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Meat: A Novel

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Sergey Belyaev and Boris Pilnyak

Meat: A Novel

Translated by

Ronald D. LeBlanc

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Note on Translation & Transliteration

As a scholar of Russian literature, I turned to translation only near the very end of my academic career, at which point in time I had become deeply interested in two so-called novels that Boris Pilnyak had written during the 1930s: *Okay: An American Novel* [*O'kei: Amerikansky roman*] (1932) and *Meat: A Novel* [*Myaso: Roman*] (1936). To the best of my knowledge, neither of these two works has yet been translated into English and neither of them has garnered much, if any, attention from Pilnyak scholars. It seems to me, however, that *Meat: A Novel* should most certainly be translated into English, especially for the sake of those potential readers who – whether they harbor an interest in slaughterhouses, animal rights, and/or human nutrition or they are mainly curious about how Soviet writers sought to depict contemporary social reality in Socialist Realist novels produced during the Stalinist 1930s – are not able to read Russian.

I have decided not to provide explanatory annotation, but instead to identify the first names and patronymics of those historical figures, mentioned by the narrator, whose surnames are not likely to be widely familiar to most readers. These first names and patronymics are provided in brackets for such people as, for example, Doctor [Aleksey Andreyevich] Zamkov and the theatrical performer [Vsevolod Nikolayevich] Aksyonov. Readers who are curious about what these people did (or what they are best known for) can conduct searches on their own to find answers to such questions. Brackets have also been used throughout the translation to provide American equivalents for Russian measures of weight and length (for example, a pood [36.11 pounds] and an arshin [28 inches]), to clarify what some abbreviations and acronyms stand for (for example, MTS [Machine and Tractor Station] and FZU [Factory-and-Workshop Apprentice School]), to identify exotic and/or archaic terms (for example, Romanée [vintage wine from Europe], *mazulya* [thin porridge], and “Maksims” [machine guns]), and to disambiguate various idiomatic expressions. My aim throughout has been to spare the reader, as much as possible, the need to look to the bottom of the page – or, worse yet, to the end of the text – to access annotation. The few footnotes that do remain are devoted almost exclusively to language issues that tend to get lost in translation.

The names of well-known historical figures are given in their English equivalent: for example, Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, Tsar Nicholas II. All other Russian personal names are transliterated. In transliterating Russian personal (and place) names from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet, I have largely followed the advice provided by J. Thomas Shaw, who maintained that for English-speaking readers who are not familiar with the Russian language, “a transliteration system should suggest something about the pronunciation of that language” and that “the less the reader knows of Russian, the closer the transliteration needs to be to something representing fairly accurately the pronunciation of the words.” As a result, I have followed System I (the system designed for non-specialists and members of the general public) outlined by Shaw in *The Transliteration of Modern Russian for English-Language Publications* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967). I have made some exceptions, however, in those cases where certain spellings (spellings that do not follow Shaw’s System I religiously) would look more familiar or sound less confusing to readers.

Meat: A Novel: Text and Context

As a scholar who had long been interested in the use of food imagery and eating metaphors in works of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russian literature and who had just recently concluded an examination of Lev Tolstoy's vegetarian beliefs, I was pleasantly surprised near the end of my academic career to learn of the existence of a work of Soviet fiction titled *Meat: A Novel*. Authored primarily by the well-known modernist writer, Boris Pilnyak, and serialized in the February, March, and April 1936 issues of the journal *Novy mir*, this novel, I soon discovered, contains a rather amorphous, disjointed, and puzzling text.

Here, very briefly, is the political context for the novel. It was commissioned late in 1935 by the Food Commissar, Anastas Mikoyan, who expected *Meat: A Novel* to be a Socialist Realist piece of propaganda that would glorify the achievements of the fledgling Soviet meat industry – especially the modern, state-of-the-art meat packing plant, built in Moscow in 1933, that bore Mikoyan's name – under the leadership of Stalin and Mikoyan. As I have detailed elsewhere, however, the literary canvas that Pilnyak ultimately painted (his co-author, Sergey Belyaev, a physician and writer of science fiction, seems to have served essentially as a silent partner in this endeavor) failed to meet the expectations of the Soviet literary authorities.¹ Pilnyak, they claimed, had written not a genuine, but a faux Socialist Realist novel that many dismissed as a piece of “hack work” (*khaltura*). Plans to have this novel appear in book form as a separate edition by the publishing house “Soviet Writer” [*Sovetsky pisatel*] were quickly scrapped, and Pilnyak soon found himself hounded mercilessly by Party officials, literary bureaucrats, fellow writers, and even many of the workers and supervisors at the Mikoyan meat packing plant. The vicious campaign of vilification that had been directed against Pilnyak by certain overly zealous proletarian writers during the late 1920s was soon revived as part of the larger campaign against “formalism” and “naturalism” in the arts that was launched in early 1936, initially attacking Dmitry Shostakovich's new opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, as “muddle” rather than “music.” Pilnyak's *Meat: A Novel* was singled out as a discordant work of prose fiction that was similarly contaminated by an assortment of formalist and naturalist elements. The author was arrested a year and a half later at his dacha in the writers' colony in Peredelkino on trumped-up charges of spying for Japan, of plotting terrorist acts upon high-ranking Party leaders (specifically, Stalin and Yezhov), and of being a Trotskyite. He was tried, convicted, and executed for these alleged crimes in April 1938.

That, in brief, is the political context of Pilnyak's ill-fated *Meat: A Novel*. As far as the text itself is concerned, *Meat: A Novel* is divided into three parts. Part I is set almost entirely in tsarist

¹ Readers who are interested in learning more details about the political context surrounding *Meat: A Novel* and its critical reception in Stalinist Russia are encouraged to consult two articles I have written on this novel and its author: “The Mikoyan Mini-Hamburger, or How the Socialist Realist Novel About the Soviet Meat Industry Was Created,” *Gastronomica: The Journal of Critical Food Studies*, 16, no. 2 (2016): 31-44, and “The Final Campaign Against Boris Pilnyak: The Controversy over *Meat: A Novel* (1936),” *Languages, Literatures, and Cultures Scholarship*. 453 [https://scholars.unh.edu/lang_facpub/453/]

Russia during the late nineteenth century. The narrative focuses here primarily on the primitive, unsanitary conditions that prevail at private and municipal slaughterhouses in a number of major cities within the Russian empire, mainly Moscow, St. Petersburg, Baku, and Tiflis. Government corruption allows a handful of merchants to control the meat trade and to amass considerable profits at the expense of both the workers and the consumers. Part II shifts the narrative focus to the status of the meat industry in early twentieth-century Russia, especially to the unfair conditions that workers faced during 1905, the revolutionary year marked by widespread workers strikes and union protests. This part of the novel also covers the years of World War I (1914-1917), the October Revolution (1917), and the Civil War (1918-1921), closing with the NEP period (1922-1927), when private trade was reintroduced on a limited scale and bourgeois values experienced a brief resurgence. Part III, which is set in the years of early Stalinism (1927-1936), tells the story of how the collectivization and the rapid industrialization projects initiated during Stalin's first two Five-Year Plans succeeded in modernizing the Soviet meat industry, as evidenced by the impressive achievements of the Mikoyan meat packing plant.

This narrative account of the history of slaughterhouses in Russia and the modernization of the Soviet meat industry opens, oddly enough, with a lengthy digression on culinary extravagance and gastronomic overindulgence. The narrator makes a few references here to some famous gluttons from classical antiquity (such as Lucullus) as well as to some of the luxurious entrées included in banquet feasts from that era (such as *Porcus Troianus*). Most of his indictments of culinary extravagance and gastronomic overindulgence in this opening section, however, are concentrated on examples taken from Russian history: the gargantuan feasts hosted by Tsar Aleksey, Patriarch Nikon, Catherine the Great, and a long list of eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century Russian aristocrats (among others, Count Potemkin, Count Stroganov, Count Zavadovsky, Count Guryev, Izler, Marquis Demidov, Count Uvarov, and Count Nisselrode). The narrator also mentions here some less affluent (but equally notorious) gourmets and gourmands, such as the Voronin brothers and Mister Foss, the champion eater who performed for years as a circus strongman. The point of this lengthy diatribe on the gluttony and the gastronomic excesses exhibited by members of the privileged class, including members of the royal family, during Russia's historical past appears to be to show that such indulgence came at the cost of the underclass – the impoverished peasants and workers whose labor was used to subsidize these luxurious gentry feasts. As the narrator observes, “The common people in tsarist Russia were starving throughout the reigns of emperors and empresses.” Indeed, he mentions as a historical example of this vast gastronomic divide between the well-fed rich and the starving poor the ghastly incident that occurred at Khodynka Field during the coronation celebration of Nicholas II, when a reported two thousand commoners were trampled to death as a result of the mass stampede that broke out when rumors circulated that the tsar's cooks would be giving away some free food gifts to the people in attendance at the coronation, but that there would not be enough food to go around for everyone: it would be first come, first served. As might well be expected, the hungry folk surged forward uncontrollably in hopes of being among those who would be fed, and during the chaos that ensued they either trampled others or were themselves trampled to death. Despite this tragic event and the enormous loss of life it caused, the tsar decided to continue with the plans for a coronation feast for his invited guests the next day.

This initial socio-gastronomic contrast between the privileged few, who are free to feast, and the oppressed multitudes, who are forced to fast, establishes a thematic opposition and a structural

pattern that will recur throughout the remainder of the narrative. The text's heroes, who invariably come from the lower classes, are shown to stand firmly on the side of social justice and economic equality: they develop a proletarian consciousness, they support Marxist ideology, and they advance the latest rational and scientific findings about food production and distribution. The text's villains, on the other hand, are class enemies who possess deep-seated aristocratic, bourgeois, and/or petit bourgeois sensibilities, and who cling stubbornly to traditional religious values and old-fashioned feudal ways, seeking everywhere to obstruct progressive historical change and to preserve outdated methods. When, for instance, the narrator describes the terribly wasteful, primitive, and inefficient manner in which slaughterhouses operate in nineteenth-century Moscow, where contamination of meat products abounds and corruption within the meat trade is rampant, it is the Russian businessmen who are mainly to blame. Powerful meat moguls, such as the Khvostov brothers, Bastryukov, Laptev, and Kochkin, are portrayed as inveterate cheats and swindlers who control the stockyards as well as the slaughterhouses and who cruelly mistreat the poor workers toiling for them.

These old-fashioned meat merchants not only oppose and suppress any call for regulation and reform in the meat business; they also resist and reject modern, scientific ideas, especially those in such new fields as nutrition, endocrinology, and veterinary medicine. In *Meat: A Novel*, the progeny of these feudal meat merchants in early Soviet Russia, particularly during the NEP period (1921-1927), are shown to be the "Red merchants," the bourgeois specialists, and the saboteurs/wreckers, such as Zaitsev, Lavdovsky, and Bastryukov the Younger, who seek to undermine attempted socialist transformations and to restore old-fashioned capitalist practices. These socio-economic, political, and ideological villains in Pilnyak's novel, however, are opposed at every step and eventually defeated by young proletarian heroes who have joined the Bolshevik cause. There are two principal heroes among them in *Meat: A Novel*. The first is Misha Rogozhin, a village lad who in 1905, at age fourteen, is sold off to the Khvostov brothers, two successful butchers in Moscow, to begin his apprenticeship in the meat business. The second is Alyosha Senyukhov, an abandoned child and runaway teenager who survives on the streets of Moscow during the winter of 1921-1922 by resorting to purse-snatching and other petty crimes. Inspired by Comrade Litvakov, himself a reformed street urchin, Alyosha seeks to mend his delinquent ways by enlisting in the factory apprenticeship school at the Moscow slaughterhouse.

Misha Rogozhin's life trajectory epitomizes the development of proletarian consciousness and the adoption of Marxist ideology that Bolshevik leaders advocated as a way to radicalize Russian youth, to inspire young Communist zealots, and to forge the "new" Soviet man. The events of 1905 – the year of revolution in late imperial Russia – expose fourteen-year-old Rogozhin to the labor strikes called to force workplace reforms and the demonstrations against tsarist oppression led by students and workers. Two years later, the young butcher's apprentice is one of several slaughterhouse workers in Moscow arrested for planning a strike. After spending a month in the local Taganka jail, Rogozhin is sent into exile for three years in the Siberian village of Cherdyn, which, he claims, served as his political and ideological "university" and led him to join the Social Democratic Party. After serving at the front as a foot soldier during World War I, Rogozhin in December 1916 is again banished – under police surveillance – for three years to Siberia, this time to the Yenisey province. Liberated from exile by the October Revolution a year later, Rogozhin serves for a short while in the Red Army in Siberia and then returns to

Moscow, where he assumes a high government post in the food industry during the NEP period. Delivering an address at the first ever Soviet Meat Conference, held in Moscow in 1927, Rogozhin speaks to his audience about the pressing need to rid the nation's meat industry of the bourgeois specialists who have infiltrated it and are now wrecking it. Immediately following the conference, sixteen Komsomol members are dispatched to the Moscow slaughterhouse to learn the trade firsthand: how to kill cattle, strip the hides off the carcasses, package the meat, and perform the various other tasks required of workers in the meat packing industry. Two years later, in 1929, a group of bourgeois specialists who have been attempting to sabotage the Soviet meat industry are executed by a firing squad. And in the early 1930s, during Stalin's First Five-Year Plan, Rogozhin heads a delegation of Soviet engineers who travel to Chicago to study the U.S. meat industry, to meet with the heirs of Swift and Armour, and to find American designers for building modern meat packing plants in the U.S.S.R. This trip results in the construction of an industrial meat packing plant in Moscow, adjacent to the old municipal slaughterhouse at Kalitniki, in 1933. This is the modern Soviet plant, equipped with the very latest technological features in mechanized slaughter, which will shortly be named the Mikoyan Plant in honor of the Food Commissar who was primarily responsible for its construction.

Alyosha Senyukhov's life follows a somewhat different trajectory in his journey to proletarian consciousness and Marxist-Leninist ideology. The reader first encounters this character only near the beginning of Part III. The year is 1929, when Stalin's first five-year plan is starting to be implemented and when Comrade Rogozhin's delegation of Soviet engineers is visiting Chicago. Alyosha is the youngest engineer included in that delegation. Rogozhin's plan was to convince American meat-packers – such as those working in the highly successful operations of Swift and Armour – to design modern industrial plants in the U.S.S.R. Swift's son, Gustavus Swift, Jr., welcomes the Soviet engineers and gives them a tour of the facilities, but he refuses to help them. Before showing them out, he places a bottle of expensive champagne inside his office safe, waging a bet with them that the Soviet Union is incapable of ever building modern meat packing plants like those found in Chicago. The Soviet delegation then turns to the heir of Archibald Armour, but he avoids meeting with them, claiming that the Great Depression has hurt the family business too severely. Alyosha suggests that Rogozhin should do what the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky had done when he visited the U.S. four years earlier: namely, tell American reporters that the Soviets have come to their country to make some money. This piece of bravado inspires Rogozhin to set up a Soviet planning office in Chicago, and he soon succeeds in finding American designers who agree to construct two meat packing plants for them, one in Moscow, the other in Semipalatinsk. At this point in the novel, the narrator digresses to provide us with Alyosha's background: his early abandonment as a child, his period of juvenile delinquency on the streets of the nation's capital, and his eventual enrollment in the factory apprenticeship school at the Moscow slaughterhouse. Comrade Litvakov's offer to help this troubled youth "forge" his fate appears to have been accepted and successfully negotiated. When Comrade Litvakov dies in 1926, Alyosha is one of the 2,000 former street urchins who walks behind the coffin of this Party member who had so selflessly devoted his life to helping create "new" Soviet men out of wayward Russian youth.

Having become one of the leading Soviet engineers in the meat industry, Alyosha now accompanies Comrade Rogozhin throughout most of the narrative events depicted in the final part of the novel. In Part III, the narrator describes how the Soviet meat industry advanced

tremendously since 1927, the year when the NEP period finally came to an end and the rapid industrialization of the countryside through a forced collectivization drive commenced in earnest. The Nepmen, Red merchants, bourgeois specialists, wreckers, saboteurs, and assorted other class enemies who impeded the construction of socialism are now largely gone (liquidated by the Party), replaced by energetic and enthusiastic young Komsomol members who are firmly committed to modernizing the Soviet meat industry by applying the very latest technology from abroad to slaughterhouse operations in the U.S.S.R. The narrator depicts the first-ever All-Union Meat Conference held in Moscow in 1927, when representatives from across the country convene to hear Comrade Rogozhin speak of the need not only to industrialize slaughterhouse operations in the country through technological innovation, but also to establish state-run collective farms that will increase meat production by adopting the best practices that reflect the latest advances in animal science and husbandry. These proposals are soon put into action by the Central Committee, which passes resolutions in 1929 and 1931 that allow for the radical reconstruction of the meat industry. In one scene that takes place during this final part of the novel, Commissar Mikoyan and Commissar Kaganovich are shown walking around the abandoned cattle lot at the old municipal slaughterhouse at Kalitniki, the site where the new Moscow meat packing plant will be built in 1933. However, the construction of that iconic industrial facility, oddly enough (especially in a so-called production novel), is not itself depicted in the narrative.

What is depicted in Part III of *Meat: A Novel*, however, is the enormous size of this state-of-the-art facility, which is equipped with refrigeration as well as conveyor belts and which is laid out on many floors, where the dimensions are measured not in meters but in kilometers. Sanitary measures at the plant include free manicures for the workers, special clothing provided at work, a cloakroom, a dressing room, and showers. The clean and efficient process of industrialized slaughter at the gigantic plant is likewise depicted in some detail as the reader follows the mechanized process of slaughtering the cattle, draining the blood, removing the hide, and chopping up the carcass that takes place along the various (dis)assembly lines. One of these conveyor belt lines concerns itself with the animal's head. After a veterinarian examines the severed head, it is placed in front of Glafira Stukova, who operates a disk-shaped saw that separates the horns from the cranial bone and uses a knife to remove the lips and cheeks from the face. After Glafira Stukova, the head crawls upon the conveyor belt toward Tanya Smirnova, who cuts out the eyes, and then toward Sergunka Zavyalov, where a guillotine cuts the cranial bone in half. The brain falls out of the cranial box, goes onto a zinc baking sheet, and is then submerged into icy water. When the zinc washtub becomes filled with animal brains and ice, it is lowered to the special raw materials shop below, where it will be utilized for various meat by-products. In tsarist times, the narrator reminds us, butchers would split up the carcass in a highly primitive and inefficient manner; this modern Soviet meat packing plant, however, has replaced the axe and the chopping block with modern equipment. Moreover, the moment of death for livestock is now painless: an electric current removes the animal's consciousness before the slaughter begins.

In addition to the impressive physical scale and advanced technology that characterize the new Moscow meat packing plant, the narrator describes the progressive socialist mentality and the proletarian consciousness of its workers. A researcher at the meat institute that is affiliated with the plant rhapsodizes about the many "dreams" – construction projects such as the Moscow

Metro and scientific advances in medicine – that are now becoming a reality during Stalin’s second Five-Year Plan. In the meat industry, this has included ways that scientists have discovered to move far beyond primitive man in the production of food by chemical means. Readers are introduced to Comrade Glukhov, a former hooligan who was straightened out by Komsomol members and now works as a Stakhanovite and outstanding shock worker. Comrade Romanov, the manager at the plant’s workers club, is not only a metalworker and active member of the permanent staff, but also an enthusiast who has straightened out several young hooligans by getting them interested in dance. Another worker, Zina Lizunova, a Komsomol member and Soviet deputy, resembles Comrade Romanov: she, too, helped out a fellow worker named Toroptseva, who was experiencing some personal problems, by letting her move in with her. Comrade Markelova, a Party member, has served as the leader of the housewives at the plant, teaching them how to pickle cucumbers and organizing a cleanup brigade to keep the workers’ quarters tidy. Examples are likewise provided of collective efforts to keep the common use area and smoking room clean. American visitors from Chicago who are given a tour of the plant are astonished by the many amenities that workers at the Soviet plant enjoy: the dressing rooms, showers, dining halls, clubs, Red corners, museum, and so on. The novel’s readers, however, are meant to be astonished more by the cooperative, altruistic, and collectivist spirit and behavior exhibited by the plant’s workers, who serve as exemplars of the “new” Soviet men and women that were to be created during the construction of socialism in the U.S.S.R.

In the concluding section of Part III, Rogozhin travels by train with Alyosha Senyukhov to celebrate New Year’s Eve 1936 by visiting his hometown, the Pecherniki Settlements in the Mikhailovsky district. On the train, the pair chats with two collective farm workers, Yagor and his wife Parfenna, who are returning home from Moscow, where they had purchased gifts for the yuletide party to be held at their kolkhoz. When Alyosha asks the couple whether their life, as Comrade Stalin had recently proclaimed, has become “better” and “more joyous” as a result of the collectivization drive that was introduced in the countryside, they answer with a resounding “For sure!” When they reach their destination, Rogozhin and Senyukhov stay at a hotel situated on the grounds of the Swine-Breeding Trust, which they inspect during their stay. They are also given a tour of the nearby collective farm, where they visit the clean, light, tidy, and simple dining hall (“it reminded one of an American camp somewhere in the state of New Jersey,” the narrator intones) and the reading room, which used to be the Kochkin tearoom, named after the notorious Russian meat baron from prerevolutionary days. During their tour of both facilities, their escort highlights how production output has skyrocketed during the 1930s, how animal husbandry has improved dramatically, and how female workers are now accorded equal status with their male counterparts.

This predictably optimistic and upbeat Socialist Realist picture of the positive impact that collectivization and industrialization are having in the Soviet countryside during Stalin’s second Five-Year Plan is somewhat tainted, however, by the remarks made by Comrade Bakin, the local official who takes Rogozhin and Senyukhov on their tour of the collective farm. Bakin complains that, despite the many advances that have been made, the spirit of class enemies, such as Kochkin and local kulaks, still remains strong in this rural area of the country. Indeed, he advises Rogozhin to take the Pecherniki workers in tow and exert control over them, since they are the same people who since time immemorial have worked in the meat business in this district. Even those workers who travel from elsewhere to work in Pecherniki, he claims, lack a

true proletarian spirit: they act as if they are coming to a summer resort rather than to a state-run enterprise and they do not help out at the kolkhoz. Bakin's complaints and Rogozhin's own personal observations combine to damper his celebratory holiday mood. Even before the tour has started, Rogozhin feels as if he had not found a homeland at the site of his birthplace: everything around him here – such as a still active Orthodox church – seems catastrophically stuck in the old traditional ways. He wishes that he had remained in the town of Mikhailov among true Communists to celebrate New Year's Eve; he realizes that his real homeland is elsewhere, in Moscow, among the friends and comrades who live there, and not in the still largely feudal Russian countryside.

Bakin's complaints about lingering counter-revolutionary sentiments in Pecherniki and Rogozhin's concerns about the tsarist-era vestiges he observes in his rural birthplace are not the only narrative features in Part III of *Meat: A Novel* that tarnish the Socialist Realist canvas that is painted in the concluding section of the novel. The narrative itself contains a few historical digressions to earlier prerevolutionary times that take the reader far away from the Stalinist present, when the Party had just officially declared the victory of socialism and had reassured the populace that "life has become better, more joyous." No sooner have Rogozhin and Senyukhov arrived at their destination than the narrator provides the reader with a historical account of the founding of the neighboring cities of Mikhailov and Pecherniki during the early medieval period and their subsequent development through time up to the period of the great reforms in the mid-nineteenth century. The narrator also digresses from an account of Rogozhin's and Senyukhov's tour of the area to speak about the conflict between kulak farmers and the Communists they tried to subdue in 1919 at the height of the Civil War ("Just as three hundred years ago Hetman Sagaidachny and the Crimean Tatars laid siege to Mikhailov from the direction of the Pecherniki"). These historical retrospectives, which take the reader back to feudal and imperial times in provincial Russia, can be read, of course, as an attempt to show just how much political, economic, and social progress has been made in Soviet times. This, after all, would be in keeping with the way the novel treats the central issue of slaughterhouses, repeatedly contrasting the primitive, backward, and corrupt practices in late imperial Russia to the modern, efficient, technologically advanced methods developed under Soviet rule. But these digressions to historical events in feudal and imperial Russia might also be read as Pilnyak's way of suggesting to readers that his country's past is something that cannot – and, more importantly, perhaps should not – be escaped.

This, in any event, concludes our brief synopsis of the text of Pilnyak's *Meat: A Novel*. I must forewarn the reader, however, that the narrative exposition of these aforementioned events in the novel does not proceed in a clear, orderly, and straightforward manner. The narrative exposition in this text is instead interrupted by a series of recurring thematic digressions, historical retrospectives, and bits of authorial commentary on a wide range of topics, from food taboos, nutritional science, and veterinary medicine to organ therapy, the human endocrine system, and the by-products of animal slaughter (material items that are enumerated at great length). As a result, readers of *Meat: A Novel* are likely to understand why Pilnyak, during the early years of his literary career, was characterized by many critics as an heir to Andrey Bely, Aleksey Remizov, and other Russian modernists early in the twentieth century who inspired a handful of unorthodox Soviet writers during the 1920s to experiment with a highly word-conscious, "ornamental" brand of prose fiction that eschewed traditional concern with plot and story.

In terms of the novel's political context, meanwhile, readers will have to judge for themselves whether Pilnyak was making an earnest effort here, late in his career, at writing a Socialist Realist novel that glorified the achievements of Commissar Mikoyan in modernizing the Soviet meat industry or was instead, as Comrade Stalin had suggested a decade earlier, simply "misleading" and "deceiving" the Soviet authorities. Readers will likewise have to judge for themselves whether *Meat: A Novel* is, as many literary officials and fellow writers complained at the time, a "hack work" of prose fiction or is instead clever piece of imaginative writing that parodies the conventions of the genre of the "production novel" and the aesthetics of Socialist Realist art. The odd "memorandum" signed by the co-authors on March 7, 1936, the date when the writing of their ill-fated novel was at last completed, might help readers in deciding how to answer this question. I have, therefore, appended a copy of it at the end of my translation.

Meat: A Novel: Part I

[*Novy mir*, issue 2 (February 1936): 5-38]

The history of sensible dining and of food connoisseurs, who see eating as an art form, often makes reference to the name Lucullus, the world-renowned glutton who prepared sauces made from the tongues of nightingales (these sauces are prepared in Paris even to this day, only now they use the tongues and combs of fowl). Lucullus would invariably place a basin with a feather in it next to each banqueter, just as he would place one next to himself, so that after having eaten their fill of one kind of dish, the trenchermen could tickle their throats with the feather and regurgitate what they had just eaten in order to free up some room for new food. The history of sensible dining just as frequently makes reference to *Porcus Trojanus*, which in colloquial speech is called *Trojan swine*. This actually refers not to the swine itself, but instead to the olive inside it: that is to say, they would take the very best olive, remove the pit, and then stuff the olive with the very best filling of capers; then they would take the very best lark, remove its innards, and fill the bird with this stuffed olive; then they would confine the lark, with various spices, inside the very best female quail; this very best female quail they would then insert into the very best partridge; the very best partridge into the very best pheasant; the very best pheasant into the very best capon; and, finally, this very best capon they would place inside the suckling-pig and, in honor of the Trojan horse, they would roast the suckling-pig on a skewer until browned. And people were convinced, and they assure us of this in world literature, that by its taste and its aroma there is nothing in the whole wide world that can compare with the charm of this dish, and especially of the olive, which is saturated with the subtlest juices of the gastronomic concoctions that surround it. This olive constitutes such a rare treasure that no other culinary treasure in the world can compare with it.

There was yet a second method of rendering a memorable pork dish that paid gastronomic homage to the Trojans; it was likewise called *Porcus Trojanus*. They would take a large pig and give it some Malaga and Sherry to drink, plying the pig with these sweet dessert wines to the point where it would lose consciousness. Then they would cut open the femoral vein of the inebriated and unconscious pig, sending it to eternal rest in the manner described by Petronius. They would remove the pig's innards through its mouth, make sausage out of its intestines by adding spices, and then, again through its mouth, they would stuff (with its own sausages) the pig that had died from overdrinking. They would rub one side of the pig with dough mixed with olive oil and Cypriot wine and then place the pig in the oven for three hours. The result was that on one side the pig seemed to have been boiled beneath the dough mixed with olive oil and Cypriot wine, while on the other side it seemed to have been roasted. They would wash the *porcus* down with red wine.

But in a Russian novel it makes much more sense to write the history of "aesthetic" dining based on native Russian material, without touching upon alimentary facts taken from world history.

In Russia's feudal economy, the principles of gluttony, just like the production of food products, were realized by primitive methods that substituted quantity for quality.

Food rebellions, as we know, plagued the Muscovite state from as early as Kievan times, that is

to say, “revolts” from the time of Boris Godunov were in no way the first harbingers of the hunger and starvation that were to follow in Russia.¹ Tsar Aleksey the Most Gentle had only just taken the first cautious steps onto the bottom rung of capitalism. And on the day of his wedding to Natalya Alekseyevna (the mother of Peter the Great), his majesty Aleksey Mikhailovich was served in the hayloft the following victuals from the fodder yard: swan wing in saffron sauce, minced hazel grouse sautéed with lemon, goose giblets, roast goose, roast pork, chicken in a stew “with lemon,” chicken on a bed of noodles, and chicken in cabbage soup. In the hayloft he was served the following victuals from the grain yard: three slices of semolina bread [filled with chopped lamb’s liver], a quarter of a loaf of leavened bread, a chicken pie with chopped hardboiled eggs, a mutton pie, sour cheese pies, egg pies, bliny, cottage cheese pancakes, a dish of crucian carp with lamb, a brined pie with a hot stew filling, hearth-baked pies, a round loaf of barley bread, and small Easter breads. The food that Tsar Aleksey was served, as is apparent from this enumeration, was preferably “agricultural,” without any of the subtle skills of a master chef, but frightful in its quantity. The annals of Russian history are filled with lists of the victuals consumed by the Patriarch Nikon on the first Wednesday of the Lenten fast of 1667 (a special fast day). The following items were served at the table of the august patriarch: a quarter of a loaf of bread, Ukrainian sweet bread, sweet compote with millet and berries (as well as with pepper and saffron), horseradish, croutons, cold cabbage, cold pease porridge, cranberry kissel with honey, “grated porridge with poppy-seed.”

And the tsar sent the patriarch the following viands and beverages from his own table: a goblet of Romanée wine [vintage wine from Europe], a goblet of Rhine wine, a goblet of Malvasia wine, a small loaf of granular bread, a watermelon, a clay pot of molasses with ginger, a pot of *mazulya* [thin porridge] with ginger, and “three cones of kernels” (three cedar cones with nuts). The historical record, unfortunately, does not indicate how, after consuming so much Romanée, Rhine, and Malvasia wine, the patriarch was able to conduct vespers services in the Cathedral of the Dormition, but by the tsar’s standards the patriarch’s table was primitive. Anticipating here a little, but without violating historical truth, we should mention that the traditions of gluttony were particularly well preserved, especially among the clergy: they painstakingly cultivated these traditions at their funeral feasts and wedding dinners, which did not change appreciably right up until 1917, the time of the October Revolution, which was in keeping with the feudal essence of the clergy.

The era of Peter the Great, which was no longer on the threshold but already on the first rung of the capitalist ladder, has not left us any instructive examples of gluttony and of the “sensible principles” of dining, for it had eclipsed “victuals” with “drink” and left us with a plethora of edifying moral admonitions that are utterly inebriated.

The “brilliant age” of “Catherine’s eagles,” however, was indeed “brilliant,” the flowering of the “northern Palmyra” and of trade in hemp and flax. The “eagles” of St. Petersburg brought in the finest French chefs. Geese, ducks, pigs, and calves were brought to this “Palmyra” from serf districts in the countryside, and the chefs re-baptized with French names all the Russian foods

¹ The idiomatic expression that the narrator uses here is the traditional Russian (migratory) one of the return of the “first swallow” (*pervaya lastochka* [первая ласточка]), announcing the imminent approach of spring.

that the country provided. These French names remain entrenched in the Russian culinary lexicon to this day, with various “pâtés,” “entremets,” “hors d’oeuvres,” and “glacées.”

(in present-day Soviet restaurants, conversations of the following sort still take place over a menu:

The waiter asks: “So, you’ll be having consommé, an omelette, and the entrecôte?”

The collective farm worker fearfully inquires: “And what exactly would that be?”

“To put it simply: bouillon, fried eggs, and a piece of beef.”

“And what exactly would bouillon be?”

“Bouillon? Well, how should I put it? It’s soup without the vermicelli, just, well, water . . .”

“And what’s vermicelli?”)

Here is the menu (also from the “Frenchwoman” Catherine) of dishes consumed during the course of one evening at Catherine’s palace – at a “small dinner.”

First course: ten different soups; *second course:* twenty-four medium-sized entremets, including turkey, duck, rabbit, *poulard* (that is, chicken hens) “with cardoons;” *third course:* thirty-two hors d’oeuvres, including marinated capons (chicken poults), wildfowl wings with Parmesan, rolled up chicken skin; *fourth course:* large plates of soup; *fifth course:* glazed salmon, carp with garnishes, kornbut-glacé with crayfish coulis, perch in ham; *sixth course:* chicken roasted with horseradish and truffles; *seventh course:* thirty-two more hors d’oeuvres, including hazel grouse à l’espagnole, turtles, white fish with olives, loach with fricandeau, partridge and pheasant with pistachios, doves with river crayfish, salmis of snipe, and other fowl; *eighth course:* various roasts – roast beef of lamb, wild goat, rabbit, gâteau de Compiègne, served with eight different sauces and twelve different kinds of salad, and all of this combined was called a large entremet; *ninth course:* twenty-eight medium-size entremets, both hot and cold, including ham, tongue, bitter orange sauce, giblets “à la Louis IX,” cauliflower, lamb sweetbreads, bacon, skewered oysters . . . ; *tenth course:* sauces with thirty-two hot entremets and dessert, including cream tortes, pastries, tartlets, and Italian biscotti.

The “eagle” Potemkin maintained a kitchen staff of ten master chefs (with various specializations), who supervised two hundred and forty chef assistants, kitchen serfs, carvers, cleaners, pluckers, and so on. The “lady eagle” Catherine once confessed to him in the heat of passion that her favorite dish was boiled beef with pickled cucumber, and also salt beef. The “eagle” ordered his cooks to make boiled beef, but not out of actual beef; rather it was to consist of some unusual substances that tasted like meat. His cooks outdid themselves in culinary refinement: they stuffed a cucumber peel with a grated mixture of pistachios, capers, pepper, and

ginger, and they concocted the boiled beef out of reindeer tongue, glued together with strands of isinglass. “Her Majesty deigned to laugh a lot and ate heartily.” This very same “eagle,” with the help of his cooks, once frightened the “Felitsa” by serving her cannonballs, dubbed – by the “eagle” inventor and his cooks – “bomb à la Sardanapale,” real cannonball cutlets made from the minced meat of all sorts of wildfowl. The frightened empress, we are told, “deigned to consume said bombs without any fear and with great gusto.” Even as late as 1917, these *sardanapales*, consisting of potatoes stuffed with boiled beef, were still being served at third-rate taverns in Moscow.

The “eagle” Aleksandr Sergeyevich Stroganov, in whose honor to this day one can order *boeuf stroganoff* at any Russian restaurant, competed with the Roman patrician Lucullus. At Roman-style dinners at his home, the guests were invited not to sit, but to recline around the table and, as had been the case at the home of Lucullus, a silver vomitorium, with an accompanying goose feather for tickling the throat, was placed beside each of the banqueters. Competing with the Roman patrician, Stroganov thought up a sauce made out of fresh herring cheeks; the plate used for this hors d’oeuvre featured cheeks from a thousand herrings. He treated his guests to elk lips, boiled bear paws, roasted lynx, cuckoo roasted in honey, burbot milts, and salted peaches. He introduced oysters into Russian usage. To stimulate their appetite and thirst after vomiting, these Russian versions of Roman patricians would go into a very hot steam bath and snack on pressed sterlet caviar while sitting on a bench there. In accordance with Roman tradition, the head of a deceased person, preserved in a jar of alcohol, was placed at the center of Count Stroganov’s table. This jar marked the beginning of the banquets: the count, as host, clinked his goblet against the jar in a toast, proclaiming in a tragic voice, “Memento mori!” And these “aquiline” banquets ended with a flock of naked young serf girls dancing around the “eagles.”

