other stall. I drank tea with the proprietor of one of the dozens of burqa shops. That's all he carried in his stall. His son was with him and he showed me the stitching and designs, saying proudly that he did the sewing himself and that he has owned the shop for fifteen years. The size and the embroidered designs around the face-screen differed, but they were all blue. At another burqa shop around the corner from his, I watched a man and his burqa-covered wife talking back and forth, presumably discussing the merits of the handiwork of several burqas, all in the same shade of blue.

In the carpet bazaar I made a friend, Amir, who closed his shop so that he could guide me through the streets. He took me to an old, enclosed market house that, he said,



Photo Peter Church

Nap Time

was maybe 500 years old. The brickwork was intricate, and the columns had beautiful detailing. But it was in a sad state of repair. Amir told me that the Taliban used it as a prison; his father had been imprisoned there because his hair was unacceptably long. Now, old men sit on the thresholds of the small rooms that serve as sewing shop and bedroom in one. Amir told me that the Taliban were stupid. They would hit you if you didn't pray right, he said. But Allah wants us to be free to pray to him. From the roof of this old market you can see across the rooftops of the old section of the city. In the distance you can see the citadel and the tips of the four minarets and the Blue Mosque. You could probably walk across the rooftops for half a mile.

In the evening I walked to the Blue Mosque and was told by a Kalishnakov-slinging guard that I could not enter until after prayer time because I was not Muslim. I asked him how he knew that I wasn't Muslim. Are you Musselman? he asked curiously. In Arabic I recited for him the Muslim invocation: There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his

Prophet. He kissed me on the cheek, stood to the side, and with a smile said, Come with me.

He led me through a covered passage and into the massive open center square where I found myself, having arrived late, facing a few hundred men lined up for prayer on a carpet running the width of the square. I looked at them, they at me. It was a bit like walking onstage before an audience. Never before had the absence of a turban on my head been so profoundly obvious. Act like you belong, I told myself. I took off my shoes, put down my backpack, and joined the men, mimicking their prayerful gestures. The men around me looked at me curiously. Word must have made its way down the line, because from the corner of my eye I could see men farther off sticking their heads up for a better view of me when they should have been bowing.



Photo Peter Church

Facing Mecca, evening prayers, the Friday Mosque

The sun was setting. The wall of ornate blue tiles on the eastern side of the square glowed in its light, as though the wall were a window looking into the infinite blue of God. The marble blocks on the floor of the square held the heat of the day and the warmth was soothing on the bare feet. After prayer, as I was milling about admiring the Mosque, I was

approached by a high school student studying for exams. He was eager to use his English and told me that he was glad to meet me. An old man with only a handful of teeth approached and, with the help of the student, said that I was his guest in Afghanistan and that he was glad that I was here. I thanked him, and told him that I, too, was glad to be here.

They both wandered off. Another man approached. He asked if I spoke English and said that this Mosque was only for Muslims, adding that he did not think I was Muslim. How do you know that, I asked. He looked me up and down and said, You do not look Muslim, then asked, What is your name? I told him, and he repeated, I do not think you are Muslim. You must go away. While I had a beard, this man had none: I don't think that you are Muslim, I said. Where is your beard? My beard is bigger than your beard. About the time it occurred to me that this was neither the time nor place to try to win an argument, the high school student returned and scolded the man. Fortunately, the man didn't make a scene. I asked the boy if I should go. No problem, he said.

In the setting sun I walked out the northern gate of the Blue Mosque and, crossing the street, found a famous resident of Herat, Haji Sultan Amidi. *Haji* is an honorific reserved for those who have made the *haj* to Mecca. Haji Sultan is the living patriarch of a family that has blown the famous blue glass of Herat since Genghis Khan's time. His story is myth mixed with history, which helps him sell his family's blue glass.

Today, the glassblowing is done by a small, hunched-back man named Tokhlan Saqui. He sits in a cave-like shop with earthen walls and a low ceiling across the street from the Blue Mosque and a few doors down from Haji Sultan's shop front. Tokhlan Saqui hunches over his kiln and with nothing more than fire and water and a blowing tube, crafts his glass. As the sun had dropped below the horizon, the only light in small shop came from the fire. His skin glowed a deep orange, as though embers were below its surface. With his glass-blowing tube he extracts molten glass from the kiln the color of a harvest moon and dripping like burning honey. He blows into the tube and the glass expands, he shapes it with a prong, he returns it to the fire and repeats. When he's satisfied he then drops it into a bucket of water that erupts in steam. When the glass has cooled, you can't believe it was fiery hot, because now it's the color of the cool sky.



Photo Peter Church

Glass Blower

On the road back to Farah, a swath of concrete and asphalt bisecting an endless landscape of dun crags and emptiness. What kind of animal is that walking beside the road ahead? It's not an animal; it's a man, a man so crippled that he can only hobble along on all fours, moving as a lame dog might. The mid-day sun fiercely pounds the earth. It bleaches the sky. The cripple pulls himself over the dirt and rocks. There's no town or village, or anything bigger than a truck stop, between Herat and Farah. From where did he start? Where could he possibly be so desperate to arrive? And what's that on the other side of the road? A herd of camels. And look at the calf suckling from its mother!

The truck I'm riding in has a security escort made up of a Russian jeep crammed with young, armed Afghan soldiers. On one of the off-road detours they drive too fast and flip their jeep, smashing the windshield and crushing the roof. None of them are wearing seatbelts. Two of the soldiers are flung from the jeep. One has some bleeding from his head, but is conscious, the other has a dislocated shoulder and is dazed, but is otherwise fine.

Fortunately that's the extent of the damage. All around us are piles of painted white rocks. The soldiers are obviously in pain, but they are breathing fine and have feeling in their extremities. We dress the head of the one and stabilize the arm of the other. The other soldiers are holding up a syringe and a liquid in a less-than-clearly marked vial and telling me to inject it in the shoulder. For pain, for pain, one of them says over and over. I wag my finger and say that's a bad idea, taking the syringe and vial—who knows what the hell it is

We're four hours from Herat. It's a bit less than that to Farah. Though they couldn't understand me, I told the soldiers that's what you get for driving like knuckleheads, consider yourselves lucky it wasn't worse, and you'll just have to deal with the pain for a few more hours. We move the wrecked jeep out of the road and consolidate passengers for the remaining hours of bumpy scrabble track to Farah. I give Shir a frustrated look and he says with a smile: No problem.

To see a slide show of all of Peter Church's photographs,
go to *Archipelago* <http://www.archipelago.org/vol10-12/church.htm>.

SIX POEMS

Oliver Abrihim Khan

[thewhite moth beats against the]

the white moth beats against the
thick south window and the
rooster promises dawn *have I ever*
 seen the dawn before?

yes you only forget
what is dawn? just the
splitting of the world between cool
and heat *and this is heat?*
no *why forget?*
we forget so that remembering
is sweet

and the birds flying in their constant
circles over Mohajireen
have not forgotten

you descend you have
hands blood running through
hair for feathers legs
as the crocked chair and
eyes for interrupting the
tower cloud

did it always mean
nothing as you gather
your body from the top stair
down and say I am old
I left the window open
I am constant circles
the emptying sky

[those were scissors locked at the joint]

I

those were scissors locked at the joint
and candles resting on upturned glasses

I mean to be *Is this you from*
two angles? no this is a man
on fire with dog *how do we*
even exist *such words crawling*
across our legs : *attrition*
war *lapse?*
all is swimming and hunger
flat into moderation

II

dominate by three lines and waiting
 again there was the flood of morning
 mind still half stripped in green yellow
 and you always pushing
 the hair from your face
 are your hands out?
 does that mean patience?

I too willing to pose in front of
 beautiful things milk river
 red apples tower of the bride
 it goes as anything goes
 becoming nails half out of the wall
 stream of plastic and the wardrobe
 bending in on itself

 so early now
 no telling one voice from
 (2) two they will not speak with
 each not with me Have mercy on
 me please have mercy on me

[teaching english]

teaching english:

yes through acquisition something you

acquire

acquire? acquire absorb to get

like sponge? no more passive

passive? without effort *easy?*

I didn't say that you know

passive resistance? *no*

[slow my eyes pendulum of praise]

slow my eyes pendulum of praise

fail beneath orange lamps

sing, thousand bird tree and simulated

granite sky the disproportioned

maw trapped inside the page

becomes the apparition of the land

yet, the ocean is real as

hand combing through coffee

and always one hand is open

[here's to getting at the bones of it]

here's to getting at the bones of it
 shade tree on a cool day and
 my love you are lines
 down the page among the chrome toothed
 women we are fatigued and the
 road sighs say Ahh scratch the
 skin shadow of the tilled vein
 the browning leaves and the naming
 of opposites :
 house fire : ax
 channel : demonstration
 stop : rise
 six o'clock and then tap on the pillars
 and they are filled with
 water filled with sand filled with shoes
 shoe : wing
 no shoes for
 the warding off and pillars
 laid in sand unerected
 the city that arranges itself
 saying Filtch the air

Filth the air Fill the air
turning the lock once twice
and done furnace locked
the clock too and our
 shoes safe
what harm could come to us now?

[somewhere in the city my lost]

somewhere in the city my lost
 hour is moving with briefcase
 toward the coast
 you my love elsewhere
 a fine burning and
 cooperating with...

how strange to hear a voice so unlike
 yours not a command
 tomes like yours I do not love
 it as I love you
 I suppose this is the error of
 rotation the page discounted
 that here the center there
 the extremity yellow tag and always
 the smell of water leaving the
 spider's web *it has there in*
no smell and again there is abandonment
 the way we eat and always
 ties into
 the line the waste the ferris and mistrust

The Renegade Istrati

Stelian Tanase

from the novel

AUNT VARVARA'S CLIENTS

tr. from the Romanian by Alistair Ian Blyth

In 1927, the Russian ambassador to Paris is Cristian Racovski. In the summer of that year, Moscow finds itself confronted with a vehement campaign against Racovski led by the French press. After much hesitation, the Russian foreign Minister, Chicherin, makes a declaration in which he thanks the ambassador for his services, but bows to the pressure. He announces Racovski's recall. On 15 October, Racovski leaves the embassy in a luggage-laden automobile, surprised that there is not a single policeman to be seen. He was accompanied by Panait Istrati. The paths of the two had crossed as early as 1905, in socialist and trade union circles. They met again in Paris, once Racovski was installed at Rue de Grenelle. They had many shared memories and acquaintances. Istrati frequented the embassy and was, for example, on familiar terms with Racovski's adoptive daughter, who recalls him thus: "PANAIT ISTRATI often used to visit us for dinner and would sit for hours on end chatting in Cristian's office."¹ He was "a nervous man, as scrawny as could be, who used to say very interesting, cutting things, things often embarrassing to Cristian, who was nevertheless fond of him and valued him a great deal."² Racovski invited Istrati to come to Russia as early as 1926, but preparations were drawn out. For propaganda reasons, Moscow was preoccupied with inviting intellectuals. Istrati was ideal for this purpose, in view of his notoriety, as well as his sympathies for Bolshevism. However, no one could have imagined that his visit would coincide with the decline of Racovski's career. It remains unclear whether Stalin recalled his ambassador because he was preparing to exile Trotsky and his acolytes, or whether it was because of pressure from the French press. However, the tension was there. Ra-

covski and Istrati were abreast of the fact that something was being prepared. Istrati asks him in the car: “Are you really being exiled by France or are you being destroyed by your countrymen?”³ Racovski prefers to change the subject. When Racovski was appointed ambassador to London in 1923, Lenin was already ill and no longer ruled Russia, which had fallen into the clutches of Stalin. Racovski is removed from his post of head of the Ukrainian government, which conferred on him too great a power, and sent to London as ambassador. It was, in fact, a luxurious exile. Racovski protests, but submits. In 1927, things became worse for him. Lenin had died three years previously. In the Kremlin, the struggle for succession was at its height. The party to which Racovski belonged loses. His closest friend, Lev Trotsky, Stalin’s number one enemy, is on the point of being removed. At the same time, preparations were under way in Moscow for the tenth anniversary of Bolshevik accession to power.

This is the context of Istrati’s arrival in Moscow. Three weeks later, on 14 November 1927, Trotsky and Zinoviev are excluded from the Party. Racovski, Kamenev, Shmilga and Yevdokimov, the leaders of the opposition within the Party, are excluded from the Central Committee of the CPSU. On 19 November, Adolf Ioffe, an advocate of Trotsky, is buried in Moscow. His suicide letter creates nervousness in political circles. At the funeral ceremony, we witness Trotsky’s last public appearance in Russia. Racovski also attends the funeral. In December 1927, Racovski is heckled as he gives a speech at the Party Congress. In January 1928, the leaders of the opposition are banished from Moscow and Leningrad, and sent into exile. Trotsky is forcibly transported to Alma-Ata, while Racovski is sent to Astrakhan, in the Volga Delta. Since Racovski’s name is closely linked to that of Trotsky, his career is practically over. The period Istrati spends in the USSR is full of events of this kind. The climate is that of a frenzied struggle for power. Stalin assails those who had opposed him in the operation to succeed Lenin. In January 1929, Trotsky is expelled to Turkey. The date almost coincides with that of Istrati’s departure from Russia. On 15 February, Istrati arrives in Paris, after having spent sixteen months in the USSR.

Thus, early in the morning of 15 October 1927, the two leave Paris. The previous evening, in a Paris restaurant, Racovski and Istrati meet Boris Souvarine, a former Bolshevik, expelled from the Komintern. In 1929, Souvarine, together with Istrati and Victor Serge,

will write one of the books in the trilogy *Vers l'autre flamme*. In the mid-1930s, he will publish one of the best biographies of Stalin. He narrates the evening of departure thus: "That evening, Racovski was pensive, taciturn, from time to time he seemed absent, although he was usually such a sparkling *causeur*. [...] Istrati was talkative, euphoric, even exultant at the thought of the pilgrimage to the "Mecca of communism" which he was about to make and of which he had dreamed for so long. So, Istrati kept heaping enthusiastic praise on the revolution and the radiant future that lay before it. He was not a member of the communist party, but he shared the popular convictions regarding the 'great light from the east', as they used to say back then, due to his powerful hostility to 'bourgeois' society. [...] He did not know anything about Marxism but was not at all worried on that account; his feelings substituted for doctrine, instinct caused him to take the side of the poor, the exploited, the victims. And of rebels of every kind. [...] His ideology placed him rather in the rank of a kind of humanitarian anarchism lacking in theoretical reasoning. Of the Soviet regime he knew nothing, excepting its hostility to the capitalist world [...] Overcome by the joy of imminent departure, he did not sense the incompatibility of his behavior with that of his traveling companion. He had no idea of the political tragedy into which Racovski had entered [...] The ambassador, a disciplined militant above all else, complied to a strict rule that forbade him to speak of secret family problems in front of a stranger to the Party, even if that stranger was a declared communist [such as Istrati – *author's note*]."⁴ The journey to the USSR takes the two by automobile to Berlin, whence they board the train to Riga, and thence to Moscow. Once he arrives in Moscow, Istrati enthusiastically declares to *Pravda* that he is a Bolshevik, that he has left the West for good, that Russia is the only place where there is the freedom to create. He would like to be buried here, but he further desires that his body be taken to Romania once a Bolshevik regime is installed in Bucharest. Are there echoes here of conversations with Racovski, who dreamed of being a red dictator in Bucharest? In spite of his conventional declarations, Istrati observes the way in which Racovski is received: "We arrive in Moscow one beautiful morning (20 October). At the station, there is nothing to attest the slightest attention on the part of the government for a great ambassador, even one fallen into disgrace... None of those luxurious limousines that drive the bureaucratic rabble around... Nothing. And the hand of the former president of the Council of Commissars of the Ukrainian People, which signed so many documents in Geneva, London and Paris, was shaken by no one. Racovski's athletically built and highly intelligent Lithuanian attendant went to look for a taxi, while the photo-reporters fixed their lenses on us. Cristian dodged them. I say to him: 'Why do you dodge them so maliciously? They are doing it to earn a

living.’ ‘In that case, they don’t know what they are doing. I am sparing them from gaffes and worn-out clichés.’” Racovski knew what awaited him. The cold, even hostile, reception given to Racovski did not prevent Istrati from manifesting his enthusiasm for Russia and Bolshevism, even in the presence of his companion. In *Confessional for the Defeated*, Istrati was to recollect: “Before leaving, I asked Racovski: ‘What is going on in Soviet Russia?’ And he gave me this diplomatic reply: ‘If you look at the surface, you won’t be satisfied. However, if you know how to look, you will love our Revolution’.”⁵ Paid by the Soviet press, Istrati had already written two eulogizing articles about Racovski, which he had brought in his pocket. Neither of them was to be published. Why? Between the date they had been ordered and the date of his arrival in Moscow, the fate of the former head of the Bolshevik Government of Ukraine, of the former ambassador to London and Paris, had been decided.

Istrati’s relations with Bolshevism are not, however, as simple as they appear at first sight. Was Istrati won over by Bolshevism? Can we take his declarations at face value? Can we regard his enthusiastic words of autumn 1927 as a conventional response to the hospitality of his hosts? The Kremlin propagandists had great need of famous writers to give their regime credibility. The scenario was relatively simple. Major personalities from the West were invited and then given supervised tours of Russia. Big ceremonies are organized for them, receptions with flowers, celebrations; they are shown that they are popular. Back home, almost none of those invited enjoy such glory. Moreover, they were paid royally. Their works were printed in millions of copies, and the royalties they received were to match. They were requested to contribute to magazines, they were interviewed. All for a price. Soviet propaganda was unstinting, especially when the person invited was someone well known. Returning to the West, after the adoring crowds, financial rewards and grandiose ceremonies, they carried out their task by “remote control”, won over by the manner in which they had been received. They wrote eulogizing pages about the Soviet regime. Not necessarily because they had been corrupted, although this was also true, but because the manipulation had had its effect. They had seen not so much Russia as staged spectacles in which they more or less believed. Istrati was also the pawn of such a practice of the propaganda apparatus and the GRU. He was not naïve, but rather volatile in his options. He became easily enthused, lost his convictions just as easily, started over again. Istrati’s itinerary in Russia is telling in this respect. We might say that he comes to Russia ready to see what lies hidden behind the veil of Bolshevik propaganda. Panait Istrati’s political experience was

more than sufficient for him to understand the truth. He had been a militant socialist in his youth; he had worked for trade unions. He had organized strikes and demonstrations; he had been an editor at *Workingman's Romania*. He personally knew all the Romanian socialist and trade union leaders of the day. He was well acquainted with the conditions of the workingman, whose cause he upheld whenever he had the opportunity. He goes to the USSR believing that he will find a dictatorship of the proletariat "at work". Instead, he encounters a venal bureaucracy and a working class exploited by brutal masters. Hence his disappointment, which, however, occurs later, towards the end of the journey, after his illusions have been shattered one by one. He sees the reason for the regime's failure in Russia's new rulers. The "bureaucratization of the Soviet regime" was the thesis of the Trotskyite opposition, with whom Istrati had close contacts. It is to be recalled that in 1913 he had met Lev Trotsky in Bucharest, in a hotel room near the Romanian Athenaeum. Racovski is his closest link to Opposition circles. On 6 August 1928, Racovski writes and sends his adherents an article/manifesto entitled "The Professional Perils of Power". Six weeks later, Istrati is in Astrakhan. We have no direct evidence that Istrati had read the text, but it would be naïve to think that he had not, especially if we bear in mind the stir it caused. It was Racovski's succinct analysis of the regime. Istrati adopts its theses in the way he views the USSR, as is transparent in *Confessional for the Defeated*. Accompanied by Nikos Kazantzakis and their girlfriends, Istrati arrives on 18 September 1928 in Astrakhan, "a malodorous city. Swarms of mosquitoes. Plague, malaria, cholera".⁶ They stay in the "best hotel" in town, the "Kommunal'naya Gostinitsa". He finds bedbugs in his room. He goes out into the corridor and starts making a scandal. "A door opens in the gloom of the corridor, a squat man comes up to me. 'Is it you who are doing all that swearing?' Racovski? How? You're living in a hotel with bedbugs?" The luxurious diplomatic residence in Paris was a distant memory. The reunion with the "great outcast" seems unreal. The former leader of the Communist International is living in a filthy hotel, exiled from his fellows. "A single room in which it would have been difficult to fit five people, a screen hiding the bed and washstand. Suitcases stuffed with books. A table heaped with papers. Racovski is working on 'The Life of Saint-Simon'. He is ill with malaria." They had last seen each other in Moscow in October. Almost a year had passed since then. Is the reunion between them an accident, as the description would have it? Did Istrati know that Racovski was in Astrakhan? He knew. Had he ended up in the city by chance? Hard to believe. Had he planned to go there in order to see his friend once more? Was there an understanding between them? Had he gone there out of solidarity, out of bravado? The pages of *Confessional for the Defeated* do not tell us. But

perhaps he was not writing about these things in order to protect his host. “He has no dark ideas,” Istrati assures us, probably for the ears of the GPU. “He is always ready to fight and more than ever convinced of... Of what? I couldn’t say. His words give rise to convictions, but to define them is time wasted. For even when they are friends, Bolshevik ambassadors remain diplomats. Thus he prefers to speak enthusiastically of the lotus ... and he describes to us the melancholy existence of these flowers, harried by cold. He extols to us the project to fertilize the sands.”⁷ Does Istrati refuse to write about what the two “accomplices” have discussed in Astrakhan, or has Racovski lost trust in his visitor and prefers not to say anything risky, anything political? Istrati nevertheless cuts the figure of an unconditional enthusiast for the Soviets. He had made numerous press declarations to this effect. Racovski had reasons to be prudent and to view Istrati with suspicion. He had enough political experience not to be taken in by someone like Istrati, who was ever changing, ever exulted, rebellious, unrestrained, angry at something, at someone. At the time, he was fascinated by what he saw in Russia. Racovski would have had a lot to say. He was one of the main leaders of the opposition. He was at the centre of a clandestine network, with whom he corresponded and planned gestures of political protest. He was under close surveillance by GPU agents. Did he impart any of this to Istrati? Did he give him any message for persons in Moscow or for the foreign press? We shall probably never know. *Confessional for the Defeated* preserves its silence. On the other hand, we find out all about excursions on the banks of the Volga. Istrati, Kazantzakis and Racovski are accompanied, bizarrely, by two invalids, one missing a leg, the other paralytic. Both are “supermen”, fanatics for transforming nature. There is something of Bosch, of Breugel, in these pages. The only echo of Racovski’s position as exile, but also of the power struggle within the Kremlin, is captured by Istrati when he reproduces the words of an official, on a tugboat named “Comrade Stalin”. The latter admonishes his sympathy for the opposition, whose leaders are nothing but “traitors”. After eight days of excursions in the Volga Delta, the small group parts. Istrati, Kazantzakis and co. leave Astrakhan for Georgia/Tbilisi, Stalin’s native turf. Istrati gives no details of his parting from Racovski. They will never see each other again.