Catherine’s “golden age” began to lose its luster due to American cotton and English coal. Russia exported grain. Meals for Paul I were prepared by a female cook, while Alexander preferred to dine out. The “negotiator” [trader] was born, the merchant who had begun his culinary career at the time of Tsar Aleksey. The glory of gluttonous digesters of that era moved to the periphery of the empire. Count Zavadovsky the Younger thought up the idea of roasting wildfowl not over firewood but over cinnamon and cloves, which he fearlessly incinerated to the tune of thousands of rubles. Count Guryev invented Guryev kasha [porridge], which was supposed to be served flaming in rum but was essentially nothing more than a type of English pudding – a tribute duly paid to Alexander’s friendship with the English. The beginning of the “iron” age, that is, the nineteenth century, which consigned to history the age of “philosophy,” that is, the eighteenth century, opened up aristocratic taverns in Sankt-Peter-burkh, which coincided with the flowering of the Novaya Derevnja District, that is to say, the rabid enthusiasm for amateur Gypsy performers. A certain entrepreneur and entertainer named [Ivan Ivanovich] Izler opened up a pastry shop on Nevsky Prospekt in Sankt-Peter-burkh. The gypsy girl Stesha [Stepanida Sidorovna Soldatova], who was famous for the song, “Little Sarafan-Little Unbuttoned Dress,” was renowned at that time among all the aristocracy and civil service bureaucracy in Russia. A propos of this song, Izler produced meat pies that he called “Little Sarafans-Little Unbuttoned Dresses,” and even to this day these “unbuttoned” meat pies are

highly regarded in Russian culinary circles.² In honor of the “disturbance” caused by Napoleon’s invasion of Russia, Izler began to work in the “style russe” and gave his pies Russian names, banishing their French ones: he named them “modest,” “safe,” “musical,” “simply a delight,” “with a riddle,” “with a little fish,” “without fish, but tasty,” “soothing,” “to your health,” “repeat,” “the little honey bee, or: very tasty”³ and “evenings in Novaya Derevnya.” The genius [Alexander] Pushkin could not avoid Izler either.

The “negotiator” [trader] climbed to the top of the social ladder when he conquered the aristocracy during the 1870s. The former (and current) merchant and manufacturer, who at first called himself Demidov and then later the Marquis Demidov of San Donato, kept calves in cradles, rocking them like little babies and feeding them, according to schedule, exclusively with cream. He fed his chickens hulled pine nuts and gave them exclusively Rhine wine to drink; he fed his turkeys truffles. Special attention was accorded the calves, who were washed once a day with a perfumed soap and dried with Greek sponges, placed on a bed with cotton wadding, diapered, like suckling babes, and, like suckling babes, fed from a nipple. The Marquis used to come visit this “nursery” personally. He would take delight in choosing an infant and personally watch as they removed it from this luxury, which was not at all calf-like, and sent it off to the other world.

The provinces did not lag behind the capital. A certain Rogozina gained renown in the annals of the “eagles” solely because during the summer she would eat dinner on a raft in the middle of a pond, to which servants rowed out in a boat with twenty different kinds of porridge, since she was famous not only for her dining room on the pond but also for her obsession with porridge. The Solvychegodsk branch of the Novgorod “guests,” the Stroganovs (not the Counts Stroganov), cultivated pineapples in the Solvychegodsk hothouses. They didn’t simply eat them: they chopped them up and fermented them like cabbage.

During the reign of Nicholas I, Count [Sergey Semyonovich] Uvarov and Count [Karl Vasilyevich] Nesselrode (the latter, under the pseudonym Kiselvrode, is depicted in [Nikolay Semyonovich] Leskov’s story of a flea) were renowned in St. Petersburg for their gluttony. So, too, was an impoverished nobleman named Nikita Vsevolozhsky, who, lacking the financial means to imitate Catherine’s “eagles,” busied himself with alimentary poetry: he used to compose “philosophical” menus in verse, as well as sayings in prose, about food. He wrote the following:

² The reason why Izler chose to call his meat pies *sarafanchiki-rasteganchiki* [сарафанчики-пастеганчики] is because the *sarafan*, a long, trapezoidal jumper dress (pinafore dress) worn by girls and women as part of a traditional Russian folk costume, included fasteners which allowed the dress to be worn open (unbuttoned). Traditional Russian fish or meat pies, called *rastegai* [пастегаи], are baked with a small hole in the middle on top, which gives the impression that a hole has popped open (i.e., become unbuttoned) to reveal their delicious filling when they are taken from the hole has popped open (i.e., has become unbuttoned) to reveal their delicious filling when they are taken from the oven.

³ The narrator uses here the Russian circumlocution *chto v rot, to i spasibo* [что в рот, то и спасибо]. Literally, it means “thank you for what I am putting into my mouth.”

“ . . . Pork, o pork! . . . How like an ardent youth she dons all manner of masks! – yet even in her most beautiful costume our most venerable pork, dear to our hearts, displays her originality. Whether we were to search for her beneath the covering of a blood sausage, or beneath the white, high-collared jacket of a liver sausage, or inside the jacket of sausage made from ground beef, or inside the robe of a frankfurter – everywhere she still remains the tastiest, the most unsurpassed pork! . . . ”

In the 1850s, on the eve of Tsar Alexander’s reforms, the fate of the Tambov landowner [Mikhail Fyodorovich] Rakhmanov, which took Catherine’s “eagles” unawares, flew like a comet across the Russian alimentary horizon. During the course of the eight years that he lived in Moscow, Rakhmanov had managed to devour two million rubles. He was mentally frenzied, he was a hysterical person, a man of [E.T.A.] Hoffmannesque intensity. In a duck, he would eat only the brain; in roast pork, only the udder; in wild boar, only the reproductive organs. He would make porridge by mixing the ichor of hazel grouse with Roquefort cheese, he would boil crayfish in cream mixed with Parmesan cheese, he would pour almond oil – prepared from fresh almonds – onto a salad. And he died while sitting at table.

Besides pork, whose praises were poetically sung, gastronomes always held liver in high esteem. Rakhmanov kept geese in a cage and fed them walnuts, and every day he would frighten them with all sorts of terrible fantasies. He even roasted some of them alive in front of the fireplace so that the other geese would get agitated and become frenzied inside their cages; since they were already filled to bursting, this excitation would enlarge their livers. From their livers, “pâte foie gras” – the famous *Strasbourg pie* – was prepared. The “eagle” Potemkin would soak the liver – both pork liver and burbot liver – in honey. The burbots were put in a washtub and tortured for years, just so that their livers would grow. They were tormented, for instance, by small-sized pikes whose intimidating appearance struck terror into the peaceful burbots.

History has recorded (no longer in a qualitative sense, but in a quantitative one) two landowners, the Voronin brothers, who between them would consume the following at dinner every day: seven bowls apiece of cabbage soup or borscht, an equal number of bowls of porridge, three geese, and two suckling pigs, not counting what they drank and what they ate as appetizers. Before the October Revolution, there lived (he died in 1919 with White Army forces in Pyatigorsk) “the famous eater Mister [Emile] Foss,” as it once appeared on posters. He began his career as a circus wrestler and ended it as an “eater.” In the final years before the World War, he worked for the Yupatov circus. Every day, right before the start of the performance, as an interlude, a table was brought out into the arena and the master of ceremonies would announce:

“A marvel of the twentieth century. A phenomenon of gluttony. A scientific mystery of world medicine. Right now, before our right honorable audience, we present the remarkable eater, Mister Foss, who in front of your very eyes will consume twenty servings of cutlets, two rings of boiled sausage, an equal portion of salad and garnish, and twelve bread rolls. In addition, he will drink twenty-one glasses of tea and beer without moving from the spot.”

Then Foss would come out, bow to the right honorable audience, sit down at the table, and begin eating. Servants would bring mountains of plates out to him. The right honorable audience would follow his every move to make sure that there wasn't any deception going on. Yupatov paid Foss twenty-five rubles for each performance. In his circus career, Mister Foss traveled to all the major cities of Russia; the policemen at all the major railway stations knew him by sight, since at every station one and the same thing repeated itself: namely, Foss would walk up to the counter, silently take a ham or a serving of pies, and eat them all up, without saying a word, in the space of three minutes, right in front of the eyes of an astounded crowd, and then he would prepare to leave. Naturally, they would stop him, and he would say in a squeaky voice: "Don't you know, fool, that I am Foss?!?" Some knew that it was Foss, others ran to get the police. In keeping with their class instinct, the police were always in Foss's camp. It is no coincidence that he died among the Whites.

Distinguished foreigners who visited Muscovy made scientific note of the fact that in pre-Petrine Russia fish was more expensive than meat. There weren't any refrigerators, so it was necessary to have sturgeon – beluga sturgeon and stellate sturgeon – brought in from far away. Beginning with the spring fishing season, sturgeon would be transported alive in vats. And from the fish, dishes would be prepared "that looked like lamb, pheasant or swan" and that could not be distinguished from them by taste either.

During the reigns of the emperors and the empresses – during the reigns of the three Peters, the two Catherines, the three Alexanders, the two Nicholases, and Elizabeth, Anna, and Paul – that is to say, during the entire time of the Russian Empire, it was customary to place the following items inside every foot soldier's knapsack: puttees, a clean shirt for one's final hour, oatmeal porridge, and rye rusks.

As far as Russia in general – Russia's villages and hamlets – was concerned, it was "cabbage soup and porridge, that's our mother."⁴ Russia was always starving!

As far as the Russian Emperors are concerned, the last of them, Nicholas II, began his reign with the *khodynka* [a mass stampede on Khodynsky Field]. But the *khodynka* has its own history, which arose much earlier than Nicholas II. On the day of her coronation, the fun-loving empress Anna Ivanovna, a fan of minstrel shows and farcical pageants, gave orders that a wooden pyramid be constructed within the Kremlin, on a small knoll opposite the palace, and she ordered that it be decorated with roasted cattle, sheep, pigs, wild boars, bears and deer, chickens and hunks of bread. After the coronation mass, the people of Moscow were allowed to enter the Kremlin. The police sergeants gave the following order: "Grab and eat whatever you can in honor of the health of her royal highness!"

The people rushed forward to attack the pyramid. They were able to pilfer the chickens and

⁴ In lieu of the traditional Russian saying, "Cabbage soup and porridge, – that's our native diet" (*shchi da kasha, pishcha nasha* [щи да каша, пища наша]), the narrator alters it here to read "Cabbage soup and porridge, – that's our mother" (*shchi da kasha, mat' nasha* [щи да каша, мать наша]).

bread without any difficulty; but when they started to tear off the roasted meat, they quarreled among themselves. Anna “Ioannovna” deigned to witness this disgraceful scene from her balcony and deigned to throw some coins down upon the crowd, thus increasing the fisticuffs. One historian has written that the people “were maimed.” Those who were maimed were transported through the Spassky Gates and brought to the almshouse for orphans, while those who were trampled to death were taken through the Tainitsky Gates to the cemeteries along the banks of the Moscow River. The Empress enjoyed this entertainment, and she deigned to call this diversion “cattle thrashing.” Cattle thrashing was the first harbinger of the *khodynka*. Cattle thrashing for the “common people” came to accompany every coronation. In Sankt-Peter-burkh, the cattle thrashing took place on the Field of Mars. The common people would thrash the cattle, while the aristocrats of the Russian Empire would idle away their time to no purpose, feasting their eyes upon this diversion while sitting in their carriages and coaches. Alexander III had organized the most recent cattle thrashing on the Field of Mars. Nicholas II expanded the holiday to massive proportions when he organized the *khodynka*. The coronation dinner for Nicholas II took place in the Palace of Facets. The Imperial “family” sat at the dinner as if they were at a masquerade ball, outfitted in the old-fashioned attire of seventeenth-century boyars: they were dressed in sable and ermine coats, in robes and long-sleeved gowns, in *kokoshniks* [traditional Russian headdress] and *sarafans*. Yet they ate various entremets as per standing orders. They drank toasts according to a set gastronomic schedule. They drank toasts to health of Nicholas II to the accompaniment of fish. They drank toasts to the health of the Emperor’s mother to the accompaniment of mutton. They drank toasts to the health of Aleksandra Fyodorovna to the accompaniment of cold aspic of pheasant. They drank toasts to the health of religious personages and all the tsar’s “loyal subjects” to the accompaniment of plombières. Incidentally, they drank, as well, some toasts without any schedule at all. At this point in time, the *khodynka* would commence. While the *khodynka* was concluding with the deaths of hundreds of commoners, the Emperor was dancing with the wife of the Marshal of the Nobility in the Gentry Assembly, in that very same building that the Soviet authorities have since given over to the trade unions.

As far as gluttony in general is concerned, we should point out a certain trajectory that stretches out over time and across space. Through time, through the development of human culture, humankind is cured of gluttony. In every country, the history of gluttony “diminishes” in proportion to the development of cultural refinement within that country. This occurs through time. Through space, meanwhile, if we trace the principles of gluttony from the West to the East, from Chicago to Tokyo, then the trajectory turns out to be unusual. In New York, in Chicago, in San Francisco, “feasts” are already totally disappearing. If a person living in one of these cities were to invite you to be a guest at his home, to have dinner with him and to dance a bit, and if this person were to be a millionaire, you would arrive at his place by 6:30 in the evening. He would treat you to cocktails and then he would have you get into his car. While you are getting into the car, you would be asked what cuisine you would like to try this evening: French? Chinese? Mexican? You would arrive at a restaurant, where they would hand you a menu. You and your host would choose what entrées best agreed with your taste, diet, and digestion. You would order an hors d’oeuvres, while your host, following his doctor’s orders, would order just toast and cauliflower because of an upset stomach and indigestion. You would eat your meal, and your host would pay for it. You would go back to your host’s home, where you would dance to music played on the radio.

If you were in Paris, and a Frenchman, even a very wealthy one, were to invite you over to his home for dinner, he would invite only you and your wife, and no one else. He would seat you to the right of his wife and he would put your wife to his right. He would sparkle with his clever *causerie* (his wit – this is where the Russian expression, “to trump with words,” comes from).⁵ The dinner would invariably consist of four dishes served on a table without a tablecloth, and they would not torture you with an assortment of knives and forks since those are changed after each course. Wine, according to the season, would be served in decanters. After dinner, you would be offered a cigar in the living room, and you would be served coffee with vermouth. The hostess would brew the coffee right in front of your very eyes. By eleven o’clock, you would have to leave for home, warmed up by the coffee.

In Tokyo or Peiping, a person of even average income would invite to dinner not you alone, but some twenty other people, acquaintances and strangers alike, all of them male. The mistress of the house, along with one remaining servant, would serve the meal. You would be served some forty dishes, beginning with the obligatory green tea. In China, there would be, in addition, melon seeds, and they would not fail to give you a steaming hot towel, moistened in some unknown spices, for you to wipe the sweat and dust from your face and hands. For food dishes, you would be served: eggs that lay in their raw state for ten years and had turned amber green, raw fish (*sasimi*), meat glazed in sugar, and pig fetuses that had been aborted and marinated to a green color. The dinner would begin at three o’clock in the afternoon and end around ten o’clock in the evening.

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Myaso [meat] – *govyadino* [beef] – *govyado* [bovine animal] – the last is an old Slavic word meaning cattle, a herd.

Humankind eats reindeer, seals, walruses, whales, seagulls, penguins, loons, bears, elephants, rhinoceroses, zebras, kangaroos, parrots, monkeys, lizards, snakes, frogs, dogs, cats, cows, horses, donkeys, camels, goats, pigs, rats, rabbits, turtles, crustaceans, mollusks, moles, May beetles, locusts, sometimes saliva (Chinese swallow’s nest), sometimes excrement (African termite colonies), small cutlets of poodles, ragout made from a pug dog, marinated octopus, fried shark fins, and shark steaks. Humankind drinks the milk and eats the eggs of all these different types of animals.

Humankind has some food preferences and taboos: Jews do not eat anything that is not kosher; the English do not eat mutton; Moslems do not eat pork; Hindus do not eat cows; Russians do not eat dog meat. Incidentally, as far as the Russians are concerned, before the time of Peter the Great, the meat of animals and birds that had been killed by a woman was not considered food fit to be eaten, for that meat was considered unclean. It was also not considered proper to eat veal, female rabbits, lobsters, and doves. In London and in Tokyo, it is impossible to find sour cream: no one there eats it. The British and the Japanese people get nauseous from sour cream, just as a

⁵ In this Russian idiomatic expression (*kozyriat’ slovami* [козырять словами]), the verb *kozyriat’* derives from the Russian calque, *kozeri* [козэри], of the French word for “wit” (*causerie*).

Russian would get nauseous from Japanese sun-dried cuttle fish, which is a Japanese delicacy.

Prince Parfeny Yengalychev painstakingly reported:

“... the meat of oxen, once it is ingested, makes the blood coarse inside a person and hardens the stomach, and it does not exit the stomach for a long time. It is better to eat the meat from wild birds rather than from birds that have been fed domestically. However, the meat of cranes is coarse and tough; it gives rise to perspiration along with melancholia. For this reason, one should only eat crane meat after having fasted for two or three days in advance. The person who eats sheatfish during the spring develops a fever with severe shakes and shivers. . .”

The warriors in African tribes would not eat the meat of a chamois because they did not want to become timid, like the chamois itself. They ate the meat of tigers and wild boars in order to become brave and ferocious. It was likewise believed that the characteristics of animals are distributed amongst their organs: courage is contained in the heart of the lion, speed and quickness in the legs of the deer, and vitality in the blood. Military leaders, on the strength of these beliefs, have eaten the hearts of wild animals and of their most stubborn, albeit vanquished, foes; they have also fed the legs of animals and enemies to their own young soldiers to eat as meat. Wise men did not consider it proper to drink cow's milk, seeking to avoid becoming stupid like cows. They thought it appropriate to drink vodka instead. It was exclusively on the strength of beliefs such as these that the ancient Roman Empire blossomed and became powerful, precisely because the founders of the city of Rome – Romulus and Remus – were nurtured on the breast milk of a she-wolf. The gizzard of a heron, crushed, pounded, and then mixed with vodka, helps against every sort of poison. The reproductive organs of the fox, taken internally, excite lust. A bear's testicles endow one with the power of fecundity; a bear's brain prevents all sorts of illnesses. An eagle's bile, combined with light honey, smeared on the eyes, gives clarity of vision. Truths of a similar order are written down in the Vedas of Sushruta, in Hippocrates, and in the Talmud. One thousand one hundred years after Sushruta, a well-known medieval doctor, Paracelsus, wrote: “To heal, it is necessary to treat one ailment with a similar one.”

In 1775, Théophile de Bordeu clearly stated:

“... every organ is a place where special substances are prepared, substances that enter into the blood; they are useful to the organism and are necessary for its preservation . . .”

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During the process of dying – it does not matter whether it is a death from natural causes, a death resulting from illness, or a violent death – the first organ that stops functioning is the left cardiac ventricle, then the right one. These are the two basic cardiac motors. After them, the left and right auricles stop functioning. The pacemaker of the right auricle still goes on beating for some time during the full cessation of the dead heart. In a violent death, when blood flows out and blood pressure drops, the auricles lapse into fibrillations that are called forth by the twitching of the muscle fibers. The palpitation transfers over to the cardiac muscles, which are no longer

compressed by blood and are now working to no purpose.

The weight of a bovine body – just like that of a human one – consists of: 16 percent bones, 42 percent muscle, 13 to 28 percent fat, 14 to 32 percent skin, viscera, glands, and nerves.

Meat is not simply muscle tissue; it is the muscle tissue of a dead animal that has ripened into meat. Muscular (or post-mortem) ossification begins with the masticatory muscles, then the muscles of the head, the muscles of the back of the head between the horns, the muscles of the body along the spinal column, and all the muscles down to the hooves ossify. The joints grow stiff, and the muscles contract. But together with the stiffening of the muscles, lactic acid oozes out. The reaction shifts from the alkaline to the acidic. The acids dissolve the muscular protein, and the enzymes splinter it; the muscles, as a result, become soft. And meat is formed.

The formula for protein is: $(R.CHNH_2-COOH).n$

The enzymes lay back the parentheses from this formula, freeing the fragments of the protein molecule. This is *meat ripening*. In the carcass of the cattle that are hanging in the freezer, the process of human *digestion* is already beginning. Lactic acid eats away at the connecting tissues, turning them into an adhesive and helping the pepsin of the human stomach. The meat's juices, which were not present during the ossification process, ooze out from the ripened meat. The ripening of meat lasts from 8 to 14 days at a temperature of 4 degrees above zero [Celsius]. The ripening of meat for wild breeds of birds (hazel grouse, ducks) leads to the process of decay and putrescence. Many peoples have eaten and continue to eat both raw meat and putrefied meat. It is completely natural that meat, which is a highly nutritious element for the human organism, is even more nutritious for the millions of bacteria that live inside meat; and these bacteria sometimes are quite beneficial for man. In order for meat to be standard, it ought to be *drained of blood*.

In the United States, a *wheel of fortune* is used for the slaughter of hogs and sheep. Hogs are hung upside down on a carousel, tied by a noose around their hind legs, and then they are thrown upside down upon the *rails of blood draining*, which transport them to the stabber, who sticks a stiletto blade near the heart in the interlacing of veins and arteries and who rips open the neck. The heart is still working, pumping out blood and emptying the carcass of blood. The stunning of small animals by means of a blunt blow to the forehead – especially with animals of the goat-sheep breeds – is not effective. In their natural environment, these animals jump down from mountainsides and are struck upon their forehead and their horns, so they are not stunned by a blow to the forehead. This is where the expression *roche moutonnée* comes from.⁶ Before putting hogs on the wheel of fortune and the rails of blood draining, the Americans hose these animals down with water, both in order to wash the hogs and in order to calm the animals down so that a good quality of meat will be produced. When they hose the hogs down with water, the Americans begin with the feet, because if the water were to fall first upon the backs of the hogs, a large percentage of them would die from shock or from a heart attack. This would render the

⁶ In Russian, the name for this geological rock formation (*roche moutonnée* or “sheepback”), which is created by the passing of a glacier, is *baranii lob* [бараний лоб], literally “a ram’s forehead.”

hog worthless as meat, if it were not to be drained of blood.

In the name of “humaneness,” the Americans have been concerned to develop a new method of slaughtering hogs that would insure that the organism dies only after it has lost consciousness – specifically, for the benefit of improved blood draining. This has been achieved in their animal slaughter. The cattle are transported in wagons by conveyor beneath a row of warm showers, and they swim across pools filled with running water. They end up in a long corridor, called the “intestine,” which is constantly getting narrower. Then they individually cross the deadly threshold of a metallic “box.” A hammer weighing 2.5 kilograms (wielded by a skilled slaughterman, it must not cause any hemorrhaging of the brain, for this would ruin the brain for human consumption) is used to stun the cattle between the horns, 1.5 centimeters above the eyes. The bull loses consciousness, that is to say, it loses sensibility, but it is still alive. It falls to the ground. A chain attached to its hind legs lifts it up onto a finishing conveyor. Hyperemia, that is, the excessive build up of blood in the head and brain, does not allow consciousness to return to the bull’s brain. On the conveyor, the bull’s throat is slit open and the animal is divided up, while the dazed heart spurts out blood convulsively.

(The blood, which flows out of the cattle, is collected in the albumin or blood section, where the blood is processed. But it is likewise used in its raw state as well, in the form of a beverage, in the form of a medication, and, in particular, in the form of an adhesive, since it turns out to be an excellent substance for gluing plywood together.)

If the bull’s brain is damaged during the process of stunning, before the blood has been drained, then only half of the normal amount of blood will drain out. This occurs because the damage to the brain suspends the heart’s activity. The less the muscle tissues are drained of blood, the poorer the quality of the meat produced, for corpuscles of blood are the first to be exposed to the attack of bacteria, right up to the bacteria of ptomaine poisoning. Meat in which the blood has been poorly drained spoils quickly and does not taste good, since it is very ulcerous and purulent, exuding pus.

In accord with the German method of slaughter, cattle are stunned by an electric current of 120 to 210 volts. This method does not ruin the skin and helps in the draining of blood out of the bull’s heart.

In accord with the old French method of slaughter, which is also the old Russian method, the bull’s head is anchored by a rope that goes downward through a ring imbedded into the floor. A dagger is used to cut the skin, the subcutaneous cellulose, and the connective tissues, penetrating through the opening between the occipital bone and the vertebrae up along the spinal column. Immediately after this, they insert a wide knife at the base of the breastbone, in the space between the first pair of ribs on the left (this method of slaughter has grown archaic, just like the so-called Asian methods: that is, the Jewish-Moslem and Iranian methods), and they cut the throat right down to the vertebrae. In accord with this method, the esophagus is cut open and the contents of the stomach are expelled together with the blood onto the meat.

The American and German methods of slaughtering cattle are considered the most humane. Not

so long ago, somewhere in the Balkans, some two to three hundred sheep or rams were herded into a slaughtering hall. Two dozen men slaughtered them with knives in the space of a quarter of an hour. The sheep went berserk before they died, flinging themselves at one another, crushing each other, bleating and even squealing, which generally is not something that sheep characteristically do.

During the process of preparing meat, the heart plays a decisive role, at least a heart that is functioning properly. The labor that is completed by a bull's heart under normal circumstances during a twenty-four-hour period is about equal to the labor, the exertion of energy, that is required to lift a bull to the height of St. Isaac's Cathedral in Leningrad. In other words, during the course of thirty years a bull's heart lifts into the stratosphere two Russian boxcars filled with bricks. Moreover, it has been established scientifically that the arteries and the veins constitute, along with the heart, one inseparable whole; they constitute a "peripheral" heart.

(Blood. Blood supply. If we take as a single unit the blood nourishment of the organism as a whole, then the nourishment of the muscle tissues that are transformed into meat after slaughtering requires half a unit of blood, for the liver eleven units, for nourishment of the brain seventeen units, for the thyroid gland seventy units, for the adrenal glands eighty-seven and a half units – and it is the heart that is in charge of all this blood.)

Professor [Georg Clemens] Perthes:

"The problem of death is so important that the study of life – biology – needs to be contrasted to the study of death – thanatology."

Academician [Aleksandr Aleksandrovich] Bogomolets:

"... [it is] one of the forms of internal adaptation to the evolution of life, where, for the sake of the beautiful flowering of individuality, immortality is sacrificed to it. Death is the price we pay for having become 'people.'"

Professor [Charles Sedgwick] Minot:

"... differentiation. We should thank it for the multitude of advantages that we enjoy in our existence and for the possibility of dispatching our physiological needs more completely than can the animals that stand below us. We should thank it for all the achievements of human genius. The price we pay for all this is death. But this is not a steep price to pay. None of us would agree to return to the condition of a lower organism."

Despite the fact that the lower the organism, the less the "individuality" and the more there are conversations about immortality, like the immortality of infusoria, where an infinite multiplication by division exists and where there is no individual death, an indisputable sign of which is the presence of a corpse; despite all this, each individual entity among infusoria divides into two individual entities, life continues endlessly, and there is no corpse.

The scheme of immortality is as follows: birth, nourishment, growth, multiplication; birth, nourishment, growth, multiplication; birth, etc. – to infinity. The death of an individual does not matter.

The scheme of the relations within living nature is as follows: simple chemical compounds, a live plant, synthesis, the reception of complex compounds, the vital functions of an animal, the decomposition of the complex compound. The result is: simple compounds, infinity, matter is eternal, immortality.

Biologists have analyzed the scheme of the functions by means of which vital functions are formed. There are eleven functions in all. And the first of them is nourishment: that is, the active, independent reception into oneself of extraneous substances from outside oneself. When, in times immemorial, one of the brightest breeds of apes tried to feed itself with bird eggs, mollusks, and after that the fresh meat of animals (rather than with seeds and fruits), that is to say, when it made the function of nourishment more complicated, at that point in time some unusual things occurred. Fresh meat and blood contained elements that restructured the exchange of substances, the endocrine system. Fresh meat, a carnal diet, shortened the digestive process. The academician Gapkin has written about this development, citing a well-known quotation from Engels, from his work, *The Role of Labor in the Process of Humanizing the Ape* (1876). A carnal diet exerted a decisive influence on the brain: the brain began to develop. The possibility of a very rapid improvement, from generation to generation, arose due to meat. The academician Gapkin has written that it was specifically the use of meat in the ape's diet that led this animal to full humanization (he left aside the question why, under these conditions, dogs, hawks, and other carnivorous animals did not determine the development of the ape). The developed brain is what gave man fire. And it is no accident that man began to eat the rabbits and lizards that he had caught, but acquired herds and domesticated those animals that resembled him in taste. Man, covered by a sheepskin, is the first master in the history of humankind, the one who established that meat is tastier and satisfies man's appetite more than berries and roots from the forest.

An organism lives in an external environment. The struggle for existence forces it to adapt constantly to its external environment. The life of an individual creature constitutes, therefore, a constant change of conditions. The *thermophilus* bacteria – the most minute of living, visible creatures known to us thus far – is 1.5 microns long. A micron is equal to one thousandth of a millimeter. Two and a half billion (2,500,000,000,000) microbes weigh one gram. The human being is an aggregate of the systems of cells in an organism. He is in no way merely an arithmetical sum, however, but rather a well-coordinated combination of these cell systems that connects together a nervous system, breathing, blood circulation, endocrine functions, and other systems, both known and unknown thus far to humankind, to form an individual creature. Life is a dynamic process based on the constant decline and decomposition of a living substance and on its constant renewal and recomposition. Life consists in the constant liberation of kinetic energies and the accumulation of potential forms of energy that can be mobilized at any moment. This is what life is! . . .

Life ranges from an invisible live virus to an elephant (or to the celebrated Simmental ox named

Shakh from the Yarishchensky breeding farm, who weighs 76 poods, 1216 kilograms). In the flow of life, particularly in the flow of the molecular life and death of an organism's cells, during every second in the life of an ox 325 million cells (325,000,000) are born and die: 325 million cells are produced within the organism and are eliminated from it.

(Shakh has been a high-class producer. He was awarded a gold medal for the first time back in 1915 and he is still alive today. His children, his grandchildren, and his great grandchildren have all been awarded prestigious medals. The most famous of his progeny are his son Azimuth and his grandson Artiste. His great grandson Apollo received the highest award at the All-Russian Agricultural Exhibition of 1923.

Is Shakh's death the price he will have to pay for a life that has been well provided for? After all, he is going to be eaten! The cynic says that man is the basest and most ignoble creature on the face of the earth: he fattens up an animal in order to kill it. Here is an illustration. We arrived in the village of Kozhino, in the Mytishchinsky District, near Moscow. Our host and hostess were elated to see us. The hostess placed a suckling pig on the grass and tickled its belly. The suckling pig grunted blissfully, closing its eyes in delight. The host thrust a knife into it just below its left shoulder blade. They roasted the fresh meat.)

Thanatology is the study of death. Thanatophobia is the fear of death.

Theorists maintain that a sense of hopelessness and horror in the face of death occurs exclusively because of the high percentage of pathological deaths: deaths resulting from illness, war, disaster, or suicide. Theorists likewise maintain that thanatophobia is the result of the low degree of dissemination of information about the formal genesis of death. The majority of people, they say, including some backward natural scientists, equate death with suffering, when in fact (according to [Ernst Julius Richard] Ewald, [Carl Wilhelm Hermann] Nothnagel, [Alfred Erich] Hoche, and [Georg Clemens] Perthes) the moment of death does not bring any torment at all. Sometimes it is even quite serene, for the communication of painful irritation to consciousness has an overall speed of only 35 meters per second, that is, twenty times slower than the flight of a shell out of a contemporary mortar. Judging by the facts provided by scientific authorities, death itself – both physiological and pathological death – is the final sleep, a sleep that is deep and without dreams. That is to say, death is a long-awaited rest; that is to say, every night, when falling asleep, all human and animal creatures undergo an exercise in dying.

In a word, "Nature possessed all the means necessary to make the individual creature immortal, but for him she selected death. She took away immortality and in return for it she gave him love!"

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As far as tainted meat is concerned, Bernhard Leopold Franz Tanner, while accompanying the Polish ambassador, Prince Chartorysky, on an embassy visit to see Tsar Fyodor III in 1678, saw in Moscow – on Myasnitskaya Street, at the corner with Yevplovka Street, that is, between the

Nikolsky Gates and the Ilinsky Gates, alongside the Lubyany Market – how Russians were buying tainted meat and were eating it raw, right there out on the street, washing it down with vodka. This tradition, we must assume, derived from the Tatars, who used to store raw meat under their saddle, beneath the saddle blanket, and would take it out of there to eat it when it had become rotten. This same Tanner witnessed how all of Myasnitskaya Street, down to the white Myasnitsky Gates and from those gates along the ponds located on the right that lead up to the Pokrov Monastery, was the Moscow slaughterhouse district.⁷

A second foreigner, Napoleon Bonaparte, in his well-known Napoleonic Code, called the Moscow slaughterhouses dirty and dangerous institutions that were a source of embarrassment.

European governments, in the course of many centuries, exhausted numerous ways of combating the foul-smelling stench and the contamination that surrounded slaughterhouse districts in major cities. Some seventy years ago, pools of blood and sewerage flowed along the streets of Europe's capitals. And the inhabitants in those days became accustomed to the idea that slaughterhouses, because of their very nature, were fated to be, and necessarily had to be, "putrid, rotten cesspools, cursed by God and by man alike," and that nothing could be done about it. There was no alternative, they believed, but to chase butchers, along with their slaughter stalls, to the outskirts of major cities, beyond the city gates. The first person who took it upon himself to try to do this in Moscow was Peter the Great, but nothing came of it.

According to the information provided to us by Tanner, the districts of Yevplovka Street, Lubyany Market, and Myasnitskaya Street, as far down as the Pokrov Monastery, were the most populated trading districts of seventeenth-century Moscow. Instead of signs, old boot tops hung on the booths of cobblers. Tailors weighed out scraps of cloth. The locality was densely populated with churches; beggars and all manner of holy fools would sit several people deep on the doorsteps of these churches. There was a large number of beer halls and "tsar's taverns" [vodka dens]; around them, from time to time, drunkards would pull each other's beards. The common people were involved in trade. The church bells would chime at St. Euplius, at St. Frolus, at St. Nikolay the Wonder-Worker on Myasnitskaya Street. The road went from St. Euplius across St. Frolus to the gates – oak gates, blackened by mud, bound with iron, and flung wide open – near the squat brick Myasnitsky Tower, on both sides of which stood white walls that enclosed and guarded the district called White City. People and horses moved through these gates. If a boyar or a foreigner⁸ were to pass through the gates, two lackeys would run in front of his carriage, waving knouts in the air for the purpose of indicating the visitor's prestige. This was the place where they drove their herds – both to the pastures that belonged to inhabitants of Moscow and to the city itself for slaughter. Peasant huts, shops, booths, courtyards, and fenced-

⁷ In Russian, Myasnitskaya Street (*Myasnitskaya ulitsa* [Мясницкая улица]) means, literally, "Butchers Street."

⁸ The word that the narrator uses here, *nemets* [немец], means "German," but historically it denoted any "foreigner" (especially one from Europe), since the Russian word derives from the adjective *nemoi* [немой], "mute," "dumb," "silent" (that is, a person who does not speak Russian). The narrator is likely to have had this original meaning of the word in mind here as he paraphrases Tanner's late seventeenth-century travel account of his visit to Moscow.

off enclosures were crowded together along the wall. Red carcasses that had been skinned would hang in the spaces in between. In narrow spaces behind the counters, atop benches slippery from blood, they would slaughter suckling pigs. In their pens, sheep would be bleating plaintively and cattle would be bellowing. They would slaughter these animals right there on the spot. Blood would flow down into pools around the yards into which the animals had been herded and around the butcher shops; blood would flow along the streets. Men and dogs would urinate into the bloody puddles that formed in the back streets and alleyways. Serfs would carry on their heads freshly flayed animal hides that were still steaming. Dogs would devour the guts of these animals. A noseless beggar would chew on a piece of bread from a small white loaf. Buyers would poke their fingers into the meat, asking, “Is it still tough, or not?” The merchant would narrow his eyes and squint from behind his grey beard, explaining that it “has softened up just right,” that “we clean out all the worms.”

Tanner:

“The strong odor here results from the fact that they conduct trade equally with tainted meat as well as with fresh meat. This tainted meat is a great delicacy for the Muscovites. Merchants spread out pieces of meat in the full blaze of the sun. The meat becomes soft and turns rotten . . . The stench comes from the befouled ponds into which the butchers toss the entrails, horns, and hooves of the slaughtered animals . . .”

In 1707, Peter restored Moscow’s fortifications, since he was hoping to meet the Swedish king, Karolus [Charles XII], on the field of battle near Moscow. Peter was walking with [Aleksandr Danilovich] Menshikov along the base of the fortifications, when he got bogged down in the mud near the Myasniki meat district and was barely able to get his feet unstuck. He let out a curse and said:

“Write another order of the day: chase all the butchers off of this street and relocate them in the black city. Let them perform the slaughter of cattle on the outskirts of the city. We urgently need to dig a fortress here. Carry away these peasant huts so that our military forces will be free to fire upon the Swedes. Dig bulwarks along the entire length of the square.”

The peasant huts were taken away and the butchers were evicted. The Swedish army did not reach Moscow. The bulwarks were never built. On the spot that had been cleared out near the Myasnitsky Gates (where the Central Post Office – the *Pochtamt* – was constructed in the nineteenth century), Menshikov built himself a palace. And although more than ten years had elapsed from the time when the meat business had been exterminated here, it was still not possible for him to live in the palace due to the odors that wafted over from the “Filthy Ponds” [Poganye prudy]. Menshikov ordered that these ponds be cleaned out. They were indeed cleaned out, and they subsequently were called the “Clean Ponds” [Chistye prudy], which still exist there to this very day.

Legend has it that on Easter Sunday of 1799, in the Zamoskvorechie District, the butchers-cum-merchants Nikifor Khvostov and Dorofey Bastryukov, under the influence of quite a bit of vodka

they had drunk to break the Lenten fast, thought up the following idea: namely, on Easter Sunday they reasoned that they were making their living “from meats” and that if the trade in meats were to expand, this would not be something that would anger God. And if Moscow were to grow in size as a result of this expanded trade, that would only add to Your glory, oh Lord. But certain circumstances, you see, are creating some inconveniences. First of all, people are herding their livestock to both the Sukharyov and the Smolensk haymarkets, beyond the Rogozhsky and Serpukhov markets. Those who are a bit bolder are driving their herds directly to the Okhotny Ryad District, leaving them in a muddy swamp on Balchug Island. Bastryukov and Khvostov need to keep pace everywhere. At the Sukharyov Haymarket, you see, Bastryukov paid 40 kopecks a pood [36.11 pounds] for cattle, while at the Serpukhov Market, Yevdokimov paid only 30 kopecks a pood for his, and then he trades them right under your very nose in the Yakimanka District. He is making two kopecks a pood more than you. It is insulting to go against Yevdokimov, and it is a direct loss. Secondly, it is very easy for the cattle dealers to deceive you: they will sell you one cow, but when it comes time to lead that cow to slaughter, you see, they will bring in an entirely different cow. And so they came up with this idea: the buying-and-selling of cattle in Moscow needs to be moved to one location; there needs to be a large cattle yard built somewhere near the Astrakhan Highroad; and the main herd of livestock can be driven from there, so that no one will either buy or sell livestock in a different location. The new cattle yard, they say, will pay for itself: we will simply need to charge one kopeck for each head of cattle and a two-kopeck coin for each branding . . . That is more or less what happened, but, in any case, around Whit Sunday of that same year (1799) the Moscow merchants, through the military Governor-General, Ilya Alekseyevich Saltykov (the second bearer of that revered surname), presented a petition, written by a cleric at the Main Salt Office, named Vaska Fyodorov, son of Sokolov, in which it was written:

“ . . . falling face forward and prostrating ourselves at the all-merciful feet of Your Imperial Majesty, the autocrat of All the Russias, we, the undersigned, your loyal subjects, most humbly request that Your Most Radiant Majesty deign to place the Customs Yard and the Cattle Yard, which are located in Moscow between the Serpukhov and Kaluga tollgates, under complete ownership of the merchants, because they have a very great need for them, which need is spelled out quite clearly by the following points . . . ”

Since the merchants wanted to procure the land near the yard from the State for free, they wrote out these explanatory points during the course of the entire fast period from Christmas to Shrovetide, beginning with the feast day of St. Thomas itself. Saltykov II spent the summer in the Moscow area and forgot all about the petition from the tsar’s most loyal subjects. Around the time of Transfiguration Sunday, Dorofey Semyonovich Bastryukov – through the clerk Vaska Fyodorov, son of Sokolov – gave a bribe, a “lamb wrapped in paper,”⁹ as a gift to the official for special assignments who worked under the Governor-General and found out where this civil servant was living, where his quarters were located. This civil servant was living in Court Councilor Bibikov’s house, which is located on Povarskaya Street, near the Church of St. Simeon the Stylite. Bastryukov had a large cart, filled with ducks, ham, and two heads of sugar,

⁹ This colorful Russian idiomatic expression for a bribe has a rhythmic, musical cadence to it that is lost in translation: *barashka v bumazhke* [барашка в бумажке]).

along with Chinese tea wrapped in blue paper, delivered to the quarters of the civil servant. The civil servant wrote a memorandum. Saltykov II returned to Moscow on August 7th. The Official for Special Assignments slipped him the memorandum for his signature on the morning of August 8th. Because of the hot weather, Saltykov signed the memorandum without even reading it. On the evening of August 8th, the memorandum concerning the Cattle Yard, sealed with five stamps of sealing wax, was lying in the light carriage of a state courier leaving Moscow on the Sankt-Peter-burkh Highway.

The reply to, and the decision upon, the petition submitted by the Moscow merchants came out unexpectedly. On the 15th of August, the exact date of the Feast of the Dormition, Prince Parfeny Yengalychev, a fat and extremely clever person, introduced himself to Tsar Paul at Gatchina after mass. Yengalychev most humbly presented the tsar with a book he himself had composed. It had just been published, with permission of the Moscow censor, by the university printing house of [Christian] Ridiger and [Christopher] Klaudii. The book was titled *Folk Handbook for Curing Various Ailments with Home Remedies Without a Doctor and Likewise Instructions Concerning Rules that Ought to be Observed by Anyone Watching their Health*.

Yengalychev, without batting an eye, looked straight into the snub-nosed, freckled little face of the Emperor and solemnly spoke these words that he had memorized by heart ahead of time:

“ . . . burning with envy and zeal toward Your Most August Imperial Majesty, I make so bold as to dedicate to you, Your Majesty, this most humble work of mine, as a proper duty to the father of the fatherland, who vigilantly watches over the welfare and prosperity of his faithful sons, as well as over their safekeeping . . . Please deign, Your Majesty, from the height of your throne, to look down upon this modest offering from your most loyal subject . . . ”

Yengalychev extended toward Paul a silver plate, covered by a piece of crimson velvet with a Maltese cross on it, along with a book in a cover of Moroccan leather and a silk bookmark. Paul accepted the gift. His adjutant, Prince Vasilchikov, adroitly intercepted the silver plate. After dinner, Paul thumbed through Yengalychev's book. He read the following:

“ . . . the consumption of food is very important for preserving one's health. Plants and animals are equally capable of providing nourishment for us. However, one must be discriminating in judging the qualities of these substances. One should never eat animals that die from natural causes, because they die for no other reason than that they are ill. One must refrain from eating the meat of those animals that have died as a result of injuring themselves, for the blood that spreads throughout the meat causes it immediately to turn putrid. The meat of ducks, hogs, and all other animals that feed on dirt and excrement, as well as of those animals that have been fed on coarse fodder and have been kept locked up, unable to breathe any fresh air, causes indigestion and weighs heavily on one's mind and spirit. The consumption of such meat in great quantity often causes scurvy or scorbutic disease, as well as hypochondria and melancholia. Eating meat once a day promotes health . . . ”

In the evening of that same day, after the servant had lit candles in the study, Prince Vasilchikov came in with a report. He submitted to his Highness, for his royal consideration, a memorandum from Saltykov II, the Governor-General of Moscow, together with a petition submitted by the Moscow butchers. The Emperor was in a good mood, and Yengalychev's book seemed to him a highly learned and scientific work. So Paul wrote upon the petition: "Dear Sir, Military Governor-General and Field Marshal Saltykov II. In consequence of your dispatch of the 8th of August of this year and in response to the request of the Moscow merchants' assembly, we order that the Customs Yard and Cattle Yard be given over to them and placed at their disposal forever, without any compensatory payment to the State."

The history of the Moscow slaughterhouse industry begins, in essence, precisely with this decree issued by Paul.

In 1805, the Customs Yard was paved with cobblestones. In 1816, after the Napoleonic fires, the Customs Yard was enclosed by a fence. Thirty-three rows of fenced-off enclosures made out of oak were hauled inside the yard and simultaneously 6,000 cattle were formed up behind these fences. By autumn, herds of animals were being driven here from the Don steppes, from Tsaritsyn, from the Khopyor River Basin, and from the Volga region for the "salting of the first meats." The livestock walked some two to three thousand versts [0.66 miles]. Small-time buyers had been darting about from village to village as far back as June 29th, the feast day for Saints Peter and Paul. At district fairs, these buyers took more large-scale consignments for cattle, up to a hundred head, herding them to provincial cities, to Kursk, to Voronezh, to Tambov, to Kaluga, to Ryazan. The livestock were fed on a flood plain covered with a stubble field of aftergrass and they were herded along the highroads – along the Kaluga, Astrakhan, and Kursk Highways – to Moscow in herds that numbered a thousand head each.

On Fridays, two civil servants from the chancellery of the Governor-General and the Ministry of Internal Affairs – and two representatives from the city – would come to the Customs Yard. The civil servants would set the retail price for meat. They would pass through the rows of fenced-off enclosures, looking at the cattle that had already been bought by small-time Moscow buyers, and they would select three bulls out of three lots. These bulls would be slaughtered and dressed right there on the spot, in the presence of the commissioners. The meat would be weighed; the selling price for every part of the bulls would be determined; the senior man in charge of each row of stalls would give the information concerning how much the hide costs; and the trade supervisor would certify how much the "head and legs," the entrails, and the suet cost. They would do their calculations and then add two and a half kopecks to the average price per pound of meat of the first grade; add one and a half kopecks to the average price per pound of meat of the second grade; and add half a kopeck to the average price per pound of meat of the third grade. These additions to the price were made "for the benefit of the butcher, to help him to maintain his shop and his workers." For using a space "at the cattle yard" they charged two and three quarters of a kopeck per head of cattle, while for their branding of the cattle by hot resin they charged a kopeck and a quarter each. The trading in cattle would be in full swing on Fridays. The merchants, the cattle dealers, and the middlemen would knock down prices. The middlemen would bid up the price if the "supply" was lower than the average price, then they would "knock down" [*shibat*'] the price, whence comes the nickname *shibai* that was given to local commissioners and whence comes the surname Shibaev.

(When the *shibai* knocked down the price, this meant that one could not transport the bull back to Cherkassy, since it had already travelled 3,000 versts. This would have spelled financial ruin for the cattle herder. This appeared as the most graphic molecular example of the capitalist “crises” that rode along the spine of oxen all the way back to the steppe, to Voronezh, Kozlov, and Cherkassy, a financial burden hanging on the necks of the “muzhik” who paid for the extra kopecks added to the price of new livestock purchases.)

The question of the centralization of the buying-and-selling of livestock in Moscow, which was welcomed by the Moscow merchants, but which the wholesale cattle drovers did not care for very much, was not connected with the question of the centralization of slaughterhouses. According to legend, in June 1863, during the time of the “emancipation” reforms, the military Governor-General, Pavel Tuchkov, invited Prince Aleksandr Shcherbatov, the head of the Moscow City Council, over to his house and he locked himself inside the study with his guest for a strictly confidential conversation. The Prince and the Governor-General loaded their noses up with snuff (the very same kind that was very widely distributed across all the countries of Europe before the middle of the last century, that is to say, before the time when *sewerage systems* and the abolishment of *private slaughterhouses* were introduced in major cities, for snuff served mainly to atrophy human olfactory capabilities, so that people, especially princes and merchants, members of the well-to-do class, would not suffocate from urban stench). The military Governor-General said to the Prince:

“I must inform Your Excellency of a very grave situation. It has been reported to His Majesty by some one of our well-wishers,” the general took another load of snuff up his nose, “well-wishers, that the slaughterhouses in Moscow find themselves in a terrible, disgraceful condition that is not tolerable in a well-ordered society. I have made inquiries and requested information from the chancellery, and I should tell you, sir, excuse me, but I am not at all pleased, sir. This is unacceptable. It is not known exactly how many slaughterhouses we have in Moscow, where they are located, what kinds they are, and how they are constructed. I went to a dinner at the home of Prince Trubetskoy in Uzkoie, driving there by way of the Polyansky Market, and I saw with my very own eyes how, at some place called ‘Khvostov Heirs,’ they are slaughtering cows in plain sight of all sorts of decent people. These fools, having caught sight of me driving by, continued to display their swagger and daring. I decided to fine these hooligans, but I was informed by the chancellery that the butchers were entirely within their rights, sir, and that what they were doing was protected by law. Please do not take it amiss, my dear fellow, but this is unacceptable.”

The generals loaded up their nostrils with snuff again.

“I suppose,” said the Governor-General, “that the miasma, the filth, and so on at the slaughterhouses is flowing out not so much because of a lack of oversight on the part of the authorities or because of negligence on our part, as much as from the poor construction of these enterprises. Beyond the Krestovsky Tollgates, for instance, near the

Pyatnitsky Cemetery, some peasants got the bright idea in their heads of building a rubbish-heap and of building slaughter stalls and a fat-rendering site in the middle of that rubbish-heap. The place they selected for this, the fools, was right next to the cemetery! . . . We must carefully inspect slaughterhouses and similar enterprises that have a connection to meat production: fat rendering sites, knackery yards, and so on. Your Radiance will receive from me a written proposal that is currently being prepared in the chancellery . . .”

“I must inform Your Excellency,” said Prince Aleksandr Shcherbatov, “that I fear the measure will have no effect on the prices of meat . . .”

“If only it would have an effect,” said the general. “If only at least the city’s educated society, bearing in mind the benefit to the State, might, for its part, make some material sacrifices . . . On the other hand, the merchants do require close, careful oversight and guidance on the part of the nobility. Krestovnikov and Talyzin, for example, are enlarging their fat rendering sites, they have built a candle factory, they are making progress, they might relax a bit, sir . . .”

Two years and two months later, at the end of August 1865, Prince Shcherbatov received from Governor-General Pavel Tuchkov a “written proposal,” in which it was written, in part:

“All measures must be taken to hasten the work of the Interim Commission on the construction of slaughterhouses, fat-rendering plants and knackery yards, a commission that created by the Duma in accord with my proposal of June 21, 1863 for No. 142.”

The Interim Commission was headed by the “negotiators” Krestovnikov and Talyzin. The prince in charge convened the commission. Krestovnikov read the draft of the report:

“ . . . beneath loose floors, there is visible a gloomy, dismal gutter in which there are tarred bins for the draining of blood, bins that are filled with this blood. The blood flows over the brim of these bins, falls onto the ground, and decays there. The livestock in the yard are standing up to their knees in mud. The slaughter is produced by a blow from the butt of an axe struck across the animal’s head. But since the animal sees in front of itself, with its very own eyes, how creatures of its own kind are being killed, it does not go willingly to the slaughter inside the shed, but instead resists it. The slaughtermen employ various means in an effort to drive the animal to slaughter: they pull his tail, they beat him with sticks on the most sensitive parts of his body, they slice tendons above his ankle joint. For those who witness these scenes, the pictures that they observe elicit horror in their souls. If you add, to what has been set forth here, the bellowing of the cattle, exhausted by thirst, the stench produced by the filth and the decomposing offal, then we may justifiably pose the question about what measures must be taken to correct such irregularities . . .”

The prince who was serving as head of the City Commission interrupted.

“Are you not perhaps exaggerating and laying it on just a bit thick, Andrey Kuzmich?”

“The picture we have entered into the record is an average one, sir,” said Krestovnikov. “Actually, in reality, when we, the members of the commission, come to visit one of these contractors at the Serpukhov Tollgate, we find right away a quagmire in the yard: there is offal, rotted lumps, horns, hooves, manure, all of it mixed together. It is sheer hell, a terrible stench. Dogs are lying around, as fat as lions. And it is impossible to go into the shed. I beg to report that you would not be able to clean the blood out of there for time immemorial, for it has congealed in layers. It is impossible to go in by the stairs that lead up to the shed because they are saturated with blood; there is a mountain formed out of congealed blood; the steps are not even visible . . .”

The prince loaded up his nostril with snuff again. Krestovnikov continued reading:

“ . . . there are twenty-one private slaughterhouses in Moscow. Moreover, there are fat rendering plants, and knackery yards, and livestock yards, and haymarkets, where they slaughter cattle, and there are butcher shops where slaughtering likewise takes place . . .

Talyzin, who was not listening to the reading, said:

“And whose fault is this? Many people make their living in the meat business and all the money they make is in small amounts. Judge for yourself, Your Radiance, a simple peasant sets up a haymarket beyond the tollgate, he provides a night’s lodging and grub for a rough and clumsy type (such as he himself is), since the latter comes to the bazaar and is himself engaged in commerce. But what kind of commerce is he involved in? Just trifles. He will slaughter a cow at the haymarket, he will sell the meat at the bazaar, he will buy two calves, and he will spend a lot on fattening them up – the farther he goes, the more he spends. We hear how the merchant Poskatukhin registered as a member of the guild for those who work in the meat business, but he already owns his own slaughterhouse. And what exactly is his slaughterhouse? A shed, a table to place carcasses on, two posts for eviscerating the carcasses, and that is the entire operation. But the stench, the filth, and the trouble it causes for the authorities are beyond measure. In this line of business, cleanliness is not counted upon; everything all around is soaked in blood. The animal, while it is alive, produces manure; when you kill it, it stinks of intestines and entrails. Carrion, it is carrion . . .”

“Yes, but you yourself began in this way. What are you aiming at, merchant?”

Talyzin answered without batting an eye:

“Benefit to the State comes not from small change, but from large-scale capital –

and that is what we in the meat business believe as well, Your Radiance . . . and Andrey Kuzmich, that is, Krestovnikov, has the same ideas . . . Have you ever heard, Your Radiance, about Kapiton Tudvasov?”

The prince had not heard of Kapiton Tudvasov. And yet Tudvasov was a man of his age, an outstanding man among butchers. He did not approve of the conversations that follow below:

“ . . . in the old days, gentlemen, everything was done properly, everything was done as God commands . . . when you would come to a tavern on a Friday, all your friends would be sitting there: Ivan Mitrich (now deceased), Mishukha Bastryukov, Pashukha. ‘How many cattle are they driving in?’ we would ask, when we all knew that there were few calves available. It was perfect timing because Mishukha needs calves. We’re laughing. ‘We’ll pull Mishukha’s leg a little, eh, why not?’ We go out onto the landing. I raise the price by a half-kopeck per pood, he raises it by a quarter-kopeck. Mishukha, who gets angry, promises to treat me to food and drink. Well, so we backtrack on our prices. ‘Mishukha, you can take all the calves, if you will stand me a treat.’ There is nowhere for the herdsman to move, Mishukha is happy, and we go back into the tavern, where Mishukha stands me a treat. But now he owes me, Mishukha does, so he will fix me up later . . .”

Kapiton Tudvasov did not approve of conversations such as these. He did not approve of such a system of mutual responsibility and collective guarantee, for he was convinced that a three-kopeck piece does not stand firm against a ruble, that investors will smother the three-kopeck piece. Kapiton Tudvasov spoke about *statistics* and about *joint-stock companies*. He maintained that one three-kopeck piece would inevitably combine with another three-kopeck piece and go into making a swindle, an *afera*. In those days, these words sounded even more terrible than they do nowadays. Moreover, the word *afera* meant “matter,” “business.” Kapiton Tudvasov counted on his abacus: every year 120,000 bulls, 50,000 cows, and countless sheep pass through the livestock yards in Moscow. The brokers are paid two three-kopeck coins per head, and that is to no purpose. From one steer weighing 60 poods, they manage to extract 21 poods of meat. The hide, the suet, and the offal weigh 15 poods combined, but where do the remaining 25 poods go? Are they given to the dogs to devour? To no purpose, for nothing. The Germans, for example, value the intestines more than gold and out of the urinary bladders they even make inflatable air bladders for swimming or floating. Have the authorities written any rules? Yes, they have. Is the butcher oppressed by these rules? Yes, he is. Does the butcher find ways to circumvent these rules? Yes, he does. Is the butcher forced to pay bribes? Yes, he is. Does he pay bribes to the on-duty policeman, the non-commissioned policeman, the commissioned police officer, the police sergeant, the bailiff, the municipal authorities, the provincial authorities, the officials in charge of rows of retail stalls, the fiscal agents, and the doctors? Yes, he does. And all to no purpose! . . .

On September 18, 1869, Kapiton Tudvasov submitted an application to the Moscow City Council:

“ . . . and, I, proceeding from the foregoing, commit myself – within three years’

time, beginning on May 1st of the next year (1870) – to construct, near the current slaughterhouse, a three-story brick building covered with a zinc roof that will be three times larger in square feet than the Imperial Bolshoi Theater, and that will cost – not counting the mobile mechanical devices and the assembled metal equipment inside – 1,300,000 rubles. Inside the building, there will be contrivances for slaughter: a section for processing the intestines, a tallow boillery for rendering the suet, a tannery for processing the hides into leather ware . . . There will be a covered yard for the livestock that will hold up to 10,000 head of cattle . . . And because of the spatial arrangement, if it proves necessary to herd the cattle across the railway bed, then I will take it upon myself to build an underground tunnel so that everything will be proper, decent, and convenient . . . I pledge to produce an output of healthy, inspected meat that will be able to nourish the population of the capital. I likewise promise that, thanks to the cleanliness of this projected enterprise, there will not be any foul odor or contamination. I will use the paunch manure and the cattle manure for fertilizing fields and gardens . . .”

“ . . . I will lease this new slaughterhouse to my own disposal for thirty-seven years, and every year for the first seventeen years I will pay the Moscow municipal government 26,000 rubles a year out of my own pocket. Then, for the next twenty years, I will pay 65,000 rubles a year. At the expiration of thirty-seven years, that is, on May 1, 1907, all of my slaughterhouse establishment will be transferred in full operation over to the full possession of the municipal government . . .”

In their dimensions and their scale, Kapiton Tudvasov’s plans were truly American and capitalistic. The “Khvostov Heirs” and the Bastryukov brothers feared Kapiton Tudvasov’s ideas. Krestovnikov and Talyzin huffed and puffed around Tudvasov; they asked him on the day he submitted the application whether he had properly greased the palms of the officials at the City Council and whether they had promised their help. And the matter, contrary to all expectations, was not delayed. It was taken under consideration exactly one month later. On October 17th, two members of the City Council, Izyumov and [Aleksandr Petrovich] Lukutin (the latter, the well-known owner of a factory that produced cardboard boxes out of *papier-mâché*), submitted a report on it.

“Who exactly is this Mr. Tudvasov?” asked Lukutin. “No one knows anything about him. He is an unknown person. Perhaps he is a schemer, an arsonist, a maniac! He could promise them mountains of gold, he could mortgage the land, he could hide abroad. God only knows what kind of surprise he could spring upon us.”

In the Tudvasov business matter, there was a bank certificate attesting to the fact that he had available capital on hand.

“And what about the interests of society? And the Duma? And the city?” asked Lukutin. “What is keeping the City Council itself from undertaking the

construction of a new slaughterhouse? There would be colossal revenues! . . . there would be cleanliness, hygiene, progress . . .”

The City Council, including Krestovnikov and Talyzin, decreed:

“The aforesaid project, which is not in accord with municipal interests and which does not, in any respect, merit our attention, is unanimously rejected.”

The Russian merchant, including the candlesellers-cum-investors, Krestovnikov and Talyzin, had not yet grown to the American scale! The military Governor-General, Pavel Tuchkov, said to the municipal head, Prince Aleksandr Shcherbatov: “But, on the other hand, the merchants need to be under the supervision of the nobility, under their leadership.” In other words, the Alexandrian “emancipation” reforms were in their historical place.

Kapiton Tudvasov disappeared from the Moscow horizons. It appears that he actually did leave for America. But the Moscow merchants remained within the sphere of Moscow’s historical development. History was following its own laws of development, its own patterns and regularities. And so sixteen years, two months, and twenty-five days after Kapiton Tudvasov’s proposal had been submitted, his ideas were implemented and became a reality. On July 20, 1886, on the feast day of Saint Ilya, the Moscow municipal slaughterhouses were mortgaged with funds from the Moscow municipal government. Litanies were recited; the choristers from the Chudov Monastery, the best-known voices in Moscow, sang. Archdeacon Andrey Zakharov, of the ancient Russian noble family of Shekhovtsovs, shouted out: “Long live the new municipal slaughterhouses!” On a vacant plot at the Kalitnikov Cemetery there was a stake sticking out of the ground, marking the boundary of the future slaughterhouses.

On that very same day, at around two o’clock in the afternoon, the shop owners in the Okhotny Ryad District tacked on another kopeck to the price of a pound of meat. At the Polyansky Market, the “Khvostov Heirs” added a kopeck and a half. To spite the Khvostovs, “Komarov and Sons” added a kopeck and a quarter. The Zherebtsovs at the Kaluga Tollgate for some reason added a full two kopecks. A panic started to spread across the Yakimanka District. Long lines of female cooks and the wives of civil servants stretched out in front of the shops, where the shop owners, from behind their counters, from their cash desks, explained to them:

“They are planning to slaughter the livestock in a new fashion. That’s why the price has been raised. They say that they will be building compartments for whoever needs them. I’m sorry, but I have fifteen people here with me who have to be fed. It’s ‘Krestovnikov Heirs’ who are profiting from this, while we’re not getting anything. And yet, nonetheless, nothing will come of this: the slaughtermen will not go to them; the slaughterman is accustomed to serving a master.”

Within the space of two hours, “Komarov and Sons” bought up all the beef “dirt cheap.” The “Khvostov Heirs” added another half kopeck to the price per pound. “Komarov and Sons” hurried over to Konnaya Square, where the bazaar had already closed. The “Kvostov Heirs” added yet another half kopeck to the price. That evening the police inspector Usov walked

around the shops; the sales clerks removed their caps when they saw him; the shop owners felt their way back into their offices by touch, selecting their paper money in a bit more ramshackle way than usual. The police inspector took a ruble from each of them, but he was unshakable and transmitted the following order: after you have closed up and locked your shops this evening, report to Sergeant Bryzgalov at the police station. The merchants stocked themselves up with new ten-ruble bills and walked over to the police station. Those who were waiting in line asked those who were heading out of the station after reporting to the sergeant: "So how did it go?" Those who were heading out answered drily: "You'll see for yourself when you get in there."

Sergeant Bryzgalov was tapping the toe of his boot against the floorboard; he did not extend his hand for a handshake; he did not exchange greetings in general; and he reproached the merchants angrily, right to the very heart. He accepted their bribes reluctantly and asked each one of them in turn, in a whisper: "So what are you doing, organizing a Pugachev-type rebellion right here in Moscow?" Then he immediately yelled at each one of them: "I'll get you to follow the rules, sir! You'll see tomorrow! I'll check on it myself! Now get out of here! . . ."

But the next morning, at the furrier Yegorov's shop on Denezhny Lane, the workers were not served roasted tripe at dinner, but were fed only potatoes instead. Vanifatyev, the foreman from the workers' guild, went to see the boss to get an explanation. The boss explained to him about the new slaughterhouses. That evening, in the darkness of the workers' barracks, one often heard the word "grub" being mentioned in the conversations among the workers, and no songs were being sung. And, on the following morning, no songs were being sung in the workshop. That morning the local priest, Father Kostromskoy, brought in a raccoon coat to have alterations made for the winter. Ivan Petrovich asked for three rubles more than before, and the priest was offended. Ivan Petrovich said: "I can't do it for any less, even if you were to do the cutting yourself, father. It's the beef . . . it's taking quite a bite out of my funds."

An order from the police chief arrived for Sergeant Bryzgalov:

" . . . due to the fact that enough livestock are being brought forward, there is no need for you to carry out oppression of the small private butchers until you receive special instructions . . ."

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The municipal slaughterhouses near the Kalitnikov Cemetery were opened on June 21, 1888, again with a litany, again with the choristers from the Chudov Monastery, and again with an archdeacon. An express train, filled with guests and decked out in national flags, arrived at the slaughterhouses from the Kazan Station. There was a dinner held in honor of the opening of the slaughterhouses. Sturgeon ear [fish soup] and coulbiac [fish pie], with a dried spinal cord of sturgeon as its filling, were served to the Vicarial Bishop, Misael, and the two archimandrites who conducted the church service, since they were not supposed to eat dishes containing meat or milk products during the fast. The brass orchestra of the Samogitsky Grenadier Regiment played music during the meal. People dined in a newly constructed tavern located near the slaughterhouses. On the day of the grand opening, the slaughtermen stood in their slaughtering stalls from morning on, dressed in their white aprons with knives in their hands. The guards, dressed in their calamanco service caps, were sitting at the gates with their shiny copper badges.

A policeman in a long beard was walking about. By order of the municipal government, two hundred sheep had been driven into the yard; peasants from Vorobyovy Gory [Sparrow Hills] had transported three hogs in their wagon. After the litany, all of these animals were slaughtered. At the same time, various toasts were drunk to the health of those present in the tavern during the dinner.

Before June 24th, the slaughterhouses stood empty; on June 25th, 26th, and 27th, they stood empty. The slaughtermen sat in their slaughtering stalls with their arms folded. Later they started to dart about: they were being lured to the private slaughterhouses, where they were promised two pairs of boots and quarter-ruble bonuses for Christmas and Easter. On August 1st, instructions from the chief of police were announced: “. . . the slaughter of cattle at private slaughterhouses is to cease immediately, violators will be fined.”

The police stations came to life. The deputies of the sergeants rushed off to make their rounds of the stockyards located near the tollgate. On Konnaya Square, at the place where the former Customs Yard and Cattle Yard once stood, chapmen-cum-cattle wholesalers were roaming about with the look of conspirators on their mugs: they would stop in at the fenced-off enclosures, they would feel the groins of the cattle, but they refrained from purchasing any. The herders were howling. The “scouts” for the City Council were reporting that the merchant council was holding back the hand of the wholesale cattle buyers to spite the police, but these wholesalers were conducting slaughter in the yards of villages located in the countryside just outside Moscow. They were slaughtering cows at haymarkets at night, concealing their activities. They were selling beef underground at the bazaars. The price of meat was rising. Public sessions were being held at the Duma. People were going to see the governor. The new municipal slaughterhouses stood empty, without any work being performed. On August 9th, the first verdicts rendered by the magistrates concerning the secret slaughterhouses were – in accord with police regulations – made public: the magistrates fined the owners of those places where slaughtering was occurring thirty rubles for each head of cattle slaughtered, and they fined the slaughtermen themselves one ruble per head.

On the morning of August 10th, Fyodor Bastryukov and Semyon Popov, along with the *shibai* middlemen Boriskin, Antonov, and Kucherenkin, stormed into the slaughterhouse office. Fedyukha Bastryukov burst out in an uproar: “Take the wares! Take the livestock! And go screw yourselves, gentlemen!”

From the other side of the office windows, the bellowing of the cattle – the trumpeting bass voices of the bulls and the tenor voices of the cows – could be heard louder and louder. The police scouts came running in and said in agitated voices: “Antipov is herding his cattle here even from Konnaya Square . . .”

(CONFIDENTIAL.

“I must inform Your Excellency that the inordinate increase in the price of meat being asked by traders is beginning to have undesirable consequences. From the information we have received from our network of secret agents, it has been observed that propagandists are exploiting the high cost of meat in an effort to incite an anti-government propaganda campaign. In the factories owned and

operated by [Aleksandr Venyaminovich] Bari, [Eduard Ivanovich and Fyodor Ivanovich] Bromley, Gustave [Ivanovich] Liszt, and others, the rise in the retail prices of meat is prompting conversations among the workers, especially in the factory dining halls. We are hearing accusations, directed at the authorities, complaining about their lack of action and negligence . . . I request further instructions . . .”)

(CONFIDENTIAL.

“To the Chairman of the Moscow City Council.

. . . the most impoverished portion of the city’s population is completely denied the opportunity to consume meat as part of its diet or it must allow itself to do so, as a special luxury, only once every other day and sometimes only once every few days . . . I propose to you, in coordination with His Excellency, the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, taking into account the special significance of this particular issue and in light of current circumstances, that you concern yourself with the selection of materials and with the conveyance of your thoughts on this matter to me in order to introduce as soon as possible a fixed rate on the sale of meat in shops in the city of Moscow . . .

Moscow Chief-of-Police . . .”)

The Governor-General introduced a new fixed rate on the price of meat. In *The Moscow Leaflet*, an Okhotny Ryad newspaper, Baryshev (Ivan Myasnitsky) published a feuilleton titled “Attack!” and this feuilleton was accompanied by a caricature: “fixed rate,” depicted as a dog, was biting an Okhotny Ryad butcher on the leg and the latter was kicking at him. The caption read: “Go away! Get out of here!” The “city fathers” were unhappy about the fixed rate. A document, signed by members of both the City Council and the Duma, was submitted to the chancellery of the Governor-General. It was a document that demonstrated the old adage that “one can’t tell a friend from a foe.”

“. . . reducing prices on meat can only be done by quickly and expediently carrying out a series of measures of an economic and commercial nature: the immediate construction of a central meat market, an improvement in the conditions for transporting livestock via Russian railways, a reduction of the taxes levied on private capital, a lowering of the percentage rate that banks charge on loans for the purchase of cattle, and no introduction of a fixed rate . . .”

The Russian merchant was leaving the military “guardianship” of a feudal lord, of a military Governor-General. The Russian merchant wanted to be independent. Merchants from the municipal government took care of themselves: namely, they were concerned about the compensation that was beginning to be handed out for those infected carcasses that were rejected at the slaughterhouses. Infected cattle from all the neighboring provinces had been brought to the Moscow slaughterhouses for the sake of “compensation,” so to speak, since a gratuity was received for the delivery of unsuitable meat products. The municipal government at that time had abolished compensations, but at the slaughterhouses they established a “private

fund for the mutual insurance of industrialists in the meat business.” It was already in the twentieth century, during Guchkov’s term in office, at exactly the same time when the metal workers at the Moscow slaughterhouse were petitioning for permission to organize a mutual aid fund at the slaughterhouses and when delegates representing the metal workers were thrashed with Cossack whips on the steps of the municipal Duma.

The *final fifteen private slaughterhouses* in Moscow were shut down – by administrative order – only in 1892.