Many things had occurred before the reunion of Istrati and Racovski. In the USSR, Istrati was the official guest of VOKS (a GPU den – apparently, the organization handled cultural relations with foreign countries). From the outset, he seems fascinated by the adventure in which he finds himself. He makes and reiterates enthusiastic declarations about the

homeland of the revolution, about the workers, about Bolshevism. He vehemently attacks the West, especially France, and the “putrid and decadent bourgeoisie”. Of course, Soviet propaganda records all such declarations and reproduces them word for word. Istrati plays his role well; he seems to have blinkers over his eyes. That was why he had been invited and paid – to be taken to different places under the strict supervision of the GPU, to be toasted at banquets, to give interviews, to witness parades, to be welcomed with fanfares, to travel in special trains and limousines, surrounded by activists ready to provide him with almost anything. The scope of the hosts was to win him over, so that on his return he would become – willing or not – an agent of Soviet influence. So that, ultimately, he would write works of pro-Soviet propaganda. He was not the only one. H.G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, Henri Barbusse, Romain Rolland, Nikos Kazantzakis, Lion Feuchtwanger, Emil Ludwig and André Malraux also fell prey to the same treatment. Istrati is enchanted by his reception, by the money he is earning in abundance. Many of his books are translated, for which he earns copious royalties. He writes articles, gives interviews. He is treated like a dignitary, although he is just a “fellow traveler” from the West. Things go well for a while. Istrati does not see what is happening, or feigns not to see. He lets himself be carried away by success, money and ceremonials.

Let us compile a time-line of the journey. Only just arrived in Moscow, he takes the train to Leningrad, where he arrives on 31 October. Here he makes the acquaintance of Victor Serge, a French translator living in Russia. He returns to Moscow and, on 7 November, in Red Square, he attends an ostentatious parade on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of what the regime names the “Great October Revolution”. He witnesses a counter-demonstration organized by the opposition and the reprisals that follow. Istrati does not react, although he personally knows many of the anti-Stalinist opposition leaders. One week later, on 13 November, he meets Nikos Kazantzakis, who from now on accompanies him. Kazantzakis had displayed Bolshevik ideas since as early as 1922. In 1927, he came to the USSR at the invitation of VOKS, like Istrati. He had also traveled in the USSR two years previously, in 1925. On 16 November, Istrati and Kazantzakis set out on an official excursion to the Black Sea and Caucasus.

In December, they both set out for Greece. Beforehand, they send a letter to Stalin, in which they express their admiration for the USSR. They embark at Odessa on the vessel “Chicherin”, arriving in Piraeus on 31 December 1927. A confidential report sent to Bucharest by the Romanian legation to I. Gh. Duca, the ad interim Foreign Minister, noted that “under close surveillance, the authorities at once realized that Istrati is a dangerous agent of Moscow”.⁸ He makes contact with the Soviet legation and Greek communist leaders. On 3 January, Istrati visits Singros Prison. What does he say to the political detainees, most of whom are communists? He shows them that he has two fingers missing and tells them that he lost them as a manual laborer. He is not “Istrati the writer” but “Istrati the worker”. He recalls that “I too have been thrown into prison on many occasions”, and they sympathies with him. Then he speaks to them about the USSR. “Something unrepeatable and wonderful is being accomplished there.” He ends by saying: “Do not be discouraged in moments of affliction. Victory is ours. [...] Istrati is yours. Istrati is no lick-spittle. I shall not bow my head. No. The others are traitors... I am and remain in your ranks. I shall remain a soldier in your ranks.”⁹ He visits a hospital for consumptives. He is summoned by an examining magistrate to give an explanation for his speech at Singros. To the amazement of the Romanian diplomat, as noted in his report, Istrati is not deported. Moreover, on 11 January, he gives a lecture at the Alhambra, an auditorium in central Athens, on the blessings of the regime in the USSR, which is followed by scuffles with the police in the street. A report for the *Sigurantza* translates an article published in a pro-Bolshevik newspaper. “Yesterday evening, at seven o’ clock, PANAIT ISTRATI spoke of his impressions of Soviet Russia [...] The lecturer was greeted with enthusiastic applause and spoke in French, translated for the auditorium by an interpreter. The Soviet Union, as it is today, can be loved only by two social categories, by the workers and by those who are born courageous [...] I shall divide the Soviet Union into two unequal parts, one the part of living souls and the other the part of dead souls. The first part comprises that terrible organism that carried out the October revolution and which now holds power. The second part comprises the parasites of this organism: a few kulaks, bureaucrats and professionals, they are tolerated by the new organism of the vigorous Russia. [...] It is always good for a living soul to sense around it the cold breath of a dead soul, behold the spectacle of reality [...] in the red democracy there is not enough work for all, nor food, nor abundant clothing, but what does exist is shared equally and fairly between the entire nation. BEHOLD GREAT JUSTICE!! The great power of communism. [...] It is said that the Bolsheviks do not get on with each other and that very soon they will devour each other and this will be their end. You, miserable undertakers of Soviet Russia,

must have lost your reason to be able to believe such hopeless ideas [...] The more they contradict each other, the more they will strengthen Soviet power, because in Russia it is the people that governs...”¹⁰ On leaving the lecture theatre, the audience provokes incidents with the police, who “try to break up the crowd, but the workers do not back down and chant down with white democracy, down with the coalition government [...] long live the communist party... Many were beaten and trampled. The crowd heads for the university avenue, automobiles and tramcars are stopped, nothing can be heard except the Internationale and the protests of the crowd...”¹¹ Istrati is called before an examining magistrate. To the amazement of the Romanian diplomat sending the report, he is not deported. Not for long. The press is unleashed against the two. Istrati’s visa expires and he has to leave. Kazantzakis remains to face trial. “We inform of the following: On 23 February, at 14:00 hours, the communist Panait Istrati, expelled from Greece, boarded the Soviet ship “Chicherin” at Piraeus. He is heading to Odessa and Moscow, where he will stay for two years, after which he intends to return to the country,” notes a telegram addressed to the General Bureau of the Sigurantza.¹² The two writers’ expedition to Athens was evidence of “enthusiasm and sacrifice”. Both Istrati and Kazantzakis wanted to show their loyalty to the revolution. It was a provocation, an agitator parachute-drop behind enemy lines.

While the two writers are in Greece, Trotsky and Racovski are sent into internal exile. The Greek press announces the event. No reaction on the part of Istrati. Moreover, he returns to the USSR. He meets up with Kazantzakis in Kiev. On the way north, they stop over in Leningrad, where they see Victor Serge again. At the end of March, they both go to Murmansk and Arkhangelsk. Istrati and Kazantzakis wanted to visit the “re-education camp” on the Solovki Islands. Gorky is to come here a year later and, to his shame, will write a eulogy. The two, accompanied by their girlfriends, do not reach Solovki; they remain in Murmansk for a few days, waiting for the necessary permits. To this end, Istrati writes to the GPU. He also writes to Romain Rolland a letter enthused by what he is seeing, by the visit he is going to make... Istrati is still prey to the illusion and to his prejudices, maintained by the VOKS organizers of the trip. When the answer from Moscow delays in coming and the accommodation is bad, he calls off the plan. It is only by chance that PANAIT ISTRATI did not visit the camp at Solovki, the first Soviet concentration camp. It is only a fortunate accident that shielded PANAIT ISTRATI from the shame of having numbered among the ecstatic visitors shown round horrible “achievement” by the GPU. “To go over to the

side of the executioners and to praise them for the suffering they inflicted on the people became a way of life (sometimes of death) for the proletarian revolutionary writers.”¹³ Our travelers change their minds and head south. In April, they arrive in the Crimea. A note by the Sigurantza reveals that “at Odessa he is working on the making of a cinema film about his communist ideals, and it is to be titled *The Haidouk* [...] From the information we have, the aforementioned is very interested in the fate of the communists imprisoned at Jilava, which causes him to publish in various foreign newspapers about the way they are treated in prison.”¹⁴ Istrati is still a devotee of the Komintern, for which he has performed many services as a propagandist and agent of influence.

He has health problems and stays in bed for around a month. At the beginning of May, Istrati is at Bekovo, near Moscow (one of the sites where victims of the Great Terror were executed between 1936 and 1938). From Bekovo, Istrati intervenes in favor of Victor Serge, who he discovers has been arrested. On 28 May, with Kazantzakis he meets Gorky, in the offices of a publisher. In July, the first article about Kazantzakis to appear in the West is published in *Monde*, a magazine published by Barbusse and financed by VOKS. The author: Panait Istrati. He then travels down the Volga to the south of Russia. On 1 August, Istrati meets Ecaterina Arbore, a militant socialist whom he knew in Romania, now Minister of Health in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (murdered in 1937 on the orders of Stalin). *Red Ploughman*, the local Romanian language newspaper, publishes on 10, 14 and 17 August articles about Istrati’s journey. Here is an excerpt from an interview published on 17 August: “As soon as I heard about Moldova, I decided at once to come and see what the Moldavians were doing [...] I have been down to the banks of the Nistru. Thence I gazed over to the other side for a long time. And on seeing the empty fields, the gendarme with a rifle over his shoulder, I was filled with pity. And how can you not pity your brother, who you know is so sorely afflicted. You are especially filled with pity when you see how on the Moldavian side they are building socialism before your very eyes, while on the other side the greater part of Moldavians and Romanians are still under the yoke of the boyars. I came to Russia weary; I leave cheerful. And I shall be more cheerful still when the time comes and I shall see what I have seen here in the whole of Romania, that is, when the whole of Romania will be a free Soviet country.”¹⁵

At the end of August, Nikos Kazantzakis and Panait Istrati, together with Eleni Samiou and Istrati's lover, Bilili Baud-Bovy, are already in the south. On 30 August, the two meet Barbusse, who is in hospital at Nizhny Novgorod. On 8 September, they arrive in Astrakhan, where Istrati sees Racovski once more. On 30 September, they arrive in Tbilisi. Thence by ship to Baku, Batumi, Sukhumi, Nvorosisk. On 2 December, Istrati is in Rostov, then Kiev. On 19 December, he arrives in Moscow at last. On 30 December, he is in Leningrad with Victor Serge and Nikos Kazantzakis. It is here the two part ways. Kazantzakis does not support Istrati in the "Rusakov affair". On 11 January 1929, Istrati is already getting ready to leave. On 15 February, he is in Paris. Kazantzakis remains in Russia until April, when he leaves for Berlin.

Before leaving the USSR, Istrati addresses two letters to Gerson, one of the heads of the GPU, in which he begs leave to criticize one per cent of the realities in the USSR as he has seen them. At the same time, he gives assurances regarding his loyalty to it. Is the idea that the GPU might solve such problems naivety on the part of Istrati? Or had he understood that the USSR was a police state and that everything depended on the special services? Had he understood that the GPU held the real power? We do not know. What is for sure is that instead of addressing himself to the Komintern, Agitrop, VOKS or directly to the Kremlin leaders, Istrati writes to the GPU, asking permission (with fake or genuine candor) to criticize the Bolshevik regime when he gets to the West. Istrati writes: "There are three kinds of writers who may pronounce on the Soviet Union [...] 1, The neutral, authors of books that are more or less agreeable [...] 2, Our enemies, professional detractors of the Union. 3, Our friends, of the Henri Barbusse type [...] professional apologists [...] As for me, the Soviet issue is a personal drama. I am a born rebel and a long-time revolutionary. I did not come to the Union in search of subjects for books, but to be able to see for myself and to be useful to the proletarian cause. Today I realize that I can be of use only on one condition: not to write like Barbusse. When a writer gives up all sense of criticism and becomes the cracked bell for an idea, he is no longer a man who is listened to and he no longer serves the cause he thinks he is upholding. He compromises it. I do not mean by this that we should succumb to the babbling and prating that would submerge us in bourgeois chaos. But there are dangerous evils here, whose name should be uttered aloud. [...] then let me be permitted also to speak of what is bad, moderately, compassionately, gently, but to speak of it. I ask your consent, I ask for that of the Party. If you accord me it, I shall write about my im-

pressions of the Soviet Union. If not, I shall keep silent in public and in private. Here as well as abroad. I shall live alone.” Once back in Moscow, he again writes to Gerson, the secretary of the GPU: “My definitive position (at least so I hope) can be summarized thus: 1, No willing return to capitalism and the bourgeoisie, which must be annihilated, in spite of the ideological and moral shortcomings of the Soviet regime. 2, The current evils of the Soviet regime are, in my eyes, remediable, on the condition that they are dealt with. 3, Absolute faith in the Soviet working class [...] 4, I do not believe that this rectification is incumbent upon the opposition [...] On the contrary, left to do as it will, the opposition is capable of even greater mistakes. 5, I can see only one means of escape from the current critical impasse: a, to cease combating the opposition through terror; b, to proclaim the right to criticize within the Party, for all members [...] c, introduction of secret ballots, in the Party and trade unions [...] I should like to be such a communist and to fight using all the means at my disposal. Here it is impossible without the consent of the Party. And abroad – where my honest word might give rise to base polemic in the opposing camp – I should not wish to combat at all, except with your approval, since I am neither an oppositionist nor an anarchist, but a collaborator in the Soviet project. [...] This is my program. I am ready to give my life to defend it.”¹⁶

“Istrati is definitively disillusioned, disabused, and in the end he no longer thinks in terms of deceptive formulas about the pseudo-dictatorship of the proletariat. [...] He returns to Paris on 15 February 1929, broken, ill, disoriented, no longer knowing to whom or to what he should dedicate himself; he can no longer speak, nor remain silent. He can neither write, nor refrain from writing,” writes Boris Souvarine.¹⁷ On 23 February, he makes his first declarations: “Trotsky or the opposition represent the gold reserve of the Russian revolution. Without this reserve, I do not know how there will be any revolutionary progress in Russia [...] It is a country that today allows all revolutionary hopes. [...] For me, Stalin and Trotsky and still two good revolutionaries. I have met no real counter-revolutionaries in Russia, apart from the ill-omened bureaucratic apparatus, made up of rodents, of communists without a party, who gnaw away and threaten to demolish the wonderful work that resulted from the October Revolution.”¹⁸ Just two days later, Madeleine Paz,¹⁹ a member of Parisian Bolshevik circles, publishes another interview in a small-circulation magazine, *Contre le courant*, which had the stigma of opposing Stalin. Istrati explains the difference between his declarations at the beginning of his visit to the USSR, when

he was an admirer of the Moscow regime, and those made on his return, when, disillusioned, he had become critical. In the meantime, he had traveled the length and breadth of Russia, he had made contact not only with officialdom but also with simple people. The image he had of the revolution and the Bolshevik regime had changed radically. “In the last three months of my stay in Moscow and Leningrad, the enchantment faded, the veil suddenly fell away, and the real situation [...] confronted me in all its cruelty.”²⁰ He repeats the main thesis of the opposition in Russia – the bureaucratic degeneracy of the revolution – and he holds Stalin responsible. The most delicate subject of the interview is “Trotsky”, who was on the front pages of all the newspapers at the time, due to his expulsion from Russia. Istrati says: “The way in which the opposition and their leader Trotsky are treated in Russia is the reason that determined me to leave Russia so quickly.” He regards the act as barbarous. And adds: “When I hear how Trotsky is branded a counter-revolutionary, I wonder whether he would have been treated the same if Lenin had been alive today. I am convinced that if Lenin had been able to see what is happening in Russia now, he would have acted no differently than Trotsky.”²¹ With these words, Istrati becomes a *persona non grata* for the Kremlin. When *Monde*, Barbusse’s magazine, interviews him, Istrati’s tone is milder; he sometimes contradicts himself. Istrati thus exposes himself to the ripostes of his former comrades. These are not long in coming. On 29 April 1929, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* publishes an article by Boris Volin, entitled “Two-faced Istrati”.²² The author compares the differing positions taken by Istrati in *NRF* and in *Monde*, the magazine run by Henri Barbusse.

The truth is that, scarcely returned from Russia, Istrati was not yet decided on what to do; he was hesitating. The issue was not what he thought of the USSR, since on this matter he was clear, but whether he should make these opinions public. The blackmail that criticizing the USSR served the enemies of the revolution was powerful in left-wing circles. Hence, his formulations do not always get to the very bottom of the truth as he knew it. Volin accuses him of duplicity and wonders whether Istrati had ever been sincere. He accuses him of using typically Trotskyite phraseology and petty bourgeois idle talk. Likewise, he warns readers about the announced publication of Istrati’s book about the USSR. An anthropologist might say: a witch-hunt was being readied. The dogs are ready to be set loose. Istrati becomes ever more implicated. He intervenes in Brussels in order to obtain political asylum for Trotsky. Without success. Nor does he insist, although he meets with Belgian officials, because Trotsky in the meanwhile announces the formation of a Fourth, Trotskyite

International, opposed to the Komintern. Istrati takes a step back. He does not want to be politically involved. He remains a loner. However, his initiative does not escape the Soviet authorities and he is placed on a blacklist, if he was not already. In both his interviews and his moves to secure political asylum for Trotsky, we can see that Istrati is hesitating.

His decision to break his silence was not at all simple. He was taking a number of great risks: that of not making himself understood, that of irritating his readers, but especially that of bringing down upon himself the agents of the Komintern, the fellow travelers and the pro-Soviet press. The lobby was very powerful in the West, especially in France, and it should not be forgotten that Istrati himself had been launched and supported by this lobby. He thus risked alienating his old friends, without any guarantee of gaining others. His revelations might have seemed just a family quarrel, between Bolshevik sympathizers, and nothing more. This would have made the report of his transfiguration produce indifferent reactions. Given that Istrati had loudly proclaimed his pro-Soviet convictions up to then, why should he be believed now? When had he been lying and when had he been mistaken? When he had declared his enthusiastic attachment to the Bolsheviks, or when he had become a critic of the USSR? For the Kremlin, the fact that an “insider” was rebelling was extremely dangerous. He had to be liquidated morally, to be compromised and discredited. Did Istrati know what awaited him? Yes and no. In 1929, although the opposition had been defeated and Trotsky disembarked in Constantinople, matters were still unclear. The USSR was still an ambivalent country, capable of going either way: either towards a fascistic regime, or towards an amplification of the NEP, a kind of semi-capitalism, following Bukharin, or towards a harsh communist dictatorship, which is what indeed happened. Stalin is getting ready for forced industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture. A nefarious policy, which will leave millions dead in the famine of 1929-1931, a policy which will lead to the Gulag, to the “Great Terror” at the end of the 1930s. Russia is faced with a historical disaster. However, the terrain of 1929 was not as clear-cut as it would be later on. Moreover, the illusions connected to the “revolution” of October 1917 were still powerful everywhere, both in the USSR and in the West. Numerous and influential left-wing intellectuals saw in the USSR the only salvation, the only exit from the crisis of capitalism.