At the turn of the century, the following historical circumstance happened in Moscow. Siberia intended to appear upon the European-Russian markets. For the carnival period between Christmas and Shrovetide at the turn of the century, when traditionally a *buryonka* cow is killed at the Moscow municipal slaughterhouse, special trains filled with frozen meat arrived in Moscow from Siberia. The Moscow meat traders had not been expecting Siberian meat. The Moscow meat traders, in keeping with a century-long tradition, were accustomed to inflating the prices of meat for this carnival period. The Siberian meat would no doubt lower the price of meat and thus break “tradition.” “Conferences” of butchers took place at taverns frequented by Moscow’s butchers. The Siberians had brought to Moscow no more and no less than 1.5 million poods of meat. The special trains stopped at the Kazan freight depot. The butchers “had a chat” with the stevedores. The frozen carcasses were hauled out of the train cars by means of hooks and thrown down upon the dirty snow. They took the shape of stacks piled on the railroad ties. The Siberian sales clerks who had accompanied the freight to Moscow ran, with waybills in hand, to the railway authorities, to the gendarmerie, and to the city Duma. The sales clerks demanded the protection of the law, the tabulation of their certificates and their facilities. They swore, they pleaded, they prayed, they cursed, and they offered bribes. The bribes were accepted, but the stacks of frozen meat were growing into mounds (like the soil that is dug out to make trenches) on the railroad ties between the tracks, getting as high as the exit semaphore. The meat was being stolen by stevedores, by railway workers, and by passers-by. Packs of dogs roamed the area at night, devouring the meat, gnawing on the carcasses down to the bone. The butchers refused to buy meat from the Siberians, for the Siberians had no trading network. The railway workers began to demand “demurrage” charges. By Christmas, a thaw had set in. The meat in the stacks was thawing and started to stink. The police showed up and filed a report. It was no longer the Siberians who were running after the railway men, but the railway men who were running after the Siberians. The Siberians tore up their invoices and went into hiding, taking to their heels and hightailing it back to their homes in Siberia to avoid any unpleasanties. They left a trail of deeds and certificates behind them. A commission of the City Council investigated the circumstances in this case only in February – in the first February of the new century, the twentieth century – and the following item appeared in the protocol:

“ . . . Dogs, who for a long period of time have been feeding on meat abundantly and without any kind of punishment, have now turned very insolent and brazen, flinging themselves at people. It has been verified that on the premises of the railway station numerous piles of cattle skeletons have stacked up. It is now necessary to destroy these piles . . . ”

The first cold storage facilities in Moscow were constructed in 1914.

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About St. Petersburg's slaughterhouses one historian has recorded:

“Our slaughterhouses on Gutuyevsky Island are a horrible and disgusting sight. By their vile, loathsome quality they defy all description. On the banks of the Kanonerka River, down which blood and excretions are supposed to flow, there are gaping, foul-smelling green pits. An ominous, bumpy shoal has formed here from the offal. Water is taken out of the Kanonerka River, upstream from this shoal, to wash the cattle carcasses at the slaughterhouses. The shoal consists of aborted calves, horns, hooves, ears, stomach parts. All of this is rotting and decaying. The hog yard is a putrid, mushy lake that reminds one of watery gruel. At the cattle yard, livestock are standing up to their chest in feces and urine as they await slaughter. There is an arshin-thick [28 inches] layer of solid offal on the street that runs around the slaughterhouse.”

This situation existed in the 1890s.

A veterinary doctor, named Aleksandr Petrovich, who was a lyrical person, loved riddles, puzzles, and complex statistical calculations. He would send them to the popular magazines *Field of Grain* and *Picturesque Review*. Aleksandr Petrovich was interested in such questions as: how many years nonstop would it take to get to the moon on a bicycle? How many issues of *The Russian Gazette* would it take to cover the entire globe (including oceans, rivers, mountains, and deserts) with them? Aleksandr Petrovich calculated that the blood that flows out of the cattle slaughtered at the Petersburg slaughterhouses in just one year would fill 400,000 buckets. If the blood were to flow out all at once, this amount would be enough to flood the entire slaughterhouse square to a depth of three quarters of an arshin. If one were to collect all the paunch manure at the slaughterhouses and smooth it out in a layer one and a half arshins thick, there would be enough paunch manure to cover the entirety of Gutuyevsky Island. But if one were to pile this very same paunch manure up into a pillar on the grounds of the site that is twenty square fathoms high – if one were to build such a skyscraper – then it would rise up higher than St. Isaac's Cathedral by sixteen fathoms. The very heaviest tonnage carried by ocean liners (30 to 40 thousand tons), even that sort of ship, according to Aleksandr Petrovich's calculations, would not be able to carry all the slaughterhouse refuse that is thrown into the Kanonerka River. Cattle lungs along with windpipes were also tossed into the Kanonerka River. From a distance, the floating lungs reminded one of geese, and that is why among slaughtermen the lungs of cattle are called “ganders.”

The first urban slaughterhouse – that is, the first municipal one – was built in Baku. This is due to historical reasons that are quite natural, for Baku was designed to be a capitalist city. The story begins in 1877, during the time of the Russo-Turkish “campaign” for the “emancipation” of the Balkan Slavs. Staff Captain Laudansky came to see the head of the city of Baku, a Mr. [Stanislav Ivanovich] Despot-Zenovich (an actual Balkan surname!). Captain Laudansky had stopped in Baku to design lines of communication (strategic, of course) for the transport of soldiers and food supplies to the Turkish border. While studying the local customs, the staff captain stumbled upon the fact that slaughterhouses were completely absent in Baku, so he

proposed to Despot-Zenovich that he remedy this deficiency – for 600 rubles in cash. The slaughterhouse was built on a hill that resembled an observatory or Golgotha. There were no structures or buildings of any kind on the site: there was a fence, there were fenced-off enclosures, and there were two dozen posts sticking out that looked like gallows. They would slaughter the cattle at these posts, they would flay their skin, and then they would hang the carcasses on the gallows. The meat cutters used to practice at night under the light of the street lamps, because during the day – due to the intense heat and the density of the population in the surrounding area – it was not possible to perform the cutting: the meat would have turned putrid and the local population would have become worried and anxious. The whole thing began with the local population. Delegates from the local community brought forward a petition; they wrote and said that blood was flowing down the mountain in streams, flooding whole blocks, and that an invasion of dogs had taken place. Wild, impudent dogs were dragging around five-arshin-long intestines in their teeth. Dogs were living beneath a slope on the mountain from which horns, hooves, paunch manure, and other refuse was being tossed, so now this area was closed off to pedestrian traffic, because these dogs were attacking people. Stored in the Baku archives is the declaration by a certain Doctor Shutsky, who states that he was walking along Gubernskaya Street one night, in pitch darkness, with a special lantern in his hand (one sent to him by his brother in Lodz), when suddenly he was run over by a fatally incapacitated cow that they had not finished slaughtering. The cow was howling, bellowing, and making all sorts of noise as it ran down the mountain after it had escaped from the slaughterhouse. The declaration states that the traumatized cow, splattering blood everywhere, knocked the doctor off his feet and rammed its horn into the lantern, which sank into the mud and drowned there, never to be found again. Thus, Doctor Shutsky was demanding compensation from Despot-Zenovich for the cost of the drowned lantern.

The city of Tiflis is located not far from Baku. The history of the construction of the Tiflis slaughterhouse is a vivid, graphic illustration of the principles by which capitalist “democrats” play the master. In March 1878, the Tiflis “city fathers,” following Baku’s example, came up with the idea of constructing municipal slaughterhouses. The Baku experience was studied and taken into account. For ten years they thought about where the slaughterhouse ought to be built: on one of the hills or by the river? In 1889, they came up with an estimated cost of 166,000 rubles. In 1890, they added improvements into the design of the project, and so now the estimate grew to 232,000 rubles. An All-Russian competition was announced. The official letter opened with the slogan, “Desire is stronger than compulsion,” written on it, and the city fathers gasped. Yensh, the city architect in Berdichev, vouched to the head of the municipal government that he could build slaughterhouses in Tiflis for 180,000 rubles. They gasped, but they did not believe that Yensh could do it “in light of local conditions.” Taking Yensh’s project proposal as their “basic principle,” they began to improve the project locally. The following list of improvements, in just a few words, speaks for itself:

1895	(adjustments to Mr. Yensh's project)	350,000 rubles
1904	(elaborations in connection with new data)	490,023 rubles
1905	(additions)	636,823 rubles
1907	(“taking into account the experience of other cities”)	755,800 rubles
1908	(“taking into consideration: first of all”)	800,000 rubles
1910	(as a result of reworking earlier project designs)	900,000 rubles

1914 (the year of the World War, *they built one; but for all intents and purposes, they wasted their money*)960,000 rubles

All the same, they did not make it to a million. They worked for thirty years on this project. How much money was stolen in the process? – Oh, the times! . . .

At the turn of the century, according to data published in *The Messenger of Public Veterinary Medicine*, there were 87 public slaughterhouses and 1,300 private slaughterhouses in Russia. And there were countless “places for slaughtering cattle” – in every courtyard, behind every fence. The majority of slaughterhouses, both public and private, consisted of a shed and a pit: in the sheds, they would slaughter the livestock; into the pit, they would toss the offal. We should add here that the majority of so-called public slaughterhouses were being leased out to private parties. There was no legislation regulating slaughterhouses. At the turn of the century, the following item was published in the *The Messenger of Public Veterinary Medicine*: “. . . all of this certainly does not satisfy the current requirements for sanitary architectonics.”

There was no legislation regulating slaughterhouses. In some cities, they charged fifty kopecks per head for slaughtering cattle, while in other cities they charged five rubles. In some cities, the slaughterhouses were sources of municipal revenue – in these instances, the slaughterhouses seemed like a “disaster” to the small-scale trader. In Kiev, in particular, a special staff, consisting of police officers who specialized in meat matters, was created. These police officers would patrol all the entrances into, and the exits out of, Kiev, searching people and carts that were trying to smuggle meat. In the greater Kiev area, following medieval principles, they imposed tariff barriers on meat.

At the Moscow municipal slaughterhouses, an Eastern-Christian, “Orthodox” church was constructed. For this slaughterhouse church, the merchants Boltushkin and Lukyanov ordered unusual banners, each of them weighing two poods, from Ovchinnikov’s store on Nikolskaya Street. Slaughtermen, as part of the salary they were being paid, were obligated to carry these banners to the construction site. To prevent the banners from being damaged, the slaughtermen were trained how to carry them. A shaft was thrust into a wheel, and logs, weighing two poods each, similar to the banners, were attached to the wheel from the top. The slaughtermen were obligated during their free time to “train” in the circular little garden right in front of the slaughterhouse gates. The slaughterhouse crusades were praised all across the Kalitniki District.

At the Moscow slaughterhouses, the “French” method of slaughter was employed. There were thirty slaughter chambers in all, and in each chamber a group of five workers, each from a different category, worked there: a stabber, a winder, a skinner, an eviscerator, and a carver. That is the way it was both in 1892 and in 1912. The workday would start at 6:30 in the morning. The people who worked at the slaughterhouse were pious, devout types, and history maintains that the workday would begin with the phrase: “Let us begin a new day by praising the Lord.” The winder would throw the noose of a rope, a *nalyga*, down onto the bull’s horns and then lead the bull into the slaughter chamber. If the bull proved obstinate and resisted, they would break its tail. The bull, naturally, would bellow. The winder would pass the end of the rope through a ring secured into the floor. The bull’s head would be lowered and the stabber would thrust a knife into the bull’s neck. The stabber would pull the knife out and wait for the

bull to fall down. The bull would fall down and would go crawling about in agony around the chamber. The stabber would strike the bull on the rump with a blunt object. The winder would then sever the arteries in the bull's neck. The blood would be collected in basins for the albumin shop. The skinner, the eviscerator, the stabber, and the winder would drag the bull by the legs and tail to the flaying chamber. The winder would turn the heel of the winch and the carcass would be lifted up in the air. The skinner would remove the hide, beginning with the hind legs, while the eviscerator would cut open the chest. The winder and the stabber, meanwhile, would go get a new bull. The eviscerator, together with the skinner, would cut away gristle around the ribs with special butcher's axes that were used for chopping up the carcass. The eviscerator would perform the removal of the entrails: the warm internal organs and the contents of the stomach would drop down onto the asphalt, and he would take away the "head, legs, and entrails of the animal," as well as the suet; the skinner would drag the stomach across the floor to a trough in order to separate it from the paunch manure. The skinner and the eviscerator would chop the carcass in half. The carver would then divide it up more definitively, making an incision in the fat near the adrenal gland above the kidney in a "herringbone" pattern. There was a hatch in the floor of the chamber. The carver would strike the heel of his boot against the iron lid of the hatch and shout out, "Ready!" The carcass would then fall down into the "store" below, that is, into the cooling section.

And during the slaughtering process a conversation *about bribes* would invariably take place:

"Today, they say, it's your turn."

"I used to work at a brick factory," he says. "You would have to turn a brick around in your hand nine times before you would set it down to dry. I used to break my back working there, and yet I still didn't get to eat a piece of a sweet dessert. Everybody knows that you can't make bliny [pancakes] out of clay and that you can't roast or fry bricks . . . So, then, I used to drink a half bottle of vodka with him, but he, however, didn't have the ruble to pay for it, so he would promise to pay me back later. This would drag on from May until the feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God [August 15th]; by autumn, I would finally get paid something. He himself, of course, is from our Settlements. So it means that here I've been hauling away guts and intestines and shoveling mud and dirt, yet I'm starving again. Something natural is gurgling in my stomach; it's demanding something basic to eat, like cabbage soup. I could eat up a whole paycheck's worth of food and yet I would still be hungry and still want more to eat. Then I wised up. I came to see how they carry out swindles among themselves, how they know which cattle to sell by weight and which cattle to sell per head, but at the time I didn't know how they conducted their business dealings. On one occasion, they said to me, 'Why are you looking at things with a conscience?' Really, everyone is stealing suet, and so I started to take some myself, carrying it out underneath my apron. On the street corner, old ladies were already standing there; by the way I was walking, they understood what I had done. They would give me a ruble for the suet and I would head off for the tavern, where I would go get drunk, munching some appetizers and having a smoke. It would be great. But then I would count up how much money I had left and I'd see that there remained

only 41 kopecks. So back I would go to pilfering again. What a nice supplement this was to our work. When we are slaughtering cattle for Kryuchkov or Bastryukov, for example, the merchant turned away. I once plopped a gander into a bucket with bladders in it, and it was all over.”

The different kinds of cheating and swindling were very precisely delineated, almost canonized. The line of work was a very lucrative one. The slaughtermen received a 25-ruble salary from the City Council, an excellent salary, because it was not easy to find volunteers to enter this line of work. But the salary was a secondary thing. They subsisted on additional income.

The kinds of additional income (these include theft, swindling, tips, and bribes):

(1) Dorofey will come to your slaughter chamber after everyone else has left and say to you: “Uncle Fedos, pray to God for us that the hide is priced at cost.¹⁰ Burov paid 5 rubles for it, but he allows for some magpie meat to be added” – This means that the merchant sold the hides by weight for a good price and he needs them to weigh more.

(2) Dorofey will come to your chamber and say to you: “Uncle Fedos, don’t drink the vitriol. Skorospelov sold Lapin sixty torsos without weighing them. Remove the hide carefully, leaving the fat on the meat, don’t be stingy with it.” – This means that the weight of the meat is important to the merchant, that the meat is at cost.

(3) Dorofey will come and say to you: “Zatechkin has come. I swear, Fedos, Zatechkin bought up the head of cattle, paying for them by the number, but selling them by the weight. The head can be cut off cleanly, under the back of the skull, and the meat can be added for four rubles a pound.”

(4) Dorofey will say to you: “Today you and I, Fedos, are going to have a name day party.” This means that the merchant drove lean, gaunt cattle to slaughter and now he wants them to look fat so that he can sell them by an approximate guess of their weight, estimating it “by sight.” In this case, the fat needs to be trimmed off another cattle and attached to the kidney by pins inside the carcass, the fat needs to be cut in a “herringbone” pattern.

¹⁰ In the original Russian, Dorofey says here (and elsewhere), “Uncle Fedos, pray to God for nose” (*Dyadya Fedos, molis’ bogu pro nos* [Дядя Федос, молись богу про нос]) rather than “Uncle Fedos, pray to God for us” (*Dyadya Fedos, molis’ bogu pro nas* [Дядя Федос, молись богу про нас]), replacing *nas* [нас] with *nos* [нос] to make it rhyme with *Fedos* [Федос]. In Russia, there were then – and there still are now – numerous rhyming ditties among the common people that involve “Uncle Fedos the red-nose” (*Dyadya Fedos, krasnyi nos* [Дядя Федос, красный нос]), ditties that suggest a person – an “uncle” (*dyadya* [дядя]) – like Fedos, who drinks too much.

(5) If a wholesale buyer is purchasing livestock by weight, he needs to take a tip from the cattle drovers-cum-sellers. The wholesale buyer at this time should take his own measures – he should grease the palms of the people who do the weighing so that they will cheat the cattle drover in the weighing of the livestock.

(6) If the cattle drover is selling livestock “by sight” and “carefully,” he needs to take a tip from the wholesale buyer . . .

In a word:

“Good morning to you, Maksim Filippovich.”

“May God be with you as you begin your workday.”

“Whose cattle are we slaughtering today?”

“Twenty-five head of Kryuchkov’s cattle, the twenty-five that are going to Skorospelov.”

“Do you mean both by weight and by sight?”

“Aha . . . That’s right.”

“Uh-huh . . . Okay.”

“It follows, then, that the livestock are waiting for us? Lead the way, Yegorushka.”

In their spare time away from work, the slaughtermen were trained how to carry banners. The slaughtermen lived in barracks at the slaughterhouses, in the so-called “wards.” Bunk beds with straw mattresses were set up inside the wards and an enormous icon was set up in the front corner of every ward. The slaughtermen drank ferociously. Fistfights raged in the Kalitniki District during holidays. In the years of revolutionary uprising surrounding 1905, the Moscow slaughterhouses were renowned as suppliers for the members of the Union of the Archangel Michael. They were renowned for their archangelship. From time to time, the wives of the slaughtermen came to visit their husbands, and the wives knew that for their trips to Moscow they needed to take curtains with them: the family bed in the ward was screened off by a curtain. Wives were not allowed to spend more than two weeks living with their husbands in Moscow.

While he was carrying banners, which were hanging from a pole and from some logs, along the little asphalt garden of the slaughterhouses, between the brick alleyways, the slaughterman Mironov, along with some of his mates, was trained to sing some church songs: “Maaany yeeears of heaaalth and prospeerity . . . to ooour maaanager, the bleeeessed and piiious boooyar, our looord and maaaster, Nikolay Nikolaaayevich Ushaaaakooov! . . .”

The following story used to be told:

“They were slaughtering cattle sold by weight at Aleksandr Yegorovich Burov’s slaughterhouse. After they had slaughtered the cattle, they would lower them down into the ‘store’ below. Suddenly we heard shouts, howls. The veterinarian, it turns out, had rejected one of the carcasses: it’s a Siberian one, he says, he brands it, and straight into the garbage heap it goes. But Burov himself is here. ‘What’s going on here?’ he asks. The veterinarian explains to him, ‘It’s an ulcerous Siberian tumor,’ he says. Burov shouts at the veterinarian, ‘The Siberian tumor,’ he says, ‘is all in your head, and not in the bull!’ And so he tears out the tumor, tosses it right into his mouth, and swallows it! . . . ‘And this won’t affect my health one damned bit. But I’m going to sue you, doc, and I’m going to prove that there isn’t any ulcerous Siberian tumor in my livestock! . . .’ So what do you think happened? Burov survived the eating of the tumor and went to court, where he proved that his livestock was healthy. He didn’t have to spend a single kopeck. And all the slaughtermen had helped him – while all the hubbub and commotion was going on, they had switched the sick carcass for a healthy one, and thus Burov ate not a tumor, but the liver from a healthy bull. It was the inhabitants of Moscow who ate up the sick carcass, toasting to the health of the infected bull! . . .”

In this same manner, the inhabitants of Moscow once ate thirty pigs that were infected with plague. As far as a bull infected with the ulcerous Siberian tumor is concerned, one can normally feed 691 people with one good bull.

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The year is 1907. The place is Yegorov’s tavern, a “dive” on Okhotny Ryad Street. It’s August. It’s hot. And it’s crowded. Human legs can be seen through the semi-basement windows. Beyond the legs, beyond the square, there is a medieval conglomeration of stalls, tents, and booths. There is trade in meat, live fish, and salad greens; there are the cries and shouts of peddlers, hawkers, and delivery men. Two meat traders are sitting at a table. The bearded one taps the lid of the teapot and shouts out into the air: “Waiter! Pour us some tea!” The waiter answers: “Right this minute, sir.”

“You sure have a hell of a lot of flies in here.”

“Yes, sir, we do have a lot of them. As you yourself know, there is a meat market right next door. But there’s no harm from the flies.”

“Yes, well, they’ve befouled your entire counter here. You at least ought to hang up some strips of flypaper.”

The waiter, a fellow in a white blouse tied at the waist by a black cord with tassels on it, looks around the semi-basement. Swarms of flies are hovering above the tables, buzzing as a cloud beneath the ceiling, sitting on the walls, as if the walls are smeared with caviar – these flies are fat and lazy. The waiter says:

“The owner doesn’t allow us to exterminate the flies. His father, the late Stepan

Spiridonych, became a well-to-do man thanks to a fly and he stipulated in his will, sir, that no one was to touch this insect.”

“Why is that?”

“It’s on account of a game, sir. For example, look over there at that table, the one not quite in the corner, near the window. Do you see it?”

Two gray-bearded shopkeepers were sitting across from each other at the table. In front of each of them there was a piece of sugar lying on the table. In the middle of the table there were two five-kopeck coins. The waiter explained:

“Whoever’s five-kopeck coin the fly sits on first, that one, sir, is the winner . . . May I serve you some appetizers, sir? . . .”

“We can wait.”

The two companions placed a piece of sugar and a ten-kopeck coin in front of each other. They started waiting for the fly to sit down on a coin.

The very same year. The very same day. The very same tavern. A second table with two companions. A conversation and an incident. The very same waiter.

“What may I get for you, gentlemen? . . .”

“Wait a bit. We want to sit for a while first. Come stand in front of me,” says Pyotr Fyodorovich Bastryukov. “Bring us half a bottle of vodka with a nice appetizer.”

The two of them – Pyotr Fyodorovich Bastryukov, whose family-run meat business beyond the Rogozhsky Tollgate dates back to the time of Tsar Aleksey, and his neighbor in the Rogozhsky township, Antip Semyonovich Laptev, known in his day by the nickname, “the Prelate,” a famous Moscow personality – are chatting. Bastryukov says to his companion:

“An agreement is better than money, Antip Semyonovich. Once my Bastryukov word is given, it means – that’s it! that’s enough! that’ll do!”

Laptev says:

“Really, why would I doubt what you say? Whatever you tell me to do, that I will do. I’m not concealing anything from you. Smetankin sold me two hundred head of cattle, which he’s going to herd into town tomorrow. Shilov agreed to sell me two hundred. There are already three hundred and twenty of them waiting in Moscow . . .”

“Buy up all of them. Put one half of them in Kocheryzhkin’s stockyard, and put

the other half in Ryzhkov's. Don't go to the site yourself. After we have come to our arrangement, then we can go ahead and herd them out. And the price will be ours."

"Really, why would I doubt your word, Pyotr Fyodorovich?"

Antip Semyonovich Laptev had acquired the nickname "the Prelate." And there were good reasons why he was called this. In his adolescent years, he had served as a shepherd boy in his native village near the Krapivnaya River. One day some cattle buyers came to town, looking to buy some calves for the autumn. They strolled around the village, then they drank and caroused all night long in a peasant's hut, where young Antip sat in the corner, cuddled up next to the stove. The senior buyer, who had a cataract in his eye and was dancing the night away, noticed Antip sitting up on the stove. He dragged the boy down from there, poured him a glass of vodka, and shouted: "Come along and carouse with us, you little son of a bitch!" And by morning, when he was sobering up, the buyer with the cataract acted as a teacher and instructed Antip as a mentor would to a student: "Money is what gives a man weight. A man without money is just the same as a speck of dust carried along by the wind. Make yourself a lot of money and spit down upon everybody else from a tall tree."

Antip Semyonovich himself considered this edifying lesson the beginning of his life story, his first discovery. During the ensuing winter, spring, and summer, young Antip became taciturn and acted as if he was not in his right mind. But in the autumn young Antip woke up one morning and announced to his grandmother in a whisper that he had seen an apparition that night in his dreams: two angels had crawled up to him on the stove and conversed with him until morning about heaven and about what was happening there right now. The grandmother sighed and groaned. Along with angels, various saints began to appear in young Antip's dreams and in waking reality. Finally, young Antip announced that the Lord God Himself had appeared to him in the cowshed and ordered him to go to a monastery to save his soul. Up until this time, young Antip had enjoyed popularity in the district. His widowed mother beat young Antip in an attempt to knock the nonsense out of him, for she needed a worker. The village priest interceded on young Antip's behalf: he came to their hut, frightened the mother, and, narrowing his eyes, asked young Antip: "So, well, tell me, you servant of God, all about how things went with Him."

Young Antip fell flat on his face and started to twitch convulsively on the floor and to scream, giving everybody a terrible fright. But this convinced the priest of young Antip's saintliness. The fifteen-year-old Antip was with the priest at every high mass and matins. He would get on his knees opposite the altar until the priest ordered him to stand with a candle and the priest's wife sewed him a white blouse, the kind worn by saints. The priest's wife smothered him with burdock oil. Young Antip's fame spread as far as Kaluga, where the local monks – through the bishop of Tula – induced him to come visit them at their monastery. Young Antip, however, did not get along well with the monks at the monastery. He began to prophesize the future and got a lot of things mixed up, so they threw him out. Young Antip left the monastery in full monastic garb: he was dressed in a cassock and wore a calotte; he had grown long forelocks and a beard during his time at the monastery; he had a slender asthenic physique. Young Antip turned up in Moscow, staying in the vestibules at the Simonov and Danilov monasteries. One day they were

holding a funeral for a merchant. They were lowering his coffin into the grave and singing “Eternal Memory,” when a young monk, with a crazed look in his eyes, suddenly appeared above the coffin and began to howl, to lament, and to prophesy: “Pray for God’s servant Gavriilo for a full year! . . .”

It is precisely with the widow of God’s servant Gavriilo – Gavriilo Mikhailovich Pukhov – that the mind-spinning, meteoric Moscow career of Antip began. He left the monastery vestibules behind, since the monks there had booted him out from among their number, and he took up residence for a while near the churches of the Zamoskvorechie District. The merchants’ houses, preferably those belonging to widows, became his patrimony. He would talk about the lives of the saints (in variant versions that he had composed based on what he had heard at the monastery in Kaluga), he would talk about Mount Zion, where the wives of Moscow merchants had certainly never been before. He would converse with them spiritually, in an ecclesiastical manner, using such words as “lily,” “grace,” and “providential gift.” And he would act like a prophet, which was his most profitable and his most dangerous trick. On his chest there hung a small bag into which one could place money, to the accompaniment of Father Antip whispering, “It’s not for me, but for the Lord God.”

In a word, Antip Laptev lived for a long while in the Dorogomilov District in the house owned by Dudkin, who ran an inn and teahouse and who rented out a very small room. One day Antip was not in attendance at mass; he did not even leave his room. Dudkin dropped by to look in on his holy lodger – “Hey,” he says, “father, it’s time to go to work” – and he nearly choked on the word. Antip was sitting on the bunk bed, cleanly shaven, dressed in trousers and a jacket, trying on his new peaked cloth cap. His cassock, calotte, and cross were sitting in a pile in the corner.

“What on earth is going on here?” asked Dudkin.

“It means that I no longer intend to play the fool. I have wised up. Let’s go, I’ll treat you to a farewell dinner . . . Look, I’m moving out of your house. I’ve bought a house on Rogozhskaya Street. I’m going into the meat business. Let’s go out to eat and enjoy some entertainment.”

They went out and got drunk. Father Antip reasoned:

“We have a lot of thieves who fear the hour of their death. Well, and we also have a lot of fools who have nothing better to do with their time. The holy fathers know how to feel hens for eggs. Well, so I’m no fool. I think to myself: ‘Hey, let me give it a try.’ I practiced something along the lines of peddling and huckstery in the delivery of . . .”

“Well, so did you make a pile of money out of it?” asked Dudkin.

“Of course, I did. I was bound to. I keep some of the money in annuities, at a small percentage rate, but thus far it has been steady. Now I’m headed for a crisis.”

In the basement of Yegorov's tavern, on the day when they were betting on flies, Antip Laptev and Pyotr Bastryukov were agreeing to commit a swindle at the cattle yard of the slaughterhouse, to pull off a most elementary and most profitable brokerage operation, one that is made on all the stock markets on earth. They needed to hide the cattle for a while, reduce the supply, raise the prices, and then they would sell the hidden cattle. To do this, they needed to have control over thousands of heads of cattle. They needed to combine into a trust. Antip Laptev was an intelligent and sensible "businessman." From his years of religiosity and piety as a "prelate" in the Zamoskorechie District, he had managed to acquire and then master the techniques and tricks of Russian "business" down to the finest details. People were not shy about talking when they were in the presence of the "holy father," while in the "spiritual" conversations held in the monastery people would invariably be even more candid and divulge confidences. Buying and selling livestock was something that Antip Laptev enjoyed doing. As he used to say, there's no work for you to do and no risk for you to take in it: herds of cattle are roaming around somewhere, they are multiplying in number, they are growing in size, other people are watching after them, and then they will need to sell them. Whether it's Antip Semyonovich himself who does it or whether it's done through the *shibai* middlemen who knock down the price, the herd is put together, brought out to the stockyard, and sold for a profit. And that's the end of the matter. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, there is the yard, filled with bargaining, cunning schemes, and the swearing of oaths. On Sundays, it's a well-used pencil and a greasy notebook. "Dukhovitinov has been sold 121 head of cattle, Pushkin has been sold 217 . . ."

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The year is 1905. Mishka Rogozhin is fourteen years old. According to the Commercial Statute of 1887, Article 37:

"Juvenile boys working at retail shops ought to be punished for any mischief they have committed by being beaten – in the presence of the shopkeeper – with birch rods upon their naked buttocks, until such time as they reform."

The boys were taught the terminology used in the meat trade, the conventional signs and marks used on wares, and the techniques for weighing and cutting meat. If the sales clerk hollered to the boss at the cash desk from the scales, "One and three quarters exactly!" the boys needed to understand that the sales clerk had short-weighed the meat. If the sales clerk hollered, "One and three quarters precisely!" they needed to understand that the buyer was not haggling over the price and that one can reckon with him at the cash desk. The boys were expected to *flatter* customers by addressing them with a higher rank. A soldier would be called a cavalier, a maid would be called a maiden, a peasant would be called a merchant, and a worker would be called a gentleman.

Up until the time of the Revolution, there existed in Russia the business that is described below. Prior to the opening of the Siberian railroad, this business clustered around the Irbit and the Nizhny Novgorod (formerly Makaryev) fairs. With the opening of the Siberian railroad, this business came to Moscow. Across the Volga-Ural steppes – indeed, across all of Russia – buyers traveled through villages and collected ten- and eleven-year-old children, orphans,

preferably full orphans who had lost both parents, and they would take these children, in batches of thirty to forty, to fairs. There the children would be sold to merchants, and the merchants would distribute them, together with their wares, across the Empire. There was no place for these children to run to and escape. According to the written records of the Office of Privy Affairs, this business had settled in the Volga region since the time of Tsar Aleksey, who used to buy young Tatar boys in Kazan to serve in his Izmailovo household. The abolition of serfdom in 1861 did not abolish serfdom for children.

The year is 1905. Mishka Rogozhin has been taken to Moscow from his native village, the Settlements [Vyselki], where his ancestors had for many years worked slaughtering animals. From time immemorial, the Settlements had been supplying Russia with specialists in the craft of slaughtering cattle and with sales clerks in the meat business, just as the village of Palekh had been supplying Russia with icon painters. Mishka Rogozhin was brought to the Paschal carnival, right around the holiday of Easter itself, and was handed over by his Uncle Yegor to work as one of the boys assisting the Khvostov brothers, who conducted trading at the Polyansky Market. Uncle Yegor bowed down at the feet of Nikolay Grigorovich “himself” and begged him to take Mishka under his wing for five years, “training him in the meat business” and providing him with meals and clothing, until such time as “what God will grant” and “we will see.” Around Easter time, the shops would close at ten o’clock in the evening. Behind the counter in the kitchen the sales clerks would get washed up, get dressed, and then get ready to go to matins. The female cook would arrange the “meat-day” meal [the first meal after the Lenten fast] on the table in advance so that there wouldn’t be any need to bustle about chaotically after matins: she would place Easter cakes, colored eggs, and pork aspic on the table. Mishka was passing his time right there – he was examining the refreshments closely and looking forward to matins: never before in his life had he ever seen such luxury. And then suddenly a woman in a shawl, red-skinned and bold, bursts into the kitchen.

She says imperiously: “Twenty of your fattest chickens! . . .”

The senior sales clerk, Zot, answers her:

“So why didn’t you come here earlier?” “The shop,” he says, “has already been closed and locked.” “Even on the day of Christ’s bright resurrection,” he says, “they won’t give you any peace.”

The old woman says:

“Oh, please forgive me, I myself understand. But something has come up and we always buy from you. The top brass wanted to go have supper at the master’s home and we just now learned of this. I have been rushing all over Moscow like a madwoman.” “I was told,” she says, “go to the Khvostovs.”

The senior sales clerk Zot asks her:

“And who exactly is this gentleman? Your master, I mean.”

“He is the head doctor of the First Municipal Hospital, damn him to blue blazes. Goodness gracious, why on earth did I have to be the one to rush over here and barge in on you like this.”

Zot says to her:

“Pay the money, add on an additional forty kopecks, and wait for it in the garden.”

The old woman softens, pays the bill, and sits down. Then she says:

“You must slaughter them for me: they won’t let me on the streetcar with live chickens, they would raise a ruckus. Goodness gracious, what a fine mess.”

Zot gets angry at these words and says to the woman ironically and dolefully:

“You don’t say so! . . . Who the hell is going to slaughter chickens for you, you fool, on the eve of Christ’s bright resurrection, on the Saturday night of Holy Week? Who would stain their hands with blood at that time? Yes, who is it, my dear, who would commit such a sinful act?”

The sales clerks refused to slaughter the chickens; they flatly refused. Becoming indignant, they quarreled and, as a result, made a lot of noise and caused a commotion. Our own Nikon Grigoryevich “himself” came downstairs out of his quarters to see what all the ruckus was about. He counted up the money again, listened to what they had to say, then he made up his mind and said:

“Mishka Rogozhin. He’s just a young boy, he has the soul of an angel; it won’t be a sin for him. Grishka, you go get the fowl. Mishka, you march straight over to the shop. And slaughter them at the threshold. Make sure you do it quietly, so that no one hears.”

And so Mishka Rogozhin, shaking and sobbing, chopped off the heads of the chickens without knowing how to do it. Grishka watched him and taught him how to do it: you need to grab the wings and tail in one hand, lay the chicken down on its side, strike it right on the neck as far as the axe will go, tap it with the handle along its back so that the blood will flow out more rapidly, hold the neck downward for a minute – and it’s ready. The dinner at the home of the head doctor of the First Municipal Hospital was well provisioned. He and his guests contributed to the religious procession and began to sing about the resurrected Christ.

The year is 1907. The manager, Nikolay Nikolayevich Ushakov, is walking along the stockyard of the Moscow slaughterhouses. He runs into a lad wearing a red blouse.

“Halt!” says manager Ushakov. “What’s your name?”

“Rogozhin, Mishutka,” the lad answers.

“Why are you wearing a red blouse?”

“My mother sent it to me from home.”

“Take it off right away and don’t you ever dare to walk around wearing it at my slaughterhouses. Get going! March!”

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Confucius, the founder of the Chinese religion known as Confucianism, lived two thousand years ago. Before he devised his philosophy, Confucius served for two years as his city’s meat inspector and oversaw how meat was bought and sold at the markets. The religious-philosophical teachings of Confucius, as we know, require that one not eat meat and, in general, they advance sublime views about the perishable nature of everything earthly and, in particular, of our own flesh.

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Once upon a time, there was this dreamy tradition among Russian writers of *belle-lettres* of heaving a sigh whenever mention was made of cattle drovers, of ox-cart drivers, of herds and herdsmen. They would invariably picture the steppe as being far away and endless. They would invariably picture it as covered with feather grass. They would picture a road, an old highway, and along this highway strode – calmly and pretentiously – broad-chested cattle, and behind them walked drovers with whips in hand. And behind them rode the senior herder in a light carriage. They would picture a stopping place for the night: the moon, a campfire, ground squirrels. They would cook the tastiest gruel in the whole wide world. And the old, “seasoned” herdsman would be recounting some remarkable stories, preferably ones about robbers or about treasures. And all around there is quiet, there is a fragrance in the air, and besides the ground squirrels there are cattle sighing as they chew some fresh cud. It is a classic storybook depiction. In the section of the State Historical Museum in Moscow that houses illustrations of everyday life is preserved a canvas with the label: *The Painter V. Rybinsky: The Ox-Cart Driver, or Drivers of Herds and Flocks in the Voronezh Province. Moscow, 1857. In the Lithograph of V. Rudnyov.* Depicted on the canvas, carefully and photographically, is how a cart has stopped in the middle of the dry, dusty steppe, on an incredibly hot, sweltering day, how ox-cart drivers are unharnessing two scrawny and emaciated bullocks, and how a group of five ox-cart drivers are sitting on the dusty ground. And although the painting does not rise to the level of poetry, one does feel how the ox-cart drivers would like to have a drink and to get a brief respite from the unbearable dust.

To cover the entire Russian Empire – and not in 1857, but in 1914, during the reign of Nicholas II – there were, in all, only 1,300 veterinary doctors.

On the steppe, of course, there didn’t exist any veterinarian science. Siberian ulcers, glanders, plague, bovine tuberculosis, strangles, and foot-and-mouth disease traveled along the steppe together with the herds of cattle. They traveled thousands of versts, going past villages and hamlets, as they rolled towards Moscow and Piter [St. Petersburg], where people did not at all suspect why it was that in Moscow people were suddenly falling ill with glanders. Generally speaking, it is hard to comprehend how the entire breed of horned quadrupeds in the Russian

Empire did not perish. And they all certainly would have perished, had it not been for the October Revolution – judging from the following scientific data: whereas, in 1851, for every one hundred human beings in Russia there numbered 37 head of cattle, in 1861, there numbered 35 head, in 1898 there numbered 26 head, and in 1914 there numbered only 19 head!

As far as the poetic depiction of ox-cart drivers is concerned, the government in 1883 outlawed the herding of cattle and ordered that cattle be transported for slaughter only by rail. This governmental regulation was issued out of alarm at the enormous mortality rate for livestock and the epidemic spread of infectious diseases.

As far as the history of meat provided by slaughterhouses is concerned, it did not advance at all from the time of Paul to the time of Nicholas II, but instead only became more degraded. Four breeds of livestock were herded to the capitals for slaughter: (1) from the south, they herded “Cherkassk” livestock of the steppe – cattle with a narrow face, gray in color, with long horns curved in the shape of a lyre, preferably oxen; (2) from the east, they herded Kalmyk livestock – thick-legged cattle, dark-red in color, with crescent-shaped horns; (3) from the southeast came chestnut-brown Kirgiz livestock – cattle that had the habit of constantly holding their head down; and (4) from nearby locales, from places around Ryazan, Kaluga, and Smolensk, they herded Great Russian livestock – the speckled Russian cattle called *buryonka*. For every unit of arable and ploughable meadowland that was capable of *providing fodder*, the number of livestock that grazed on such meadowland was four times lower in the Russian Empire than in Europe. One would think that more fodder would remain, but the European cow would produce three times more milk than the Russian *buryonka*, to say nothing of the meat it provided. In Russia, they had not heard about animal husbandry. On the steppes, livestock led a semi-feral existence, so they therefore resembled something rather substantial. Their Great Russian sisters, however, grew thin and gaunt in cattle sheds, where they were infested with lice and froze in the mud. During Lent, they ate the straw thatching atop peasant huts, while during spring the farmers would occasionally drag them out with ropes to the grass. *Buryonka* cattle died by the millions (in the statistical records, it is written that exactly 50% of the livestock “were lost due to cattle plague,” exactly half of the livestock that was used as meat!). *Buryonka* cattle died because they were systematically starved to death: they were not fed what they should have been fed, they froze to death, and they walked up to their ears in their own excrement. And yet, all the same, some of them lived on, some of them contrived a way to live. But they also degenerated. The Russian Empire even managed to export Russian livestock on the European markets, and they exported livestock right up to the end of the century, when it finally became clear that there was nothing finally to export. For they would bring a *buryonka* cow to the slaughterhouse and would see that it was the same size as a kitten and that instead of the thirty poods of net weight of meat that they used to get, they were now getting no more than fifteen poods. Economists of that time “discovered America:”¹¹ “We no longer have any beef-producing livestock and thus there is no longer anything for us to export.” They also discovered the scientific explanation for this: namely, that “due to chronic malnutrition, our livestock have become smaller in size.”

It was suddenly established as a fact, following the decree of 1883 concerning the transport of

¹¹ The Russian expression “to discover America” (*otkryt’ Ameriku* [открыть Америку] means to realize the obvious, to discover something that is already widely known.

livestock by rail, that the meat and hides provided by puny little cattle did not justify the expenditures incurred by transporting, feeding, and then slaughtering them. Economists of that time became engaged in calculating the cost of the livestock's pre-slaughter trip. The rail travel, the fee charged for watering, and the bribes turned out to be less expensive than the myriad of "commission" expenses, beginning with the small-scale cattle dealer, the cattle dealer-cum-shipper, and the cattle drover, and extending to the price reducers, the runners, the senior slaughtermen, the local cattle buyers, the wholesalers and retailers, the guards, the draymen, and the sales clerks. The meat of a *buryonka* bull or bull-calf would sell for three times more than it was worth. Economists discovered that "the greater the overhead expenses, the fewer the cattle there will be that will be capable of bearing these expenses." And the smaller and punier the cattle will be.

Economists were making discoveries, one after another:

"When herding livestock to the place where they are turned over for slaughter, the peasants were not waiting for the cow to grow to its normal size and turned it over at six or seven months of age."

". . . thus, if in one year we accumulate a million average-sized, well-fed head of cattle passing through the slaughterhouses, then it means in Russia we have 2.5 million undersized, degenerate cattle who, for all practical purposes, remain for breeding."

"During the last decade of the nineteenth century – from 1891 to 1901 – Russia exported 5 million rubles worth of meat products, while America exported 369 million – 73 times more."

The economists turned their eyes to America.

One observer of everyday life wrote down the following didactic lesson he had once heard:

". . . You devils, you are bringing shame upon yourselves by taking such freaks to the fair before you've managed to feed the cattle properly," preached the rich man Yerofey Ivanovich.

"But there is no fodder, esteemed Yerofey Ivanovich," they answered him. "We ourselves have not had any food to gobble up."

The economists stated:

"We must acknowledge that the peasants are malnourished. How are they, under such circumstances, to be expected to be able to feed their livestock properly?"

"We must improve the health and prosperity of our rural population, on the strength of which the cattle will improve and the number of head of cattle will increase."

At the turn of the century, there was, in connection with Russian attitudes toward the West, an economic fascination with, and enthusiasm for, Western ideas. “We need,” the economists said, “to import from abroad the very best steers, and mate them with our *buryonka* cows.” “And their offspring,” they said, “will turn out to be fat, meaty, and milky. Their descendants will multiply.” And thus they began to import cattle.

(This is how, to cite one particular instance, Shakh’s father came to Russia.)

This project halfway found acceptance on gentry estates and became established, but nothing improved as far as the peasant herds were concerned. The Simmental breed of cattle, which weighed hundreds of poods, were breaking the spines of the *buryonka* cows. But even when the *buryonka* cows survived the mating sessions, there was no fodder anyway, for there was still no proper care and maintenance of the cattle. The frost and the mud still remained, the rotten straw remained, and the “peasant” continued to starve the cattle half to death by eating their food. And so, after two generations, even the external signs of the Simmental cattle had faded from the hide of the *buryonka* cows. Economists did not realize that two and a third centuries earlier Tsar Aleksey had tried the very same thing before them. That is to say, in 1663 he sent Minich Bashmakov, the secretary of the Privy Affairs Council, to Ukraine with an order:

“... since the cows on the farms of our Majesty in the provinces of Izmailovo and Skopin are exceedingly unproductive and are not producing meat of high quality, you are ordered to go visit Cherkassian towns and to buy for us, His Majesty, up to one hundred pedigree, horned domestic animals from a large breed of bulls and cows. You are to pay whatever price is necessary.”

And, at the same time, Tsar Aleksey wrote the following to the military governor of the Arkhangelsk Province:

“... We, His Majesty, are aware that in Kholmogory some foreigners and some trade people own foreign cows that are exceedingly strong due to their udders. For that reason, send to us in Izmailovo fourteen of those cows and heifers that are close to calving, as well as fourteen bulls that are suitable for them, at the price of three rubles and ten three-kopeck pieces for each animal.”

So now they undertook to do the very same thing all over again. Economists advanced the theory that the *buryonka* is an independent breed of cattle that had adapted to the Russian climate and that her descendants would be able to improve “on their own” if the breed were to be reared properly, maintained in sanitary conditions, fed sensibly, and in general domesticated. From Russian slaughterhouses came the warning: the average dead weight of the *buryonka* carcass had fallen to eight poods, while out of America came the report that the average dead weight of one head of cattle at the Chicago slaughterhouses had grown to twenty-eight poods. They set about domesticating the *buryonka* according to the principle of “on their own,” and very soon it became clear to them that the grazing American cow will eat up eleven pounds of dry fodder for one pound of meat, while a Russian *buryonka* cow will eat up twenty-one pounds of fodder.

Finally, they remembered Darwin and adjusted his theory of adaptation in a totally phantasmagorical way. Everything, they say, adapts. If the ploughing of virgin soil and meadows has reduced the amount of pasture available for livestock, then let the livestock adapt itself to the slopes of hills and gullies. If the railway men are dissatisfied with live cattle freight, since the railway cars – due to the livestock – need to be sent back empty, then, they say, let the railway men adapt the railway cars to the cattle that are becoming smaller in size and punier by constructing two-tiered chambers inside the cars. If the meat loses its quality and becomes more expensive, then let the consumer adapt himself to this. If everyone all around is dissatisfied, then it makes no difference – let them all adapt themselves . . .

And beyond the scientific oratory of the bourgeois Darwinists, the true experts in meat matters – whose origins can be traced back to the time of Tsar Aleksey – continued to “adapt themselves:” the cattle chapmen-cum-wholesalers, the cattle drovers, the price reducers, and the meat traders were getting rich and making a fortune, just as they had done earlier.

As far as veterinary medicine is concerned, the enormous Russian Empire contained only three veterinary institutes: one in Derpt, now known as Tartu, in Estonia; another in Warsaw, still known, as before, as Warsaw (or, to use the Polish name, Varsovia), in Poland; and a third in Kazan. Moreover, Derpt and Warsaw always used to supply doctors for what were at that time the Baltic countries and the Polish kingdom. The Kazan Veterinary Institute serviced Russia as far south as Ashkhabad and as far east as Vladivostok. As a result, there was in all only one veterinarian for the entire territory of what is now Turkmenia. Here and there veterinarians existed, here and there they could be reckoned, here and there nothing was heard about them. There were no veterinary regulations. Some veterinarians submitted to the authority of the national government, some to the local zemstvo, some to the municipal government, many sat like royalty at manorial latifundia, and many others did not even know who it was that they should be submitting to. And it was not just them: no one knew. Everything was built upon “private” initiative: some people wanted it done this way, some people wanted it done that way. In fact, for the entire Russian Empire – including the Baltic states and the Kingdom of Poland – there were only 1,300 veterinary doctors in all. In highly enlightened St. Petersburg, at the aforementioned Kanonersky slaughterhouses, the veterinarians examined the livestock numerous times: when they were being unloaded off the railway cars, at the gates when they were being herded into the haymarket yard, when they were being herded out of the yard. And all the same: after the slaughter of these examined livestock, it turned out that from among them 8,000 head each year had been ill with tuberculosis, 3,000 with pneumonia, 22,000 with the infection caused by parasitic tapeworms of the echinococcus genus, and 3,000 with ulcers and abscesses. There were cases of trichinae and beef tapeworms, of sepsis and pyemia. This was in Leningrad. And what about in the “Empire?” In *The Messenger of Public Veterinary Medicine*, they wrote about how a certain veterinary doctor “used to hide sick cows and cattle at the slaughterhouses in a dark shed on a dirt floor lit only by a kerosene lamp . . .”

Well, and what about those places where there were no veterinarians? In Turkmenia, for example? . . . As we have already said, one good bull could feed 691 people! . . .

The year is 1916. It’s already the second year that war has been raging. At the Moscow

slaughterhouses they are killing “ministry” livestock for the quartermaster service. Sentinels are standing guard at the slaughter stalls. Dorofey shouts out merrily: “Hey, birthday boys, you’ll get a three-ruble note for delivering five slaughtered cattle . . . Skorospelov has requested them, the quartermaster is waiting. Uncle Fedos, pray for us! . . .” Fedos’s beard has noticeably whitened. He growls: “I’ve already prayed, and I lit a candle, but what I got for my prayers, that I don’t comprehend.”

Professor Vasily Vasilyevich Barkhanov, the very well-known Russian neuropathologist and Privy Councilor, receives a letter:

“Dear Vasily Vasilyevich!

His Highness, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, has graciously approved your trip to go visit the forward trenches at the front for the purposes that you requested on the 12th of this month. Please be so kind as to send me your observations and conclusions in top secret confidentiality, refraining from divulging or publishing them until after they have been examined and approved by the appropriate officials in the proper channels.

General Alekseyev
Chief of Staff of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief”

A confidential conversation that Vasily Vasilyevich had with Prince Drutsky, a colonel on the General Staff, is what served as the occasion for this correspondence. The Prince had said:

“The current war is a war of nerves. And for even the bravest people there are limits to one’s nerves. A series of defeats, therefore, overtaxes the nerves of our brave troops. People who are sent out on endless, hopeless attacks, without seeing any way out of a ring of fire, losing all hope and losing comrades as fatalities, often end up surrendering to the enemy and becoming prisoners. They experience the distressing feelings of a hunted animal . . . Take the following as an example, Your Excellency. The troops in a sector are raring to get into the action and see combat, but after the first unsuccessful attack they already go out much more cautiously the second time, they go out unwillingly the third time, and, in the end, at the first sound of firing coming from the enemy, they lie down in the line and do not get up, no matter what threats are made to them, right up to the threat of individual execution by a firing squad.”

His Excellency, Vasily Vasilyevich, had said:

“Obviously, the fear of a shell or a bullet in the forehead is stronger than threats from the rear.”

The Prince had nodded his head in the affirmative and smiled ingratiatingly:

“Here you have been so kind as to make an absolutely correct observation and

provide a scientific explanation. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief and his circles have instructed me to have a talk with you . . . The High Command considers a scientific psychological observation of the soldiers in the trenches desirable . . . perhaps science will be able to find the means of having an influence, if you would be so kind as to see, upon the bravery of the soldiers . . . upon the soldiers' nerves. Science, in your person, Your Excellency, can help bring us victory."

Vasily Vasilyevich set off for the front in the medical train belonging to the Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna. At twilight, in the dense forests of Polesie, the first snowflakes were falling lightly around the dreary puddles. The wind was whistling around the snow-white, enameled train cars of the Empress, knocking against the plate glass windows. Inside the train compartment, it smelled of cigar smoke, eau de cologne, and iodoform. A general's shoulder strap, a grey double-breasted jacket with the cross of St. Vladimir, a pin of the academy, and the silhouette of a professorial head with its hair cropped short in a crew cut were reflected in the plate glass window . . .

An automobile crept up carefully to the forest.

"Here, Your Excellency, is the point where we'll need to go on foot."

Vasily Vasilyevich leaned on the arm extended out to him and dashed out of the car.

"I am very grateful, Lieutenant."

The staff officer said:

"Observe silence, gentlemen, and do not smoke. Lieutenant Androsov, are your people ready? – Lead them out."

"Please follow me, gentlemen."

The forest path led into the darkness, to potholes and puddles. Vasily Vasilyevich stumbled, and they supported him under his elbow. He said: "I am very grateful, Lieutenant."

The darkness now answered with the bass sound of a hoarse whisper: "Glad to oblige, Your Excellency."

Vasily Vasilyevich sensed an incomprehensible fear, staggered, and asked: "Who's there?"

"Private First Class Rybakov, from First Company, Your Excellency. I know every hummock here. Now, for instance, you might stumble, but you won't fall. Step around the puddles, Your Excellency, it isn't slippery here . . . Take a look at the spruce trees, Your Excellency. Since he started firing around Assumption Day, good God, he shaved off all the spruce trees . . . He chased us beyond the

river, here we've been sitting at this same place for two months now . . . we know all the hummocks."

"'He' – is that the Germans?"

"Yes, sir, Your Excellency, that's right: the Germans. Hold on to my arm, Your Excellency; here on the right there's some grass, it's not slippery. But on the left the tree trunks have been broken completely off. Our troops stood on this spot three times, back and forth it's gone. Right near here there was a village, but nothing is left of it now, level like the palm of your hand. It was called Kolobyski."

"I think it would be best if you were to remain quiet for a bit, my dear fellow," Vasily Vasilyevich requested.

"Glad to oblige, Your Excellency."

They set off in silence. They walked for a very long time. When it was just beginning to get light, they came upon a new edge of the forest. Lieutenant Androsov, having pulled himself up, reported:

"Please let me have your attention, Your Excellency. The enemy is to our left, on the other side of the river. We must descend from the highway for cover. Please maintain an interval of five paces. Private Rybakov will go in advance. Our communication trench begins beyond the turn on the right, Your Excellency . . . How do you wish to proceed, Your Excellency? Do you want to go to the battery or directly to the infantry in the trenches? At the battery, Your Excellency, you can take a rest in the officers' dugout. Our things will be taken there."

"I would suggest," said Vasily Vasilyevich, "that first of all you should personally clarify the disposition of our troops, and then, depending upon the circumstances . . ."

"In that case, you should allow us to head to the battery."

The first one to scamper off into the darkness, after shrugging his shoulders, was Private Rybakov. Vasily Vasilyevich waited several seconds and then crouched down, as if he were crawling into a box, before leaping into the ditch. The embankment for the highway rose up on the left, the trail sank into the ground, the clay walls of the ditch began to be propped up with logs, while water accumulated at the bottom. The wet boards made a splashing sound beneath their feet. They were already walking along the communication trench and, for long distances, along an elongated grave. They snaked behind Rybakov, walking along the complex intersections of these mole holes. Up above, against the background of a sky turned pale, the complex decorative designs of the barbed wire could be seen.

The bunker was set deep into the ground. Camouflaged weapons gaped at the enemy. One

could even smoke here. The officers welcomed Vasily Vasilyevich like a blood relative, treated him to grog, gave him some tea to drink, let him have the best place to sleep, joked around with him, asked him questions about Petrograd, and told him anecdotes. In this sector of the front, there had been a lull for already a second month now, and the soldiers had grown accustomed to it. They had grown accustomed to the Germans lazily firing an occasional shot from their rifles during the day, grown accustomed to the Germans firing two shells their way each morning, as a daily salute, and then falling silent until the following day. The Russians would likewise salute the Germans with two shells each morning, would likewise fire an occasional rifle shot, would go on nighttime reconnaissance missions, crawling up to the river bank, where they could actually hear German voices. They would sit, hiding in the bushes, then at daybreak they would crawl under the barbed wire and report back that nothing special had been observed in the enemy camp that night. This happened in the fall, when they were making preparations for winter quarters. They were drinking tea trench-style; on an overturned ammunition box, they spread a tablecloth and opened their canned food rations. Vasily Vasilyevich liked the minutiae of their everyday life: the beds and tables made out of ammunition boxes, the excellent canned food, the grog. He said:

“One’s appetite develops in the fresh air. The vibration of the air when shelling or firing is taking place must disturb, to some extent, blood circulation to the brain: in order to restore one’s health, besides sleep, good nourishment is likewise needed. If the emotions can be varied more . . .”

In the dugout something occurred that had elicited from Vasily Vasilyevich comments about emotions: namely, Warrant Officer Novachenko was planning to marry a nurse from the divisional hospital and was inviting everyone to the wedding. The delivery of the regularly scheduled morning gift to the Germans of a shelling should be turned over to Novachenko, in honor, so to speak, of his imminent wedding.

At seven thirty in the morning, they went out to take a look at the artillery guns. Vasily Vasilyevich examined the positions through the observational sighting slits. In the dim circles of the lenses of the binoculars, he distinguished the empty strip of the trench, three rows of wire obstacles, barriers, an expanse of space, again trenches, the curves of the communication trenches, a river, the ruins of a building, the misty strip of the horizon. The battery commander explained:

“Direct your attention, Your Excellency, closer to the river, in this direction . . . It’s as if columns have been set into the ground, do you see? . . . The most wonderful grove used to be growing here, oak trees that were two spans in circumference – they have been destroyed by shells.”

The battery commander glanced at his wristwatch, then said:

“It’s five minutes until eight. Where’s the bridegroom? – Warrant Officer Novachenko?”

“Here, Captain, Sir!”

“Fire our salute. The usual one. From the far cannon. Go get it ready, we’ll wait for you . . . Your Excellency will now have the pleasure of seeing a live shelling.”

They came out of the bunker and went up to the battery. People were standing around near the cannon. Private Rybakov, like an old acquaintance, saluted Vasily Vasilyevich. Warrant Officer Novachenko put his eye to the gun sight and aimed the cannon. Two soldiers thrust a fat, shiny shell into the round opening of the cannon, while a third soldier turned the lever, as if closing a lock, and moved a step to the side. The vibration of the air could indeed cause a brain concussion. The battery commander and Novachenko lifted their binoculars to their eyes. Vasily Vasilyevich did the same. And he saw how on the far bank of the river there flew up into the sky, up to the very clouds, a new thick black cloud, pierced by red bolts of lightning. The sound of the explosion on the far bank of the river turned out to be louder than the sound of the shot out of their own cannon.

“What was that?” asked Vasily Vasilyevich.

“As you can see, the shell landed in their artillery depot,” the commander said in an embarrassed and almost dissatisfied way. “It was a chance occurrence.”

In the binoculars one could see how logs, people, clumps of earth, and concrete blocks flew up into the air. Novachenko’s lips quivered and turned pale. Without a trace of deference, he grabbed Vasily Vasilyevich by the sleeve and shouted: “Take cover! It’s dangerous!” And then he squatted down. Everyone around was already squatting down. Two shells flew over the battery with a screeching sound and fell nearby; fine sprays of stones knocked against the bunker. And immediately columns of dust rose up in front of them, above the trenches. In front of the sighting slits, someone grunted. No longer were any human words to be heard. It smelled of burnt gunpowder. The face of the battery commander grew old before one’s very eyes: from a good-natured and round face, it became a grey, angry, and oblong one. During the din caused by the shooting and the explosions, it seemed that the battery commander, not with his throat but rather with his wide-eyed look, shouted down the din: the battery – the trailer – the telephone receiver. Vasily Vasilyevich was carried by the air from one weapon to another and then tossed aside; he sat with his legs outstretched. While sitting, he saw how Private Rybakov’s service cap flew off from his head and, along with it, half of his scalp, and how above the fragment of his skull, higher up, the arm of Warrant Officer Novachenko, the bridegroom, went flying.

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In the trenches below the battery that morning, the men who had returned from patrol reported that nothing special had occurred in the German camp during the night. Among those who had gone out on the nighttime patrol was Private Mikhail Rogozhin. A soldier who had become separated from his unit said to Rogozhin: “Well, okay, butcher, run off and get us some bread.”

The separated soldier was darning his cartridge pouch. No events of any kind were taking place in the trenches: no one was planning to get married to a nurse, and the professor who was studying the psychology of bravery had not yet come to visit them. In the bunkers, people were

still snoring. At the flanking machine-gun, Platoon Leader Yershov was cursing out the red-haired Kopeykin. Rogozhin had fetched the bread, poured some hot tea into his canteen, and yawned. From the battery, people were circulating the story that some general had come. At that moment the German ammunition depot exploded.

The highly explosive Brisant shell, a German invention, usually flies with a whistling sound, screeching and hallooing, and it makes its impact upon the ground, softly grunting, without the slightest earthquake. After the shell has struck the ground, silence ensues.

The silence lasts just an instant, an extraordinarily rotten instant, after which time a deafening explosion occurs, the earth shakes with fever, and a volcanic crater is left in the ground. Brisant shells were fired at the trenches and at the battery. Without receiving any command, the inhabitants of the trenches rushed to the battery via the communication trenches. Mikhail Rogozhin saw a general, unbeknown to him and wearing white shoulder straps, who was sitting next to a broken gun carriage. The general was sitting on the ground. A shell exploded, bursting with yellow smoke. The general wiped his cheek, just as he would after receiving a slap in the face. Down the general's cheek human brains were streaming – not the general's brains, but the brains of some unknown person. Right next to the general sat the battery commander; he was sitting on the step leading down to the sighting slits, with his back to the Germans. He was indifferent to everything: his eyes did not blink. The general shouted to the captain:

“Cease fire, captain! – for God's sake, cease fire! . . .”

Mikhail Rogozhin bent over the battery commander and said:

“Cut the harness traces, Your Honor, we need to get out of here!”

The general shouted out his command:

“Yes, of course, cut the harness traces, captain, cut the harness traces, for God's sake! . . .”

The Germans fired shells for exactly twenty-eight minutes. Mikhail Rogozhin, along with twenty other enlisted men, was pummeled with dirt on the site of the former battery. The battery commander and Vasily Vasilyevich were leaving the battery on an ammunition wagon. The wagon got stuck – in advance of the German shelling, the bark stripped from trees had piled up on the ground. The battery commander, together with the driver, was pulling the horses by their bridles; the horses were in hysterics. Vasily Vasilyevich shouted: “Cut the harness traces!”

He grabbed his dull sword and, climbing up upon the horse, started sawing at the harness traces. At corps headquarters, there was alarm and commotion. Encrypted dispatches flew out of the telegraph machine; telephone calls demanded threateningly to know: where had the famous Russian scientist, professor, and privy councilor gone!? Companies held in reserve, throwing off their chains, were sent out to meet the Germans and the German shells; batteries raced forward. A German assault was expected.

Many years later, in 1929, Major Fritz Loebel noted down in his memoirs about the World War:

“On September 23rd, the Russians, with their first shell, blew up the light battery on the second line. Thinking that in this instance what took place was the result of a careful zeroing in of the weapon on the part of the enemy during the course of the past several weeks of a lull in the fighting, I answered back with fire in order to protect ourselves from ensuing nuisances of a similar kind. I needed to act quickly, without approval from headquarters, and, as a consequence, I received a reprimand ‘for a loss of composure,’ although the Russians were punished for an overly accurate shelling.”

They found Vasily Vasilyevich that same day toward evening time, far in the rear, alone, seated on horseback. He was taken to the staff train. Alongside the staff train stood a field hospital. Wounded soldiers lay in rows on the ground next to it. The chief doctor sent for Vasily Vasilyevich, and invited His Excellency, if he so desired, to stop by the first-aid station to get acquainted. Vasily Vasilyevich said: “No, old chap, no, no, I thank you kindly!”

By the way, in Petrograd, during his first lecture at the Military Medical Academy following his return from the front, Professor Barkhanov was greeted with applause. He tilted his head, with its hair cropped short in a crew cut, and said:

“Yes . . . The soldiers are raring to get into the action and see combat. These unremarkable, gray heroes aroused in me a feeling of ecstasy . . . Let us turn to today’s lecture. The nourishment of the nervous system . . .”

(To Be Continued)

Meat: A Novel: Part II

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At the very same time, other Russian professors were studying the following issue. Science already learned a long time ago that the human body consists mainly of water (it constitutes 65% of the body's live weight), that proteins together with fats occupy another 30%, and that the ash from a person occupies only the remaining 5%. It has been known for a long time now that a "large calorie" is the amount of warmth that is necessary for heating one liter of water one degree Celsius, that there is a certain instrument, called the Berthelot bomb calorimeter, with whose help it is possible to find out the caloric content of one body or another, and that calories serve to measure the "food energy" consumed by a person daily. The norms of calories have been calculated; a person is required to take these normative amounts, necessary for human nourishment, in the form of water, mineral salts, phosphorus, proteins, fats, and carbohydrates. Scientists have also calculated, argued over, written articles about, and made computations on both grams and calories: how much does a person need of this, that, and the other. It seems that scientists have agreed on this point: that an adult person, who does not work an especially large amount of time and whose height and weight are average, needs to consume in one day, as a daily ration, exactly 96 grams of protein, 44 grams of fat, and 409 grams of carbohydrates, no more and no less. In terms of calories, this means the energy provided by 2,472 calories. And it was at that point in time that the great orthographic reform was introduced!

A hundred grams of meat contains 20 grams of protein and provides 130 calories. This means that in order to provide approximately the correct dietary norm of protein – 96 grams – one must eat nearly half a kilogram of meat. But if the caloric energy, 2,472 calories, was being stoked by meat, one would have to eat two kilograms of meat. Scientists have compiled tables showing how many calories, proteins, carbohydrates, etc. there are in which food products. They have also devised a way of showing us how a person needs to be fed in a scientific way, without getting all entangled in the scientific terminology: for example,

a) in order to get 2,472 calories of energy, *one must eat*:

Peas 1.0 kilogram
Potatoes 2.5 kilograms
Cabbage 6.5 kilograms
Apples 4.0 kilograms

b) in order to bring into the body 100 grams of protein, *one must eat*:

Peas 400 grams
Potatoes 5.0 kilograms
Cabbage 5.5 kilograms
Apples 24.0 kilograms

In accord with a scientific diet, one must consume exactly a pood [16.38 kilograms] and a half of apples each day. The scissors effect of matching caloric intake with the chemical composition of foods has plagued scientists very much, all the more so since not all food products are suitable

for the human diet: for example, the birch tree is very caloric, but people don't eat it. Science combined the items of diet, their caloric content, and their chemical qualities.

Russian carters, furriers, hatters, plasterers, diggers, house painters, and carpenters in cooperative artels used to consume each day, according to the standards of that time, "a portion of cabbage soup" with beef (14.4 grams of protein, 4.6 grams of fat, 8.3 grams of carbohydrates, 260.3 calories), buckwheat porridge with beef lard (14.0 grams of protein, 28.0 grams of fat, 104.0 grams of carbohydrates, 747 calories), and three and a half pounds of bread (400 calories) – that is, only 1407.3 calories. That is to say, Russian carters, furriers, and carpenters – the members of the three most well-fed professions – were starving in the Russian empire scientifically and systematically, the more so since those scientifically determined 2,472 daily calories needed to be consumed by a person of average weight who did not perform much physical or mental labor.

Incidentally, these same scientists conducted other scientific research. Sometimes they selected for their scientific research not an entirely average person (that is, a truly scientific value), but one in an actual profession, and they studied not the quantity of energy that people could acquire in exchange for their labor, but rather the quantity that was demanded of people for normal work, the quantity that people expended through labor. And here is what the results were:

	calories expended:
A seamstress working by hand	2700
A seamstress working by machine	3000
A metalworker at a factory	3300
A harvester at harvest time on a farm	4000
A smith with a hammer in his hands	4100
A plowman behind a wooden plow	5000
A woodcutter with an axe in the forest	6000
A brick carrier	8900
A mower with a scythe in a meadow	9000

We set forth above the principles of sensible gourmandise from Tsar Aleksey to the medical mystery of Mr. Foss; we likewise recounted the episode of the tsar's "cattle thrashing" that degenerated into a *khodynka* [mass stampede]. As far as the malnutrition of the Russian population is concerned, basically it was determined by the interrelations between social classes in the country, but it was organized by the fasts in particular. Such that the clergy, let us say, came to the aid of starvation. The Wednesday and Friday fasts during a week organized the weekly starvation. During the spring – when there is nothing for the peasant to eat, because the fall reserves have already been consumed, and the cows have not yet calved and the chickens have not yet been delivered, and if there is even the slightest bit of food, it means that one must fall into debt – during the spring, the clergy has created the "great fast" [Lent], when god-fearing, righteous common people were expected to eat *tyurya* [a cold soup made out of bread] in unboiled water or to lie around not eating anything at all. At the beginning of summer, right before the feast day of St. Peter, when the fruit has not yet ripened in the fields and only in the gardens have vegetables of any sort appeared, there is again a fast. In winter, right before Christmas, there is a fast. The times when a peasant could eat meat were called "meat-eating" times, and they always coincided with times not only of harvests, but also of taxes and the

payment of taxes, corvée, and insurance. Without fail, it always turned out that it was precisely during “meat-eating” times that a *buryonka* cow would be led out of the yard for slaughter, to the accompaniment of the old women’s howling and the young children’s crying; and this would last until Shrovetide.¹² In fact, these very same fasts led, in practice, to enormous savings of food products – in the government context, it led to the concentration of these food products in the hands of the lords and masters, while for those people who were selling their labor, it led to exhaustion, to systematic malnutrition, and, consequently, to a corresponding submissiveness, necessary for the lords and masters. The fasts were observed only – as people used to say – by the “simple” folk, while the “educated” folk – as they used to say – did not observe fasts. As concerns the monks, who as a group were neither “simple” nor “educated,” it was precisely during the fasts that they grew fat.

As is well known, and as was to be expected, the Russian peasant, that is to say, the simple folk, preferred during the fasts to feed on starchy vegetable fare that was high in carbohydrates. Statistics, as we know, are a relative thing and a tricky thing: for example, two men are sitting in a restaurant, and one of them eats up a pound of meat; according to statistics, each of them needs to eat half a pound of meat, while in real life it happens that one eats a pound of meat, while the other does not eat any meat at all. According to statistics, before the World War there were 44 kilograms of meat per year for every person in the United States, but only 10 kilograms for every Russian: that is, on average 28 grams each day for each person!

In Voronezh Province, [Fyodor Andreyevich] Shcherbina collected the entries for receipts, expenses, and food budgets among peasants who were living there during the twelve-year period from 1885 to 1897. Vladimir Ilych Lenin analyzed these figures in his study, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*. Vladimir Ilych did not single out the peasantry *in general* or the peasant diet in general. He divided the food budgets by groups of peasants: those who had no horses, those who had one horse, those who had two, three, four, five or more horses. The horse, in fact, was the measure of peasant well-being. Here is what the peasant groups consumed each year:

Grain products (in rye poods)¹³	Meat (in poods)
Horseless peasant	17.4
One-horse peasant	16.4
Two-horse peasant	23.2
Three-horse peasant	22.8
Four-horse peasant	25.1
Five (or-more)-horse peasant	26.2
Average	22.2
	0.59
	0.49
	1.18
	1.29
	1.79
	1.79
	1.21

The wealthy peasant ate twice as well as the peasant who owned just one horse. The conditions of labor developed in such an abnormal way that the horseless peasant ate better than the peasant

¹² The Russian word that the narrator uses here for Shrovetide, *myasopustie* [мясопустие], means literally “meat is allowed.”

¹³ A “rye” pood appears to be a pood [16.38 kilograms] of rye from which the flax fibers have been hackled (i.e., removed by a steel comb called a “hackle”).

who owned one horse. *In general*, there did not exist any *average* or *middle* peasant. We could and we should repeat the *story of the puny little buryonka* cow: with the horseless peasant, of course, but also with the peasant who owned one horse. These poor peasants ate three times less meat than the kulak [affluent peasant], fewer than 10 kilograms per year. Their diet was bread and potatoes, kvass and milk.

The Russian worker received 75% of his protein and 96% of his carbohydrates from bread, not far removed from the peasant diet, but the poor peasants received their protein from sauerkraut.