Istrati operated within a political and intellectual climate full of uncertainties. We observe, throughout 1929, his hesitations, insecurity, and about-turns. He makes his mind up with difficulty, changes it, and then starts all over again. He receives contradictory pieces of advice from his entourage. Some warn him not to put himself in a bad light with the Soviets and their fanatics in the West. Others, fewer in number, encourage him. His correspondence with Romain Rolland is dramatic. From Rolland, Istrati was expecting clarification. He sends him the two letters addressed to Gerson, the GPU secretary, in which he had undertaken not to write critically about the USSR. At the end he adds, for Rolland's eyes only: "When I made this commitment, I imagined, in my naivety, that the men of Power are of good faith, that they are unaware of the putrefaction below them, and I believed that it would be sufficient for a powerful and friendly voice to alert them, in order for them to become aware and to take measures. After the 'Rusakov Affair', I became convinced that those in power were aware of the evil that was undermining the Revolution, and that they did not brook any criticism. This situation released me from the commitment I had taken, since there was no longer anything to be expected from those at the top. To proceed cautiously will not mean anything."²³ Rolland answers him: "The letters addressed to the GPU are perfect (I condone them in their entirety). [...] She [Rolland's sister, Madeleine – *author's note*], like myself, thinks that you cannot, that you must not publish them at this moment, and in particular you must not let Boris [Souvarine – *author's note*] or the friends of Serge [Victor – *author's note*] publish them. That would be a terrible, bludgeoning blow by which the wretches would strike at the whole of Russia, under the illusion that they were crushing the putrefaction [...] You have done all that you had to, all that you could. There is nothing more you can do. These pages are holy. They should be conserved in the archives of the eternal Revolution. [...] We still love you and, moreover, we venerate you for what you have written. But do not publish them!... It would not serve the Russian Revolution, but rather the European reactionaries, whose game the opposition blindly play. [...] It is evident that those in power [in the USSR – *author's note*] are too compromised, depend too much on one another, on their material competition, to be able to take account of what you are saying. [...] unfortunately their force is destroyed, there is no one else capable of leading post-revolutionary Russia. It can only hasten the process of putrefaction [...] Your role is to save the flames of heroic idealism from the ruins."²⁴ PANAIT ISTRATI replies impressively, two days later, on 30 May: "I am no longer writing *Vers l'autre flamme*."²⁵

At the end of August 1929, Istrati comes to Romania for the second time. Four years had passed since 1925. Istrati was a different man. In the meantime, he had completed his journey through the USSR. Shortly before taking the train to Bucharest, he leaves the manuscript of *Confessional* at the Rieder publishing house in Paris. The promise made to Rolland is not kept. On 18 August, he is already in Munich. On 20 August, one day before entering Romania at the Curtici border crossing, he writes to Rolland from Budapest: “My friend, I have poured out my anger! During 28 days of sciatica and toothache, I poured out all the hell that was poisoning my life [...] There will be three volumes 1, written by me 2, by V.S. 3, by B. Suv. All provisionally signed under my name.” There were thus to be three books, written by Victor Serge, one of the characters of his book, Boris Souvarine, an expelled communist, and by Istrati himself. In order for the enterprise to produce a reaction, PANAIT ISTRATI was provisionally to sign the three volumes under his own name, since the others were virtually unknown at the time. This gesture clarifies the fact that he knew what he was doing. He did not wish merely to bear witness, he wanted to win the match. It was a kind of campaign, which he knew well how to unleash.

The reason for his presence in Bucharest was not literary. At the beginning of August, a miners strike had taken place in Lupeni. The county prefect, Stefan Razvany, had given the order to fire. Razvany was the brother of the well-known communist Eugen Razvany, the lawyer from Salonta/Oradea. Even if his change of attitude regarding the Kremlin regime had been heard of, Istrati remained a dangerous Bolshevik agitator as far as the Siguranta were concerned. His long trip to the USSR and his repeated declarations of support for the Kremlin made him all the more suspect. The Romanian Communist Party was in a state of collapse. A number of factions were vying for power. One led by Marcel Pauker-Luximin, the other by Vitali Holostenco, nominated general secretary in 1928 by the Kominintern. Arrests and betrayals from within had completely annihilated the PCdR. Not by chance, PANAIT ISTRATI – arriving in Romania right in the midst of this crisis – is suspected of having come to rebuild the PCdR or else to “organize a new Romanian workers’ party”, as a note of the Siguranta claims. The press are also scandalmongers for this information (*Curentul, Universul*). The truth is different, simpler, and emerges from the so-called “clandestine scenario”. It relates to a tragedy. On Sunday 4 August, the miners of Lupeni declare a strike. On 5 August, they occupy the electricity plant and begin to flood the tunnels. The army intervenes; the miners refuse to cease their actions. On 6 August, they are fired on, 21

fall dead. The press extensively describe the event. Istrati quickly makes a decision. On 8 August, he writes to Romain Rolland: "I am going to Romania for the sake of those massacred at Lupeni." He was impressionable by nature and a believer in the "workers' cause". Moreover, he had managed to finish *Confessional for the Defeated*. He leaves Paris, where has been stalked by journalists. The tension around his manuscript increases. There was already talk of the book in editorial offices, cafes, and political and literary circles. Many classed him as a suicide. Perhaps he wished to take account of the advice given by Rolland, who had asked him to leave Paris. There was another argument in favor of going to Romania: he was going to take the side of the workers in the trial of the communists at Timisoara. Then, he wanted to make an enquiry, to write a reportage about the tragedy at Lupeni. By these two gestures, he wanted to counterbalance his anti-Bolshevik attitude. His former comrades' accusation that he had betrayed the "cause" would have been diminished. He thus balanced his criticisms directed against the Kremlin with criticism directed "against the Romanian authorities guilty of the tragedy at Lupeni". He wished to underline that he was on the side of the workers, of the strikers and of the communists standing accused in the trial at Timisoara. Istrati did not want to pass as a traitor of the proletariat, of the USSR, of the revolution. He did not want to go over to the other side of the barricade, "to the bourgeois camp". He wanted to be an "honest critic of the revolution" and the Bolsheviks. A spectacular gesture in favor of the strikers arrested and investigated by the police, of the victims of "bourgeois terror", could show the West, but also the USSR, that he had not changed his options. Another detail in this confused situation. A crossroads. Istrati still maintained many of his old convictions. He had not abandoned his *sui generis* Bolshevism. For him, what he had seen in the USSR was still an authentic revolution, which had unfortunately fallen into the hands of corrupt and incapable leaders. Istrati was still a believer, one of the faithful. The heresy towards which he was now tending caused him much suffering. The break had not yet occurred. This will occur later, after the launch of the campaign of denigration conducted by Moscow. Only then will he understand the nature of the regime led by Stalin and sever the umbilical cord. In the summer of 1929, however, he still finds himself at a crossroads. He had not emancipated himself from communism, even if he was preparing to become a heretic.

Reaching the Romanian border (on 21 August) he is met by the Sigurantza. "On 21 August, on international train No 24, the writer PANAIT ISTRATI entered the country, com-

ing from Paris, together with his wife, with destination the town of Braila, where he will stay for six weeks. He possesses certificate 930 issued on 2 May by our legation in Paris.”²⁶ Here is another note: “Department of General Security, Brigade IV. Today, 28 August, he left the locality on the 8:40 express train, with the destination Timisoara. The scope of this journey is in connection with the trial of the communists, brought on the occasion of the disorder at the funeral of the communist Fonaghy, deceased in hospital at Cimpina, and transported by automobile to Timisoara. From Timisoara he is going to Lupeni in the Jiu Valley, where he will make contact with the workers and will inform himself about the incidents that have taken place, with a view to an account that he is going to publish in pamphlets. After completing these enquires, he is going to return to Bucharest and stay there for a couple of days, after which he will go to Braila, his birthplace, where he will stay for two weeks. On 5 October, he is leaving the country with the destination Paris.” As we can see, the agent is very well informed as to Istrati’s plans. The writer is shadowed, watched, his correspondence is opened. “General Department of Police No. 2751/29 August. NOTE. The Timisoara Regional Police Inspectorate reports: after being given permission by Mr. Chief Prosecutor Nicolau to make contact and speak with those arrested on 7 April [when the incidents connected to the funeral of Fonaghy occurred – *author’s note*] and after introducing himself to them, Mr. PANAIT ISTRATI communicated to them that he had been sent by the French Government at the request of our government in order to make contact and to verify the disagreements between the workers and capitalists in Romania. In discussions, the aforementioned said that, in fact, since he arrived in the country, he had ascertained that in Romania the working class is terrorized by the capitalists and had become convinced that this country is administered by bandits, promising those under arrest that on his return to France he would inform public opinion over there about the terror being exerted in these trials and about what had happened at Lupeni, when he leaves the country he will assist the workers and will discredit, as is only warranted, this country and its leaders. [...] Before leaving the country, the aforementioned is going to inform Minister VAIDA-VOIEVOD of the latest events. As the latter gentleman, through promises made to those under arrest, is to a large extent agitating the spirits of the workers, compromising the leadership of the country and the entire administration. He has even dared to defame our Romanian women, saying that they are depraved. We have been informed that tomorrow he wishes to make contact with workers’ leaders at various factories, something which is against our interests and will produce discontent in the ranks of the workers, encouraging them to continue the disturbances which have been repressed only with great difficulty up to now. The trial continues

and will probably last another two days. We shall report in the morning to the County Prefect Dr. TIGAREANU who is similarly informed. We ask that you should order the measures which we are going to take.”²⁷ Istrati takes part in the debates at the trial in Timisoara. On 7 April 1929, a conflict had arisen between the authorities and participants at the congress of the communist United Unions. It was a provocation engineered by Komintern agitators. The body of Ion Fonaghy, a detainee from the Doftana Prison, is brought to Timisoara during the congress. There is a confrontation between police and demonstrators and shots are fired. There are dozens of arrests. “What happened at Timisoara should come as no surprise. Hidden instruments machinated everything. [...] Everything was calculated. The stupidity of the police and the magistrates, always ready to light the fuse, counted for little. The communist leaders even thought of the consequences. The break-up, the terror [...] But this is precisely what they were after. Moscow has no need of unions, of democratic workers’ legislation. Moscow knows one thing and one thing only: there must be agitation at any cost – even at the price of innocent workers’ blood; and as for the monitors with millions of *chernovetz* [money – *author’s note*], the only thing that suits them is clandestine activity. It’s very profitable.”²⁸ “... A ludicrous police provocation”, notes Istrati (*Lupta* [The Struggle], 26 September). Against the background of these events, Istrati meets Lucretiu Patrascanu, the defense lawyer, who offers him information and asks him to intervene on behalf of his clients. Which is precisely what Istrati does.

PANAIT ISTRATI arrives in Lupeni a month after the tragic events. On the night of 7/8 September, he stays in a hotel there. The next day, he visits the victims’ widows, visits the hospital where there were still many wounded, meets the miners’ leaders. The authorities take special measures, fearing new disturbances. There is a state of siege in the Jiu Valley. Additional squads of gendarmes are allocated to the area. Before traveling to the Jiu Valley, Istrati is received in Bucharest by ministers Alexandru Vaida-Voievod and Ion Mihalache. He obtains a free-access permit to the area. We know his impressions from a series of eight articles published in *Lupta* [The Struggle]. The “enquiry” undertaken by Istrati doubles the official enquiry. He does not have time sufficiently to inform himself, to gather impressions. His articles express revulsion at what has happened. Sometimes he admonishes, he threatens that he will inform western public opinion about what he has seen when he returns. From the series of articles published in *Lupta*, we transcribe a few notes about communism,

a subject that preoccupies him: “I too believed in such [revolutionary – *author’s note*] enthusiasm, like so many heroes mixed up with the bandits, fanatics and bootlickers of which the as-yet-unwritten history of Bolshevism is full. Today, however, the hoaxed and bloodied masses believe in nothing except the power of their own arms.”²⁹ “[...] It is a question of war. The communists have declared war on the capitalist bourgeoisie, throwing the pacifist, legal methods of social democracy onto the scrap-heap. [...] The bourgeoisie had the right to defend its existence. And it did so, positioning itself very comfortably on the same field of illegality to which its mortal enemy had made resort, going beyond even the right to self-defense, tying the tin can of communism to the tail of all those who inconvenienced it, imprisoning, beating up, killing people. But the communists do not only use illegality in their struggle to lay hold of power. In non-fascist countries in particular, they agitate within the limits of the law. And thence one from two: either the law is for all, and in this case the communists are permitted to profit by it, or it is not for all, in which case one should say so decisively, eliminating any trace of legal communist agitation: newspapers, meetings, economic or political organizations. [...] and I shall reveal these things [that he has discovered – *author’s note*] to the eyes of the West, because the governments here get away with too much... determined as they are to do everything in their power to create fertile ground for Bolshevism.”³⁰

Naturally, rumors and suspicions regarding Istrati’s journey to Romania are circulating. Some are fuelled from Paris, in the journalist sphere, others from Moscow. On 31 August, a report of the Sigurantza cites a news item from a Russian language newspaper published in Paris, *Poslednaya Novosti*, according to which “Istrati is recommended for preparation of renewal of diplomatic relations between Romania and the Soviet Union.”³¹ Other rumors speak of the mission he is supposed to have been given by the Komintern to organize a new workers party, which would replace or unify the various conflicting factions.³² The Security is to follow whether Istrati makes contact with these groups and their leaders. He does not.

On 18 September 1929, a confidential report, sent to the General Police Department, reveals that on 13 September a parcel, containing “72 typewritten loose leaves in French”, was received at the Braila Post Office. “[...] from the summary examination that

has been made it results that these loose leaves are part of a work by the writer Panait Istrati, regarding his visits to various towns in Georgia and Soviet Russia and in which he documents the state of affairs in that country, the political turmoil and the means of organizing the Russian proletariat in plants, factories and construction sites etc.”³³ Istrati was thinking of the book that was going to be published, *Confessional for the Defeated*. He had asked the publisher to send the proofs to Romania, in order to hasten publication of the book. Istrati stayed at home for a few days, reading the proofs. He might have waited until he returned to Paris. It is interesting that he had taken precautions for the operation not to be detected by the secret services. The envelope arrives in Timisoara, in the name of a friend, who in his turn sends it not to Istrati’s address but to that of another friend in Braila, who is to deliver it. It is possible that Istrati was afraid not of the Sigurantza but of the GPU, who were interested in reading the book in advance and attempting, as in other situations, to halt its publication. On 25 September, the General Police Department writes: “It would have been interesting for the Department to have copies of the letters addressed to the writer, or at least the excerpted findings made in Soviet Russia.”³⁴

The Braila Police inspectors send daily reports to Bucharest regarding Istrati’s movements and conversations. Here is an excerpt for 29 September: “PANAIT ISTRATI shows himself to be a convinced partisan of the workers who suffer due to the social organization today and affirms that he will support, through his writing, this matter permanently but alone, isolated, unregimented by any party or left-wing or extreme left-wing group, of which he has a horror due to their narrow spirit and the compromises they accept. Thus he criticizes the Romanian Social Democratic Party which has made a compromise with the government, as well as the communist regime in Russia [...] which he accuses of tyranny and narrowness of views.”³⁵ On 27 September, Istrati holds a conference in the local theatre. Nothing has remained of the pro-Bolshevik, inflammatory discourse of the speech given in the lecture room in Athens. “Finally, speaking about what has been happening in Soviet Russia, which is to say the behavior of the leaders, saying that they have done nothing short of banishing one social class and installing another, which pays no heed to even the most elementary humanitarian notions, proceeding more tyrannically with the people than the class deposed.”³⁶

Istrati's attempts to appear in public are obstructed by various groups. On 6 October, he was due to speak in the Tomis Room on Vacaresti Avenue, a traditional left-wing meeting place. The socialist leader L. Ghelerter was organizing the conference. "Ghelerter thought to obtain a victory thanks to the Social Democratic Party and thanks to PANAIT ISTRATI [...] a writer of great talent, but ... a great muddlehead. He has remained the same muddlehead as before the war. Those of us who knew him then will not deny this. Moreover, he is a man of no character. He was in the service of the Soviets – today he rejects them without having the courage to tell the whole truth about what he saw in Russia. The motive? He does not want to burn all his bridges with Moscow."³⁷ The Istrati conference did not take place. Agitators belonging to other socialist groups, as well as nationalist students, protest inside and outside the auditorium. Police agents stand by passively. Nevertheless, they bundle Istrati out of the theatre and protect him when the situation gets nasty. "The aforementioned PANAIT ISTRATI was notified by the Prefecture of the Bucharest Police that he must leave the country on 2 October this year. On that date, PANAIT ISTRATI, in two automobiles, transported his luggage, which was searched, to the station ... The aforementioned and his wife have left the country..." At the Gara de Nord, there are likewise disturbances. Istrati takes the Orient Express to Paris. In the evening, he crosses the border at Curtici, as noted in another report by the Sigurantza. He had received news that *Confessional for the Defeated* was about to appear in the bookshops.

The Bucharest press treated him with suspicion; his recent past was not forgotten. Nichifor Crainic: "PANAIT ISTRATI has reappeared in Romania with his eternal hobby-horse: the persecuted masses. This too is a profession which we all know today. It has been practiced by ... Guernet, Torres and Barbusse, the famous Masonic comrades of Panaitache, impresarios of the 'venerable', no less famous Costa-Foru. You know the story: they came, they investigated us, they left, they cursed us for the whole world to hear. Romania was depicted as a country of gallows and bandit officials. PANAIT ISTRATI too has practiced the trade of 'defender of humanity'. He investigated us; he cursed us thoroughly, with worldwide resonance, protected by his great, and justified, prestige as a famous and fashionable writer. [...] I saw him in Brussels, at the PEN Club congress. In front of writers assembled from all over the world, he gave a lecture – about Romania, naturally; slanders, curses, lies, outrages. Our country was presented as an immense inquisition from whose cellars any innocent man would emerge tortured and disfigured – if he emerged at all! [...] PANAIT IS-

TRATI then spent a year in Soviet Russia borne in triumph and fed on the golden apples of the communist Paradise [...] Returning to Paris from Marxist Russia, Panait gave fresh declarations to the press, in which, this time, he renounced communism, cursed the Leninist regime [...] Such is the man!”³⁸ Pamfil Seicaru writes: “The articles ‘What Lupeni conceals’ and ‘The Jiu Valley’ are a disgusting accumulation of insolence, intended to disfigure the majesty of a drama provoked by politicizing that became converted to communist methods of agitation. [...] Panait Istrati’s articles have convinced us that apart from pederast confessions, the narrator is a little thug with stumpy fingers who strains to appear violent, who yelps so as to appear rebellious. [...] Conventional, mediocre, vulgar and stupid – such is the impression given by Panait Istrati’s articles. Poor humble poverty of the workers, how many pens sully you! [...] But did PANAIT ISTRATI really come to our country in order to paint the blood shed by the miners of the Jiu Valley in the somber colors of tragedy? [...] PANAIT ISTRATI obeys orders; he did not come at the call of any proletarian solidarity... Who are those who have assigned Panait Istrati? Who is so fervently interested in ‘what is happening here with us’? And what occult, irresistible, tyrannical force sent Panait Istrati, the poor little poet of deflowered bottoms? [...] Here is what Panait was assigned to present to the mysterious masters who sent him: the Romanian authorities and army as beasts crazed by alcohol and thirsty for warm, human blood. ‘Those who have the right to rise up and to set the country ablaze’, writes the servant of Racovski. [...] What a dangerous confusion – what an encouragement to all kinds of outrage! PANAIT ISTRATI the lyrical narrator of sexual perversions, the Marcel Proust of beer vendors, investigates us. Panait, Panait, was there any need to prostitute your writing, after you had defiled your body with so much voluptuous publicity?”³⁹ Finally, from the *Universul* newspaper of 30 September: “These are the words by which Panait Istrati, the slanderer of Romania and protégé of Minister Vaida-Voievod, cynically adopts – in one of the enquiries he has published about ‘Lupeni’ – the sad role of tool of anti-Romanian interest. But not even the cynicism of these confessions, nor the shameless insults, with which, in the same enquiries, this sinister character has slung mud at the army, magistracy, police and the government of this country itself, could prompt the order of the interior minister to withdraw the blessing for him to continue his enquiry, at the same time as the hospitality which he saw fit mock”. Istrati’s isolation in Bucharest is a bad omen and foretells what awaits him in Paris.

On 1 October (while PANAIT ISTRATI is still in Romania) “L’Affaire Roussakov ou l’Union Soviétique” (a text included in *Confessionals*) is published in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. Romain Rolland reacts thus: “I am consternated,” he writes one week later, on 7 October. “Nothing of all that has been written for the last ten years against Russia, on the part of its inveterate enemies, has done so much harm as these pages will do. [...] The only ones who will gain any advantage from this crazed revenge: reactionaries. How could you not have realized?” Rolland again: “Istrati, I would have liked to spare you from this ill-fated error... Now it is too late! Withdraw from politics. You can bring nothing but misfortunes!” The question would be, to whom? Istrati replies on 18 October: “We no longer have the same knowledge of Russia, nor the same feelings towards our political friends (I might say even towards the working class, as I saw it there, crushed by my countrymen). You hold me responsible for this act, as if it alone were capable of organizing a capitalist crusade against the USSR. I am responsible only for a certain weakening of faith at the heart of the International. This is what I wanted and I should like to go all the way, annihilating this ‘communist’ party chock-full of charlatans.” Rolland’s reaction is extremely negative: “I refuse you my name [...] My disapproval is net” (20 October 1929) Istrati writes to him, resigned: “I was expecting your refusal. I accept it. [...] But if you are determined to sacrifice the best people in Russia today, not by defending the bad, but quite simply by refusing to make any distinction, taking Russia as a homogenous whole – then know that you are, without willing it, adhering yourself to the destruction of hope and the ideal in the world, which is now being perpetrated, in Russia and in the International, by a generation of careerists.” Rolland replies (25 October): “[...] I know very well that any revolutionary government swims in blood. Nor do I like bloodied hands (neither those of Danton, Marat, Trotsky, Lenin etc.).” Istrati writes from Strasbourg (three days later, on 28 October): “I shall not hide from you my amazement at seeing you become so officially Soviet. Or perhaps it is because you think me an anti-Soviet? [...] The question might be put to me now that I have returned from Russia. ‘Were you not at all aware of what was going on over there before you left? For everyone knew you were a Bolshevizer. [...]?’ I answer NO! [...] I know, today, that a majority of people from my class came to power, that they immediately started to stuff themselves, that they became distanced from the masses, allowing all those who were not on their side to die of hunger.”⁴⁰

The attack against Istrati is launched by Moscow. In its September-October 1929 issue, *Vestnik inostrannoi literaturny* publishes “Le grand bazar des idéologies”, signed by Bruno Jasienski. In a polemic against the interview given to Barbusse’s magazine *Monde*, the author speaks of “Istrati the renegade” and about a slanderous campaign against the Soviet Union. On 2 November, *Vechernyaya Moskva* publishes “The True Face of Panait Istrati”, signed by Bella Illyes. It is a harsh attack, the subject is no longer limited to Soviet literary life, it moves into the political. There is talk here of the fact that Istrati might be an agent of the Romanian secret police and that he has accepted to create an anticommunist party. Istrati is a “writer-adventurer”. Bella Illyes recalls the leftist stance of Istrati and reproaches him that he was always dissatisfied with the money he received in the Soviet Union. Illyes’ conclusion: “Istrati quite simply wished to sell the USSR. But since in the USSR people cannot be bought, Istrati found other buyers – the enemies of the USSR.” We shall find the same accusations in 1935, signed by H. Barbusse. One week later, on 9 November, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* publishes a letter from a group of Soviet writers, including Leonid Leonov, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Valentin Katayev etc., which warns the West to be on its guard and is in fact a denunciation. There is a list of the names of a number of writers who have viewed the USSR sympathetically: Theodore Dreiser, John Don Passos, George Duhamel, Stefan Zweig, H. Barbusse, Ludwig Renn. Then comes the denunciation proper. Panait Istrati, “whose very name sounds shameful” and who had come to the USSR as a “Determined apologist of the October Revolution”, has profited from all the privileges “of his situation, which were offered him in good faith and in abundance. [...] He considers himself a ‘revolutionary’ but he is an ‘adventurer’. Istrati has demonstrated how convictions can change simply by crossing a border. After he had taken everything he could get, he abandoned his ‘country of adoption’ with the same ease, as can be seen, with which he once abandoned the ‘putrid West’, whence he has now returned.”⁴¹ *Linkskurve*, a left-wing publication, takes up the accusation: “With what rapidity Istrati has changed his point of view! It seems to us that the opinions of this independent left-wing intellectual depend too often on the opinions of those paying him.”⁴² The line of attack for the campaign is to discredit Istrati. It was not a case of a crisis of conscience, of a lived experience, of the fact that he had understood that the Bolshevik revolution was something other than the Kremlin pretended. Istrati was portrayed as an adventurer, a mercenary who, dissatisfied with how he had been treated and paid, had sold his services to the enemies of the USSR, the western bourgeoisie. Behind the scenes, we discover Agitprop, the propaganda section of the Komintern and GPU. Newspapers financed by the latter take part (in France, *L’Humanité*, *Monde*), as well as subservient

intellectuals and fellow travelers. There are brief lulls in the campaign, but it will not cease until after the death of the author. Istrati is mentioned in pro-Moscow left-wing circles only in a negative context. Otherwise, his name is ignored. It is a conspiracy of silence, compounded by repeated campaigns of defamation.

Under these circumstances, Istrati prefers to return home. *Confessional for the Defeated* can be found in large Bucharest bookshops from January 1930. It is a refuge. Present in the political, newspaper and cultural media of the West, in Paris especially, where he had been launched and had achieved literary fame, he could have defended himself. By returning to Romania, did he give up? Is he overwhelmed, defeated? In any case, even at home he finds no peace. The Sigurantza continue to keep him under surveillance, suspecting him of communist activities, as is revealed by the reports in the archive. The polemics surrounding him, connected to his change of attitude to the USSR, were well known, but might be a diversion, they might be a legend created by the Soviet special services in order for him to operate more effectively as an agent of influence. In Bessarabia, the authorities ban sale of *Confessional* (the Romanian language edition, published by *Cugetarea*) in March. A few days later, at the beginning of April, a telegram from the police at Curtici signals that “he has entered the country on express train no. 24 [...] declaring that he is going to Bucharest”. The next day, 6 April 1930, a note from the Police and Sigurantza reveals that “the agitator Panait Istrati, former honorary member of the USSR [*sic*!], has been expelled from the Third International, due to his attitude towards the latter, which culminated in the issue of the volume entitled *Confessional for the Defeated/Soviet Russia*”.⁴³ The same note recapitulates his trip of 1929 and his relations with Dr Leon Ghelerter, the president of the small socialist workers’ party. Likewise, the report records his daily movements. It is signaled that “he appears to be an inveterate enemy of the Soviet regime and describes the life of the Russian people in the blackest colors. PANAIT ISTRATI upholds that if the borders of Russia were not guarded with such severity by the Soviet authorities, a large part of the populace would emigrate to other countries.”⁴⁴ “PANAIT ISTRATI recently received from France a voluminous mailbag among which there are a few letters from Russia posted to his address in France, by the writer VICTOR SERGE (pen name), who is in Moscow with his family and of whom, PANAIT ISTRATI, makes mention in his recent book ‘The Rusakov Affair’ [*sic*!]. In these letters Victor Serge gives a detailed description of economic life in Russia, and in order to characterize better the state of affairs in that country, he expresses himself in the words ‘When you were

in Russia in 1928, it was a paradise, but today it is a hell'. PANAIT ISTRATI, reading the letters, remarked 'In 1928, when I was in Russia, it was already a hell, so what must it be like today?'"⁴⁵ On 17 June, a report reveals that he has not made contact with any suspect left-wing organizations, that he has refused to give any more lectures in union circles, that he receives 6,000 French Francs every month from Raider publishers in Paris, that he is ill and is going to Compiling to take the air and for treatment. Other notes record the foreigners who visit him. Arriving in Bucharest, he meets Nina Arbore, Dr Ghelerter, George Costa-Foru. On 10 July, when he leaves Romania, also via Curtici, a note demands that "the person in question immediately be notified to the Department on his return"⁴⁶ The conscientious functionary does so on 17 July. Istrati goes to Braila, comes to Bucharest, whence he goes to Compiling etc. He receives foreign guests, publishes some works in the press, is signaled in reports by the Sigurantza, looks after his health. Istrati gives the impression of a man who cannot find his place. Which is true.

He provokes, like it or not, disturbances, debate. He does not have the peace he desired, if he ever desired such a thing. One example: in January 1931, at the conference in Jassy, the followers of A.C. Cuza and militant communists separately agitate to prevent him from speaking. The police take drastic measures to maintain order. Here is an excerpt from the Cuzist manifesto disseminated in the city: "A new crusade by the 'advocates of humanity' is venting its fury in our native Romanian lands. The communist INTERNATIONAL, hand in hand with occult freemasonry, the author of all the infernal plots to destroy Christianity, royalty and constructive nationalism, has this year sent the most odious scoundrel, the abortion who answers to the name PANAIT ISTRATI. In Jassy, the pederast cur was embraced with the utmost warmth by his brothers in Judas [...] The miscreant who abroad made the most injurious slurs on our dear monarchy, our church and Romanianism in general, the scoundrel who, in collusion with all the internationals in the world, has caused the country the greatest evil is now coming to Jassy, sent here by occult Judaeo-Masonry, under the disguise of literature, to apologize for destructive communism [...] he thinks that in Yiddified and Masonized Jassy there is no longer a Romanian consciousness to nail him to the post of infamy [...] We shall give the miscreant a lesson."⁴⁷

Nor do the communist treat him any better. Alexandru Sahia writes on 30 January 1932, in the publication *Floare de foc* [Flame Flower] (director Sandu Tudor): “What a great scoundrel you are, comrade Istrati! I remember your glory days, when it was sufficient for you to announce a book for all the western publishers to fall over themselves with offers. What was this down to? Talent? Let’s be honest! It was the red trampoline that bounced you so amazingly high. The two fat cows, Racovski and Trotsky, proffered you their teats to suck your fill, like a frisky colt. Racovski, representative of the Soviets in Paris at the time, was happy to meet the comrade again; he offered you rubles. Away in Russia, recommended by Racovski to Trotsky – the latter espied in you a fresh element for his permanent revolution movement. But Trotsky has been thrown overboard in the meantime, Racovski sunk in Astrakhan. And in Russia, formidable industrialization and reconstruction of the economy begin in earnest. Who would think that in a corner there still exists Panait, the bard of the ‘taverns’! But things might still have been confused if the one who today curses communism had not come up with meddlesome financial claims [...] As his reward, Panait, a follower of Trotsky, was shown to the Nistru. The Bolsheviks were unaware of any way to pay you except with bread, the same as any other worker, and on top of it all they gave you the freedom to roam. You couldn’t understand. You refused indignantly; you wanted money and blood. You feel good now [...] among the Danube cesspools, providing for the King’s dictatorship... lover of tyrants.” On 15 November 1932, *Santier* [Building Site], a left-wing weekly run by socialist Ion Pas, translator of the first version of *Confessinal*, published an article by Sandu Eliad (himself a man of the left, a journalist, film director, the discoverer of singer Maria Tanase, and later one of the founders of the “Friends of the USSR” association): “Panait Istrati: A Globetrotter of Beliefs”. It is a personal attack: “PANAIT ISTRATI has flown all the banners of beliefs according to the fashion of the time, according to how much he expected to get paid.” Another attack came from a friend of his youth, also a communist, who lived in Paris and whom he also used to see at the USSR embassy, hosted by Racovski. On 7 February 1932, his old friend Alecu Constantinescu breaks with him, publishing in Detroit, in the Romanian communist weekly *Desteptarea* [Awakening], a long article entitled “A necessary explanation. My friendship with Panait Istrati”. It is a late reaction to *Confessinal for the Defeated*. “I have known Istrati since 1909. During the period when the union and socialist movement headquarters were situated on Victory Avenue, opposite the White Church, a tall, slim young man, with a greedy mouth but gentle, obedient eyes, introduced himself to me...” Constantinescu wanted to make the decorator, who had only four years of primary schooling, into a theoretician of Marxism. He introduces him to left-wing circles, discusses

with him, helps him to get to Paris, and initiates him into the mysteries of the doctrine. Then their paths separate. Constantinescu adheres to Bolshevism, becomes head of the clandestine movement in Romania, is condemned to death, arrested, escapes, emigrates to Russia, then lives in Paris, as a Komintern agent. Istrati goes to Switzerland in 1916. He too is full of enthusiasm for what is happening in Russia, for Bolshevism. Before becoming a well-known writer, he attempts suicide. Istrati, the 'born revolutionary' (his words), could find nothing better to do in Nice than to slit his throat when four or five white armies surround Soviet Russia, ready to slice into the living flesh of the Russian people. Istrati is also guilty of revering Trotsky. "Trotsky is the only leader capable of illuminating the opinion of the masses", he believes, while Constantinescu believes that Trotsky tried to obfuscate it. For Istrati, "these communists are inferior beings who have lost any notion of individual liberty, puppets moved by the strings of the Komintern and the Russian Party". We discover that Istrati threw his French communist party membership card into the Seine when Trotsky was expelled from the Komintern. His old friend disapproves of him and says that he is a "thoughtless anarchist, for anarchy at any price." He also reproaches his opinion that there is no proletarian class awareness, writing of the latter that it is "the mere appetite to get their hands on the bourgeoisie's turkeys and geese! Nothing more. PANAIT ISTRATI could see nothing more in Russia and Marx." And he concludes: "The difficult times through which my class are passing has opened a gulf between myself and the writer Istrati."⁴⁸ Their split did not prevent Alecu Constantinescu writing to Istrati, who was in Filaret Hospital, one month later: "[...] for all the deep differences between our views and the bitterness your apolitical capers have provoked in me, the news that you too have arrived in the last palace of Gheorghiu [Stefan Gheorghiu, militant socialist, friend of Istrati in his youth, died of tuberculosis in Filaret Hospital in 1914 – *author's note*] and perhaps even in the same bed, has touched me [...] I have received the parcel of newspapers and thank you." Further on, the text seems to be rather a secret, ciphered message, such as those which old, clandestine friends used to send each other.⁴⁹

In 1935, the anti-Istrati campaign erupts once more. This time, it is connected to the trial of a university professor from Cernauti, Petre Constantinescu-Iasi. After his arrest, in November 1934, the Komintern organizes the usual agitation. The Moscow-financed press comes to the defense of the arrested professor, claiming that he is not a communist agent, but an anti-fascist intellectual. Various (crypto-)Bolshevik associations from Europe join the

campaign. Naturally, a group of “independent” intellectuals come to Romania in order to make an enquiry. At their head, we find a well-known figure, architect Francis Jourdain (1876-1958). He is the vice-president of the “Les amis de l’URSS” association. In 1927, he is part, together with PANAIT ISTRATI and others, of the French delegation that attends the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution in Moscow. The French Communist Party daily *L’Humanité* (31 October 1927) even announced on its front page “PANAIT ISTRATI et Francis Jourdain à Moscou”, in an article illustrated with color photographs of the two. They knew each other well. After 1929, ties between them are broken. On 14 January 1935, Petre Constantinescu-Iasi is released to await trial on bail. On the same day, the French delegation arrives in Chisinau. On 17 January 1935, PANAIT ISTRATI publishes in *Curentul* an “Open letter to my friend Francis Jourdain, vice-president of the French Friends of the USSR, and currently their moral delegate in Romania.” A few excerpts: “[...] you should understand how unsuitable it is for a man of your moral worth to play the role of communist investigator in a communist affair, a role you have accepted to play in the country most exposed to communist terror. [...] You admit that in the investigation you are making you are accompanied by two Soviet stooges of more than dubious morality [...] you should ask yourself whether it is honest to patronize moral investigations only when a communist is arrested in a bourgeois country, and on the contrary to remain tight-lipped whenever, in Soviet Russia, legions of young idealists are exiled to the icy wastes and summarily executed, idealists that have included my personal friends [...] Professor Constantinescu-Iasi was neither exiled nor martyred, but was quite simply arrested for communist agitation [...] I presume that you are not so naïve as to believe that the situation in Romania, here at the Nistru, is the situation of France, between the Rhine and the Atlantic, or that the bourgeois government could have been moved by this whole sentimental comedy [Petre Constantinescu-Iasi’s hunger strike – *author’s note*], when they have to deal with an adversary that promises to put them up against the wall on the very day a Soviet regime is installed here. I read in the papers today that, arriving in Chisinau, you had nothing better to do than make contact with two communist Jews, which unleashed the legitimate fury of those nationalist strata that have a thousand reasons not to share your sympathy for the communist regime. Well, dear Jourdain, you will not know the consequences of this exploit of yours, because you are going away, protected by those Romanian soldiers which the theology professor’s comrades shoot year after year on the Nistru and who don’t really know what to make of you when they are fighting communist banditry.” Istrati resumes two days later, in *Universul*: “I no longer be-

lieve in communism – which, especially for the defeated, I regard as the greatest danger that threatens humanity today.”

These two articles unleash a frenzied campaign in *Monde*, a publication financed by the Komintern. But before that, in Bucharest, Mihail Sebastian writes of Istrati in *Rampa*: “Rhetorical, sentimental thinking, quite gross in its theories, but lyrical, animated, made to warm simple hearts. [...] Bolshevik or Nazi, Mr. Istrati is innocent. [...] What Mr. Istrati says on the subject of political doctrine is hilarious, pretentious, mediocre and – let us say it clearly – stupid [...] The theory of a semiliterate, limited man, a closed mind.”⁵⁰ Mihail Sebastian was not lacking in left-wing sympathies. Sahia, in *Bluze albastre*, 1 July 1932, sharply reminds him of his communist sympathies, already abandoned at that date, and the fact that he had become a member of the bar on the recommendation of two communist lawyers. Sebastian had a marked awareness of his status as a Jew. As such, he was disturbed by Istrati’s appurtenance to the *Crusade of Romanianism*. The attack in *Rampa* may be a coincidence, not necessarily an episode in the anti-Istrati campaign.

The leader of this campaign was Henri Barbusse, director of *Monde*. Barbusse was a militant communist. A Kremlin favorite involved in all the Komintern’s agitation and propaganda activities in Europe. He was to be found more often in Moscow than in France. His relationship with Istrati dated from 1919, when the Romanian had addressed to him a letter, “Lettre d’un ouvrier à Henri Barbusse”, published in *La Fenille* in Geneva. In the 1920s, the two collaborated. In 1928, Barbusse publishes “Istrati est des nôtres”, in defense of Istrati, attacked for anti-Sovietism in the German communist press. After publication of the *Vers l’autre flamme* trilogy, the two part ways. The new anti-Istrati campaign is launched under the heading “Les victoires du capitalisme” in *Monde*, with an article signed by Francis Jourdain himself: “Réponse à Panaït Istrati”, dated 1 February 1935.⁵¹ A few quotations: Since we arrived in Romania, the reactionary press has treated my comrades and myself as agents provocateurs, thugs disguised as ‘intellectuals’, OFF WITH THE MASK! it cries [...] You [PANAIT ISTRATI –*author’s note*] willingly lend them the support of your talent, you place at their disposal the authority granted to you by your supposed acquaintance with us [...] since you are afraid that, from an excess of modesty and discretion, I might forget to tell your anti-Soviet government that I am an active friend of the USSR, then you pre-empt me, with a gen-

erous and chivalrous initiative, presenting me as the vice-president of an association whose activity is banned in your country, and whose members your fascist friends have undertaken to exterminate [...] Sincerely, such sentimentalism (?) might naturally have forced a number of errors: BUT NOT CAPITULATION. I no longer believe in the sincerity of your disordered ardor. I do not incriminate you for what you were unable to be, for what you in any case have never pretended to be: A MARXIST. I impute to you that you are not what you claim to be: a rebel, a refractory. Rebellious, braggart but sincere, you would have wept for admiration before the courage and abnegation of the likes of Dimitroff, Thaelmann, Rakosi – likewise before the likes of Constantinescu-Iasi, at whom you bark like a cur. [...] Anarchist, rebel, unyielding? Let's be serious! Patriot, anti-Semite, fascist!" In the same issue, Louis Dolivet publishes "Le loup devenou mouton ou Panaït Istrati fasciste" (The wolf turned into a lamb or PANAIT ISTRATI the fascist). There follow others – author Charles Vidrac and lawyer J. Ferucci (the latter of whom comes to Bucharest) under the title "Le cas Panaït Istrati". The subject is the same, Istrati's fascism. "You are neither a democrat nor a communist. All that is left is for you to be a fascist.", J. Ferucci tells him. In a long article for *La Commune* (March 1935), entitled "Un traître", Vladimir Pozner reminds Istrati of his erstwhile opinions about the USSR and publishes a letter sent to Francis Jourdain in 1928, from near Moscow, in which the Romanian is very critical of the West and displays his enthusiasm for the USSR. "[...] friends, believe steadfastly in the red star that rises over the horizon of communist humanity!", wrote Istrati then. After returning from the USSR, Istrati became a "a professional of oaths, a recidivist of good intentions, a hysterical man of letters, he declaims, he foams at the mouth, he spits out his lungs". Pozner accuses him of Trotskyism and fascism: "The ambivalence did not last an eternity. There followed a brutal descent into chauvinism, anti-Semitism, fascism: the 'other' flame' of Panaït Istrati". Istrati is a "corpse". We shall also encounter this double accusation, of Trotskyism and fascism, in the trials of the Great Terror.

The most significant text of the campaign is signed by Henri Barbusse, on 22 February: "Le Haïdouk de la Sigurantza". We also find here the themes with which we have been dealing in this book: collaboration with the Security, denunciation, betrayal and money. Thus, Istrati is an agent of the Sigurantza and became a critic of the USSR for financial motives. Barbusse writes that "PANAIT ISTRATI made his debut in life as a poor man. Crushed by social injustice, needy, a vagabond, porter, vendor of postcards and itinerant photogra-

pher, one fine day he was washed up with his belly empty and his literature drowned, on the Côte d'Azur." After being saved by Rolland, "he knew satiety, fame, almost glory [...] moreover, in our half of humanity [the communist half – *author's note*], we saluted him as a rebel." Then Istrati, writes Barbusse, referring to *Confessional for the Defeated*, published books which did not live up to the hopes placed in him. And he adds: "The decline of PANAIT ISTRATI as a writer and the decline of PANAIT ISTRATI as a man are not two different stories, but one and the same story. For him, the man has ended up demolishing the artist." The two had known each other for almost fifteen years. What he recalls now, in 1935, is that "Istrati was infatuated and displayed an air of superiority, that he hated Gorky because he had been compared to him and he earned more money. In any case, Istrati used to talk only about himself and about money." "The dithyrambic praises of the USSR [...] the solemn oath [...] to be buried in Soviet soil" were nothing more than a business deal for Istrati. Barbusse tells us that Istrati told a mutual friend that if the USSR had treated him better, he would have had a different attitude. Naturally, Barbusse does not tell us who has given him this information. He knew perfectly well that VOKS, Agitprop, Komintern and the GPU paid cash for the many image-building services that various journalists and writers agreed to perform for the Soviet Union. He himself received stipends from Soviet funds, and he was adept at making propaganda and taking part in campaigns such as the one launched against Istrati. Istrati too had received large sums in royalties for the many editions of his books translated into Russian. He had also received money for articles and interviews. The Russians had paid for his hotels, train fares, meals etc. for the entire duration of his trip. This is true, but it did not prevent him, once he had become aware of what was happening in the USSR, from keeping his distance, even if he knew that he would lose all these advantages. Barbusse did not do likewise, and remained until his death, in August 1935, on the payroll of the Komintern.