Indeed, the story of the puny little *buryonka* cow was being repeated. The World War began during the summer of 1914. By the summer of 1917, the number of calories consumed per day by an adult Russian was reduced by 2.75 times in comparison with the pre-war period.

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A person sits down at table and eats a piece of meat. In terms of the facts of nutritional science, he is ingesting into his body proteins, which have a specific molecular weight of 14,000 to 35,000: that is, 2,000 times less than the weight of water, the weight of water being designated by the number 18. By means of proteins, a person ingests into himself carbohydrates, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, and sulfur. Under the action of enzymes, the protein splits into amino acids before it enters the stomach, as was reported earlier in the chapters about thanatology and the methods of slaughtering cattle. Stomach enzymes break down the protein completely, to a final amino acid state. And, essentially, a person is nourished by means of these amino acids, for it is precisely the amino acids that are absorbed by the walls of the intestines and that feed the organism through the blood; the blood, glands, air, and new enzymes work toward the formation of water, ammonia, carbonic acid, sulfuric and phosphoric acids, urine, and excrement. The urine, excrement, and gasses – the final disintegration of the proteins – are expelled by the human organism into the atmosphere and soil; from there, they enter into plants, which synthesize them into new complex constituent parts that nourish animals, primarily herbivorous ones. In science, cattle – and, primarily, cows – are often called *factories on four legs*. Cows are called this because even while they are alive they give us milk, cream, sour cream, curds, and cheese.

Thus, a person sits down at table and eats. Meat in a factory on four legs makes up 60% of the cow's live weight and fats makes up 8%. For centuries, all the remaining parts of the cow used to be discarded, thrown away into a garbage dump. Now it has been established that the *value* of the meat is exactly equal to half of the value of all that remains in the entire animal. By-products from the cattle (and from pigs, goats, and sheep) have turned out to be more valuable than the meat itself. These by-products were called, and are still called, *waste matter*. It has turned out that man used to eat meat according to the poverty of his knowledge, while now he eats it according to his ability to read and write. And *waste matter*, is it not more essential for humankind than the eating of muscles? Shouldn't we now call muscles waste matter?

The hide of an animal, its "cutaneous covering." Boots. A briefcase. A suitcase. A dog collar. A watchband. Trousers. Service caps. Instrument cases. Cases for glasses. The seats in the train cars of the Moscow subway. Saddles. Automobiles. Airplanes. Book bindings. Lanyards.

Scabbards. In the ranking for kinds of leather materials produced, the U.S.S.R. occupies first place in the world.

The hair from the hide, the fur. Felt. Wadding. Batting. Felt boots. Woolen cloth. Stockings. Pants. Pullovers. Wigs for performing artists. Carpets, hand-woven rugs, sumac rugs. The hair from tails – oxen tails and cow tails – mattresses, seats, chairs, divans. Bristles. Brushes. Paintbrushes. Waxed thread. Fishing line. Decayed bristles – fertilizer, nitrogen. Special names for bristles – “lek” and “okatka.”

The inner side of the hide – the scraping from the inner side of the hide – hide glue.

The lard. The inedible fat. Stearin, candles, medicines. Palmitin, olein – perfumes, soap, ointment, cold cream, beauty secrets. Margarine. The greasing of wheels and frozen cheeks.

The bones. The bone marrow. Fat. Glue. Gelatin. Spodium. Superphosphate. Phosphorus. Buttons. Cigarette holders. Knives. Chess pieces. Toothbrushes. Spoons. Cigarette cases. Handicraft art. Brooches. Nail clippers. Bishops [chess pieces]. Medical instruments for getting down into the throat. Clyster pipes. Bone oil. Typewriters, calculators, and sewing machines. Microscopes. Automobile and airplane engines. Joiner’s glue. Fertilization of the soil. Bone coal – the refining of sugar and vodka.

The horns and hooves. Cups for pharmaceutical scales. Eyeglasses. Spatulas. Combs. Inlaid work. Jewelry boxes. Keratin – non-soluble, not subject to drops in temperature – precision mechanics. Fertilizers. Nitrogen. Hoof oil – chronometers, torpedo devices, submarines, aviation, – softening and dyeing of higher quality leather and cloths; – the feet of 25 rams – two liters of hoof oil.

The intestines. Frankfurters. Smoked and *lyubitelskaya* sausage, bologna sausage, Vienna sausage, salami. The best sausages in the world.

The urinary bladders. Sailing. Brawn. Furniture. Commerce.

The blood. Everything you like. Liquid meat – proteins, sugar, fat, iron, phosphorus, salts. Medicine, hematogen, hematin, hemoza. Food products, stall-feed for fattening up swine. Mixed with lime – highly intensive feed for laboratory plants. Blood protein, separated from water, – clear albumin, – photo paper, photographic plates, textile and wine dyes, the chemistry of sensitivity to light, the production of champagne. Dark albumin – glue for veneer, tanners in the leather business, plastic. Fibrin. Peptone – bacteriological institutes and laboratories, scientific thought.

The seminal organs. Organ therapy. Elevation of male sexual activity and general tone. Endocrinology. The cow’s ovaries – laboratory specimens for the vigor of the female sexual hormone, ovarian endocrinology. The pituitary gland – endocrine receptacle – growth hormones, the two prolactin hormones “a” and “b,” “first polonium” and “second polonium,” hypersexual hormones, the biochemistry of the sexual glands. The prolactin hormones found in the

urine of pregnant women, – urine, – Doctor [Aleksey Andreyevich] Zamkov's urogravidan therapy.

The pancreas gland. Insulin. Very cruel debate between Doctor [Ignaty Nikolayevich] Kazakov and Russian scientists on the pages of *Pravda*. Treatment of diabetes, depletion of sugar in the urine, and glucose diseases. Insulin was discovered by the Canadian doctors [Frederick] Banting and [Charles H.] Best in 1921; in the U.S.S.R., it is currently being developed via the factory route. The thyroid gland. Theory of metabolism. Treatment of exophthalmic goiters and cretinism, myxoedema. Doctor Kazakov. Disputes. Arguments. The adrenal glands, – adrenalin, a very strong vasoconstrictive remedy for cobra bites.

The stomach. Stomach mucus. Pepsin, the digestive enzyme. Inexpensive suede for packaging small bottles of perfume and eau de cologne.

The bile. Perfumes. Medicine.

The windpipe – glue and gelatin.

The tendons – glue, gelatin.

The heart – meat extract.

The gallstones – export – for Tibetan medicine.

The paunch manure – fertilizer briquettes.

The tails – canned broth.

Thus, a person sits down at the dinner table. He is eating meat. He is wearing leather footwear. He is dressed in woolen clothing. He has the bridge of his horn-rimmed eyeglasses resting on his nose. He is sitting on a leather seat. He has taken a cigarette out of a leather case and stuck it into a holder made out of bone. Inside him, meat is turning into amino acids. He has added some fats, which go by the name of cream, to the coffee he poured into a cup made out of dark albumin, that is to say, he poured it into the most fashionable plastic. Or he has poured some liqueur, which has been rectified by repeated distillation through burnt bone, into a small liqueur glass. The person's eye has grown mellow after eating the food. The person has taken a portion of "second polonium." His gaze has fallen upon a book in a leather binding and then has gone along a table glued together by a joiner, that is to say, by glue that had been removed by boiling a tendon . . . Yes, and even the person himself consists of meat, bones, skin, fats, and glands. God knows, 13,000 years ago, when humankind preferred to live in bushes out in the open air, it too was dressed – albeit in a crude way – in leather and in fur, and it nourished itself with the very same carbohydrates, fats, and proteins as today. The person has got up from the table, crossed over to the divan, turned on a gramophone record inside a cabinet, which is covered not with genuine leather, but with imitation leather.

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It was now the twentieth century. Already at the end of the nineteenth century, namely from 1892 through 1894, a book, *Works of the Special Commission on the Search for Methods of Slaughter, Less Painful for Animals, Established by the Russian Society for the Protection of Animals*, was being published in Russia. But no one anywhere uttered a single word about the *immediate* producer of slaughterhouse goods – about slaughterhouse workers: about all these winders, eviscerators, skimmers, carvers, trimmers, intestines cleaners, calibrators, planers, swine scalders, and so forth. Neither sociologists, nor slaughterhouse experts, nor veterinarians were writing about them. Yet there were several tens of thousands of people working in this trade; indeed, at the end of the nineteenth century there were up to 2,000 registered slaughterhouses alone. Nothing is known about them. A small number of poets, Mikhail Zenkevich in particular, have written some dreadful poems about them.

A Bull at the Slaughterhouse (1913)

In front of dozens of boxcars, purple souls
Moistened the intense heat from furtive arteries.
Having finished the dividing up of the carcass, fine lads
Left their slaughter sheds for the next one.

They hauled a dazed animal by a rope,
With bloody hands they twisted its tail.
The iron machine looked like a guillotine,
And the asphalt floor – like a black podium.

With the swift blow of his dagger, the butcher
Shattered the spinal vertebra without a crunching sound.
And, collapsing, the dead heap shook
With a feeble kick of its hind legs.

Then, like a razor slashed across the neck,
He sluiced with water the forms placed underneath.
In the pupils of his eyes, as in pieces of coal,
The golden union of spine and skull, turning blue, faded.

And just as in herds amidst the wide open spaces of the steppe,
In one of the boxcars, a bull that had reared up,
Shaking from the rubbing together of a pole and a collar,
Nestled close up against a year-old heifer in the corner.

It is as if he did not sense that the semidarkness was close at hand,
That soon it would be necessary for his legs of steel,
As leftover pieces of cast-iron meat with its skin peeled off,
To be thrown, cut off, into the red rubbish heap.

And I thought, trying to measure my burning trepidation:
How the blood for slaughter in these tender lovers

And in this stone-browed bull, with a blow of assonances,
Is stunned by the eternal rhythm – love.

All those winders, eviscerators, and carvers, that is, all those who worked at the site of slaughter, were augmented by those who made a living “off of meats:” the guards, the goaders, the stevedores, the carters, the porters. There were dozens of professions, thousands of people. Catherine I had already decreed: “And the governors, the military governors, and the mayors will see to it that the rows of meat stalls at markets are constructed decently and respectably on the outskirts of the city, and that the embrasures from these rows of stalls are located at a distance, separately.” To this day, in India, in China, and in Japan, the people who are engaged in the business of slaughtering animals, the butchers-proletarians, are set apart in a special caste, according to the traditions of the Middle Ages. In Japan, this caste is called *this one*. These outcasts without rights are required to live in their own districts; they do not have the right to teach their own children along with other children; they do not have the right to marry outside their caste; they are deprived of an enormous series of civil rights; and, according to anecdotal evidence, they are not accepted into the army. As concerns the personnel who were serving in the Moscow slaughterhouses, the labor force was supplied from the time of the Middle Ages onward by peasants from the Pechersky Settlements, from Ryazan Province, and from the Mikhailov District, by the members of families and guilds whose skills had been honed in the traditions, habits, and techniques of that time. From the time of the abolition of serfdom, the ones who became the feudal lords, the suzerains of the population in the Pechersky Settlements, belonged to a family of kulaks called the Kochkins, without whose permission there was no possibility of procuring a job in the meat business, but whose permission was received not only through deference and respectful bows, but also through eternal enslavement. The meat trade was a dirty business; every person, who was able to, strove to flee from it. There were few volunteers from elsewhere. It was precisely for this reason that the meat trade was profitable, staffed by hired help looking to earn some money on the side through “gratuities” and “dark” bribes and easy money. The masters cultivated handouts, since these contributed, better than did a salary, to the slaughterhouse workers remaining in the master’s grip. One could reason – as the Japanese did – that the people in the meat trade, standing up to their knees in blood, were demoralized by the constant labor in slaughter. As was described earlier, the workers lived in barracks and in tents next to the Moscow slaughterhouses, spending their free time – during the winters in taverns, during the summers in abandoned lots – playing the three-card game called “Tippen” and drinking vodka. And, as was said earlier, as part of their salary they had to carry banners, made out of wheels and logs, that belonged to the church located on the grounds of the slaughterhouse. The work of a slaughterman was interwoven with the activities of a wholesale cattle buyer, a cattle drover, and a meat trader; it was interwoven with the general profitability of earning money on the side through bribes. The work was disconnected and only very slightly differentiated.

If one were to speak about the social essence of pre-revolutionary slaughterhouse laborers, then it would hardly be possible to call them a proletarian group. This was a typical guild-type version of the bourgeoisie, very petit bourgeois in its essence. As the year 1905 was

approaching, the concept of “Okhotny Ryaders”¹⁴ remained the darkest page of Black Hundreds activity in Russian history. The Okhotny Ryad’s “Pillars and Odomantes” group signed the royal petitions together with [Aleksandr] Dubrovin, [Vladimir] Purishkevich, and [Pavel] Krushevan, and they steered the “fine lads” working at slaughterhouses to follow their lead. The slaughterhouses took to the revolutionary streets of 1905 – by means of the Union of the Archangel Michael. The first glimmers of proletarian consciousness arose among the neighbors of the slaughterhouses – among the tanners of Moscow and Smolensk, who turned down offers to join the Union of the Archangel Michael and united in strikes. The junior veterinarian doctor Chernyshev, together with the metalworkers of the Moscow slaughterhouses, organized a militia combat detachment; he was betrayed by his very own fellow slaughterhouse workers-cum-soldiers and disappeared into exile, never to return to the slaughterhouses. The slaughterhouse metalworkers left to go join their brothers – the metalworkers in the Simonov Quarter. The apprentice shoemakers gathered together with the tanners at the Polytechnic Museum in Moscow at exactly the same hour when the slaughterhouse members of the Black Hundreds movement were marching from the slaughterhouses near the Kalitniki Station, no longer with the wheel of a banner, but with the real banners themselves.

Mikhail Rogozhin was fourteen years old when, after having been brought to Moscow from the hereditary slaughterhouse trade of the Pechersky Settlement’s Middle Ages, he slaughtered chickens for Easter while working for the meat trader Nikon Gavrilovich. And he was seventeen years old when manager Nikolay Nikolayevich (“May God grant him long life”) Ushakov asked him about the red shirt he was wearing in the slaughterhouse stockyard. The fate of Mikhail Rogozhin strayed away from slaughterhouse matters.

The river made an arc, strewn with sand, at the Settlements and then flowed along for about fifteen kilometers, as the crow flies. Cutting across the river’s path, where a summer ford passed through along a stony shoal, a country road climbed up to the sand and crawled into the Settlements. But from there, by means of ravines and fields, turning past nameless pine forests and spruce groves, it joined up with a major highway, the old Astrakhan Highroad, which ran

¹⁴ Throughout this section of the novel, the narrator makes frequent use of the noun *okhotnoryadets* [охотнорядец]. Much like the English suffixes *-er*, *-an*, and *-ard*, the Russian suffix *-ets* [-ец] can be attached to a geographical location (a city, state, country, region, etc.) to mean “one who hails from” that particular geographical location: thus, in Russian, a Leningrader is *leningradets* [ленинградец], an American is *amerikanets* [американец], a Spaniard is *ispanets* [испанец]. As a result, an *okhotnoryadets* is literally “one who hails from Okhotny Ryad,” the famous commercial district that is located in the heart of Moscow. In pre-revolutionary Russia, especially during the late nineteenth century, the word was largely synonymous with “trader” (*torgovets* [торговец]), while in revolutionary Russia, especially during the period from 1905 to 1921, the word was closely associated with the conservative, right-wing political views held by the people who conducted business in this commercial center: namely, the “pogromists” who strongly supported such anti-semitic groups as the Black Hundreds, the Pillars and Odomantes, and the Union of the Archangel Michael. I will leave it to the reader to decide whether the narrator has mainly “trader” or “pogromist” (or equally both) in mind when he uses the word *okhotnoryadets*, which I will render throughout as “Okhotny Ryader.”

from Astrakhan to Moscow. Herds numbering a thousand head of cattle were driven to the railroad along this highway, while bargemen hauled the same livestock along the river on barges pulled by towropes. And from those olden times to our own time, the descendants of the price reducers, oxen guides, cattle drovers, butchers, and wholesale cattle buyers – the Prasolovs, Baryshnikovs, Shibaevs, Boytsovs, Myasnikovs – have been living in the very best peasant huts. But the failures and the losers – the Rogozhins, Fyodorovs, Brykins, and Odnoslovs – lived in crooked little huts in the low-lying area closer to the river. Sergey Rogozhin, Mikhail's father, a tall, gaunt man, tried during his lifetime to till the land, to fish, and to deal in veal; he even moved to Moscow to work in the meat trade, but the labor trickled through his fingers and no bread allowed itself to fall into his hands. While tilling his parcel of land, he would stop for a moment, holding on to his plowshare out of fatigue, and he would philosophize, looking at the well-built peasant huts belonging to the Shibaevs and the Baryshnikovs:

“What a meadow they have! What land they have! Oh, my God! . . . Those carvers, they live like the warlord Mamai [of the Golden Horde]! . . . Our grain lies in the ground, while theirs – it walks the earth . . . oh, what a state of affairs! – it's robbery, robbery in broad daylight!”

He sent his son, however, to Moscow – to find happiness.

His son slaughtered chickens at Easter time for the Khvostov butchers, up until the autumn meat-eating period began. After the meat-eating period began, Mikhail worked at the intestines factory on the grounds of the slaughterhouses; for two years he transported intestines in a cargo trolley from the slaughter chambers to the wash station, three hundred meters away, and the trolley was loaded down with forty pounds of intestines. The slaughterhouses had been built by the Moscow municipal government, but for all intents and purposes they belonged to the lessees, who were the real owners. The millionaire Burov brothers, Skorospelov, Inozemtsev, Volkhovitinov, the Bastryukovs – they all leased the slaughter chambers and the cattle pens where the livestock were kept before being slaughtered; they paid the city council for the slaughtering, for the butchering, and for the weighing – and they were the ones in charge. They were the ones who leased the factories on the grounds of the slaughterhouse: the intestines factory, the tallow melting factory, and the tanning factory. They were the ones who were in charge of the people who worked at the slaughterhouses; they were in charge of their dormitories, their food, their fate – their carrying of banners. Several taverns were located around the slaughterhouse enterprise: Kashirin's, Balagushin's, Morev's, Bobrov's, Shchukin's, Mikhailov's, Silvestrov's, and – the famous “Delight.” It was precisely around “Delight” that people were being hired as laborers.

On Sunday, Uncle Yegor took Mishka away from the Khvostov brothers on the sly, for Article 37 about the punishment “by rods across naked buttocks” tormented Mikhail, and so his uncle brought him to “Delight.” Reticent people, dressed summer style in felt boots, were sitting on the ground near the tavern. Buyers were driving up in carriages driven by cabbies and in carriages pulled by their own trotters; young lads, who were clever although they had fat mugs, were running up to them, hiding behind the buyers in the restaurant, and then running back out from inside. Yegor and Mishka were about to settle down on the front steps, when a guy wearing a peaked cap with gold braid said to them: “It's forbidden to stand here. Can't you see

where people are sitting?” And he pointed toward the crowd of reticent people in their felt boots sitting on the ground.

The reticent people were, all the same, conversing:

“Now we’ll get our fill of waiting. They have a regular stock exchange going on inside there. In the clean half of the restaurant, they are sitting in heaps: the cattle drovers with other cattle drovers, the local cattle buyers in their own peculiar way, and the butchers all by themselves.”

“I know. They settle among themselves how to outwit each other.”

“Last autumn I carried blood for fifteen rubles a month. After they cut the vein on the cattle’s neck, we place a basin beneath its chest. And when they have filled the basins, you get down on your knees and they put five basins on your head. You have to walk without spilling any blood out of the basins; you have to pay a fine if you do spill any. You carry them about as far as that house over there on that street, to a cart; you sit down next to the cart and then they remove the basins from you and give you empty ones for more blood . . .”

The guy in the peaked cap with gold braid stuck his head out the front door and muttered fiercely:

“Hey, hired hands . . . Lukyanov is coming out! . . .”

The reticent people jumped up from the ground and hurried over to the restaurant. At first, a clerk in a long coat with fitted waist appeared on the porch. After him, a fat merchant came out and stroked his beard majestically. The clerk shouted out: “Don’t press forward. Those who . . . stand in a straight line!”

The merchant said: “Oh, there are so many of you! We don’t need this many. What am I going to do with you? Prokhor, you choose.”

The merchant set off for the slaughterhouses. Prokhor, that is, the clerk in the long coat, ordered: “Don’t press forward! Line up!”

The reticent people lined up, like soldiers, in front of Prokhor. Prokhor walked along the front of the line and said:

“Stop fidgeting, stand at attention! Has anyone here worked as an intestines remover before? No? You get paid twelve rubles and you get to live with us. Why are you fidgeting again? You’re weak and feeble, I say, and that’s all there is to it. You won’t do. There’s nothing more for us to talk about . . . Those of you who were selected, go stand over there on the side. The owner will return soon and explain everything to you.”

Those who had been selected and were standing off to the side each gave Prokhor twenty-five kopecks as a tip. Mishka, along with Uncle Yegor, were among those selected. Two hundred men worked at Lukyanov's intestines factory. They lived in a "dormitory" – a half-collapsed wooden house – on plank beds that were teeming with bed bugs. They lay down matting and slept on them in pairs, placing their felt boots under their head for a pillow and covering themselves up with their jacket for a blanket. The basic kind of labor they performed consisted in separating the paunch manure from the intestines. The cooks took six rubles for the food they provided; white bread and potatoes were expected on holidays.

One evening Prokhor came over to the dormitory after getting drunk. He started a conversation with the new hires: "Well, dear workers, who wants to drink tea with sugar tomorrow and to eat bread for free?" Uncle Yegor asked him, "Is the owner hosting a wedding banquet or a funeral meal?" The cook snorted. Those who knew better remained silent. Prokhor said:

"Agitators, strikers, students, Jews, and other people of their ilk talk all sorts of nonsense and confuse the workers. They ask for a pay increase unreasonably, at a time when even the owner himself is suffering financially. Incidentally, everything at our slaughterhouses is calm and tranquil, and we need to stand for order. This is why, guys, tomorrow you need to go to the tavern on Zatsepa Street for the tsar and the fatherland. Standard bearers and patriots will be meeting there."

Prokhor Vasilych selected a dozen of the new hires, including Uncle Yegor. The lights were turned off in the tents. A voice arose in the dark:

"This means tomorrow we'll knock off work by four, that's likely, and then we'll go – there's no doubt that we'll have to go. The owner is such a skinflint that he's not going to give out kopecks to us for nothing, not when there's bread made with sifted flour and sugar here. They are going to take us away and put us into the Black Hundreds. They wouldn't be handing money out to us unless it meant our joining the Black Hundreds. Otherwise, they would have us remain here, living in lice . . ."

A second voice said threateningly:

"Who are you? You aren't a striker yourself, are you? . . . You unwashed devil!"

"Yes, that's right – I'm unwashed. We live like devils, we bathe in washtubs filled with blood . . ."

A third voice said softly and melodiously:

"And why not go down there to eat some bread made with sifted flour? . . . I wouldn't be any the worse for it."

“There’s a class war going on between capital and labor, and you say, ‘I won’t be any the worse for it!’”

“Who is that over there?! What, are you some sort of striker?!”

“No, I’m not a striker, I’m for capital . . .”

The tavern on Zatsepa Street was overflowing with people. The slaughtermen, the intestines removers, the renderers, and the butchers were sitting stoutly in their seats. The tavern was abuzz. A snub-nosed little man, about forty-five years of age, dressed in a frock coat and wearing a thin pointed beard, came into the hall, out from behind the door at the bar, and shouted in an old woman’s voice:

“No one is to be allowed to enter the premises now! And stop making so much noise, Orthodox Christians! Pal Titych wishes to say something! . . .”

Waiters brought out some bread and teapots from the bar. Uncle Yegor took Mishka with him to get some of the free bread and hauled him off to a corner where it was a bit darker. Behind the buffet counter, a mustachioed man who looked like a barrel got up onto the rostrum. He straightened out a gold pin on his long coat and made a grunting sound. The crowd quieted down.

“We have our own people here, of course, people from Zatsepa Street. But, by the way, we also have guests from Okhotny Ryad Street and likewise from Rogozhsky Val Street. It’s not a meeting we’re having; we don’t acknowledge any meetings. It’s instead an intimate conversation. And, of course, Orthodox Christians, we will talk a bit about our Mother Russia, about what villainies she’s had to endure from strikers . . .”

Some people in the corner next to Mishka grunted loudly. The snub-nosed man scurried over to the corner and stared them down. Things quieted down in the corner. Pavel Titych was elucidating:

“Orthodox Christians, we need to stand up for our faith, for our tsar, and for our fatherland. And as far as the strikers and Jews are concerned, we need to beat the red snot out of them . . .”

“Just you try to do that!” shouted out the same voice that had grunted.

Pavel Titych leaned on the counter with his hands, looked threateningly off into space, and said: “Who is it that dares to open up his big fat mouth?”

The snub-nosed man screeched: “Didn’t they say that only our own people were to be allowed inside!? Has the whole gang crawled in once again!?”

From out of a second corner could be heard a tenor voice clearly changed to sound like a bass: “We’re curious to know what those here who are members of the Black Hundreds think . . .”

The waiters flew to the corners. People were hauled out from their places. Someone was dragged out by the sleeve of his jacket. Pavel Titych shouted menacingly: “Clear the hall of hooligans!” Out of the corner people started to cry out, obviously feigning:

“Ouch! They’ve scalded me!”

“Who’s been scalded?”

“The Black Hundreds are scalding people with boiling water!”

“Help! Police!”

“Are you beating people with whips, you swine?”

“Beat up the police!”

The plate glass started to jingle in the window frames. Teapots, with boiling hot water actually inside them, started to fly up into the air. Some people were running toward the doors, others were forcing their way to the counter.

“Beat them! We know who they are: these are workers from the [Yuly Petrovich] Goujon metallurgical plant and from the Hekkental factory!” shouted Pavel Titych, rolling up his sleeves.

The table next to Mishka started to squeak and collapsed. One lamp went out, and then another. Mishka was weighed down by a bench. People were squealing and howling as they fought. The sound of police whistles tore through the air. Mishka crawled out from under the table, and at the same time Uncle Yegor crawled over on his hands and knees to get him. They crawled together over to the exit. The door was broken off. The slaughterhouse workers-cum-soldiers were pummeling the metal workers from the Simonov Quarter. The metal workers were defending themselves splendidly . . . Mishka could see by the light of the street lamp that Uncle Yegor’s lip was split in two. This fighting was taking place on the other side of the street. Mounted guards were racing toward the tavern, lashing everyone in quick succession with their whips. And for the first time, at that moment, at the first word that Mishka ever read in his life, the golden letters on the signboard took shape by themselves: t-a-v-e-r-n.

Uncle Yegor, trembling, moving at a slow trot, and holding Mishka by the hand, ran back to their lodgings near the Kalitniki Station. Mishka was running behind him at a full trot. He was out of breath; he was terrified. Nonetheless, having grasped how to read and write for the first time that evening, he was reading: Crawfish, beer, butcher shop, bread, tailor, pharmacy.

This was a great secret – knowing how to read and write, penetrating beyond mere letters. This was the joy of cognition, which is repeated but a few times during one’s life. During weekdays

there was no free time, since it was spent entirely on work and sleep. Mishka waited for Sundays to go read signboards, to learn the secret of the birth of words. And on Sunday, alone, secretly, he set off for mystery, descending into a world of mysteriousness. He read all the signboards on his way down to Taganka Square. He read all the signboards on his way down to the walls of Chinatown. At the book fair near the walls of Chinatown, he stopped directly across from a bearded man in glasses, next to whom some books and pictures were lying on the ground. A naked, curly-haired girl, hardly covered by some tulle on her hips, was smiling at Mishka from one of the pictures. Mishka looked at the girl with his mouth wide open and read: “The Gem of the Harem.” He didn’t know the word “harema” [garema]. He decided that this was the girl’s name. “Harema . . .”¹⁵ She was, of course, unusual and remarkable.

A red-nosed peddler wearing glasses rapped on the book merchandise and shouted:

“Come on over and shop here! Songbooks, tales! A new pamphlet! The appearance of the Mother of God before two monks from the Strastnoy Monastery. The price is five kopecks. Yapancha, the Tatar horseman, in one part.”

Mishka asked sheepishly: “And how much is this ‘Harema’ . . .?”

“Five kopecks for everyone else, six kopecks for you.”

Mishka grew utterly shy and timid at the prospect of becoming the possessor of Harema and paid him with three two-kopeck coins. He hid Harema under his shirt. He decided to go to to Belov’s store in Okhotny Ryad to see his cousin Vasily, who worked there as a junior clerk. Mishka wanted to reveal to his cousin the immensity and boundlessness of experience opened up to him by the ability to read and write; Mishka didn’t know whether he should show him Harema. On his way to Okhotny Ryad, Mishka came out past the Loskutny Hotel. To the right one could already see the tents, street peddler trays, counters, baskets, and boxes of the continuous flea market that was Okhotny Ryad. An incalculable crowd of people was streaming out. Carters, coachmen’s open carriages, and two-wheeled carts being pushed by a coolie were driving past. Above the crowd and the tents howled the human choir of commercial shouts, arguments, dissatisfactions, and oaths. Policemen were standing next to the chapel on the square. Mishka crossed the street and headed toward the tents. And suddenly a cry broke out. Three guys hurried from the roadway toward the market stalls and dragged Mishka along after them. Some other people were running away from the sidewalk on the other side of the street. Some of them were running toward the tents, others were running away from the tents. The crowd of people standing at the tents started to thin out at this moment. The sound of police whistles burst out furiously. The roadways were emptying out. Police officers in grey overcoats were walking along the roadways. Everything quieted down. A demonstration of students and workers was

¹⁵ The caption beneath the illustration, “The Gem of the Harem” (*Zhemchuzhina garema* [Жемчужина гарема]), provides the genitive singular form (garema [гарема]) of the Russian masculine noun for “harem,” not its nominative singular form (garem [гарем]). As a result, Misha mistakenly believes that “garema” is a feminine noun in the nominative singular form and, thus, the girl’s first name.

marching from Mokhovaya Street, from the university. The demonstrators were singing. Mikhail could make out in the silence words that made one prick up one's ears:

“ . . . arise, working people . . . ”

The demonstrators were advancing toward the police. The police stepped aside ominously. Behind the bins, on the bins, on the baskets and boxes around the Okhotny bazaar, stood traders wearing aprons and merchants dressed in long coats, gentlemen wearing hats, noblewomen in veils, female cooks with baskets, and street vendors with food. Along the roadway walked young people, students in greatcoats and grey double-breasted jackets, and workers in their overalls. At their head was a red banner being carried by a young girl. The gentlemen and lords quickly disappeared from the sidewalk. Clerks in aprons came forward and tucked in their aprons. And a broken voice, screeching from exertion, swept over the crowd of Okhotny Ryaders who had quieted down:

“Beeeaat theem! . . . ”

The demonstrators did not halt. Youth and determination radiated out of them. From the demonstrators could be heard:

“ . . . dooown wiiith . . . ! ”

The cry was left hanging in the air, suspended by slogans. The Okhotny Ryaders ran from the bazaar in the direction of the students, hoping to run into them. Coachmen and carters, standing to their full height in their vehicles, hallooed. A frenzied young lad ran up to the banner. He struck a golden-curved girl in the face. She fell. Those who were marching behind her grabbed the banner. People were fighting on the roadway, beating up the students. Whistles were being blown.

“The Cossacks ought to be summoned here,” said a nobleman in a pince-nez and straw hat who was standing next to Mikhail.

“Don't worry. Our guys will pin their ears back,” answered a man in a long coat with fitted waist.

“So why isn't the police chief anywhere to be seen?”

A streetcar drove into the crowd of people fighting and stopped, just like a ship among human waves. Mikhail was beside himself. He hurried onto the roadway to jump in, to pull people apart, to stop this from continuing, just as he used to do in his native village at the Settlements when the younger boys would fight. His leg tripped over a box he hadn't noticed, he fell down, and he heard:

“Hit them in the ribs, just like the guys from Yegorov's tavern beat people up.”

Rifle shots could be heard coming from the direction of Teatralnaya Square. The cry “Cossacks!” swept across the crowd.

At that point, all of them, the Okhotny Ryaders and the demonstrators, moved away from the roadway and rushed over to the kiosks. The Cossacks were speeding along from Teatralnaya Square. Some gentlemen, squealing, ran around the corner. The crowd of people squeezed Mishka in the passageway between two tents, pinning him up against a stack of boxes. The boxes smelled of fresh apples. People were running past, some in a victorious howl, others – mainly the gentlemen – in a squeal of horror, while still others were running past in impotent hatred to the point of tears.

“Marya, I’m telling you, you’d be better off coming over here.”

The same girl who earlier had been carrying the red banner now ran toward the boxes. Her golden hair was stuck to her forehead. She glanced wide-eyed at Mishka and did not see him. A male student was running right behind her. He stumbled on the curb of the sidewalk and fell down on the spat-upon asphalt. The fat heel of a dry cowhide boot was raised up over the student’s head. Mikhail, with his head, struck the man whose boot was upraised as hard as he could in the stomach. His cousin, Vasily, in a bloodied apron, with a full set of sheathed butcher knives on a strap, fell down, sweaty and fierce, right next to the student.

“Mishka, is that you!? You son of a bitch, you’re with the students!?”

Vasily’s eyes were green, like those of a lynx.

“Don’t hit someone who’s fallen down,” Mishka said.

His cousin’s eyes suddenly grew sober. He said in an unexpectedly humane way:

“Guys, get out of here or else we’ll kill you.”

He helped the student to get back up on his feet. Mikhail saw how the girl had stretched out her hand to the student. He thought that she, of course, was Harema’s sister. He reached into his shirt. Harema wasn’t there.

A week later, on the following Sunday, Mikhail was again walking around Okhotny Ryad. Near the tent where he had run into Harema’s sister, a fat old woman in a very wide shawl was shouting:

“Grandma’s rennet apples! Napoleons! Pears and oranges! . . .”

Mikhail had grasped how to read and write. He knew two songbooks by heart. He knew *The Warszawianka*, the revolutionary song whose motif enchanted him. He cried over the woeful tale of the sufferings of Lady Margarita, held captive by Count Douglas in the luxurious halls of his ancestral castle. He hated this Douglas. He did not understand what venom this book was instilling in him, removing his class consciousness and replacing it with the consciousness that

even wealthy people could be unhappy . . . Somewhere, in stories, the tall grass of the steppes was rustling and an unusual sun was shining. He had come to know the technology of the intestines-cleaning operations. He had come to know perfectly the particulars of pork and beef small intestines, middle guts, caecums, weasands, chitterlings, and fatends. First you need to let the intestines *drop down*: that is, separate them with a knife from the *small gut*, as well as from the mesentery of the bowels and the intestinal fat. Then you need to make *sausage casings* out of the intestines, washing them in cold water, squeezing the paunch manure out of the intestines with your hands, and then washing them a second time and a third time in warm water. Next you need to turn the intestines inside out by the mucous membrane and clean the mucus off the intestines by means of the *casing slime*. Then the intestines are sorted by size and pickled in lime tubs. The labor expended on the cleaning of the intestines was highly complex work; it required skill and attention to make sure that the intestines did not tear. Mikhail was soon assigned to work on the desliming and cleaning of the intestines.

During the December uprising in Moscow, the junior veterinary doctor Chernyshev set off for the Simonov Tollgate with some metalworkers from the slaughterhouses, who had formed up as a military detachment, and he disappeared into exile. The uprising was suppressed by the Semyonov guards. The year 1906 passed. It was now 1907. In 1905, the professional labor movement in Russia had appeared above the underground for the first time, and generally it took wide shape for the first time, becoming a mass movement. During the year 1906, it scampered back into the underground. In Moscow, in 1880, they started to transport illuminating gas in barrels and, simultaneously with this, some streets were illuminated with [Pavel] *Yablochkov candles*, that is, with electric light. At that time there were horse cars, to be replaced by streetcars at the beginning of 1912. A waste-water disposal system. Indoor plumbing . . . In 1905, there were, in all, 11,660 public officials, city workers, and office workers in Moscow (in 1917 there were already 151,000!) . . . Streetcar drivers were the ringleaders, the driving force among Moscow city workers in 1905.