After finishing with the accusations regarding money, Barbusse passes on to accusations regarding morality. He claims that, at Lupeni in 1929, Istrati took part in a "government investigation", he traveled around with official investigators, he was in agreement with the authorities that ordered the miners to be fired on and were guilty of the massacre of the union that called the strike. Denunciation, slander and blatant lies were part of the techniques frequently used by the Komintern when some one had to be destroyed. Barbusse manipulated them dexterously and unscrupulously. Then, Istrati is supposed to have taken

part at a congress of the (communist) United Unions in 1932 and to have demanded that it should be outlawed and a large number of its militants arrested. Furthermore, Istrati is supposed to have denounced to the press a number of communists who were living clandestinely in Braila and played the “role of provocateur”. The Security made many arrests, writes Barbusse, after these denunciations, approved by Istrati in an article for *Curentul*. The episode is entirely invented. For six months, continues Barbusse, “Istrati has been officially attached to a faction of the Iron Guard, an armed, pogromist and terrorist faction, controlled by the Hitlerite government.” Barbusse mentions that the Iron Guard assassinated prime-minister I. Gh. Duca. Istrati belongs to the Mihai Stelescu group and is one of the group’s three leaders. He mentions that he writes for *Cruciada Româanismului* [Crusade of Romanianism], the group’s newspaper, and that it has dedicated many articles to him.⁵² Barbusse accuses that, on 19 January 1935, Istrati wrote in an article for *Universul* that the wider interests of humanity were threatened by communism and revolution. “Behold the writer, behold the man!”, exclaims Barbusse, overcome. Istrati “presents himself as an apostle and even as a martyr, when in fact he is the lackey of the reaction of the hangmen, the holders of secret funds, and the Police torture chambers. Panait Istrati, rabid dog of the pack that hunts down revolutionaries. Panait Istrati, bought by the enemy to betray his former brothers in poverty and his former comrades in the struggle, to betray his own cause. Panait Istrati, handsome ornament of Panurge’s flock of mangy sheep.” In his indictments, prosecutor Andrey Yanuarevich Vyshinsky will also dub Kamenev, Zinoviev, Bukharin Rykov and Racovski as “rabid dogs” and demand their extermination. As he was writing these lines, Barbusse was negotiating the royalties and expenses for his work on Stalin. And he was paid handsomely.⁵³ Barbusse had a sumptuous villa on the Côte d’Azur, and practically unlimited sums from Soviet sources. The “venal Istrati” remained poor. The accusations had no relation to reality. The attack was strictly a propaganda product, intended to destroy the adversary.

The article was a public execution. Who could check the truth of the affirmations made by Barbusse and the others in *Monde*, *La Commune*, and *L’Humanité*? The silence surrounding Istrati is remarkable. No one came to his defense. He was also far from Paris, in Bucharest; he was ill and had no means of intervening. He also had a reputation for inconstancy. He passed as a former, vehement, noisy Bolshevik, who had betrayed his old beliefs. He was viewed with suspicion by apolitical intellectuals; for them, Istrati was far too mixed

up in political disputes and had once adhered to a dubious cause. The politicized, but with other allegiances, viewed him as a former communist. In any case, Istrati did not hesitate to criticize capitalism and western democracies in harsh terms even after 1929. In this context, it is no wonder that Istrati is isolated, put up against the wall of infamy by Barbusse and co., morally assassinated, annihilated. Many preferred to view the campaign passively, seeing it as a “family” quarrel. The 1936-1938 trials in Moscow will be viewed in the same way. The death of Istrati, on 16 April, puts an end to this campaign.

The 1930s were a decade of Manichaeism, of fascism versus communism. Any “midway” position, independents or nuances were neither understood nor followed. Changes of attitude were even less appreciated. Hitler’s accession to power in Germany had simplified the terrain and reduced the options. The criticism unleashed by Istrati’s travel impressions, which under normal circumstances ought to have become broader, more focused, and to have provoked a debate (as happened in the 1970s when Alexander Solzhenitsyn published *The Gulag Archipelago*), is reduced to silence. After January 1933, the USSR is perceived as a hope, an alternative to the Nazi regime in Germany. For a time, Europe had to choose between two dictators, Hitler and Stalin. The democracies seemed weak and lacking in any political will to confront their adversaries. Istrati had been a proponent of the cause of revolution and Bolshevism who, disillusioned by what he had encountered in the USSR, broke the silence. He was regarded as a traitor. The *Greater Soviet Encyclopedia* (1937) writes: “Istrati manifests himself [in his novels – *author’s note*] as an anarchist extremist and individualist. In 1928, he visited the Soviet Union. In collaboration with counter-revolutionary Trotskyites he wrote a series of revolting caricatures about the Soviet Union.” In the same year, 1937, the *Lesser Soviet Encyclopedia* noted: “His works are colored by facile romanticism and a spirit of petty bourgeois revolt. He likewise manipulates this mediocre ideology in his description of the haidouks.” After he had made a journey to the USSR, “he spread venomous slanders against the Soviet land and out of compliance with the international counter-revolution spread propaganda hostile to the USSR.”⁵⁴

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Notes:

1 Elena Codreanu Racovski, *De-a lungul si de-a latul secolului* (1908-1999) [The Length and Breadth of the Century]. Univers Enciclopedic, 2002, p. 53.

2 *Idem*, p. 77.

3 Panait Istrati, *Spovedanie pentru invinsi* [*Confessional for the Defeated*], Editura Dacia, 1990, p. 39.

4 Boris Souvarine, *Souvenirs*, Editions Gérard Lébovici, 1985, pp. 56-58.

5 Panait Istrati, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

6 Panait Istrati, *Confessional for the Conquered*, Editura Dacia, Cluj, 1990, p. 88.

7 *Idem*, p. 89.

8 ANCR, Archive CC of the PCR, Fd. 95, D 9796, vol. 1, p. 72.

9 *Idem*, pp. 73-74.

10 ANCR, Archive CC of the PCR, Fd. 95, D 9796, vol. 1, p. 58-59.

11 *Idem*, p. 61

12 *Idem*, p. 69.

13 Mircea Iorgulescu, *Dilema*, no. 64/1994.

14 ANCR, CC Archive of the PCR, fd. 95, D 9796, vol. 1, p. 76.

15 *Idem*, p. 106.

16 Panait Istrati, *Confessional for the Conquered*, Editura Dacia, 1990, pp. 136-139.

17 *OP. cit.*, pp. 72-73.

18 Interview in *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, 23 February 1929.

19 See *Cahiers Panait Istrati*, no. 11/1994, pp. 147-150.

20 *Idem*, p. 149.

21 *Idem*, p. 150.

22 *Idem*, p. 151.

23 Panait Istrati, *Confessional for the Conquered*, Editura Dacia, Cluj, 1990, p. 139.

24 *Idem*, pp. 115-116.

25 *Idem*, p. 117.

26 ANCR, Archive of the CC of the PCR, Fd. 95, D 9796, vol.1, p. 109.

- 27 *Idem*, pp. 113-114.
- 28 *Socialistul* [The Socialist], 1 April 1929.
- 29 *Lupta*, 24 September.
- 30 *Lupta*, 26 September.
- 31 ANCR, CC Archive of the PCR, Fd. 95, D 9697, vol. 1, p. 129.
- 32 *Idem*, p. 130.
- 33 ANCR, CC Archive of the PCR, Fd. 95, D 9696, vol. 1, unspecified page.
- 34 *Idem*, p. 136.
- 35 *Idem*, p. 137.
- 36 *Idem*, p. 143.
- 37 "The PANAIT ISTRATI Conference" (unsigned), in *Socialistul* [The Socialist], 13 October 1929.
- 38 "Un om neserios" [An unreliable man], in *Curentul*, 29 September 1929.
- 39 "Ah, Panait, Panait", *Curentul*, 30 September, 1929.
- 40 For the correspondence between Istrati and Rolland, see *Les Cahiers Panait Istrati*, nos. 2, 3, 4/1988.
- 41 *Idem*, p. 166.
- 42 *Idem*, p. 168.
- 43 ANCR, CC Archive of the PCR, Fd. 95, D 9697, vol. 1, p. 179.
- 44 *Idem*, p. 185.
- 45 *Idem*, pp. 186-187.
- 46 *Idem*, p. 197.
- 47 *Idem*, p. 197.
- 48 *Desteptarea*, 7 February 1932.
- 49 In Panait Istrati, *Pagini de corespondenta* [Pages from the correspondence], Braila Museum, Editura Porto Franco, Galati, 1993, pp. 114-115.
- 50 "Panait Istrati, ideolog politic" [P. I. political ideologue], *Rampa*, 30 January 1935.
- 51 The text was published in Romanian translation in the gazette of L. Ghelerter *Proletarul* [The Proletarian], on 4 March.
- 52 This episode in the career of Istrati requires separate analysis, which we do not propose to make here.
- 53 See the details in Dmitri Volkogonov, *Lenin. O noua biografie* [Lenin. A New Biography], Orizonturi-Lider, 1999, p. 435 and in Arkadi Vaksberb, *Hotel Lux. Partidele comuniste fratesti in slujba Internationalei comuniste* [Hotel Lux. The Fraternal Communist Parties in the Service of the Communist International], Editura Humanitas, 1998, pp. 74-77.
- 54 *Cahiers Panait Istrati*, no. 11/1994, pp. 187-188.

SEVEN POEMS

Jared Carter

Senmurv

The method employed was an interesting one: a
huge silver dish was heated till it was red hot, after
which “the strongest vinegar” was poured over it.
The Patriarch was obliged to stare directly into it
for a long time, thereby utterly destroying his sight.

Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries*

He was christened Justinian – the second so called,
and a man as evil as his namesake was honorable.
Behind his back they called him *Rhinotmetus*,
or “Cut-Nose.” True, he suffered during the revolt,
but he was not put to death.

Fourteen years later,
his exile ended and the usurpers beheaded,
those plotters who had maimed him now blinded
and exiled in turn, he sought out more victims,
and the Terror continued.

As it would be written
by Paul the Deacon, “as often as he wiped away
drops of rheum from his nostrils, almost as often
did he order another of those who had opposed him
to be slain.”

Years later, one of the survivors told
of the cruelty: “We were taken to the city in chains.

When we were led before him, he sat on a throne
 of gold and emeralds. He wore a diadem of gold
 encrusted with pearls, fashioned by the Empress
 with her own hands. All who had come with me
 from Ravenna he sentenced to immediate death.
 They were dragged from the room.

Two eunuchs
 removed my fetters, and bade me take refreshment
 from a long table, where fresh figs, pomegranates,
 and smoked ortolans were laid on great silver dishes.
 The platters were beautifully wrought, fashioned
 in some faraway place, one with a winged griffin,
 others with a phoenix, an eagle, a peacock,
 a caparisoned horse.

I had eaten nothing for days.
 On his throne, the Emperor dabbed at the place
 where his nose had been.

'He welcomes Felix,
 Holy Patriarch of Ravenna,' a Chamberlain said
 in perfect Latin, 'and bids His Reverence partake
 of the bounty offered here.' I reached for grapes.
 The Emperor clapped his hands.

A eunuch
 thrust me aside, scattered the grapes, and held
 the heavy platter aloft for all to see. It bore
 a fantastic silver image, a creature half bird,
 half dog. 'Senmurv!' he cried out. 'Senmurv!'
 echoed the courtiers, 'Senmurv!' they called,
 again and again, as I was led from the chamber,
 amid great laughter."

They sewed my eyelids back
 with strands of silk. The creature on the plate
 was the last thing I saw in this life. When the liquid
 burned away, the heathen image opened like a star

inside my head.”

Two years later, Justinian II
was beheaded by still more usurpers. Assassins
sent by the new Emperor pursued his grandson,
Tiberias, who was six years old, the last survivor
of the Heraclian line.

The Old Empress hurried him
into the Church of the Virgin at Blachernae,
claiming sanctuary, pleading with the two men.
John Strouthos, called “the Sparrow,” advanced
on the terrified child, who with one hand clung
to the altar and with the other clutched a piece
of the True Cross.

Strouthos wrenched the relic
from his grasp, reverently laid it upon the altar,
took the boy outside, stripped him of his clothes,
and “slaughtered him like a sheep.”

“*Senmurv*,”

Felix remembered, years later, while speaking
with a chronicler from Venice, who had come
to pay his respects. “*Senmurv*. It is a word
that comes to me occasionally, as I sit
day after day in this shadowless room, listening
to one of the novices read aloud.

Some mornings,
after mass, a brother will take me for a walk
through the city, and along the old fortifications,
and out into the fields.

He might guide me to a wall
of holy images – Apollinare in Classe, perhaps,
or San Vitale. The Tomb of Galla Placidia
is my favorite. I reach as high as I can, taking in
the texture, running my fingertips over the tiles.”

Colossi of Memnon

Early we woke, before dawn, with torches
held by men who knew the way, to be led
out through the peaks and valleys of tents
heavy with shadow.

At the river's edge
six rowers held their tapered oars aloft.
Across that darkness, then, to the far shore,
and a road, where the dust, still drugged
with dew, no longer rose to question what
we sought in that forgotten world.

Ahead,
emerging from a field where nothing grew,
two battered figures loomed, as if to watch
our slow approach. No other thing was there;
far to our backs, no light had yet appeared.
The torches, moved about, revealed the ruin
of what had been a place of majesty
and power – two seated kings, worn down
by wind and sand, and accidents of time.
The northern statue had become a shrine
that somehow, in its fractured state, still kept
the power of prophecy.

Travelers had come,
for centuries now, to wait until the light
crept down its broken face, hoping to hear
some burst of sound, some inexplicable gasp
of ancient syllables, even – they say –
a kind of music. The guides began to speak

their lines:

“O vast, O dread magnificence,
erected to inspire, but cast adrift,
abandoned in this empty realm, speak now
of vanity, ambition, and of pride – ”
We turned away, embarrassed by such show,
such falsity.

And yet the light descended,
warming the weathered stones.

Something within
began to gravitate, and with a surge
forced syllables into the unmoved air –
a curse, perhaps, for all that had transpired
to bring us to this place?

We stood amazed.
Is witnessing a power that outlasts kings?
I saw, it croaked, and then a torrent came:
*I saw it happen, all – the trenches swift
with blood and gore, the standards held aloft,
the triumph through the streets, the shouts and cries,
the lifted crown!*

From deep inside that head
what had come pouring out? And were those words,
or was that groaning but a screech of stone
in torque, unsettled by the sun’s assault?
What did we harken to?

“One would compare
the sound most nearly to the broken chord
of harp or lute,” a scholar wrote. “A blow,”
another said, “upon an instrument
of copper.”

Even now, in places where
the faithful come, beneath revolving fans,
where water, drifting across tranquil pools,

keeps whispering – at intervals, amid
the laughter, and the subtle ebb and flow
of pleasant talk – a momentary hush
comes over everything.

Far off, almost
impossible to hear, some primal power
much stronger than the wind begins to stir,
and summons more than voices from the dark.

Kloster Weinhausen

southeast of Celle, in Lower Saxony

Down a single long passageway with many paneled doors,
doors that are closed now, that once opened into rooms painted
with Biblical scenes, rooms with windows of stained glass –

there is nothing at all now except the darkness, the light
that comes from either end of the corridor, and the fifty cabinets
made by hand, with their great hinged lids, their iron locks,

for this is the Kistengang, the passageway of chests. Fashioned
of native sycamore and white oak, they have been standing here
for half a millennium; here, where everything is made of wood

and nothing moves, all is silence. This is the Kloster Weinhausen,
established in the thirteenth century by the Cistercian Order,
where the unwed daughters of the nobility were put away for life –

the reasons now being long forgotten, unremembered, lacking
records of any sort, except for these gaunt receptacles. Whatever
name you might choose is inadequate – coffer, cupboard, casket –

since they are all that remains. The tour guide explains they held
the dowry of each young woman who was consigned to this life –
she became a bride of Christ, during the process of initiation –

while the guidebook says they contained “personal effects.”
Linen, and cloth for habits, and perhaps traces of silk. Not combs,
not jewelry. These are heavy, ponderous boxes, worked up

at the behest of some duke or landgrave. You can imagine
carpenter and apprentice, in a courtyard, hammering and sawing,
assembling the wide planks, fitting them together with mortise

and tenon. Each waits beside the door of what were simply
dormitory rooms. The printing of books had not been invented,
the New World had not been imagined. She came here for life.

All that was half a millennium ago. The chests alone endure.
They are older than da Vinci and Michelangelo, older than America.
You try to imagine something that happened to them other

than this silence, but it cannot be done – not some young gallant,
saying farewell to his beloved, knowing she is convent bound,
seeing the trunk ready for the journey, and, to lessen her sadness,

climbing inside, closing the lid, pretending he will always be there –
not some poor soldier fleeing the Protestant army, hidden away
by the nuns, crouched in one of these bleak containers – all of that

is sheer romanticism, fabrication, embroidery. None of that now.
The boards of the pine floor creak as you walk down the row.
Each of these chests is without decoration, each slightly different,

each entirely empty.

Moret sur Loing

There was a time, then, out of the depths
of summer, in a year that had gone wrong
all other ways, save this: that the river
where we walked, in late afternoons, still
held to its old course, and the plane trees
by the millrace were untroubled – serene,
even, when they shadowed the evenings
we spent there, in the café, lingering
after coffee, watching the barges drift by.

Below the bridge, along the cobbled quai
where housewives knelt to pound the sheets –
on the stone wall, a stick was fastened
with iron pins, the measuring rod showing
high tides in earlier years, all the way back
to the Franco-Prussian War. Imagine
the water rising that far in 1911. Think
of what it must have been like in 1932,
poling about through the flooded streets.

And we stand here now, on a last visit,
with late sun glinting through the willows
along the island. From the houses above,
the sound of families gathered by the radio
for the evening meal. Plates, silverware,
glasses of red wine held up. We pause,
savoring this moment, this stillness
along the shore, this balance of memory –
the lights of cars crossing the bridge,
the dove-gray buildings, the blue water,
the current moving at the river's heart –
all come together in the gleaming dusk.

Villa of Mysteries

The record notes . . . that “nothing could be gotten out of her except that she repeatedly protested her innocence.” As so it went on, until noon, when the torture and the questioning had to be discontinued. The reason for this was a superstition that is very old, but nowadays forgotten: that midday, evenmore than midnight, was a haunted, eerie time.

Michael Kunze, *Highbroad to the Stake*

When I went there with you that summer, we looked out
from the balcony – courtyards full of wisteria, vendors offering
bunches of narcissus and dahlias wrapped in wet newspaper,
drifting mist of fountains with children scampering through –

and yet Pompeii itself was desolate and scorched by the sun.
A goat picked its way along a crumbling wall, glancing up
with its slit eyes. The top of the city had been sheared away
by some great wind or wave, like a monkey’s head strapped

in the center of a table, and sawed open, its moist contents
spooned out by some dark power. No roofs, no ceilings,
nothing left above our heads, the gardens seared to ash,
the atria buried. We came, finally, to the Villa of Mysteries,

and had it entirely to ourselves, in the stillness of noon.
Nothing I saw there made sense – why those pictures alone
should have survived – marriage as initiation, as ritual,
as suffering. Suddenly you screamed, and stumbled back

from a shattered doorframe. A rat had darted out, you said,
scrabbling among the shards, and gone down a hole. Now,
it has been twenty years since I last held you in my arms.
Even longer since we walked through those desolate places.

Trier: Rheinische Landesmuseum

Gods who are fled! And you also, present still,
But once more real . . .

Hölderlin, "Germania"

Voices that I knew, that I had heard in years past, come
from far away and yet familiar: first a schoolgirl, on whom
I had a crush, who walked home with me in the violet dusk
of an April evening.

Next, my own daughter's voice, saying
her prayer, at bedtime, to the moon. These in turn mingled
with and joined by others that were familiar to me, and yet
more intimate – cries and gasps, even a sobbing, or a kind
of crooning, that I knew once, from throats long forgotten,
faces blurred or vanished –

suddenly come into focus,
strangely tuned and interwoven, fresh and immanent,
wreathed about my ears as though for the first time,
sounding together, singing. I could hear them clearly,
and know this was not a dream.

For this is a museum
of antiquities, of scattered, broken monuments unearthed
and reconstructed, of sarcophagi cut whole from stones
and outlasted their occupants, of monumental inscriptions
stripped from vanished walls – a gathering up, a place
of the irreducible, the inarticulate.

I had been the first
of visitors on this summer morning, had walked alone
among these displays for more than an hour, listening
to my own footsteps, sensing the wisdom of those

who had built this place, who had brought these things
together, and set them up in these unrelenting chambers,
so devoid of anything soft or woven.

Where daylight
has no shadow, where sound moves from room to room,
searching and revealing.

Slowly it became clear to me:
they must have known, those efficient, taciturn Romans –
soldiers gripping their flat swords, provincial officials
writing out final directives, matrons in flowing gowns,
preparing to die beside their husbands, arms around
their children, letting the cup fall and roll in the dust.

Perhaps they understood – their lives had been so clear,
so carefully chiseled and fitted together – that everything
around them would be reassembled, after it had been
broken and pawed over and scattered. After it had been
completely covered up and forgotten.

It matters not
whether these artifacts that came to light were the best
of what they knew, or the least, or the most humble, only
that they have come here now, and been patiently restored –
sections of mosaic floors, portions of damaged frescoes,
coarse terra cotta lamps impressed with images of gods
and maidens.

All that had been clear and well defined
in their world – that could be broken but not obliterated –
was like the pattern of a wave.

The flat stone skips three
or four times, but eventually it sinks, leaving behind
concatenations fragile as dreams, and equally as lost.

In these high-ceilinged rooms there are no carpets,
no acoustical tile. The visitor's slightest step is amplified
and carried along through the rooms.

Bodiless voices

follow, and precede, a timeless progression. Emily,
that was her name, and she took my hand once. We walked
together for a time. Sara, that was also her name, long ago,
she of the patrician family by the bay, who did not live to see
her twenty-first birthday.

Their voices rising out of stone,

the chiseled trappings of horses and handlers, processions
with flutes and cymbals, gowns and subtle drapery. The wave
endures.

I begin to understand, finally, how this music

has reached out to me, after echoing through long hallways
and corridors, and being charged by such reverberation.

I have been listening to the living –

schoolchildren, coming

into view with their teacher, ceasing their chatter
for a moment in my presence, gathering in a semi-circle
while the docent tells them to notice this or that feature
of the shattered head or the limestone stela.

It is time.

It is time to leave this hall and its endless echoing, time
to go back out into the sunlight. Always these voices
have been a part of me, however submerged or lost
or slumbering. That they came to me now, in this place,
yielding the murmur of gods and goddesses, is the gift
of *genius* reawakened, of stone become pure evocation.

Samizdat

Warsaw 1970

Which meant, simply, that you met someone
in an empty hallway, or behind an alley wall,
and that person handed you a typed chapter
of a forbidden book. You concealed it among
the papers in your briefcase, and carried it back
to your flat, and hid it.

Then, during the night,
while the others were sleeping, you took over
the family typewriter, and began to type out
an original and four carbon copies. The task
might take several long nights, and always
you listened for odd footsteps among those
that came and went in the corridor outside
the door, or along the passageway to the loo.
Always you paused, always you were cautious,
because there were agents who went around
late at night, hoping to detect the tap-tap-tap
of typewriters.

While you typed, you smoked
furiously, trying to stay awake, trying not
to make too many errors. When you finished,
you delivered your copies to someone who took
the different chapters, that had been prepared
by your fellow conspirators, and assembled them
into five complete copies of the contraband book,
and passed these on to still others.

In this way

translations of Karl Popper and Mikhail Bulgakov
 and Solzhenitsyn and Pasternak and Akhmatova
 were given to persons who wished to read them,
 persons you might never meet and never know.
 Sometimes your own group got together secretly,
 to smoke and drink red wine, and listen while
 someone read aloud from the book all of you,
 working together, had just produced —

the passage,

for example, about the mysterious developments
 when the Master, with his strange companions
 and assistants, first appears, and takes over
 the Theater, to the complete consternation
 of all the authorities and respectable citizens.

In the poem “Senmurv,” Paul the Deacon’s remarks on Justinian II are quoted by John Julius Norwich on p. 338 of his *Byzantium: the Early Centuries*. The poem’s invented narrative of the blinding of Archbishop Felix in 709 was prompted by Norwich’s account on p. 340 and the accompanying footnote. Poem lines 58-68, describing the murder of Justinian’s grandson, condense and paraphrase Norwich’s paragraph found on pp. 344-45.

“Senmerv” was first published in *Poeziepamflet*, and subsequently in De Contrabas http://decontrabas.typepad.com/stanza/dichters_c/, where it is translated into Dutch by Ton van t’Hof.

“Colossi of Memnon” was first published in *Agenda* <http://www.agendapoetry.co.uk/index.php>.

Considering our numbers and economic importance, American artists have an amazing lack of political clout. A 2002 study done by Americans for the Arts found that the nonprofit sector of the arts industry generates \$134 billion in economic activity annually and employs 4.8 million people full-time. This is just the nonprofit sector of the arts industry—the artist-helper groups. It doesn't include the economic activity generated by artists themselves. And what comes back to artists from government for these economic contributions? A more recent study done for the Louise T. Blouin Foundation and the OECD found that while Americans are second from the top as a percentage of GDP when it comes to spending on culture, the U.S. government is second from last in terms of its own spending on culture.

—American Art Party <http://www.americanartparty.com/>

& && & &

The Dangerous Unknown of Our Untested Innocence

Katherine McNamara

He that would make his own liberty secure must guard even his enemy from oppression. For if he violates this duty he establishes a precedent that will reach himself.

—Justice Wiley B. Rutledge, 1946¹

Studying War

War, at root, no matter the *casus*, is a combat of will between a handful of men; rarely, women: Thatcher, Golda Mair. The so-called war on terror is the will at work of Bush, Cheney, Blair, earlier Saddam Hussein, bin Laden, a small number of others who have made happen the armed anarchy of Iraq and, increasingly, Afghanistan. Twentieth-century wars were made on civilians, contrary to international treaties: the firebombing of Dresden

and Tokyo and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the IRA bombs in Britain; massacres of Muslim Bosnians by Serbs; genocides in Armenia, the German Reich, Rwanda. In this century, civilian mayhem continues. A few men of power and influence have, in reaction, mobilized many hundreds of thousands of fighters who enter the fray for their own reasons, believing or not. Under the leadership of these few, national treasuries have been opened and wasted, as have been borders, houses, human flesh. Torture is practiced under their coy misdirection.

If they were ever like us, they are not like us now. We cannot imagine the mind of a Bush or Cheney or bin Laden; the similarities to our own are hardly relevant. We ourselves haven't (yet) chosen to kill and destroy, no matter if the reason seems good and just. What would seem clear to us is opaque to them; what concerns them is outside the realm of our lives. It is no use thinking Bush would, in a different life, show up at the Kiwanis meeting; and although bin Laden may well have worshipped beside the fathers and brothers of ordinary people, the theology and poetry of his rhetorical style mark him as one blessed. Not dissimilarly, Bush and Blair, without poetry, call out to their own believers.

Michael Herr's *DISPATCHES*² and Neil Sheehan's³ *A BRIGHT SHINING LIE*, two books by combat reporters, were about the war that poisoned my generation. In November 1969, the journalist Seymour Hersh broke the news of the My Lai massacre.⁴ David Halberstam⁵ published, in 1972, his anatomy of the American war presidency, *THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST*. Thirty-five years ago, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* printed The Pentagon Papers, the secret history of the Vietnam War commissioned by Robert McNamara, then Secretary of Defense. Daniel Ellsberg,⁶ an investigator seconded to the project from the Rand Corporation, was so appalled by the secret history that he understood it as his duty to inform the citizenry. What shook him was seeing that American presidents were *not* misinformed about Vietnam. The facts were clear enough: the U.S. was fighting the wrong war, and was losing. But the presidents – Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon – continued to prosecute the war because of political calculation; doing so, they prolonged an unjust war without learning its lessons.

Ellsberg thought the public ought to know this. (He believed that people acted rationally and, given accurate information, would make rational decisions.)⁷ He smuggled a copy of the Papers to Neil Sheehan, then a reporter for the *New York Times*. On June 13, 1971, the *Times* published the first installment, and brought down the wrath of a secretive, vindictive presidency on itself and the First Amendment.

About that time, I was a girl in the world with the same name as the Secretary of Defense, who was called a baby-killer, and worse. My sister and I, just out of studentdom, went to Europe for the first time. In a hostel in the Florentine hills, the cute guy behind the desk looked at our passports and told us sternly that we should change our name. We had never thought of ourselves as part of our society's madness. We were against it! (McNamara wasn't our relative! Ours was a good name!) We found ourselves defending America against this chic boy who called himself a Maoist. Later, whispering to each other, we were wry and embarrassed, and my sister said, sadly, "We have to learn that we're not the good guys anymore." It was a curious experience, being scorned as Americans, impersonally. We didn't know this as a cultural divide. We were studying war, and the history of war, and our own culpability in that far-away war.

The American Proconsul

Recently, at a political lunch, a party operative said that the first book that he, and Vietnam vets like him, felt had spoken truly of their experience was James Webb's *FIELDS OF FIRE*. (Not *DISPATCHES*.) Several other men of his age agreed heartily. Webb's name had become prominent in local political talk. He advertised himself as "Born Fighting," the title of his latest book, which put some people off. He was a former Marine who won the Silver Star in Vietnam, and had been Secretary of the Navy under Reagan. None of this would suggest him as a writer of serious novels, yet I was curious and willing to be persuaded.

THE EMPEROR'S GENERAL, about MacArthur as proconsul in Tokyo during the American Occupation, came to hand. I found I couldn't put it down. It is a decently-, at times eloquently-, written historical novel: General and Supreme Commander Douglas A. MacArthur as observed by his aide, Capt. Jay Marsh, the fictional narrator, who serves as the General's translator, intermediary, and spy. Webb is using, not making, fiction. The novel is a close study of power, the love of power and corruption by it; and of the necessary loss of innocence — better, loss of illusion — of any man who comes close to power.

MacArthur was a great man. His biographer, William Manchester, wrote of him in *AMERICAN CAESAR*: "He was a great thundering paradox of a man, noble and ignoble, inspiring and outrageous, arrogant and shy, the best of men and the worst of men, the most protean, most ridiculous, and most sublime. No more baffling, exasperating soldier ever

wore a uniform. Flamboyant, imperious, and apocalyptic, he carried the plumage of a flamingo, could not acknowledge errors, and tried to cover up his mistakes with sly, childish tricks. Yet he was also endowed with great personal charm, a will of iron, and a soaring intellect. Unquestionably he was the most gifted man-at-arms this nation has produced.”

Webb obviously has read Manchester and agreed with him. The novel’s thesis — there is a thesis, about which Webb has thought and felt deeply — is that MacArthur forced the execution of, that is, murdered, Tomoyuki Yamashita, the Japanese general made officially responsible, by MacArthur and by the Imperial Family, for the Rape of Manila. MacArthur committed this judicial murder for two reasons, insofar as reason can be discerned: because if the peace were going to work as intended, both sides needed a scapegoat, and the commoner, Yamashita, suited each of them; and because MacArthur was cruel, arrogant, envious, and vengeful.

Thus, Webb’s story is classically shaped, more effectively so for having been drawn from history, the plot revealing the delicate, yet cruel, yet complex pressure of will set against will; *hybris*; fall; disillusion; epilogue.

The story as it unfolds, moves with inevitability. The narrator is Captain Jay Marsh, fluent and literate in Japanese, a junior member of MacArthur’s staff, who lands with MacArthur at the invasion of Leyte, the general having abandoned his men to the Japanese (as Jay Marsh sees it), now returning as he had promised, to deliver them. The American force moves on to Manila, a city dear to MacArthur’s youth, sacked by the Japanese. Marsh explores the ruined city, falls in love, enters the household of a newly-rich, powerful family as suitor to their beautiful, cherished daughter; proposes marriage; is accepted; agrees to join the family business, which is in supplying American bases. MacArthur and his staff, including Marsh, then move on to Tokyo, to accept the surrender of the Japanese. Marsh, as the general’s translator, becomes also his “listener.” He is drawn by Marquis Kido, the Emperor’s Privy Seal, into a back channel through which the Supreme Commander and the Emperor can imply their desires by proxy. Lord Kido rewards, amuses, and enmeshes Marsh in local intricacies, until Marsh betrays Kido into sacrificing himself for the sake of the Emperor, and wins his own release from service to MacArthur.

Jay Marsh is a lucky young man who uses his luck and energy to advance himself; thinks of himself as a decent man, becomes aware of his growing corruption through fascination with MacArthur’s use of power, yet knows he himself is neither great, nor coura-

geous; yet, knows he will betray the woman he loves; yet can't and won't suppress his sexuality; yet does the decent thing by his mistress (like "every man," yet almost in spite of himself, he takes a mistress). At the level of melodrama, his conflict (like MacArthur's) is that there may be no way to reconcile 'pure' romantic love with worldly ambition: the latter will win.

The Nature of Suffering

The author writes of the Philippines and of Japan with sympathy and perhaps from experience. He uses Marsh to look at his own culture of sin and guilt, founded in Western, Christian belief, and see it as being alien to the intractable Japanese code of shame and face; to comprehend in his own terms the meaning of the emperor's divinity. Young Jay Marsh serves the reader, too, as interpreter of this novelized history of the American Occupation.

Jay Marsh comes to understand that, by something more than analogy, Japan knows itself as a whole family, the sacred father of which is the Emperor, who cannot be destroyed if Japan is to live. He will see that the Occupation cannot succeed – that the Occupation forces are, potentially, hostages amid the sea of Japan – unless the two former enemies can work in balance. Here, Marsh is with Lord Kido, the Privy Seal to the Emperor, whose "listener" he has become in the back channel wrought between MacArthur and the Emperor. Lord Kido is speaking:

"Then you know that this is not an easy moment for the Japanese people," continued Kido. "We have been preparing them [for surrender] for some time."

"How have you been preparing them?" I asked.

"You must understand the nature of suffering," answered Kido. . . . "You see, your royalty and ours understand that no matter how ferociously a war is fought, in the end the royalty must respect each other. If we do not, there is no civilization."

"We have no royalty in America, Lord Privy Seal."

"Now you're playing with semantics," shrugged Kido. "But I am sure you and the supreme commander both get the point. And then I must ask you, what

does an ordinary Japanese think when the bombs come down for months at a time but none of them touch the emperor's palace or the holy shrines?"

"I don't know, Lord Privy Seal. What does he think?"

"He thinks nothing, Captain Jay Marsh. Nothing. Because he expects this to happen. Do you understand? He might die, and the entire population of commoners might be incinerated. But no harm can ever come to the emperor. . . .

"So, we had to work with the people to prepare them for the end of the war. It could not come too early, or they would feel betrayed in their sacrifices. It could come only when they were secretly begging for it. They would have to feel not only that they had sacrificed but that they could sacrifice no more. And so the time came when their suffering was so great that the emperor, through his decision to accept personal shame even though he was not at risk, was relieving them of their own suffering. Deciding to end the war finally became an act of imperial benevolence. Do you agree, Captain Jay Marsh? . . . We worked very hard for peace. But the people could not be betrayed. If their sacrifice was not complete, would they be so easily welcoming MacArthur, or would they wish to continue the fight? So you see," shrugged the lord privy seal, "by having the struggle run its course, the emperor has delivered the people to MacArthur. Because in the end we must maintain order, and work together."

War Crimes

Nonetheless, at the insistence of the Allies and the Western newspapers, there are to be war crimes tribunals in Tokyo.⁸ Webb conveys nicely the backstage arguments and negotiations by MacArthur, who does not favor the trials. In the novel, the senior lawyer from the Judge Advocate General's office, responsible for organizing the newly-made court, is Col. Samuel Genius, whose frustration with MacArthur is directly related to devotion to his duty. We learn that there are now three legal categories of accountability:

A. Individual atrocities, the easiest to determine: "For instance, we have reports of doctors conducting savage and inhumane experiments on our prisoners of war. Deliberately injecting soybean milk and even urine into their veins. Deliberately bleeding to death healthy

men in order to capture their plasma. . . . I have a report that certain members of the Japanese secret police kept pens of naked Western men and women underneath the torture chambers of Bridge House in Shanghai. These kinds of things.”

B. Mass atrocities, somewhat more difficult to assign blame for. MacArthur makes his own assessment about “Asia” and its respect for human life. Col Genius is speaking:

“It involves accountability for what we might call mass atrocities. Situations where Japanese soldiers went out of control for days or weeks at a time, resulting in the large-scale slaughter of innocents.”

“Like the rape of Manila,” interjected MacArthur, his face suddenly a map of vivid, angry memories.

“Exactly, sir,” said the colonel. “And Nanking, which was actually twice as savage as Manila. . . . The key question in both Manila and Nanking is the extent to which the commanders must be held accountable for the actions of their subordinates. No matter how much we might condemn the acts themselves, in the law the issue of command responsibility is not a simple matter. If they ordered such actions, we have one standard, which is murder. If they openly or brazenly allowed them, we have another, which is probably reckless homicide. If they were negligent and did not know but should have known, we have a third standard, which is more likely manslaughter. The extent of the killing also affects the gravity of the crimes we prosecute. It will be difficult to sort this out.”

“Not for Manila, it won’t,” said MacArthur. . . . “Develop a day-by-day account of the sacking of the ancient Christian city of Manila, and the rape of its innocent women and children. . . .

“And there is another distinction with reference to Nanking. We should not lose sight of it. . . . These actions took place eight years ago. At that time, World War Two as we came to know it had not yet begun. Two ancient Asian peoples were throwing themselves against each other in a way that westerners might not fully comprehend, but filled with symbolic signals that each Asian side understood full well.” . . .

Colonel Genius looked steadily at the General. “Two hundred thousand innocent Chinese were raped, bayoneted, used for target practice, buried alive, and

otherwise grotesquely done away with. . . . And in all due respect, General, I would call it wholly evil as well.”

C. “Class A” war criminals, charged with “national-level atrocity, prosecuting the war itself”: “They include categories such as ‘conspiring to wage aggressive war,’ and ‘crimes against peace.’ General Tojo is an example, since he was the wartime prime minister. Another is Field Marshal Sugiyama, obviously. And there will be others,” says Col Genius.

“We must be extremely careful,” MacArthur finally said, staring out toward the emperor’s inner palace. “I do not wish for you to misunderstand me, Colonel, but all this relates to the past. The day-to-day decisions of high government officials regarding the conduct of a war are not in my view criminal acts. I’m dealing with the future every day. The future, do you understand? I am working to secure the well-being and security of a region that holds more than half the world’s people.”

The Supreme Commander A Judicial Murderer

Webb, using fiction as a microscope, argues that MacArthur as supreme commander brought trumped-up charges before a military commission of his own devising, to kill Yamashita, the “Tiger of Malaysia,” a general nearly the equal of himself, who surrendered his army in the Philippines only after the Emperor had ordered him to do so— and after Manila had been destroyed, yet arguably not under Yamashita’s order or even misdirection.⁹

Jay Marsh, disgusted, the unprofessional soldier, raises questions in terms of military honor. Did MacArthur abandon his men? Did Yamashita lose control of his army? Who decides on the nature of war crimes? What is the difference — who announces the difference — between the Rape of Nanking and the Rape of Manila?

Where would MacArthur have been at this moment, and what would he have looked like, if he, like Skinny Wainwright and even Tomoyuki Yamashita, had stayed behind with his men? This was not an idle or unfair question. Even Eisenhower had proposed to General Marshall in 1942 that MacArthur stay and fight. But instead of standing white-haired and broken before the world in crimped khakis, begging for some fresh understanding of an ever more distant

plight, MacArthur was the new Caesar. During the siege of Corregidor MacArthur's dreams were so narrow that he had shamelessly inveigled a promise from Philippines president Quezon to rehire him as grand marshal once the war ended, with the same salary as before. Now he was preparing to take the Japanese surrender and to run the entire government of an ancient and mighty nation.

And yet. War is the business of killing. MacArthur has formed his own Philippines War Crimes Commission – “Note the choice of words, now—‘commission,’ as in nonjudicial” — in order to hang Yamashita.

A commander's responsibility is to his men and to the civilian population — making war on civilians is a war crime.¹⁰ Yamashita, pushed deep into the hills, did not declare Manila an open city, which would have protected the population, but withdrew. There followed — on Tokyo's order — the rape and sack of the city. Yamashita is to be hanged for dereliction of his duty. But, Marsh learns, he is being framed by MacArthur and the Imperial Family, who have had to reach an accommodation: MacArthur cannot act as Caesar without their cooperation; only he can protect them, in turn, from the War Crimes Tribunal. The peace is fragile. Without the Emperor, the people would resist the relatively few Americans in place, who are therefore also hostages. Yet, MacArthur, knowing well how to display power to the Japanese court, arrives in Tokyo unarmed and allows the imperial guard to ‘protect’ him.

MacArthur goes further, however, by deliberately shaming Yamashita, a man whose highest good is duty to his Emperor. Jay Marsh is shamed by “the fetid odor of unnecessary evil. *Unnecessary*, that was the reality that shamed me. The spoils of a just war, a war fought on behalf of tolerance and human decency, did not give anyone the right to murder a great man for reasons of political expedience and personal jealousy.”

Looking into his eyes I realized that no matter what he would say, inside his heart he knew that at some level he was wrong.

“It's not easy for me to pass judgment on a defeated adversary, Captain Marsh. But rarely has so cruel and wanton a record been held up for public scrutiny.”

“I can't imagine you'd say that if you've been reading the transcripts, General. You're hanging the wrong man, sir. This is an emotional time, but all wars end emotionally. General Grant didn't seek to hang General Lee after the Civil War just because he lost, did he?”

MacArthur bridled at that, his mouth tightening with disgust. “General Lee did not sanction the killing of innocents. Nor did he pillage and destroy an ancient Christian city.”

I took a deep breath, but said it anyway. “No, I guess we’d have to go to the rape of Georgia and the burning of Atlanta for that. But that was the Union Army, and General Sherman was on the winning side. So I guess we’re not supposed to mention it.”

I was trying to force his hand, to get him so angry that he’d be done with me, fire me and send me off. . . . But for some reason the supreme commander held back. A small, teasing smile crept onto his face. “An interesting point, but you realize you are treading on very thin ice, Captain! My father was a soldier in that march.”

“I well know that, sir. And I make no judgments, although I suppose he did feel some air of conciliation in marrying your mother, a daughter of the Confederacy?”

Rape Is A War Crime

Marsh quotes MacArthur: “The protection of the weak and the innocent are the most holy responsibilities of a battlefield commander.” We still ask, Are leaders responsible for the savagery of their men? We are met with evasion. But the rape of Nanking¹¹ and the rape of Manila¹² were ordered by the Emperor’s uncles. “Rape” as a war crime is not (quite) touched in *THE EMPEROR’S GENERAL*: the cities were raped, women were raped as part of that raping. The torture and killing of all people, men, women, children, were equally awful in their methods and numbers. Who was responsible? The Japanese assignment of responsibility (to protect the Emperor and the royal blood) meant honor would be preserved. The general, a commoner, was sacrificed, on the justification that *he did not know what his men were doing*. This has happened in other wars, in other locations.

Afterward, Korea was a new kind of war, says Marsh in the epilogue, where MacArthur was the wrong general, and was filled with *hybris*, and was replaced. One is struck, nonetheless, by an honorable American tradition of generosity in defeat as exemplified by MacArthur in Japan. One thinks of Grant’s generosity toward Lee and his officers, or George Marshall’s plan to rebuild Europe. But the author has raised the question of the honor of the

American forces by reminding us of Sherman's march through Georgia. We may be aware that the sacking of cities is part of our military tradition; and we receive more information daily about a misguided and violent triumphalism that does not sit well with what we believe ourselves to be as a nation.