It was now the year 1907.

Kalabukha said to Mikhail:

“Stand by the fence. Whistle if you are approached by anyone who is not one of ours.”

There were two other guys who were pulling guard duty. On the abandoned lot, slaughterhouse workers who cleaned intestines sat down and lay down to sleep around Kalabukha. It was getting dark. Kalabukha was standing up, straight as a pole, talking about how workers nonetheless managed to achieve some of their demands through strikes. The workers at the albumin factory sued for bath money, which, according to a court ruling, it was found that they should be receiving. The tanners marched to the City Duma with red banners, and the Cossacks lashed them with their whips. Nonetheless, Guchkov got frightened, so he increased their salaries to forty rubles and gave them a ten percent raise every three years.

Some were saying:

“The year before last, Doctor Chernyshev had arranged to have the metalworkers stage an uprising. And where is the metalworker Korolyov now? And where is Chernyshev himself? A black coach [used by the police for transporting people to prison], penal servitude . . .”

Others were saying:

“Six rubles for cooked grub . . . Hang around, if you’d like. Ours is the filthiest of professions. Potatoes and white bread are served only on holidays, yet we have to wash the shit out of animal intestines . . . Fifteen hours on our feet, hauling water, five hundred buckets . . .”

They decided to go on strike. They chose the workers Kalabukha and Yesenin, nicknamed Monashkin, to serve as a deputation to speak with Lukyanov. They decided to demand a bathhouse, a ten-hour workday, and a pay increase. Yesenin said to Lukyanov:

“It’s impossible to live, working at your factory, master. Even the most highly skilled worker at your factory receives twenty-eight rubles, there’s no higher salary. The child laborers, meanwhile, get only ten rubles each. That’s simply unthinkable. We don’t have any clothes, any aprons, or any laundry. We stand in shit from morning till night. We work by the light of kerosene lamps for three kopecks an hour. We live in lice.”

Lukyanov responded curtly: “You can go down on your knees to your Aunt Fenya. You can go to hell!”

On this day Mikhail, who was wearing a red shirt, just happened to catch the eye of the manager Ushakov (“God grant him long life”). Long after midnight some individuals came to the “dormitory,” one wearing tinted glasses and a fake mustache, all the others in uniform. They rummaged around under the matting on the plank beds and arrested both of the deputies.

“It’s filthy in here, like a pigsty,” said the individual wearing the tinted glasses. “Where do you wash your hands here?”

Kalabukha answered calmly: “He only just touched the matting, and his hands are soiled. We ought to stick him in some paunch manure, the swine! . . . We don’t have any water.”

An individual in uniform poked Kalabukha in the ribs and said: “That’s enough, orator. Let’s go.”

Kalabukha, who did not feel the blow, answered calmly: “Just you wait, you herring. I want to say goodbye to my comrades.” He turned to the intestines cleaners. “Well, what do you think, comrades, does this mean farewell? Who wants to bid me farewell?”

Mikhail Rogozhin walked up to Kalabukha, clasped his hand, and shook it, without kissing him. But he embraced Yesenin and kissed him, without shaking his hand. They led the two arrested

men away. The official in charge of the corridor extinguished the lamp; the policeman remained in the entrance hall. They did not sleep all night long. In the morning, they did not go out to work. They sat on the ground next to the hut. The news arrived by itself: the District Inspector and the Labor Inspector had set off from Rogozhin's section of town, but while traveling along the road they were intercepted by Lukyanov, who took them to his place to drink tea and greased their palms with bribes. Nonetheless, at noon the inspector arrived. He was an elderly, shaven man who, one could tell, loved to tell anecdotes. He made the rounds of the "dormitory" and wrote up a report.

The workers tried to dissuade him:

"Your Honor, write it up as it really is. We aren't asking for anything extra. Describe how we're made to live like pigs."

The inspector said in a friendly manner:

"Okay, okay, I'll describe it like [Alexander Sergeyevich] Pushkin would . . . Tell me, in confidence, which one of you is inciting a strike?"

Mikhail Rogozhin said loudly:

"I'm inciting it myself!" He slapped himself on the stomach with the palm of his hand. "Soon we'll sell our own intestines to Lukyanov. Let him put them on the frankfurters as skins. There won't be any reason for me to gobble them down then, I'll have become rich!"

The inspector said affectionately:

"Now don't you be cracking jokes. We're not in a tavern. How old are you?"

"Sixteen."

"What do you do for work?"

"I clean out intestines."

"What's your name and patronymic?"

"Mikhail Rogozhin."

"Aren't you the one who was walking around yesterday in a red shirt?"

"My mother had sent it to me."

"Now don't you be cracking jokes . . ."

That night Mikhail Rogozhin was arrested. After spending a month sitting in the Taganka jail, he received three years of administrative exile in Cherdyn. Cherdyn turned out to be his university.

As far as the strike of the workers at the intestines factory is concerned, it lasted a month. Lukyanov evicted those factory workers, throwing them out of the dormitory; they were living on an abandoned lot out in the open air and then relocated to a cattle shed on the grounds of the slaughterhouse. Although the female cook had been paid money ahead of time, she refused to prepare meals for these workers, in accordance with Lukyanov's orders, and she disappeared. The slaughterhouse commissary refused them credit. The slaughterhouse workers, especially the metalworkers, helped out the workers at the intestines factory. The metalworkers were supported by the slaughtermen. The slaughterhouse, in a petition to Ushakov, requested that the workers at the intestines factory be allowed to purchase groats and bread from the commissary on credit. The slaughtermen shared stolen rennet and lard with the workers at the intestines factory. The slaughterhouse requested that Ushakov provide the strikers with a hut. Otherwise, the slaughterhouse was planning to strike right after the workers at the intestines factory. Lukyanov shortened the workday to twelve hours, increased salaries – up to thirty-five rubles for skilled workers, up to twelve rubles for child laborers – and signed a written statement that he would keep all workers on the job for a year, without any dismissals.

In 1916, the well-known Russian neuropathologist, Privy Councilor Vasily Vasilyevich Barkhanov, traveled to the front to study the nature of bravery from the perspective of the human nervous system. Mikhail Rogozhin met the professor when the latter was cutting the harness traces off the horses and fleeing from German shells, clearly proving by his own example what is the nature of bravery. When the staff general was found far in the rear, riding on an exhausted horse, and was taken to the headquarters train, personnel from the field hospital sent for His Excellency and asked him to stop by the first-aid station. His Excellency said at that time: “No, old chap, no, no, I thank you kindly.”

But the personnel at the field first-aid station were at work, tending to the wounds of those who had been maimed in honor of the general's study of bravery. In the dark rooms of the shot-up manor house, in the courtyard next to it, and on the road leading up to it, people were sitting and lying down on hospital beds, on overcoats, and on the ground. It smelled like a mixture of medicine and sweat. On three tables in the operating room, they were performing operations and bandaging the wounded. People were lying on stretchers, waiting in line for the operating tables. Human bones, arms, and legs were being tossed into enamel basins. Medical orderlies were carrying the wounded on stretchers up to the operating tables and then lifting them onto them, while doctors and nurses were taking the wounded down off the operating tables and putting them on other stretchers. The work proceeded as if on a conveyor belt, the surgical gowns stirring noiselessly. The air, filled with the smell of ether and chloroform, was moaning. It seemed as if an enormous, vociferous, and nonetheless suckling infant was crying out. The medical orderlies were holding graduated medicine glasses, filled with water, up to the mouths of the wounded.

A doctor was counting, “The forty-third stomach wound,” and then he added to a nurse:

“Look alive, my dear . . . wipe my forehead, mother . . . wipe my nose. It’s dripping! . . . Next! . . . *Moriturus* . . .”

Sweat actually was pouring down from the faces of the surgeons.

“Name? . . . Mask! Nurse, check the pulse. Give me a lancet . . . Next! . . .”

The fragment of a grenade flew into a basin.

“Name?”

“Mikhail Rogozhin.”

“Mask. Pulse . . . Shin fracture. Splint . . . cotton wadding. Next.”

“Name? . . . Write down the name. The forty-fourth stomach wound. *Moriturus*. Next. Wipe the sweat off my mustache.”

Moriturus means in Latin: one who is bound to die.

Next to the building, Mikhail Rogozhin was lying on a stretcher set low to the ground. To the right and left of him stood rows of similar stretchers. The stretchers were waiting to be loaded into railway cars that would evacuate them to the rear. An enormous, vociferous infant was crying. Rogozhin regained consciousness and said loudly, in full conviction, in full consciousness: “Oh! My God, what scum!” Inside the special medical train, they were making a list: last name, first name, type of weapon, regiment? Rogozhin’s temperature was 40 degrees. He said in semi-delirium:

“Name – Rogozhin, Mikhail Sergeyevich – Is this another interrogation?! Please! – Peasant, descended from a family of paupers, worked as a laborer at an intestines factory, was exiled by the government, returned from exile, worked for half a year as a metalworker, was exiled again, but did not serve out the term of my sentence because I was transferred by the government from exile to slaughter, at first to a military company, and then, after learning how to kill, to the front, to become cannon fodder . . . Go ahead and interrogate me, please do! . . . Type of weapon? – Marxism! . . . Regiment? – The Russian Social Democratic Labor Party! . . . Oh, my God! Just you wait! . . .”

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The year was 1915. The war had been going on for nearly a year already. The Moscow slaughterhouses were working for the army. On Sundays and all the other holidays, the slaughtermen were required to go to church, to pray for the victory of the Orthodox troops and of the throne. The slaughterman Kochkin volunteered to make the rounds of the worker dormitories on the slaughterhouse grounds and hurry any idlers off to church with his walking stick. He would yell at them angrily:

“You devil, you reveler! Is this what you wanted?! – Go stand through mass with a short prayer service for the health of our troops, then go eat dinner, and after that you can go out and carouse.”

Behind the stockyard grounds there was an abandoned lot in a primitive condition, a “club” attached to the slaughterhouse, overgrown with turnips and nettles. In 1914, the horizon was fenced off from the Kalitnikov Cemetery by the huge concrete structure of the first Moscow cold storage warehouse. Halfway through the mass, people were gambling, playing heads or tails and card games on the abandoned lot, as they drank homemade brew.

“There are seven rubles and twenty kopecks in the bank, as well as a jacket and boots. Who wants a card?”

An old woman from the countryside had come to visit the stabber Klim for a short stay. Uncle Fedos, Klim and his wife, and several other people were talking about life. Fedos was delivering a speech, lying on the ground amidst the nettles in a proud and stately way:

“How did people used to make money and get rich before? Lovyazhkin at first went around catching cats and selling them for their fur, he carried liver to sell to noblemen’s wives and their cats, getting three kopecks of clear profit for each portion he sold. Lukyanov, an illiterate peasant from Ryazan who had no aversion to intestines, made a million rubles, outpacing the German Fürle. Pushkin now owns five houses, yet he started out in Skopin, where he would feed the calves belonging to peasants for free. Who is Shishkin? He swept the floors at the slaughterhouse. And now? Now he’s a millionaire. Saikin began with a lame mare . . . And here I am, conducting an honest trade that is to my liking. I’ll amass a little more and then open up a haberdashery store.”

Klim’s wife said:

“Kochkin stayed in our village for a short while; he’s installing a new set of royal doors at the church . . .”

Uncle Fedos said:

“Klimushka, tell your spouse not to butt in on the conversation . . . Kochkin, too. He has a house and a tearoom in the countryside, and if we hadn’t paid him a bribe, we wouldn’t have been able to get work at the slaughterhouse. And, by the way, there is the war. Now they make us work fifteen hours a day, much more when compared to the work hours we used to have during peacetime, and yet the pay we receive is the same as before. And why is that? Go ahead and force your way into Mr. Poderni’s office, he’ll tell you: ‘If you don’t like it here, go and complain at the front!’ Well, so we keep our mouths shut. But we ought to be receiving pay increases. They’re trying to catch workers spending their time idly, they’ve placed soldiers to monitor them. By the way, Mr. Poderni is trying to coax us: at the front, he says, there’s a war going on, so a lot of meat is needed to

feed the troops; there were some instances of displeasure voiced at the front, he says, that they were sending too little meat there. So I'll tell them that we're killing livestock untiringly here; we'll probably wind up slaughtering all of them soon. But we're not the ones who are providing meat for the troops at the front. And they need to ask for meat from others, not from us. They didn't ask us for meat when the war was beginning . . ."

"And what's going on with the people in our village . . ." Klim's wife started to say.

Fedos said:

"Klimushka, tell your spouse not to butt in on our conversation . . . They're killing people at the front in due course . . ."

A lad drenched in sweat came running headlong from the slaughterhouses. He shouted piercingly, and in an inspired manner:

"Quit working! We need to fight the Germans! . . . the only thing flying across all of Moscow right now is the fluff from poplar trees! We need to rout the Germans!"

The inveterate card players paid out the bank all at once. From the barracks, from the abandoned lot, from the tavern "Delight," people were running toward the gates of the slaughterhouse, upon which enormous bulls were depicted. Near the gates, a District Militia Officer was taking a stroll, stroking his mustache from time to time. Kochkin was walking behind him, crouching on each leg and assuring him: "The people who work for me are the right men for showing one's patriotism, Your Honor . . ."

Fedos, who was trotting behind Klim and Klim's wife, ran into Dorofey, who shouted out:

"Now we'll get to touch some capital, we'll divide it up among ourselves: grab what you can!"

At Kochkin's home, Fedos asked:

"And exactly what kinds of Germans do we have around here?"

The District Militia Officer looked at Fedos contemptuously and said:

"And Fürle, old chap, what is he, in your opinion? A Tatar?"

Tables, chairs, and junk were flying out the windows of Fürle's apartment. Young boys were competing to see who was the most accurate sharpshooter in breaking the glass in the windows. Everything in Fürle's house was befouled and defiled: even the doors and window frames were plundered, torn off from their hinges. His grand piano, with its belly ripped open, lay scattered

about in the street, there being no need for it. On the grounds of the slaughterhouses, they were wrecking Fürle's storehouses, wheeling out tubs and smashing them to bits with axes. A salty cube of lard fell out onto the ground. Some old women grabbed the lard, stuffing it into their shirts, closer to their hearts. Horses were being led out of the stables. A barefooted eviscerator jumped onto an Ardennes draft horse and beat the mare with his naked heels.

Someone shouted out, enraged: "Now let's set it all on fire!"

At Fürle's factory, they were breaking into pieces the tables used for cleaning cattle intestines. Right next to Fürle's storehouse were the storehouses that belonged to Lukyanov. Cowering inside his office, Lukyanov with his final words was begging the District Militia Officer in a bass voice and begging Kochkin in a treble one:

"Are you the one who thought this all up, you son of a bitch!? Really, don't you know that I'm the one who showed up here and got established among them? That it's my storehouses, after all, that are located right next to his!?"

He pleaded with the District Militia Officer as well:

"Mr. District Militia Officer, Your Honor, my storehouses are right next to Fürle's . . . By God, sir, the men will touch my things and carry them away . . . It's all the same to them, there are some malicious individuals who walk among them! . . ."

And he pleaded with Kochkin:

"Kochka, you bald-headed old devil . . . Don't you know that those are my storehouses that are located alongside his? What do you think, that your ugly puss looks nicer to them than Fürle's?"

And he pleaded with the District Militia Officer again:

"Your Honor, send for the police, we'll spare no expense . . ."

The District Militia Officer replied:

"Where is the overseer?"

A police officer stepped into the office.

"I'm here, Your Honor."

"Let's go take a look. Isn't it about time we took some measures?"

Lukyanov walked behind them and moaned:

“Our Lady, Queen of Heaven, joy of all those who are grieving, assuage my sorrows . . . Come to my aid, Mother of God! . . . Your Honor, don’t forget about the malicious individuals, about the agitators. The senior slaughterman, Dorofey, do you know him? He reported to me that there were some who tried to talk their way out of taking part in the pogrom. They tried to explain that, well then, there’s no need to beat up the Jews! . . . Our Lady, Queen of Heaven, joy of all those who are grieving . . .”

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December 1916.

“Confidential. Serf Military-Convict Branch, No. 1713.
To the Head of the Moscow Provincial Prison.

Announce to Mikhail Sergeyevich Rogozhin, the peasant and war veteran from Ryazan Province who is located in your prison, the following measure of administrative penalty – banishment under open police surveillance to Yenisey Province for three years.

Colonel Martynov
Head of the Division for the Protection of Public Safety and Order for the City of Moscow

Approved by
Cavalry Captain Znamensky
Divisional Corps of Gendarmes.”

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..... Rogozhin was walking in the very deep snow of the streets of Moscow, which had turned into a wasteland. The room was cold and smoke-filled at the headquarters of the District Committee. In the hollow, resounding office, a man in a tall fur hat and an overcoat was finishing up writing out a document. The hands of the man writing the document were in gloves, the ink had frozen, and the man was wiping crystals of ice off his glove. The ice crystals were shining especially brightly against the color of the ink. The man was sitting in an armchair, the back of which was inlaid with the merchant-class luxuriance of a girl with flowers. Rogozhin was seeing this man for the first time, but there was nothing surprising for either of them when they started to speak like old comrades, like brothers, using, of course, the informal “thou.” Mikhail told him how, after he had been liberated from exile by the Revolution, he had stuck around in Siberia for a while; at first, he fought as a partisan in guerilla warfare and after that he served in the Red Army. Back in the World War, his leg had been broken, and [Admiral Aleksandr Vasilyevich] Kolchak broke it again during the Civil War. He was released from military service for good and came to Moscow, where he is thinking of staying and being of some use.

“Have you been in the Party for a long time?”

“Yes, since the time of my first exile, since 1908, I suppose.”

“Are you married? Do you have any children?”

“It always seemed that somehow there wasn’t any time for me to get around to getting married . . . No, I don’t have any children . . . When I got to Moscow, I called on my dear uncle, his name was Yegor, but he died last year. My cousin Vasily died and left behind a wife and young boy. That’s all the family I have left. The young boy is bright, he shouts non-stop: ‘Comrades, pay attention, Yermany is attacking us! . . .’ I didn’t come here because of relatives. I came because I will be of more use here.”

The person with whom he was speaking complained:

“I get so involved in my work that I sit here until late at night, but I’m glad to see you . . . This is what we’ve decided: go check to make sure that the slaughterhouses are taking shape, and drop by the Registration and Distribution Department of the Central Committee. I have been signing all the warrants, so my hands have become numb. Well, we’ll soon be done: NEP is beginning. Make sure that you go down to the slaughterhouses; I know nothing about them. Stop by there and then we’ll talk a bit. Give my regards to the Yerman. If you’re not going to get married and won’t have any children of your own, you should take care of that young boy. Be well. And don’t forget to stop by.”

The towers at the gates to the slaughterhouses were crowned by two bronze bulls that were one and a half times larger than the normal Simmental bull, a luxury of Mr. Poderni. The bulls were standing there just as they had before. Clouds of crows were circling above the cemetery. The street was covered with snow; a path wound its way in the middle of the street, just as in Yeniseysk. Everything was frightfully familiar to Rogozhin. But he did not encounter any familiar people. In the former “chamber,” an icon hung in the corner, just as before, but it had become tilted and had turned black from flies; only scraps of a small chain remained in the icon lamp. There was an extraordinary number of women there. It smelled of putrid linen and diapers. In the corridor, he met up with a shaggy old man wearing a coat that was not the right size for him, its flaps reaching the ground. The old man, who was carrying a small casket under his arm, knocked on the door with his fist and shouted:

“Who is this casket for? Who ordered it!”

Two female voices answered him immediately from across the stairway landing:

“Bring it here! It’s our casket! . . .”

The old man started to grumble in an overbearing manner:

“You order something, but you don’t provide the correct address! People! Really, how can a bureau work in this manner?”

A second old man, who seemed very undersized, shouted out joyfully:

“Mishukha, don’t you recognize Uncle Fedos!? That’s a sin, isn’t it!? . . . Come, come here! . . .”

Fedos was soaking some crusts of bread in boiling water. He got a second mug out of the cabinet and treated Rogozhin, assuring him that the extract derived from soaking these rusks in boiling water was more helpful than tea.

“We were living high off the hog here, Mishukha. At first, our men were not settling down here: one half of them were swept away by the World War, the other half by the Revolution. And women were starting to arrive here in droves. It’s a business that brings enormous wealth, there would have been a demand for you every night, but me, I’m old, of course. The common people really are scattering, but I think that we need to sit through all of this. It’s said in Scripture: ‘Since you were faithful with small matters, I will put you in charge of much greater ones.’ We need to be patient and wait. By the way, our benefactors are not losing heart: they are not giving up their activity, they are still trading in cattle and sending out livestock to be slaughtered . . . although a bit fewer than before.”

“Which benefactors are these that you’re talking about?” asked Rogozhin.

“It’s the same ones all the time: Bastryukov, Pushkin, Kochkin . . . All the ones who used to be benefactors, sure enough, are benefactors now . . . What I can’t figure out is the money. At first, they counted it out in the hundreds, then in the thousands. Today it’s a thousand, tomorrow it’s ten thousand. Well, okay, we used to put up with it. But now, I’ll be damned if I can figure it out, the count has gone up into the billions. Just look at where we’ve leapt. I was planning to open up a haberdashery store after the war; the store never got opened, yet I became a millionaire! . . . Kryuchkov gives as a bribe enough paper currency to pay off three officials, he gives a million rubles, but there’s nothing to buy with it.”

“Are you going to lie low during all of this?” Rogozhin asked.

“Of course, how can I do otherwise? As long as they’re killing livestock, I have to be at the slaughter chamber,” Fedos crossed himself and placed his cup upside down, as a sign that he had drunk enough.

“And what did you come here for? To take a look at us, eh? To get hired for a job here? You won’t find any masters here. No one knows who is master to whom. We sit here like blockheads . . . The State, by the way, has turned out the way you’d like. Maybe you’ll get involved in governing the State, too!?”

They set off together to see what remained of the slaughterhouses. Fedos talked about how they had become dilapidated. A man with a rifle had taken up a position at the warehouses. Two small dogs rushed out from under his sheepskin coat.

“Do you have a pass? What’s your name?”

Mikhail stopped. The man looked closely at him in the twilight, spread his arms wide apart, and shouted merrily:

“Mishka! You Bolshevik devil! Is that really you? I know it’s you, I know it, I guessed it. You guys are all the same. You walk boldly from one checkpoint to another, but here they take people’s heads off for doing that.”

“Uncle Leonty, are you making a fuss?”

“I’m not making a fuss. I’m guarding this place. Our intestines factory got closed down, there isn’t any business. In the slaughter chambers, they’re killing horses. There weren’t any people that stayed here. Some died in the World War, others left for the countryside. There it is; that’s how things stand: I’m alone with a rifle and two dogs. I’m guarding the place, and I won’t let you in. Just the other day two smart alecks showed up here. ‘Leonty, don’t you know us?’ I say to them, ‘No, not at all. I’m seeing you for the first time.’ ‘But we’re comrades from the comp . . . com . . . How the devil do you say it! . . . from the Company Committee, from the co-op. You’ll get a thousand Nicholas rubles if you sell us a motor!’ But they let their eyes wander about and I can see that they’re people I’m acquainted with – one is Bastryukov’s nephew, the other, I forget his name, but I’ve also seen him doing work in the meat business. I say to them in a real friendly way: ‘Bring me an official order with a revolutionary seal on it from Comrade Lenin, and I will give you whatever you want free of charge. But if all you bring me is money, then to hell with you: you can go see Fenya under her skirt!’”

“Are you a Party member?” Rogozhin asked.

“No, I’m illiterate. But I’ve heard Lenin speak. He appeared before the people, took off his cap, and bowed in all four directions politely. He didn’t say too much, but he did explain: ‘Comrades, they say that we shouldn’t let go of our rifles!’ So I’m holding onto mine, you see? . . . And what have you come here for? Do you need some fittings?”

“I think, just like you, that the meat business needs to be put right for the workers and the peasants. Will you help me?”

It turned out that there were many people there with whom Mikhail Rogozhin was acquainted; even relatives who had loved him a lot from childhood, it turns out, showed up. In the blue-gray fog, an old Ford crept up to the new house on Vorontsovskaya Street and blew the horn briefly,

honk-honk, and two seconds later blew the horn again, honk-honk. At that point, Mikhail Sergeyevich, who had grabbed his heavy briefcase, came down the stairs, went out onto the street, and climbed into the Ford. And while the driver of the Ford was stepping on the gas, Mikhail Sergeyevich was scheduling the coming day down to the last minute, allocating time for conferences, for business conversations. He even allocated time for a conversation right then and there with his driver, Klim, known more simply as Vanya, about world news primarily, since Vanya had already read the newspaper headlines, then about how the Ford needed to be ready at a certain time to take him some place, and how, while Mikhail Sergeyevich was being detained at a certain establishment, Vanya should hurry to go fuel up the car. And every day they had one and the same conversations:

“Don’t speed, Vanya. Once again a policeman wagged his finger at us, did you see? And once again I’ll be the one who will have to pay your fine, just like last time!”

“Do you really think that I’m speeding, Mikhail Sergeyevich!? The car is too old for that, there’s no life in her . . . do you call this driving!? We need to junk our car, Mikhail Sergeyevich, we’re driving her to the grave.”

“Well, that’s why you need to slow down and take it easy on her.”

“Brrrrrooommm!” the clock chimed and added yet another silver bell; it was nine fifteen. The clock was complex. Set in a mahogany cabinet that resembled an armoire, it had a multitude of dials upon one basic face, an enamel one with blue numerals. The small dials showed everything that related to time: seconds, weeks, dates, months, phases of the moon, and a counting off of days. The number of days counted off was impossible to understand. Mikhail Sergeyevich had calculated that number the first day he stood beneath the clock. By the will of someone unknown to him, the arrow pointing to the number of days counted off reckoned that number starting from October 25, 1917 old style. The number exceeded one thousand, five hundred. The clock was wound once a year. Comrade Zubova, the female secretary, said hello to him, smiling. Sheets of paper to be used for taking down shorthand were already lying on the table.

Managers and deputy managers were entering the waiting room to see secretary Zubova. She could be heard saying:

“He arrived and said: ‘Today the day is totally and entirely ours, as long as there aren’t any phone calls involving executive directives.’ He strolled down the corridor, looked in at the snack bar, and ordered that they change the cheesecloth gauze. Right now he’s reading his correspondence.”

The phone in the office rang. Comrade Zubova disappeared into the office and then came back out right away: “He wants Nikolay Andreyevich to come in to see him.” The manager of the Commerce Department straightened his jacket, glided across the parquet floor as if on skis, and plunged through the door into the office.

“Have you read the letter from London? It turns out that during all the years of revolution the Central Union of Consumer Societies came to a standstill . . . NEP is beginning, and now they don’t know what to do . . .”

“These are curious innovations, Mikhail Sergeyevich. The London office sent the final conditions for the swine to be used for making bacon. The swine are described in such glowing terms in the articles that you can see them with your eyes closed. But if we’re going to do business, that means we’ve got to do business. If we’re going to be Red merchants . . . I’ve sketched a model outline. I proceeded from the notion that the foreign market is now demanding swine of the ‘dimensional’ sort. But our commission, as you recall, emphasized the enormous percentage of swine of the ‘pending’ sort. Bastryukov sends coarse, thick-skinned swine our way; the fat on this swine is soft. And they’re always some kind of multi-colored swine: the colors aren’t clearly visible, they’re dark piebald, reddish, spotted . . . They dump swine of all sorts and of all ages onto the platform . . .”

“This Bastryukov, who exactly is he?”

“Bastryukov? . . . Mercy, he’s a well-known bourgeois specialist, a prominent co-op official. He’s working with us just in passing.”

“Who is he? . . . He’s not by any chance from the meat-business family of the Bastryukovs, is he?”

“I can’t say for sure, but it seems that way. In any case, he’s an expert in his trade. He’s difficult to work with . . . The cooperative, according to the tasks assigned in connection with meeting the standards, was going to undertake fattening up the swine. But they know no restraint. So long as the swine got a little fatter. It turns out that all we got were the ‘excess weight’ sort of swine . . . As far as NEP is concerned, we’re really beginning to do some business. I have reason to think that we will soon start receiving orders even from other countries.”

The customary routine – the daily procession of managers and visitors into Rogozhin’s office – was well underway. A representative of the agricultural association “Strength,” Grigory Ivanovich Zaitsev, a modest man, came in and introduced himself. He said the following:

“The harvest has come in, and the peasant is seeking to withhold his livestock, hoping to feed it in the yard until the spring grass arrives. But when there’s a crop failure, there’s nothing to feed the livestock with, so you have to take your livestock to the marketplace, and the price drops. We understand all that. It’s the ABCs of economics. We have two categories of sellers: the peasant, as such, and an agricultural association like ours. Buyers, on the other hand, there are a hundred different kinds of them: butchers-cum-private traders, cattle drovers, representatives of cooperatives, AOM, MKhB [Meat Packing House], TsRK [Central Workers Cooperative], the rural union, the State Agricultural Syndicate,

and various other institutions. Now there's even your own enterprise, "Prepared Meat," and every city has its own "Prepared Meat" enterprise. And can you imagine what's being done at the fairs? It happens that cows are regularly being snatched right out of people's hands. Well, and no one is bothering to consider prices. Some representative of "Prepared Meat" from Ivanovo-Voznesensky will arrive at the Voronezh fair, and right away he'll request a hundred tons of meat for the festivities. He'll take out his wallet: "Give me all that you have; I'll pay you in cash." There is price-fixing at the fair, and the price for a cow soars up to the sky like an airplane; there's no way to come close to being able to afford to buy it. The "Prepared Meat" representative from Ivanovo whisked away what he wanted, loaded his cargo, and – see you later. The co-op officials, meanwhile, need to have a drop to drink while the peasants figure out the temporariness of the price increase. How can you plan under conditions like these? You would need to be a prophet. The buyers would need to be united together."

Mikhail Sergeyevich asked: "Is the private trader speculating?"

"How can I put this? It's a matter of supply and demand, it's basic economics. Even if the social sector is nonetheless nibbling us to death . . . And thus the co-op officials, who come from the ranks of the old bourgeois specialists, they understand perfectly the mechanics of the economy. And they derive profit from the stock market flurries generated by these 'Prepared Meat' enterprises by means of – not to mince words – sheer speculation."

"And this is very common. The product left with the cattle, and others were left holding the bag. But the bourgeois specialists are not losing heart; instead they are spreading the rumor that prices will climb, that there's nowhere else for these prices to go but up. Well, the rumor has started to spread in the districts and in the countryside. One co-op official after another will go around the district, buying up five cows on the spot and overpaying for them wittingly. We're watching how the wives have been putting pressure on their peasant husbands: 'Go take the cow and sell it; haven't you heard what price they're offering?' So they will take the cow to be sold, and the town square will be full of cattle. In the district capital, there are more cattle gathered together than people. It's an unusual fair. And this is where the trapping begins. The co-op officials order horses, they pack up their suitcases, and they bid farewell to their host at the inn . . . Well, this is a well-known story . . ."

"Just like in the old days at 'Delight'?" Mikhail Sergeyevich asked.

"It's sort of like that. A literal howl arises at the market. The co-op officials beat down on the peasant all day long, until after dinner. How is the peasant able to hold out?"

Mikhail Sergeyevich had learned long ago to remain calm; he followed the rule not to be surprised at anything. He said to Zaitsev, smiling:

“Yes, these are not really co-op officials, but thieves.”

Zaitsev smiled back at him and said:

“They are bourgeois specialists, Mikhail Sergeyevich, they have been practicing sorcery around the meat business since time immemorial, so have their grandfathers, and great-grandfathers. And they’re now practicing sorcery around you.”

“And who are the ones who are doing this?”

“Oh, right, as if you didn’t know already? Your own bourgeois specialists, that’s who: Nikolaev, Mozhaikin, young Laptev, the Kolgushkin brothers, the Komarovs, Fedotov. They’re serving in your own government office. At first, they hid in the food committees, well, but now they have moved over to you in the procurement sector. We’ve had enough of bourgeois specialists. Basta!”

Zaitsev fell silent. So, too, did Rogozhin. “And thus I believe,” said Zaitsev,

“that it would behoove us, Mikhail Sergeyevich, to follow the path, as they say, of lean management by reducing all unnecessary units. The district fair doesn’t amount to anything, if I myself can sell items there directly. Give us an advance and we’ll distribute it to the members of the agricultural artel. Let them decide in advance who gets the young bull and who gets the over-milked cow. We’ll rustle up a herd and send the cattle directly to the capital. There’ll be less trouble that way: the brokers will be out of our hair, there’ll be cash profits, and we’ll hold a knife to the throat of the private trader. In general, buyers need to be consolidated and coordinated . . . Do you approve of this idea?”

“I’ll think about it.”

“Can we discuss this in our section?”

“Sure, why not? Go ahead and discuss it.”

At this time, the clock started to chime twelve o’clock noon with the peal of a May thunderstorm. Both Zaitsev and Rogozhin fell silent, each immersed in his own private thoughts, listening to the chiming of the clock. “And you know, Mikhail Sergeyevich,” said Zaitsev,

“You and I, after all, have become relatives: I married Natasha, the widow of your cousin Vasily Stepanovich. She’ll give you a call. Please come to the wedding and see how we’re getting settled in. Professor Rulyov will be there . . .”

“Thank you, give my regards to my cousin-in-law . . .”

After four o'clock, the divisions presented reports on the business that had been conducted that day.

“Comrade Zaitsev personally gave you a report. Simplifying the trading apparatus, bringing the producer of livestock closer to the consumer . . . please sign the estimate for the advance and the directive.”

Rogozhin said:

“For the time being, I will not be giving out an advance, and the directive is not worth signing.”

At five fifteen, Vanya brought the Ford around so that they could have dinner together. Vanya and Mikhail Sergeyevich were sitting across from each other in the office. Mikhail Sergeyevich was saying to Vanya:

“Eat everything up, down to the last bite . . . Otherwise – if we were to give you three servings of food rations, you’d only take them home with you – where’s the guarantee that you would eat dinner as you ought to? You most likely would give all of your rations to Manya. So when you’re dining with me, you are to eat everything up. I would also ask of you that you not race down the streets to no purpose when you’re driving.”

The clock in the office changed the number of the day precisely at midnight. The springing up of the new number was accompanied by a long and triumphant chorale. This chorale always found Mikhail Sergeyevich sitting over papers, alone in his office.

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Natalya Pavlovna phoned. Mikhail Sergeyevich chided her for keeping her marriage a secret from him. She said:

“But I was preparing a surprise for you. Zaitsev served together with Vasily; he was his boss. When I became a widow, he supported me. I won’t hide from you the fact that we had an affair, even though he’s older than me. A feeling rose up inside me. I hid this from you when you came to see me. Besides Vasyutka, I also have a daughter, Nina, from Zaitsev. We wanted to invite you over once we moved into the new housing development and got registered at the civilian registry office . . . for some reason I was embarrassed to tell you about Nina before I was legally married . . . But now please write down our address and telephone number . . . Don’t forget your relatives, don’t judge me too harshly.”