The U.S. Army has adopted what it calls a war-fighting creed: "The Army's 'Warrior Ethos' is also illuminating in this respect. It was introduced in 2001. At its core is the Soldier's Creed. Note that it enjoins the soldier to have just the one type of interaction with his enemy – 'to engage and *destroy* him': not *defeat*, which could permit a number of other politically attuned options, but destroy."¹³ Soberly, after the terrible revelations of kidnapping, torture, rape, and murder over the last several years by Americans in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantánamo, and elsewhere, one considers that U.S. forces, and possibly their commanders, including civilian commanders, may during this president's unlimited "war on terror" be brought to face charges of war crimes.

Rape is also a war crime.¹⁴

The Women Intra Muros

Webb uses romance as an allusion to MacArthur's own intimate connection to the Philippines —part of his youth had been spent there while his father was Governor General — and as an opening into an intricate society that is macho, hierarchical and status-conscious, Christian, Creole Spanish more than Asian; where the Americans are soldiers or brusque businessmen who seldom take Filipinas as wives. In Manila, Jay Marsh falls in love with a young woman of good family, the Ramirez, who is called Divina Clara. Relations between Marsh and Divina Clara evoke (as the general recognizes before he does) the lost secret love between MacArthur and Consuelo Trani, a high-born Filipina whom he, for the sake of his career, would never marry; who appears only in shadow.

Webb is a romantic. No matter how long they have been separated, no matter how he has treated her (although always with, at bottom, honorable intentions), the woman will always love the man, as Consuelo Trani in her pride loves only MacArthur. Even Yoshiko, a beautiful (of course), skilled *geisha* whose services are provided him in Tokyo by Lord Kido,

seems to love Marsh, as he believes, or wants to believe. He leaves her, too, but gallantly, erasing the shame that has attached to her for serving an American.

One can't think the situation of these characters is fictional. MacArthur, Marsh notes, will not meet with women professionally, and as a husband, he is at best distant. This narrative, drawn from history, works only when the women are peripheral, no matter how well loved, and are abandoned. No woman of authority or power appears in this kind of story.

As for the beloved women: they recede from history; they live *intra muros*, behind walls. Yoshiko must be purified of her shame of having pleased an American. Divina Clara, whose trust Marsh betrays, must be immured after her sin of fornication. She is put away by her father into the strictest possible convent, the Discalced Capuchins. In the epilogue, thirty years afterward, Marsh meets her for the last time. She has become a nun who greets him in serenity — but yet allows him to understand that she has forgiven and never stopped loving him.

There is a long distance between “the most gifted man-at-arms this nation has produced” and a very junior captain who has no intention of making a career in the Army. At his own level, Marsh makes friends with a priest, Father Garvey, a man of some wit, much whisky, and moral theology. He, too, in suffering, renounces erotic love, for continued service to God. None of these males chooses the love of a woman over his manly calling: soldier, banker, priest. Indeed, given the inflexible codes they all follow, they have no choice. They might regret a lost love; but is it the woman herself they regret? What lesson is signified here? That such events are common, inevitable, and, in the end, and except privately, unimportant. Temptation can hardly be resisted, one must suppose.

The Dangerous Unknown Of His Untested Innocence

Jay Marsh serves MacArthur, excited by the General's regard, then grows alarmed at MacArthur's ungoverned use of power, and finally recognizes that MacArthur has tempted and corrupted him, too, even as he has agreed to it. No matter how high the purpose, Marsh learns, the actual, necessary compromises grow shoddier, more utilitarian, pragmatic.

His final sell-out is banal. Naively thinking himself clever in easing out of MacArthur's grasp, he is neatly countered by the General, who gets from Marsh everything he desires, including collusion in Yamashita's death. Marsh's reward: he is offered the chance of becoming an investment banker, "a very rich, and even a very powerful, man."

I felt an odd freedom as I drove back to Manila in the sorrowing darkness. Not the freedom that comes from hope but rather a permanent sense of disentanglement, a knowledge that there was no remaining aspect in my life where I would ever again be required to confront the dangerous unknown of my untested innocence. It was undeniably liberating, knowing I had failed on so many levels and yet still survived. No, I thought, survival was not even strong enough a word. I had prevailed, despite consistently betraying my inner instincts. I had a bright future, and the only place I had reached for it was down. I was going to be rewarded with a plush life, a demigod named MacArthur's compensation for betraying myself.

Warriors And Aristos

The novel, therefore, is picaresque also, a study of class: the warrior class and its implication with aristocracy; and the way a smart, lucky young man rises out of one class into another. Jay Marsh, born into a share-cropping family in the Ozarks, has come far, but will go farther. Offhandedly, MacArthur advises him not to accept the job in the family firm offered him by Divina Clara's father; entering the household as a subordinate would decrease his prestige as an American in Manila, not to be accepted. The young man proves his mettle. Slyly, MacArthur then introduces him to the investment banker in whose service he will later rise, and for the sake of rising, lose his accent and learn the manners of his new station.

One must realize that whatever the sentimental movies and the books, e-mails and blogs say about how ordinary soldiers feel and what their mission is,¹⁵ the central truth is the power wielded in the inner rooms of the big men. A war is a contest of wills between a handful of aristocrats and rulers, and, as Lord Kido explains, when *they* want it to end, the war ends; not before.

Does Jay Marsh regret the life he would have had with Divina Clara? But could she have come with him? He has noted early the “unsuitability,” as it was considered, of MacArthur’s alliance with a Filipina, and takes the lesson to heart. He is relieved when MacArthur advises him not to join the Ramirez family. How quickly he accepts MacArthur’s introduction to Thorpe Thomas, the banker (“An uncontrollable thrill now shimmered through me. I was as breathless as the first time I had ever seen a naked woman. New York. Hong Kong. Japan. Singapore. And Manila as well! I knew vaguely what investment bankers did. They lived well, traveled to great places, and made millions of dollars”). Pornographic, that quickness. Having betrayed Divina Clara, he can’t yet reconcile himself to having done it. The temptation of wealth and the chance to make it among his own kind is too great to pass up.

One can suppose from Jay Marsh’s retrospective satisfaction that Webb’s portrait of youthful corruption is meant, finally, to be ironic — although moral outrage, not irony, is his authorial temper — as well as instructive, a lesson in history from below that any gifted young man can take as he finds it. Or, is it not chagrin, the wormwood-tinctured flavor of the compromised way we — some few of us — live now.

And it became a good life, prosperous, challenging, rewarding not only to myself but to those who trusted me. In joining the Bergson-Forbes Group I had found the perfect venue for my gift of diplomacy and my instinct for intricate negotiation. I quickly became respected for my judgment, relied upon for my vision of East Asia’s future, and, not incidentally, rich.

And as my career ascended ever upward, I often looked back at that crucial moment in the supreme commander’s office that so unalterably changed the direction of my life. I had faced MacArthur wanting only my freedom and my future with Divina Clara. I had left his office doomed on both counts but launched toward semigreatness. With every success I would secretly ask myself where I might have been if I had acted differently. But the answer, inevitably, was that my very speculation was moot. For I would not have acted differently. . . .

How sweet is the siren of seduction, and how empty are the promises of virgins who know their time has come. To have escaped MacArthur only with the right to forever denounce his actions would have been a hollow, Pyrrhic victory. What indeed would my dignity have purchased? And when all was said and done, how could I think ill of the man who so generously rewarded my service to him

by handing me over like a baton to the likes of Thorpe Thomas? . . . MacArthur had opened the door, ushering me from one secret room to another.

Epilogue

There was a political rally downtown, in Lee Park, a green space named for the general revered in Virginia. Democratic candidates from around the state lined up in a show of unity under the banner of Jim Webb, our nominee for Senator, who is running against the morally weak and shallow incumbent, George Allen. Al Weed, who is our district's choice for Congress against the odious incumbent Virgil Goode, was there, as were candidates from six other districts, and the man who had been Webb's opponent in the primary and now stood with him, graceful in his losing. I met the state party chairman and greeted the finance director, whom I knew. I said hello to Al Weed, an intense, smart, forward-looking man with a military haircut, whose press handouts call him "farmer, soldier, statesman." I know enough about him to agree with that. I studied Webb, who looked modest and watchful. He hardly smiled, not currying favor with the decent people who had come out to cheer, and spoke soberly and accurately about how we have to change the distribution of power in Washington. He wore a respectable suit and scuffed tan suede boots, that are said to be his son's boots. His son, like Al Weed's son, is serving in Iraq.¹⁶

Two combat veterans, Weed and Webb, with sons carrying on from where they left off; sons as hostages. The candidate fathers are harshly critical of the President's war, although they do not agree with each other in all respects about how to draw down the Occupation.

We don't want to study war no more.

How will we agree to let ourselves be governed: as a republic, or as an empire? It may already be too late to decide, but it seemed to me an American kind of optimism rose in Lee Park, our idiot version of 'innocence,' so dangerous in the world, yet containing hope, or the memories of hope, in the goodness of our principles.

The moral question is not, who will prevail, but whose children will be allowed to live?

A note: When James Webb was Secretary of the Navy under Reagan, Lee Goerner, my husband, and I watched him on the old McNeil-Lehrer News Hour. Lee, not a demonstrative man, used to pace when Webb came on; he didn't like him, he thought him contentious. (I didn't see that as a drawback. Webb was arguing for his version of the Navy and resigned when his argument was not accepted.) I wonder if Lee, who was then an editor at Knopf, had seen the manuscript of *FIELDS OF FIRE*; he was not its publisher. He wouldn't have answered, if I had thought to ask. He had edited *DISPATCHES* (Gloria Emerson, the late war reporter, told me this after Lee died) and the book had made him as an editor. He was so angry at the war, in which he was not healthy enough to have served. He considered himself a middle-of-the-road man and Democrat. He did not do well in the surge of turbo-capitalism after 1989.

Notes

1 Quoted by James Webb in *THE EMPEROR'S GENERAL* (New York: Broadway Books, 1999; Bantam p.b., 2000). The case was *IN RE YAMASHITA*, 327 US 1 (1946). Justices Rutledge and Murphy dissented from the majority opinion of the Supreme Court, which upheld the conviction of General Tomoyuki Yamashita by a military commission appointed by Gen. Douglas MacArthur, then supreme commander in Japan. The majority argued that the Court did not have authority to Yamashita's conviction, on the narrow technical ground that the war was not officially over and therefore MacArthur still retained authority in the matter.

Webb writes:

Then in words that would bedevil American military commanders during the Vietnam War, [Justice William Francis "Frank"] Murphy made a haunting prediction: "Such a procedure is unworthy of our people," he wrote. "The high feelings of the moment doubtless will be satisfied. But no one in a position of command in an army, from sergeant to general, can escape these implications. The fate of some future president and his chiefs of staff and military advisers may well have been sealed by this decision."

The question of war crimes and Yamashita, as written about by Webb, is discussed in these Endnotes.

See also, Charles Lane, “Former Justice’s Influence Felt in 2006,” Monday, July 3, 2006, *Washington Post* <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/02/AR2006070200721.html>, Page A19, on *Hamden vs. Rumsfeld*:

Justice John Paul Stevens wrote last week’s Supreme Court opinion striking down President Bush’s plan to put suspected terrorists on trial before military commissions.

But in a real sense, the opinion’s author was **Wiley B. Rutledge**, the justice for whom Stevens clerked during the court’s 1947-1948 term, and for whom he has expressed great admiration in the years since.

Appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1943, Rutledge served only six years before his death in 1949. But in that time, **he made a mark by arguing that the United States must respect the rights of its foreign enemies.**

His most famous dissenting opinion came in 1946, when he wrote that the majority of the court was wrong to deny a petition for habeas corpus by Tomoyuki Yamashita, the Japanese general sentenced to death by a U.S. military commission in the Philippines for atrocities committed by his troops. “I cannot believe in the face of this record that the petitioner has had the fair trial our Constitution and laws command,” Rutledge wrote.

.....

Stevens defended not [Osama bin Laden’s former aide, Salim Ahmed] Hamdan, but Hamdan’s rights.

His opinion last week cited Rutledge’s opinion and quoted from a passage in which Rutledge summarized the unfairness of Yamashita’s trial, calling it “outside our basic scheme.” Some of the procedures Rutledge criticized were similar to those in Hamdan’s military commission trial at Guantánamo Bay, Stevens implied, especially limitations on the defendant’s access to all the evidence against him.

Stevens went on to argue that the concerns of Rutledge’s dissent were reflected in later changes to U.S. military law, and in the 1949 Geneva Conventions. As a result, Stevens argued, the Supreme Court’s decision upholding Yamashita’s conviction, “the most notorious exception” to the rule that military trials of U.S. enemies should usually give them the same rights as their American counterparts, “has been stripped of its precedential value.” The origins of Stevens’s opinion in the post-World War II debate underscore how thoroughly it rejected the Bush administration’s military commissions and the political and military concepts upon which they were based.

Administration officials have characterized the conflict with al-Qaeda as a new kind of war in which the United States cannot afford to be constrained by the existing domestic and international legal framework.

... The danger posed by international terrorism, Stevens wrote, is not by itself enough to warrant “any variance from the rules that govern courts martial.” (con’t.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/02/AR2006070200721.html>; emphasis added.)

2 See “Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (Knopf, 1977)’

<http://journalism.nyu.edu/portfolio/books/book230.html>”, Portfolio, New York University.

3 See “Remembering the Vietnam War, Conversation with Neil Sheehan’

<http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/conversations/Sheehan/>,” Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley.

See also, “Writings of Halberstam and Sheehan,” C-SPAN DVD http://www.c-spanstore.org/shop/index.php?main_page=product_video_info&products_id=170973-1.

4 Seymour Hersh reports regularly for the *New Yorker* <http://www.newyorker.com/>.

5 See David Halberstam and Neil Sheehan, C-SPAN American Writers II The 20th Century

<http://www.americanwriters.org> > Social Transformation to Vietnam > David Halberstam, Neil Sheehan, and the Vietnam War Writers.

6 Daniel Ellsberg, “Iraq’s Pentagon Papers, This unjustified war is waiting for its whistle-blower, says the leaker of Vietnam’s secret history,” Sunday, June 11, 2006, by the *Los Angeles Times*

... It was questions very much like these that were nagging at my conscience many years ago at the height of the Vietnam War, and that led, eventually, to the publication of the first of the Pentagon Papers on June 13, 1971, 35 years ago this week. That process had begun nearly two years earlier, in the fall of 1969, when my friend and former colleague at the Rand Corp., Tony Russo, and I first started copying the 7,000 pages of top-secret documents from my office safe at Rand to give to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

That period had several similarities to this one. For one thing, Republican Sen. Charles Goodell of New York had just introduced a resolution calling for the unilateral withdrawal of all U.S. armed forces from Indochina by the end of 1970. Unlike the current Boxer resolution, his had budgetary “teeth,” calling for all congressional funding of U.S. combat operations to cease by his deadline.

Two other similarities between then and now: First, though it was known to only a handful of Americans, President Nixon was making secret plans that September to expand, rather than exit from, the ongoing war in Southeast Asia — including a major air offensive against North Vietnam, possibly using nuclear weapons. Today, the Bush administration’s threats to wage war against Iran are explicit, with officials reiterating regularly that the nuclear “option” is “on the table.”

Second, also in September, charges had been brought quietly against Lt. William Calley for the murder 18 months earlier of “109 Oriental human beings” in the South Vietnamese

hamlet of My Lai 4. This went almost unnoticed until mid-November of that year, when Seymour Hersh's investigative story burst on the public, followed shortly by the first sight for Americans of color photographs of the massacre. The pictures were not that different from those in the cover stories of *Time* and *Newsweek* from Haditha: women, children, old men and babies, all shot at short range.

What was it that prompted me in the fall of 1969 to begin copying 7,000 pages of highly classified documents — an act that I fully expected would send me to prison for life? (My later charges, indeed, totaled a potential 115 years in prison.) The precipitating event was not Calley's murder trial but a different one. On Sept. 30, I read in the *Los Angeles Times* that charges brought by Creighton Abrams, the commanding general of U.S. forces in Vietnam, against several Special Forces officers accused of murdering a suspected double agent in their custody had been dismissed by the secretary of the Army. (con't.
<http://www.commondreams.org/views06/0611-24.htm>)

See also, Sen. Mike Gravel, "Introduction to the Pentagon Papers," this issue.

7 See, for instance, Nicholas Lemann, "Paper Tiger, Daniel Ellsberg's War http://www.newyorker.com/critics/books/?021104crbo_books," *The New Yorker*, November 4, 2002:

For Ellsberg, the shattering revelation of the Pentagon Papers was that the American Presidents who made decisions about Vietnam had actually been well informed. Nobody was lying to them about the probability of success of American engagement, and they engaged anyway. All this contradicted not only Ellsberg's own explanation for mistaken judgments but a whole way of seeing the world, in which if decision-makers can be given good information they will make rational choices. But even after reading the Pentagon Papers, Ellsberg remained loyal to the tenets of decision theory; in leaking the Papers to the press, he was simply changing jurisdictions, trading in a faith that perfectly informed Presidents will make rational decisions for a faith that a perfectly informed public will force rational decisions on misguided Presidents. That's why Ellsberg comes to regard "deception," "secrecy," and "lies" as the devils responsible for bad policy — they were other names for misinformation. Hidden within the morally outraged and civilly disobedient radical, in other words, was the soul of a wronged decision theorist. The publication of the Pentagon Papers presented a new kind of Ellsberg paradox: providing the public with complete information didn't have the effect that Ellsberg expected....

8 "The Tokyo War Crimes Trials <http://cnd.org/mirror/nanjing/NMTT.html>," summary.

See also, The Truman Library, Tokyo War Crimes page http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/nuremberg/tokyo.htm.

See also, "The Tokyo War Crimes Trials (1946-48) <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/macarthur/peopleevents/pandeAMEX101.html>," *The American Experience*, PBS.

Occupation official turned historian Richard B. Finn notes, “World War II was the first major conflict in history in which the victors carried out trials and punishment of thousands of persons in the defeated nations for ‘crimes against peace’ and ‘crimes against humanity,’ two new and broadly defined categories of international crime.” For most people, this calls to mind the trials of Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg. But an equally difficult, fascinating, and controversial set of trials occurred in Tokyo, under the watchful eye of Supreme Commander Douglas MacArthur.

9 Biography of Yamashita

The Japanese general Tomoyuki Yamashita (1885-1946) distinguished himself as the “Tiger of Malaya” during World War II. After the war he surrendered in the Philippines, where he was tried for war crimes and executed by the Allies.

Tomoyuki Yamashita was born on Nov. 8, 1885, in Shikoku, son of a medical doctor, who started the child in a military career. At the military academy he was a year junior to his life-time rival, Hideki Tojo, and graduated at the head of his class. By 1932, when only 47, he became section chief of military affairs in the War Ministry and was earmarked as an eventual war minister or even premier. He was one of the generals admired by a fanatical group of radical young officers, called the Imperial Way faction, who carried out an abortive coup d’etat on Feb. 26, 1936. Although Yamashita, then a major general, refused to go along with the plot, he came under such a cloud of suspicion that he almost retired but instead took an assignment in Korea. This actually put him in an advantageous position when the China incident of July 1937 broke out, and he distinguished himself in action so well that he was promoted to lieutenant general and placed in charge of North Korea.

Meanwhile, Gen. Tojo, whose control faction had benefited from the Imperial Way faction’s demise, again began to fear Yamashita’s revived popularity and finally got him transferred to an isolated Manchurian outpost in 1941. But when Japan entered the war against the Allies, Yamashita was placed in charge of the 25th Army and dramatically took Singapore by a surprise attack through Malaya. The British commander, Lt. Gen. Percival, surrendered to him in February 1942, and Yamashita was made a full general.

Jealous of Yamashita’s fame, Tojo quickly transferred him to the quiet Manchurian border until October 1944, when Yamashita took full command of all the Imperial forces in the Philippines, as the Allies relentlessly moved in. On Sept. 2, 1945, he surrendered his sword at Baguio to the representatives of the Allied forces, among whom was Gen. Percival. By direction of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Yamashita was almost immediately put on trial as the one responsible for the last-minute wild massacres by Japanese troops in Manila, establishing a principle of responsibility the implications of which frightened a number of American officers. Yamashita was hanged on Feb. 23, 1946.

Gen. Yamashita is remembered in Japan as a military leader whose personal career was victimized by that very factionalism in the military that had so much to do with dragging Japan

into the euphoria of war and the humiliation and suffering of defeat. His honorary pen name was Hobun. (Quoted in full from BookRags.com <http://www.bookrags.com/biography-tomoyuki-yamashita/index.html>. The facts shown here seem to be undisputed.)

10 See Crimes of War Project <http://www.crimesofwar.org/index.html>: “The Crimes of War Project is a collaboration of journalists, lawyers and scholars dedicated to raising public awareness of the laws of war and their application to situations of conflict. Our goal is to promote understanding of international humanitarian law among journalists, policymakers, and the general public, in the belief that a wider knowledge of the legal framework governing armed conflict will lead to greater pressure to prevent breaches of the law, and to punish those who commit them.”

See also, Tim Kafala, “What is a war crime?” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1420133.stm>” BBC News, 31 July 2003. “At the heart of the concept of war crimes is the idea that an individual can be held responsible for the actions of a country or that nation’s soldiers.”

11 “*The Rape of Nanking: An Undeniable History in Photographs*” <http://www.tribo.org/nanking/index.html> tells the story in words and more than 400 photographs of the Japanese invasion of China and the sacking of its capital city, Nanking, in 1937-38.

“Between December 1937 and March 1938 at least 369,366 Chinese civilians and prisoners of war were slaughtered by the invading troops. An estimated 80,000 women and girls were raped; many of them were then mutilated or murdered.”

12 *The Sack of Manila* <http://www.battlingbastardsbataan.com/som.htm> “This account of the wholesale destruction of Manila and its people is based on affidavits of victims and eyewitnesses of Japanese atrocities. Their testimony was collected by U. S. forces which liberated Manila. The affidavits were contained in a report made to the War Department by the Commander-in-Chief of the Southwest Pacific Area.”

13 Early this year, an excerpt was published in the *Washington Post* of a critical review of American forces by a British senior military advisor, Army Brigadier Nigel Aylwin-Foster. I learned that Aylwin-Foster’s report was read carefully in the military. Although the prominent retired general whose opinion I asked was cautious in his reply, he did not dismiss Aylwin-Foster’s judgment out of hand. The event at which I asked this was a gathering of policy analysts, retired foreign service and military people, journalists, and others. When I pressed on, wondering what, then, will our country do with these warfighters who come home having learned to *destroy*, the only response was (I thought) helpless sadness. An excerpt follows, with the original source linked afterward.

“Advice from an Ally: Get Past the Warrior Ethos http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/13/AR2006011302305_pf.html,” *Washington Post*, Sunday, January 15, 2006; B03.

Last week, Post military correspondent Thomas E. Ricks reported on a sharp, provocative critique of the U.S. Army’s performance in Iraq written last year by a senior British military officer, Army Brigadier Nigel

Aylwin-Foster, who has extensive counterterrorism experience and has served in Iraq. Aylwin-Foster's paper was published by a U.S. Army journal, Military Review. The Army chief of staff told colleagues last week that he plans to send it to every general in the Army. Here are edited excerpts:

... Armies reflect the culture of the civil society from which they are drawn. According to [retired Army Col. Don] Snider [a West Point senior lecturer], the Army is characterized, like U.S. domestic society, by an aspiration to achieve quick results. This in turn engenders a command and planning climate that promotes those solutions that appear to favor quick results. In conventional warfighting situations this is likely to be advantageous, but in other operations it often tends to prolong the situation, ironically, as the quick solution turns out to be the wrong one. In COIN terms the most obvious example is the predilection for wide-ranging kinetic options (sweep, search and destroy) in preference to the longer term hearts and minds work and intelligence led operations.

Furthermore, a predilection with technology arguably encourages the search for the quick, convenient solution, often at the expense of the less obvious, but ultimately more enduring one.

The Army's "Warrior Ethos" is also illuminating in this respect. It was introduced in 2001. At its core is the Soldier's Creed. Note that it enjoins the soldier to have just the one type of interaction with his enemy -- "to engage and *destroy* him": not *defeat*, which could permit a number of other politically attuned options, but *destroy*. It is very decidedly a war-fighting creed, which has no doubt served well to promote the much sought conventional warfighting ethos, but cannot be helping soldiers to understand that on many occasions in unconventional situations they have to be soldiers, not warriors.

As important, the Army needs to learn to see itself as others do, particularly its actual or potential opponents and their supporters. They are the ones who need to be persuaded to succumb, because the alternative approach is to kill or capture them all, and that hardly seems practicable, even for the most powerful Army in the world. [Emphasis added.]

See also the full article: Brig. Nigel Aylwin-Foster, "Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations

<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/CAC/milreview/download/English/NovDec05/aylwin.pdf>," *Military Review*, Nov.-Dec. 2005.

14 This is the entire post on Tuesday, July 11, 2006, by Riverbend, "Girl Blog from Iraq... let's talk war, politics and occupation," Baghdad Burning <http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com/>.

Atrocities...

It promises to be a long summer. We're almost at the mid-way point, but it feels like the days are just crawling by. It's a combination of the heat, the flies, the hours upon hours of no electricity and the corpses which keep appearing everywhere.

The day before yesterday was catastrophic. The day began with news of the killings in Jihad Quarter. According to people who live there, black-clad militiamen drove in mid-morning and opened fire on people in the streets and even in houses. They began pulling people off the street and checking their ID cards to see if they had Sunni names or Shia names and then the Sunnis were driven away and killed. Some were executed right there in the area. The media is playing it down and claiming 37 dead but the people in the area say the number is nearer 60.

The horrific thing about the killings is that the area had been cut off for nearly two weeks by Ministry of Interior security forces and Americans. Last week, a car bomb was set off in front of a 'Sunni' mosque people in the area visit. The night before the massacre, a car bomb exploded in front of a Shia husseiniya in the same area. The next day was full of screaming and shooting and death for the people in the area. No one is quite sure why the Americans and the Ministry of Interior didn't respond immediately. They just sat by, on the outskirts of the area, and let the massacre happen.

At nearly 2 pm, we received some terrible news. We lost a good friend in the killings. T. was a 26-year-old civil engineer who worked with a group of friends in a consultancy bureau in Jadriya. The last time I saw him was a week ago. He had stopped by the house to tell us his sister was engaged and he'd brought along with him pictures of latest project he was working on- a half-collapsed school building outside of Baghdad.

He usually left the house at 7 am to avoid the morning traffic jams and the heat. Yesterday, he decided to stay at home because he'd promised his mother he would bring Abu Kamal by the house to fix the generator which had suddenly died on them the night before. His parents say that T. was making his way out of the area on foot when the attack occurred and he got two bullets to the head. His brother could only identify him by the blood-stained t-shirt he was wearing.

People are staying in their homes in the area and no one dares enter it so the wakes for the people who were massacred haven't begun yet. I haven't seen his family yet and I'm not sure I have the courage or the energy to give condolences. I feel like I've given the traditional words of condolences a thousand times these last few months, "Baqiya ib hayatikum... Akhir il ahzan..." or "May this be the last of your sorrows." Except they are empty words because even as we say them, we know that in today's Iraq any sorrow- no matter how great- will not be the last.

There was also an attack yesterday on Ghazaliya though we haven't heard what the casualties are. People are saying it's Sadr's militia, the Mahdi army, behind the killings. The news the world hears about Iraq and the situation in the country itself are wholly different. People are being driven out of their homes and areas by force and killed in the streets, and the Americans, Iranians and the Puppets talk of national conferences and progress.

It's like Baghdad is no longer one city, it's a dozen different smaller cities each infected with

its own form of violence. It's gotten so that I dread sleeping because the morning always brings so much bad news. The television shows the images and the radio stations broadcast it. The newspapers show images of corpses and angry words jump out at you from their pages, "civil war... death... killing... bombing... rape..."

Rape. The latest of American atrocities. Though it's not really the latest- it's just the one that's being publicized the most. The poor girl Abeer was neither the first to be raped by American troops, nor will she be the last. The only reason this rape was brought to light and publicized is that her whole immediate family were killed along with her. Rape is a taboo subject in Iraq. Families don't report rapes here, they avenge them. We've been hearing whisperings about rapes in American-controlled prisons and during sieges of towns like Haditha and Samarra for the last three years. The naiveté of Americans who can't believe their 'heroes' are committing such atrocities is ridiculous. Who ever heard of an occupying army committing rape??? You raped the country, why not the people?

[In the news they're estimating her age to be around 24, but Iraqis from the area say she was only 14.](#) Fourteen. Imagine your 14-year-old sister or your 14-year-old daughter. Imagine her being gang-raped by a group of psychopaths and then the girl was killed and her body burned to cover up the rape. Finally, her parents and her five-year-old sister were also killed. Hail the American heroes... Raise your heads high supporters of the 'liberation' - your troops have made you proud today. I don't believe the troops should be tried in American courts. I believe they should be handed over to the people in the area and only then will justice be properly served. And our ass of a PM, Nouri Al-Maliki, is requesting an 'independent investigation', ensconced safely in his American guarded compound because it wasn't his daughter or sister who was raped, probably tortured and killed. His family is abroad safe from the hands of furious Iraqis and psychotic American troops.

It fills me with rage to hear about it and read about it. The pity I once had for foreign troops in Iraq is gone. It's been eradicated by the atrocities in Abu Ghraib, the deaths in Haditha and the latest news of rapes and killings. I look at them in their armored vehicles and to be honest- I can't bring myself to care whether they are 19 or 39. I can't bring myself to care if they make it back home alive. I can't bring myself to care anymore about the wife or parents or children they left behind. I can't bring myself to care because it's difficult to see beyond the horrors. I look at them and wonder just how many innocents they killed and how many more they'll kill before they go home. How many more young Iraqi girls will they rape?

Why don't the Americans just go home? They've done enough damage and we hear talk of how things will fall apart in Iraq if they 'cut and run', but the fact is that they aren't doing anything right now. How much worse can it get? People are being killed in the streets and in their own homes- what's being done about it? Nothing. It's convenient for them- Iraqis can kill each other and they can sit by and watch the bloodshed- unless they want to join in with murder and rape.

Buses, planes and taxis leaving the country for Syria and Jordan are booked solid until the end of the summer. People are picking up and leaving en masse and most of them are planning to remain outside of the country. Life here has become unbearable because it's no longer a 'life' like people live abroad. It's simply a matter of survival, making it from one day to the next in one piece and coping with the loss of loved ones and friends- friends like T.

It's difficult to believe T. is really gone... I was checking my email today and I saw three unopened emails from him in my inbox. For one wild, heart-stopping moment I thought he was alive. *T. was alive and it was all some horrific mistake!* I let myself ride the wave of giddy disbelief for a few precious seconds before I came crashing down as my eyes caught the date on the emails- he had sent them the night before he was killed. One email was a collection of jokes, the other was an assortment of cat pictures, and the third was a poem in Arabic about Iraq under American occupation. He had highlighted a few lines describing the beauty of Baghdad in spite of the war... And while I always thought Baghdad was one of the more marvelous cities in the world, I'm finding it very difficult this moment to see any beauty in a city stained with the blood of T. and so many other innocents...

15 The National Endowment for the Arts sponsors "Operation Homecoming" <http://www.nea.gov/national/homecoming/index.html>, a series of fifty writing workshops "conducted by distinguished American writers" meant to guide returning service people in verbal and written expression in order to "tell their story." Recently, the *New Yorker* (June 12 issue: "Dispatches from Iraq: Soldiers' Stories") ran a well-considered selection of these writings. Most of the writers were older, surprisingly.

Several authors have dissented from the government's initiative, being suspicious of its propagandistic overtones. See Aleksander Hemon, "Operation Homeland Therapy" <http://www.slate.com/id/2108158/>; Eleanor Wilner, "Poetry and the Pentagon: Unholy Alliance?" <http://www.poetsagainstarwar.net/Poetry%20&%20The%20Pentagon%20Unholy%20Alliance.pdf>, with response by Marilyn Nelson <http://www.poetrymagazine.org/letters/archive/1204.html>. Dana Gioia, chairman of the NEA, justified his program to Congress <http://arts.endow.gov/news/news06/Testimony.html>.

16 Maj. Al Weed III is a combat surgeon in Iraq. His father, the candidate, served in the Army reserves, retiring as sergeant-major after forty-two years of service, from Vietnam to Bosnia. Maj. Weed was seen recently in a documentary film, "Baghdad E.R." Baghdad E.R.: <http://www.hbo.com/docs/programs/baghdader/index.html> Review, *Weekly Standard* <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/012/230tmzxn.asp> and Ron Steinman, *Digital Journalist* <http://www.digitaljournalist.org/issue0606/war-unvarnished-baghdad-er.html>. As was "Operation Homeland" (previous note), "Baghdad E.R." was criticized, but from the opposite side. When the film was shown in Washington, D.C., at the Smithsonian, a number of higher-ranking officers who had been expected, did not appear. See "Army Officials Won't Attend Screening of HBO Documentary on Baghdad Hospital," *New York Times*, May 12, 2006 <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/12/us/14cnd->

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Neil Sheehan, A BRIGHT SHINING LIE, John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0679724141/104-2548281-3359141?v=glance&n=283155> (Random House, 1988; Vintage p.b. 1989)

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On Love, Vol. 2, No. 3 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol2-3/endnotes.htm>

Fantastic Design, with Nooses, Vol. 2, No. 1 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol2-1/endnotes.htm>

Kundera’s Music Teacher, Vol. 1, No. 4 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol1-4/endnotes.htm>

The Devil’s Dictionary; Economics for Poets, Vol. 1, No. 3 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol1-3/endnotes.htm>

Hecuba in New York; Déformation Professionnelle, Vol. 1, No. 2 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol1-2/endnotes.htm>

Art, Capitalist Relations, and Publishing on the Web, Vol. 1, No. 1 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol1-1/endnotes.htm>

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Contributors

Sarah Arvio is the author of *Visits from the Seventh* (Knopf, 2002), her first book, for which she won the Rome Prize and a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellowship. Poems in that volume were awarded *The Paris Review's* Bernard F. Connors Prize and *Poetry's* Frederick Bock Prize. Her second book of poems is *Sono* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2006 <http://www.joanlowerynixon.com/knopf/catalog/results2.pperl?authorid=891>). Sarah Arvio works as a translator for the United Nations. The author's photo, shown on our podcast, is by Rigel Garcia de la Cabada.

Alistair Ian Blyth alistair_ian_blyth@hotmail.com was born in 1970 and educated at Bede School, Girton College, Cambridge University (A. B.), and Durham University (M.A.). He is a free-lance translator of Romanian into English, specializing in literature and philosophy. In press are his translations of Constantin Noica, *Six Maladies of the Contemporary Spirit* and Andrei Plesu, *On Angels* (Central European University Press, Budapest), and Gellu Naum, *Selected Poems*, Bilingual edition with a critical introduction by Alistair Blyth (Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest). Translation His translation of Stelian Tanase's "The Renegade Istrati" was supported by the Romanian Cultural Institute <http://www.icr.ro>.

Jared Carter's www.jaredcarter.com fourth collection of poems, *Cross this Bridge at a Walk*, was published in 2006 by Wind Publications in Kentucky.

Mike Chasar mchasar@yahoo.com is a Ph.D. student in English at the University of Iowa where he is writing about American poetry and culture. The poems in this issue are from a longer sequence titled "Your Unsteady Freddy," portions of which have appeared in print in *The Antioch Review* and *Free Lunch* and on-line at *Valparaiso Poetry Review* <http://www.valpo.edu/english/vpr/chaserechinoidea.htm> and *Eclectica Magazine* <http://www.eclectica.org/v8n4/chasar.html>. Other recent work has been in *Poetry* http://www.poetrymagazine.org/magazine/0905/poem_171983.html) and *Word for/ Word* <http://www.wordforword.info/vol9/Chasar.htm>).

Peter Church is a writer and photographer who covers travel and international politics.

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Mike Gravel <http://demofound.us/people/gravel.htm> was the U.S. Senator from Alaska (1969-81) who in 1971 read the Pentagon Papers into the Congressional Record. Beacon Press published *The Gravel Edition of the Pentagon Papers* soon after; his introduction to that edition appears in this issue, on the 35th anniversary of their publication. As senator, he took positions on such issues as the Cannikin Nuclear Tests (opposed <http://demofound.us/people/gravel2.htm#cannikin>); the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (co-author of the legislation <http://demofound.us/people/gravel2.htm#nativeclaims>); and the Pentagon Papers:

Daniel Ellsberg attempted to secure the release of the Pentagon Papers through a member of Congress in order to provide legal protection for his actions in releasing this top secret historical study that detailed how the US had ensnared itself in the Vietnam War. Since other Congressional leaders Ellsberg approached had failed to act, he turned to the New York Times and Washington Post, which published excerpts of the study in June, 1971. A Justice Department injunction and a Supreme Court decision at the end of June put the publishers at risk. The day before the Supreme Court decision, in an effort to moot their action, Mike Gravel officially released the Pentagon Papers in his capacity as a Senator communicating with his constituency. Since the Supreme Court had successfully intimidated the Fourth Estate, Senator Gravel sought to publish the papers in book form, but was turned down by every major (and not-so-major) publishing house in the nation - save one. Beacon Press, the publishing arm of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, faced down the Nixon Administration by publishing *The Senator Gravel Edition, The Pentagon Papers*.

The Justice Department brought legal action against Beacon Press and against the Senator's editor, Dr. David Rotberg. Mike Gravel intervened in the case, using his Senate office as a shield for Beacon Press and Rotberg. Decisions at the Federal Court and the Court of Appeals protected the Senator from prosecution but left Beacon Press and Rotberg at risk, so, against the advice of his attorneys, Gravel took the matter to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court rendered a landmark constitutional decision in the spring of 1972 narrowly defining the prerogatives of an elected representative with respect to the speech and debate clause of the Constitution. Senator Gravel's defeat before the Supreme Court placed him at risk of prosecution, along with Beacon Press and Rotberg. With Watergate afoot, the Nixon Justice Department lost interest in the prosecution of Ellsberg, Gravel and Rotberg. However, the Court's decision did set the stage for its later decision on the Nixon Tapes forcing Nixon's resignation from the Presidency. <http://demofound.us/people/gravel2.htm#pentagonpapers>

Sen. Gravel is running for the Democratic nomination for president in 2008 <http://www.gravel2008.us/>.

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Oliver Abraham Khan oliverakhan@gmail.com was born in Ohio in 1980. He has studied English and Arabic in America and Syria, and his poems have appeared in *Pearl* and *The Indiana Review*. The poems published here are excerpted from a larger work titled *The Toll*, written while overseas. He is currently translating the early works of the late Egyptian poet Amal Dunqal.

Mat Snapp MatSnapp@gmail.com grew up in Littleton Colorado and studied English Literature, Creative Writing and French at Arizona State University. He now lives and works in Lahaina, HI, where he writes freelance food and wine articles, is learning to surf, and is finishing two longer projects: a novel and a non-fiction adventure bent on demystifying the sport of golf. His future plans include an MFA in creative writing. His work has appeared in *Fourteen Hills* <http://14hills.net>, *The Paumanok Review* <http://www.paumanokreview.com/5.3/index.php?page=snapp>, and *Modest Proposal Magazine* <http://www.mpempire.com/snappinspain.htm>. He also does public relations work under the pseudonym Fellson P. Wheatley for a Phoenix-based band named GOODER <http://www.gooderonline.com>.

Stelian Tanase was born in Bucharest in 1952. He studied philosophy at the University of Bucharest and defended a doctoral thesis in Political Sociology. He currently teaches political sciences at the University of Bucharest. He published his first novel, *The Luxury of Melancholy*, in 1982. From 1983 until 1989, the communist regime prohibited the publication of any of his texts. Stelian Tanase was a Fellow at the Wilson Center http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=topics.item&news_id=109979 in 1994 and a visiting professor at UCLA in 1997, having been awarded a Fulbright scholarship. He has been co-president of the Romanian Journalists' Association since 1990 and vice president of the Romanian Political Science Association since 1994. He has been invited to lecture on political topics in Italy, Norway, Hungary, Austria, and the U.S.A.

News of Our Contributors

Edith Grossman, translator of Gabriel García Márquez, Mayra Montero, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Cervantes, among other noteworthy authors, has been awarded the Ralph Manheim Medal for Translation by PEN American Center <http://www.pen.org/page.php/prmID/1310>. The medal, awarded once every three years, recognizes a lifetime's excellence in translation. Edith Grossman is a Contributing Editor of *Archipelago*. Her translation of Victoria Slavuski's *Music to Forget an Island By*

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<http://www.archipelago.org/vol2-1/slavuski.htm> appeared in *Archipelago*, Vol. 2, No. 1. Her translation of Cervantes' "The First Part of the Ingenious Nobleman Don Quixote de la Mancha" <http://www.archipelago.org/vol6-2/cervantes.htm> appeared in Vol. 6, No. 2. With pleasure, we offer our warmest congratulations.

Matt Madden <http://www.mattmadden.com>, some of whose "Exercises in Style" appeared in *Archipelago*, Vol. 5, No. 2 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol5-2/recommend.htm>, has published *99 Ways to Tell A Story: Exercises in Style* <http://us.penguingroup.com/nf/Book/BookDisplay/0,,9781596090781,00.html> (Cham-berlain Brothers, a member of Penguin Group USA, New York, 2005).

Michael Graves mikegraves50@hotmail.com, whose poem "Blatnoy and the Lawyer" <http://www.archipelago.org/vol8-1/graves.htm> appeared in *Archipelago*, Vol. 8, No. 1, has published a new book, *Adam and Cain*, (Black Buzzard Press, 4705 South 8th Road. Arlington VA 22204, 2006; \$15.95 + shipping and handling). In Manhattan, the book is available at the Gotham Book Mart, Left Bank, or St. Mark's Bookshop. The author may be contacted directly for the book, for ten dollars plus shipping and handling, at Michael Graves, 1426 71st Street, Brooklyn, NY 11228.

Michael Graves is a former student of James Wright, at Hunter College. He has published a chapbook, *Outside St. Jude's* (R. E. M. Press, 1990), which was reissued as an e-book by Rattapallax <http://www.rattapallax.com/>. *Adam and Cain* is his first full-length collection. He is the recipient of a grant from the Ludwig Vogelstein Foundation, and has read his work to a gathering of The James Joyce Society in New York City. A. Nicholas Fargnoli, the President of the Joyce Society, has adopted some of Graves' poems in his course on modern American literature at Molloy College. Michael Graves has published poems in a number of journals and magazines, including the *James Joyce Quarterly*.

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Letters to the Editor are welcomed via e-mail letters@archipelago.org

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