Mikhail Sergeyevich went to see his relatives. Vanya sped off with him in the Ford towards the Church of the All-Merciful Savior at Chigasy, driving along some of the outlying streets in that part of the city that still had old wooden buildings in it, searching the side streets in the dark. He stopped the car near a street light across from a lattice trellis. The lattice trellis was the height of perfection in woodworking openwork; it was painted with a white oil paint, studded all over on

the top with nails to keep crooks out. Behind the lattice trellis, a newly decorated, two-story wooden house with venetian windows rose up. It was a most solid building, a private residence that contained four apartments. The gate was locked. On an enameled metal plate, the names of the owners were listed: Zaitsev, Professor Rulyov. Rogozhin rang the bell. The snowdrifts in the courtyard were carefully shoveled off, the walkway was sprinkled with sand. Beyond the outside door, still other doors were heard being slammed; a well-lit stairway flew open most brilliantly. In the vestibule, Grigory Ivanovich Zaitsev, who was doting on Rogozhin as if he were his oldest friend and closest relative, removed his coat for him and took the hat out of his hands, hindering the pretty young girl in a white head-dress and white apron who was trying to shake non-existent snow off Rogozhin's coat. The rooms gave off the aroma of fragrant warmth. In the distance could be heard the soft drone of cultured voices. An eclipse descended onto the square shaft of pink rays of light that were issuing forth from the adjacent room: Natalya Pavlovna, wearing a very enormous shawl, a so-called Cantonese shawl, whose fringe was dragging along the parquet floor, appeared on the threshold. Before the Revolution, and even during the years of War Communism that followed, Rogozhin had never visited a house, so alive with the reality of the times, such as this one.

His cousin-in-law was absent-minded, affable, cordial . . . and unrecognizable. In Zaitsev's study, it smelled of cigars. A gallery of people, faces, *pince-nez* eyeglasses, partings of hair, and bald spots was turned in Rogozhin's direction. On the threshold, Zaitsev shouted out: "Mikhail Sergeyevich!" He introduced everyone to Rogozhin. "These are all your own people here. Do you need introductions, or are you already acquainted? This is Vasily Aleksandrovich Rulyov, professor of refrigeration, our meat luminary, ha-ha." The professor had an unusual look: on his right eye sat a spyglass, a complex optical structure. The professor was tall and lean; he wore his thinning hair in a straight part down the middle.

Natalya Pavlovna led her relative into the nursery to show him the sleeping children. Nephew Vasiutka resembled his father. He woke up and got used to his uncle very quickly.

"And are you, Comrade Uncle, a Bolshevik?"

"Yes, and what of it?"

"Well, here mama was telling me that I must, without fail, call you *comrade* . . . And what is this that you have here, Comrade Uncle?"

"This is the combat medal of the Red Banner."

"And what did they give you this for?"

"You would do well to be quiet for a bit, not to ask questions, and to listen to what your elders will be asking you about," said Natalya Pavlovna. "Lie down under your blanket, as one should, and put your hands on top of it . . . Misha, we're going to eat supper."

Professor Rulyov was speaking:

“... at our slaughterhouses, there is still a lack of sanitation and a primitive, Asiatic quality. We are still not yet making normal use of the products of slaughter. The slaughterhouse is the alpha and omega of the meat business, but without refrigeration the slaughterhouse is senseless. Realistically speaking, we still do not have refrigeration and cold storage warehouses . . . While abroad – oh, yes, a-broad – it’s a completely different story. There the slaughterhouse is a major factory and industrial enterprise. All the raw materials at the slaughterhouses over there are now being converted into a ready-made finished product that can be put directly on the market . . .”

Mikhail Sergeyevich was observing Natalya Pavlovna and was puzzled how it could be that from a nice, simple, merry young girl she had turned out to be such a sovereign lady of the manor.

After supper, they drank coffee, real coffee; who knows how coffee, together with cigars, turned up in blockaded Moscow. Zaitsev cut the chocolate cake with his own hands, his eyes squinting in delight. The professor was telling the assembled company that he has an extraordinarily rare disease in his right eye, a disease with whose Latin name he did not find it necessary to bore those who were present. It is the type of disease where eyeglasses do not help; a real telescope is instead needed. We have absolutely no idea how to make this telescope in *our own country*, or we do not want to know, so before the Revolution the professor used to travel abroad twice a year on account of his eyes. He had stayed in Moscow during all the years of internecine warfare (yes, yes, – it was internecine!), but now he is once again going to go abroad, and the government is giving him foreign currency to do that.

A man, with whom Rogozhin was not familiar, inclined his head to one side and said categorically:

“Our foreign currency is bread, it’s grain. A harvest, and we have everything – fats, proteins, carbohydrates – and all that the soul desires. One needs to know our history! Russia has been, is now, and always will be, a bread-producing country.”

Rogozhin recalled phrases out of a London publication on “standards” for swine:

“... eyes of a good size, not sunken or hollow, but bright and clear, point to the health of the pig, to its meekness and to its capacity for rapid growth . . . coarse ears and lackluster eyes in a pig bear witness to a phlegmatic temperament and sluggish digestion . . .”

The unfamiliar individual became agitated:

“You’ve read in *Izvestia* that it’s essential not only to sow rye, but also to raise cattle, and that this is the business of the Soviet government. A strong master will raise them himself in his herd, do what you like. The peasant is accustomed to

slaughtering calves, but not to giving people milk to drink. The business used to be standardized, but how is it now, I would ask you?"

Rogozhin asked his cousin-in-law: "Who is that?" "It's Grisha's comrade, an economic planner . . . Fomin," she answered, and she began to speak tenderly:

"It's been so long since we've seen each other, so much water has flowed under the bridge . . . you've now become an important person. Can it really be true that you haven't gotten married yet? Are you living like a lonely bachelor?" she broke into a laugh. "You need to find yourself a nice girl, a female commissar, someone right for you."

Rogozhin said:

"Where is your telephone? I need to call the garage."

"Your driver is here in our kitchen. We've already fed him. He's paying court to Glasha . . ."

It was the NEP period.

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Rogozhin summoned his colleagues to his office, treated them to cigarettes, and then said to them point blank: "Tell me about yourself."

They replied in the usual way, telling him where they were born, what their social origins were.

Rogozhin said:

"I already know all that. But now tell me, in a simple and friendly way, what do you think about the work you're doing: what do you like and what do you not like? Are you married? Do you have any children? Are they in school? Does your wife work?"

Rogozhin drove to Bolshaya Dmitrovka Street, to the old house of the literary-artistic circle on Staraya Square. They told him in reply:

"Be patient, don't get nervous. It's impossible to re-arrest everyone."

The clock in his office accompanied the days with a triumphant chorale.

The number of days grew to 365.

And again to 365.

Every twenty-four hours in his office were accompanied by a triumphant chorale.

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A red flag was fluttering above the former restaurant “Delight.” A sign was hanging at the entrance: “Club, Snack Bar.” On the door was posted: “Cinema, *Little Red Devils*.” The stockyard area was called the Meat Section. The section worked, as before, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Cattle were herded along the thoroughfare. The guards at the gate and the veterinary attendants counted the cattle. The drovers cracked their whips. In the stockyard area, beyond the enclosures, stood those cattle that had already been herded in. An accustomed eye could see that, beyond enclosure number 11, the cows were only suitable for sausage products. Nearby, beginning with enclosure number 13, the cattle could just barely pass as second quality meat. “Co-op officials” were walking about between the enclosures in a business-like manner, dressed not in aprons, but in caps, and cleanly shaven. Behind the co-op officials walked some bearded men, every single one of them strong and heavysset, wearing long coats with fitted waists and short sheepskin coats. They addressed the co-op officials formally and politely, calling them by their first name and patronymic; they wore hats with earflaps. It was just like a hundred years ago:

“I’ll take them on sight . . . how much are you asking?”

“Vasil Palych, you bourgeois specialist, cursed be your strength, speak openly: do we need to grease your palm or not? . . . I have tables with me. The scientists, Clüver and Shtraukh, the devil take them, made the calculations: the length of the torso, the breadth of the chest at the saddle-girth surcingle.”

Treukh grinned:

“In that case, we’ll need to get someone from the office down here, an accountant . . . Before the Revolution, my dear comrade, for twenty-five years, I used to purchase livestock by sight, with my naked eye. My eye itself can feel the cattle without making a mistake. For an animal creature, everything is marked in the groin: how much its meat weighs, how much fat it has. My eye can even determine the weight of the hide. It happens that they will feed the cattle herring over there, then they will give them three buckets of water to drink; or they will offer a pregnant cow, I can recognize her by her teats . . . I see everything . . .”

“You lie all the time, Vasil Palych. What was it you said the last time? That the cattle were supposedly femoral, haunchy, and what was the result?”

“But they were lying to you, my dear comrade.”

Just like twenty-five years ago, the church bell started to howl furiously, a tattered red calico flag climbed up a pole in the middle of the stockyard area, signifying the opening of trading. Buyers began to climb past the fences of the enclosures to get to the livestock: they touched the jowls, withers, and spines of the cattle; they looked into their mouths and under their tails; they counted the rings on their horns. Caps with briefcases crowded into the passageways. The member of the *commodity exchange* who was assigned to duty that day was recording in his notebook the

transactions, the merchandise: “available,” “en route,” “on schedule.” *Shibais*, those profiteering middlemen, were hanging around. An unknown man who looked lost approached another unknown man who looked calm:

“You wouldn’t by any chance happen to be the merchant Bobrov, now would you, sir? . . . My God, I’ve been looking for him for two days now! . . .”

“Did someone swindle you?”

“It’s two days now that I’ve been looking for him.”

The cast-iron bulls were getting ready to jump down from atop the gates. Their horns thrust into the sky ominously. At the cinema, *Little Red Devils*.

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Again and again the clock added 365 to the countdown of days, and again and again there were 365 chorales.

And the memory comes back to one’s mind – quite recently – of marches, battles, nighttime reconnaissance missions, the din of weapons firing, the shells of machine guns, a cartridge belt for rifles, the voices of comrades, so clear and so distinct, exactly as if it were all taking place right nearby, exactly as if it were happening right now . . . Special trains, railroad ties . . .

“I’d love for us to get our hands on a couple of ‘Maksims’ [machine guns] . . .”

“And why is that?”

“So that we could fire some rounds at this – what’s it called now? – this Meat Section! . . .”

“Be patient, don’t get nervous.”

The clock before October counted 3,650 days.

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The year was 1924. It was April.

April that year was sunny and warm, very genial. Directly in front of Vasily Aleksandrovich Rulyov’s office, there was, as was only befitting, a reception area. A female secretary sat at the reception desk. The female secretary’s name was Nadezhda Ivanovna. In a glass on the desk in front of Nadezhda Ivanovna, some Crimean sunflowers were dying. She had bought these sunflowers on Strastnaya [Passion] Square in honor of maidenly loneliness. Nadezhda Ivanovna was a female secretary, and she was twenty-three years old. And it was that kind of sunny day when it was dark inside the rooms, without fail, and when it was sad to look at the sunflowers, for they spoke of some wide open spaces and some unusual things. And into the reception area there walked an unusual man. Nadezhda Ivanovna gasped, “Ah!” Into the reception area there

walked a foreigner. Yes, this was a foreigner wearing a checkered suit the color of a parrot, trousers of the kind that in Russia are worn only in theatrical performances, trousers, stockings, and red slippers. The foreigner's nose was sharply angular, his chin and cheekbones were sharply angular.¹⁶ The foreigner was, without dispute, exotic.

The foreigner announced, in broken Russian, that he would like to see Professor Rulyov and handed her a business card inscribed with letters of the Latin alphabet:

“J. S. Hillfouter.
‘Union’ Joint-Stock Company.
Refrigerated Slaughterhouses and Bacon Factories.
Representative for Eastern Europe.”

J. S. Hillfouter folded over the appropriate corner of his business card, in accordance with gentlemanly rules of decorum. He called Nadezhda Ivanovna “miss.” Nadezhda Ivanovna had read or heard somewhere about the practice of folding over a corner of business cards. The word *miss* sounded like music to her ears. Nadezhda Ivanovna raced into the office to notify the professor of his foreign visitor.

The professor receives J. S. Hillfouter. J. S. Hillfouter treats the professor to a cigar, smiles with golden teeth, cracks some jokes, and then, as the business representative for “Union” in Eastern Europe, immediately begins business conversations about the possibility of “Union” receiving the concession for the construction and operation of the Bolsheviks’ meat packing houses and bacon factories within the territory of the U.S.S.R. He assures the professor that the Bolsheviks cannot not, in general, get along without foreign capital and that they cannot, in particular, hope to eradicate Asiatic backwardness in their slaughtering of livestock and in their cold storage of meat. Somewhere within their territory, the Bolsheviks actually did have Asia, steppes, Kazakhstan, and alpine pastures on the Altai Mountains, on Tian-Shan, on Mount Pamir, on the Caucasus mountain range, and in the Transcaucasus. The “Union” Joint-Stock Company, on the other hand, had a world-wide reputation, had dollars, and had the latest in meat engineering. J. S. Hillfouter does not find it necessary to resort to diplomacy and speaks directly: so what if the Bolsheviks don’t crumble – he, J. S. Hillfouter, is offering them a contract for fifty years. There are, of course, interest rates and forfeits. There is, given certain peculiarities and a certain – “I beg your pardon” – instability, the issue of extra-territoriality: this involves not only the territory of the future enterprises themselves, but also the territory of the employees of “Union,” independent of their citizenship, whether it be American or Russian.

J. S. Hillfouter puffs out a smoke ring. The blue cigar smoke creeps up toward the window, toward the sun.

¹⁶ The sharp angularity of the foreigner’s facial features is conveyed to the reader here by the narrator playfully attaching the suffix *-ugol’nik* [-угольник], which derives from the Russian word for “angle” or “corner,” to the words for “nose” (*nos* [нос]) and “cheekbone” (*skula* [скула]): that is, *nosougol’nik* [носоугольник] and *skulougol’nik* [скулоугольник]. Since the English equivalent for *-ugol’nik* [-угольник] is “-gon” (as in “pentagon” and “octagon”), the resulting coinages would read literally as “nosagon” and “cheekbonagon.”

J. S. Hillfouter reports that Professor Rulyov's reputation for erudition, for designs, and for authoritativeness in matters concerning refrigeration is well known throughout the world of meat packing houses, and that he, J. S. Hillfouter, a business representative, considers it, above all else, an honor and a duty to pay a visit to the respected professor.

The conversation takes place in English. Rulyov speaks the language perfectly. Suddenly J. S. Hillfouter begins to say something absurd. He starts talking – about orange peels. The topic of oranges had already long ago been forgotten in the U.S.S.R. Oranges – this is an image of decline, of falling, such piquancy, such sharpness. The Bolsheviks have been in power for seven years already; no one knows where their orange peel is. In fact, wouldn't the most sensible thing to do be to sign a contract right away, not wait for an orange peel to occur, at which time Russia would have to come to "Union" hanging its head and shamefacedly eat humble pie. "Union," naturally, would at that time demand a contract for one hundred years. But perhaps the orange peel itself could be made by means of the meat of "Union?"

The smile disappears from J. S. Hillfouter's face. J. S. Hillfouter looks attentively at the windows, at the door, at the professor's telescope. He takes a tiny piece of scrap paper out of his vest pocket and places it on the table in front of the professor. On the paper is written in Russian:

"Tolya. Trust him, have a chat with him, stay calm. We'll live for a little while longer. Halim."

The professor's eyes turn into two needles. A very long time ago – youth, Nizhny-Novgorod, the Nizhny-Novgorod Men's Institute of Noble Youth – two school nicknames . . . How their paths had parted! . . . Halim – Nikolay Viktorovich Shtraube – went into the army after graduating from the institute, and now he is an adjutant of Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich, a candidate for the Russian throne, selected already for that post in emigration under the name Kirill the First. J. S. Hillfouter takes the note out of the professor's hands, places it in the ashtray, and strikes a match to it. The note, one may assume, was steeped in saltpeter and made into touchpaper back in Paris: it burns without leaving any ashes. There were only two people in the world who could remember and who could know these two nice institute students, Tolya and Halim . . .

"Let's have a chat," the professor says quietly. "Only not now, and not here."

Nadezhda Ivanovna was a female secretary. She considered herself unfortunate. Before the Revolution, she was a student at a gymnasium. J. S. Hillfouter knew French no better than Nadezhda Ivanovna did. Nadezhda Ivanovna's co-workers in the office told jokes at her expense, mainly the senior efficiency person, who said that she bleaches her hair with *hydrogen peroxide*.¹⁷ But this did not accord with the truth: her hair color was natural. The next morning,

¹⁷ The narrator makes an untranslatable pun here (or, more likely, the typesetters at *Novy mir* committed a humorous typographical error), substituting *perepis' iz vodoprovoda* [перепись из водопровода] for *perekis' vodoroda* [перекись водорода], with the result that it sounds as if

J. S. Hillfouter came to the office once again and brought with him an enormous bouquet of roses and a lilac, a white lilac. He gave the bouquet to the “miss” – the female secretary – as a gift. He asked her to get some information for him, two figures. He asked her not to tear herself away from her work; he wrote down her telephone number and said that he would call her for these figures. One of these figures turned out to be the target number for the carrying capacity of cold storage warehouses for army food rations.

Three weeks later, it was May, the cherry blossoms were beginning to bloom.¹⁸ The window shades were lowered.

“Assez [Enough],” Nadezhda Ivanovna said in French and added softly, in Russian, “My dear . . . please turn over. It’s already late, and I need to go to work tomorrow . . .”

J. S. Hillfouter said guiltily:

“You’re going to be angry again, *darling* . . . how silly you are! . . . but the fact is that I’m simply wealthier than you are . . . after all, if you were my wife, you would take this money for household expenses and clothing . . . So, I beg you.”

“No, no, no, and no!” Nadezhda Ivanovna said firmly. Her skinny naked shoulders straightened proudly.

This woman would not take money from J. S. Hillfouter. She loved him.

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(To Be Continued)

Nadezhda Ivanovna washes her hair with excess urine from a water pipe, rather than with hydrogen peroxide.

¹⁸ These two phrases, “the cherry blossoms were beginning to bloom” (*zatsvetala cheremukha* [зацветала черемуха]) and “the window shades were lowered” (*zanaveski na oknakh byli opushcheny* [занавески на окнах были опущены]), appear to allude to the Bolshevik debate over sexual morality during the 1920s. The first phrase is quite likely to conjure up in the contemporary reader’s mind the title of a well-known (and highly controversial) literary work of 1926, Panteleimon Romanov’s short story, “Without Cherry Blossoms” (*Bez cheremukhi* [Без черемухи]), which describes the disillusionment of a young woman whose romantic notions about love – as well as her sexual innocence – are shattered forever after an evening spent with her boy friend who, suffering an acute case of spring fever, is only concerned with satisfying his own selfish sexual desires.

Meat: A Novel: Part III

[*Novy mir*, issue 4 (April 1936): 92-126]

“Shtraube wants to see you.”

“I’ll soon be leaving to go on a trip abroad.”

“It would be useful for you to go see him.”

“My eyes are going to start aching. I’m getting this official trip on account of my illness.”

“All right . . .”

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Professor Vasily Aleksandrovich Rulyov petitioned the Soviet government for permission to take a trip abroad on account of his illness, he received some foreign currency, and he went to Paris to have a new telescopic lens inserted into his right eye, even though the best telescopic lens of this type was made in Germany. Both before his departure abroad and then later upon his return home, the professor held some lengthy and amicable meetings with J. S. Hillfouter.

The concessional proposals that J. S. Hillfouter had made to the Soviet government were categorically rejected by the Soviet government, even though negotiations lasted nearly a year. Having received a refusal from the Main Concessional Committee, J. S. Hillfouter reported to the committee that “Union” was drawing up some new proposals. During the spring of 1926, a “meat conference” was held in Paris, which both Rulyov and J. S. Hillfouter attended. According to a report filed by a certain Mr. Gefting, a resolution stated that “one should rely on the private trader for the mass products of minor producers.” The conference, which had been convened by “Union,” used such terminology, very often repeating the phrase “about the embedding of the private trader into socialist trade,” about the “experience” and the “know-how” of the private trader, about his knowledge of “markets” and “states of affair.”

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Antip Semyonovich Laptev, the “Prelate” who had begun his career with sacred activity, did not die in the wake of the October Revolution. He continued to live in his former, now nationalized, house, residing with his wife, Anfisa Petrovna, in two of the rooms. On the other side of the wall, there lived unmarried accountants from the refrigerated slaughterhouse. In the evening, they played the guitar and sang:

“Fire, fire, my dear little rifle!
Fire, my dear little rifle! . . .
My dear red little rifle,
Take no pity on the bourgeois . . .”

Rather than go out anywhere, Antip Semyonovich Laptev preferred to sit at home attired in his dressing gown, which resembled a cassock. He would sit in his underwear in the armchair by the

window, looking out the window, and he would often say: “Oh, you miserable, pants-less riff raff, just look at what you’ve gone and done! . . .”

It was soon after the Paris “meat conference” that the “Prelate” Laptev demanded that his wife get devils for him – as many as possible of the most horrible devils, ones with horns and tails, the hoofed and furry kinds, such as are to be found out in nature and in paintings. Anfisa Petrovna searched for devils for a long time and found some in an antiques shop. These devils adorned the walls. Antip Semyonovich would say: “Oh, the grim reaper is approaching, – in the next world they are asking about me . . . do you see how many devils have been spawned?”

Grigory Ivanovich Zaitsev used to come by to visit Laptev, the “Prelate.” He would come by to drink some tea and converse with an intelligent man. The “Prelate” would say:

“The worker has grown stronger; he has an impudent look about him. He feels secure, knowing where he stands. Things are over as far as that issue is concerned. Now the state of affairs is suggesting that the battle will start up in the countryside, the Bolsheviks will reach the villages, if they are not fools, and, it turns out, apparently they aren’t fools . . . Things are headed in that direction. Have you heard what our rulers are writing in the newspapers? – ‘Grain is the foreign currency of all foreign currencies . . .’ That’s right. That’s precisely why the strong peasant needs to understand this and hide his precious grain, bury it in the ground. And he is hiding it. They’re right once again. He who has grain is the master. We need to understand what the Bolsheviks are apt to do to strengthen themselves, and we need to understand where we can trip them up.”

Grigory Ivanovich used to come to visit the “Prelate” with caution: the devils on the wall frightened him. And he would speak with caution. He would ask:

“Are you thinking, Antip Semyonich, that they will be thwarted by grain?”

“I don’t think that they’ll be thwarted, but we must hinder them.”

Grigory Ivanovich looked with caution at the icon case. Instead of icons of the saints, there were devils arranged in the icon case, and an icon lamp was burning in front of them.

“I don’t think that they’ll be thwarted. A peasant without support has nowhere to go; the Communists have turned up in the countryside once again, the pants-less ragamuffins. And we should remember the Holy Scripture: ‘Man does not live by bread alone’ – but also by tea with sugar, and by fish, and by beef . . . One needs to pray to the devil, he will lead us to reason and make us understand.”

“Your words are incomprehensible to me, Antip Semyonich; although I see that you have devils hanging on the walls, but to what end – that is beyond me.”

“It means that you were made by your parents in an incomprehensible grade of nature. These devils are very beneficial for me: for the building management and

for the police, for the financial inspector and for other others of his kind. They will come here, they will see the devils, and they will spit. ‘The man has lost his mind,’ they will say. That’s correct. But it’s essential to support the peasant. I’m speaking about the strong peasant, and not about the poor and ragged peasant. And he will support us. He will support us with bread, while we will support him with beef. In Astrakhan, if you look, you’ll see that you can trip someone up with fish. You and I need to confuse them with meat, so that they’ll never be able to figure it out . . .”

Grigory Ivanovich Zaitsev asked with caution:

“And how is it that we need to try to do this?”

The “Prelate” beckoned Zaitsev with his finger to come closer to him:

“You’re acting badly, you son of a bitch. Aren’t you reading in the newspapers how the Bolsheviks are handling things? In Poltava, word has it, they have made a bacon factory out of an old soap works; they are slaughtering just under two hundred thousand swine. Petka Bastryukov can’t keep pace with that. They have expanded business in Kremenchug and Vinnitsa. They have rendered animal fat, the very best; they call it lard. They are learning how to make artificial leather out of tripe. They are making swine blood pass through a spraying nozzle, trying to make buttons out of it, eh!? Haven’t you heard about all this!? The coffin is opening wide for us . . . They write that soon there won’t be slaughterhouses at all; in their place, they’ll be meat-packing plants that are industrial complexes. Have you noticed what other word likewise begins with the letters “c-o-m!” Come on, keep your eyes open, pay attention to this . . . Just think, who is it that has been in the meat business from time immemorial, lived his whole life in it, from the time he was a stabber to the time he became a meat dealer like me? There are few proletarians among us. Who is it that carried the banners in 1905? It’s our strength, the people in the meat business . . . Just put your brain in gear and think about it: where have they all disappeared to, besides the cooperatives and “Prepared Meats?” Our man sits in every stall and booth. Don’t you get it? . . .”

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In 1927 the first Soviet Meat Conference was held in Moscow. It was a historic event for the Russian and Soviet meat industry, for it was precisely here that the concept of *meat industry* was introduced. This conference took place as one in a series of other conferences that were preparing the way for the First Five-Year Plan. Right after this conference, sixteen members of the Komsomol headed out specifically to the Moscow slaughterhouses; they were the first young people at the Moscow slaughterhouses. At the conference, Mikhail Sergeyevich Rogozhin had shouted out:

“Comrades! Up to this point in time it has been the so-called *bourgeois specialists*, that is, the former Russian merchants, who have been in charge, and

they have been operating according to the traditions of olden days, of Tsar Hunger. While we were battling against the counter-revolutionaries and the interventionists, the merchants made their way into the cooperatives, where they rule with the old traditions, the same old roguish trickery, when making purchases to corner the market, when visiting the slaughterhouses, and when selling their livestock. In the countryside, we find the same old cattle drover, the chapman, the most malicious kulak type. At the slaughterhouses, we find thievery, bribery, and the backward Asiatic methods of slaughter. On the grounds of the slaughterhouse, there are the former price reducers. Up to this time, after all, the meat trade has been a dirty business; you wouldn't drive a single Party member there even by force. Well, it's clear, the damned bourgeois, who has not yet been totally annihilated, has ensconced himself there . . . Comrades! . . .”

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Professor Rulyov spoke frequently and amicably with J. S. Hillfouter. J. S. Hillfouter wrote letters, in large numbers and for a long period of time, to “Union.” There turned out to be a second Russian professor and practical expert who took part in the friendship between Rulyov and J. S. Hillfouter: Ignaty Isidorovich Lavdovsky. On the periphery were Bastryukov, and Laptev, and Zaitsev, and others. There were professorial offices, meat sectors, slaughterhouses and cold storage warehouses, canning factories, railroad invoices, and so on. Rulyov, as became clear later, received ten thousand dollars from “Union,” through J. S. Hillfouter, whether as a bribe or as a “bonus” is not known. Here, in reality, there was everything that is found in cheap detective novels: “lounges” with beautiful women and Parisian “avenues,” as well as the swamps of the Belorussian Polesia and border violators. Looking through his telescopic lens at the sheets of paper with their highly important reports and memoranda, Professor Rulyov inserted the calculations, which were absolutely “scientific.” The calculations were on their way to Lavdovsky, to Ignaty Isidorovich, who was doing the “planning” and who added his own calculations to those of Rulyov. The numbers had become so overgrown with scientific sounding phrases and with the sciolism of a scientific jargon that it was impossible to understand them. Support for all of this was provided by the “traditions” that had developed since the time of Tsar Aleksey. The “milieu” was perfect: all these “bourgeois specialists.” The republic was planning to convert the meat trade into a meat industry. Lavdovsky was doing the “planning,” and livestock were being brought in, and the plan for the transportation of cattle by railway was being fulfilled perfectly. But the livestock were being brought not to loading centers, but to God knows where, to some place where no one knew what to do with the livestock, some place where there wasn't any fodder and where cattle died. The loading centers started to experience one crisis after another. The republic was planning meat resources. Lavdovsky “was planning” meat procurement in the provinces of Tula and Tver, where neither young bulls nor young calves had ever in all one's born days been fed, but he “forgot” about districts on the steppe.

During the year of collectivization, when the kulak was slaughtering his livestock throughout the countryside, yet when the kulak at the same time was not involved with J. S. Hillfouter and Rulyov, and, therefore, would not have been opposed to selling his livestock, Rulyov and Lavdovsky were worried about an order that affected the cooperatives. This order, hidden beneath revolutionary phrases about – and transports of rapture over – the kolkhoz farms, would impose a ban on purchasing cattle. They played dirty tricks, wherever and however they could.

At the slaughterhouses, carcasses were being carved up in such a way that 80% of the blood remained inside them, and they detained the meat at the slaughterhouses, supposedly for the purpose of allowing it to “ripen,” until such time as it spoiled as a result of not having become entirely drained of blood. They poured out the blood, which was still flowing out of the meat, in order that this blood would not go to the albumin factories. The resale buyers were shopping for cows pregnant with calf so that they could reduce the total amount of livestock. In the course of one year, there passed through Moscow slaughterhouse stalls alone some 4,000 cows pregnant with calf, that is to say, cows during the final month of their pregnancy; that is to say, 4,000 calves, in the most senseless fashion, were tossed into the garbage pit. J. S. Hillfouter passed on to Rulyov an order from “Union:” “Act in a most energetic way, arouse the dissatisfaction of the populace, and pay attention to the army.” In all the stores across the Soviet Union and in Red Army kitchens, assorted canned meats, which were stacked up in a red pyramid, began to swell up and to bulge out; they were ready to explode, stinking with a toxic stench. Sometimes, in irritation, shoppers would throw these cans right in the store manager’s face; managers would drive to depots, sometimes resorting to cursing; depot managers showed them their basements, where canned food cemeteries were coming into being; bacteriologists in their laboratories would cautiously open stinking cans, smear some of the liquid from the canned goods on microscope slides, color them with a red eosin dye, look into the immersion microscopes, and certify that it was *proteus vulgaris*, a putrid microbe that appeared as a result of insufficient sterilization. Officials were corresponding, protocols were being written, fates and Party membership cards were going to the devil.

J. S. Hillfouter and Professor Rulyov, who held lengthy and amicable meetings, recalled their first conversation about orange peels, calculating that the rotten canned meats would turn out to be one of them. Rotten canned meats were buried in dumps, like an infection. And new mysteries with canned goods began. On the can it would be written – in the style of the Empress Catherine, the Lady Eagle – *le boeuf supreme à la bouillon*, that is, they say, quality beef in broth; they would open the can and inside the can there would be something that looked like the navel and paunch of a suckling pig, unthinkable entrails whose anatomical origin could not be determined either by science or by grandma Fetinya, who served for thirty years with General Ikofantov and was famous all over the Arbat neighborhood as a medicine woman. Or else it would be written on the can “chicken ragout,” a thing that was only slightly comprehensible even by its name. They would open up the can, and in the “ragout” would be found the tusk of some unknown mammal. In fact – this is a historical fact – Professor Lavdovsky, Ignaty Isidorovich, issued the following government order, under his own personal signature:

“... it is categorically forbidden, despite the fact that it is a common American practice, to make canned meats out of the tails of cows and oxen. They can only be made out of meat, in accordance with our standards, as published in directive number Ts/1113/15/b...”

In Astrakhan, where the fishing is great, salt was catastrophically disappearing, getting stuck en route, being sent to Arkhangelsk instead of Astrakhan. The fish was spoiled. The fish carcasses were tossed back into the sea or else burned.

. . . In some of the preceding chapters we told how, on July 20, 1886, the day when it was decided to build municipal slaughterhouses in Moscow, right after the ceremonial church service with singing by the famous choristers from the Chudov monastery, the “Khvostov Heirs” added on one and a half kopecks to the price of a pound of meat at the Polyansky Market, while at the Kaluga Tollgate the Zherebtsovs added on two kopecks. In the evening of that same day, the police officer Bryzgalov asked the Zamoskvorechie butchers: “Are you the ones who are organizing a Pugachev-type rebellion right here in Moscow?!” On the following morning, the furrier Yegorov reduced the workers’ food rations, but raised the price for a priest’s fur coat three rubles over what it had been, telling the priest, “I couldn’t make it any cheaper, even if you were to do the cutting! . . .”

The activity of the wreckers in 1926 was no different from that of these bad actors in 1886.¹⁹

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Rogozhin placed his hand down upon the paper, lifted his eyes up to look at Pyotr Petrovich, and said: “Well done!”

“Completely counter-revolutionary. On paper, everything in the project was smooth and splendid. And then they went ahead and built it – and we knock about the world, – a meat packing house, technology – American models . . . the s-sons-of-bitches! Fat rendering plants, both for edible and inedible lard, were constructed together with it. They forgot all about bone processing. They forgot all about the blood for albumin. Does this mean that once again we’re going to drain the blood into a stream the way it used to be done in the olden days? A shop with machines for cleaning intestines was built, a shop that was half a verst [.66 mile] long in size, – the offal has to be hauled down to the yard from the third floor, it has to be loaded onto a wagon, and then hauled again by hand, in hot weather or freezing weather, just like the way it used to be done in the olden days . . . completely the work of sons-of-bitches.”²⁰

“Who designed this shop?”

“Rulyov. And visas were issued, right up to and including yours and mine. In the matters of visas and resolutions, Rulyov was operating as if he were behind a barbed wire entanglement.”

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The first instance of wrecking was uncovered in Astrakhan. This was not only wrecking. This was a public event that was written about in all the newspapers. The swindlers wormed their

¹⁹ The semantic link that exists in Russian between the word for an “activity” or “action” (*deyatel’nost’* [деятельность]) and the word that denotes the person who is engaged in that activity, the “actor” or “agent” (*deyatel’* [деятель]), is more obvious than its English equivalents here might suggest.

²⁰ The narrator uses here the word *sukinsynstvo* [сукинсыство], literally, “son-of-a-bitchness.”

way into the Party organization in Astrakhan. The local organs transferred all the Astrakhan trade over to the private trader. Those who worked in the fishing industry existed under arbitrary rule and outside Soviet law. There were even “lounges” where several Party members “closed ranks” with the swine. On December 11, 1929, on the pages of *Izvestia*, the official newspaper of the Central Executive Committee and All-Russian Central Executive Committee, it was briefly reported that the thirteen ringleaders of the “Astrakhan affair” had been executed by a firing squad after being found guilty at trial on corruption charges.

Rulyov was still alive. Rulyov would be executed by a firing squad later on; he was among the thirty officials, working in the meat packing houses and the canned meats industry, who were convicted of wrecking.

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Rogozhin’s conversation about the Rulyov project and the news about the execution of the “Astrakhanian ringleaders” took place simultaneously. By this time, the female secretary, Miss Nadezhda Ivanovna, was calling J. S. Hillfouter simply “Jimmy.” After the execution of the thirteen “Astrakhanian ringleaders,” Jimmy suddenly disappeared in a flash from the U.S.S.R. The Soviet passport control points did not register his departure across the borders of the U.S.S.R. He, Jimmy, was too prominent a figure to cross the border illegally as a stowaway and like a petty thief. There is reason to believe that a certain unspecified “world power” carried Jimmy out in a suitcase. Jimmy did not say goodbye to Nadezhda Ivanovna. With Jimmy’s disappearance, Nadezhda Ivanovna’s world became empty and lost all meaning. One workday morning, Nadezhda Ivanovna turned off the usual route on her way to work and walked over to Lubyansky Square to tell the OGPU people there everything that she knew about herself and about J. S. Hillfouter.

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During the winter of 1929-1930, in accord with the will of the Party and of Soviet power, collectivization – the industrialization of agriculture – proceeded like an enormous wave. The Union of Socialist Republics finally headed off for socialism once and for all, extirpating by their roots the last remaining vestiges of capitalism in the countryside. Antip Semyonovich Laptev understood the circumstances perfectly. Behind the scenes, the All-Union Laptev, Antip Semyonovich, a kulak, tried with all his might to win people over to his side, helter-skelter and pell-mell. Antip Semyonovich counted on the darkness of village life, the ignorance of country folk, to grab the Party and Soviet power by the throat. The Party and Soviet power grabbed Antip Semyonovich by the scruff of his neck. The villages did not sleep for days, weeks, and months on end. Across the countryside, kulaks were destroying their livestock. In the villages, collective farms were cropping up. Special trains loaded with kulaks were dragging themselves along the railroad tracks, special trains loaded with those who – by means of a scythe, an axe, a sawed-off rifle, a word, an item of gossip, whatever fell to hand – crawled out of their corner, crawled out from under their gateway, to befoul Soviet power, special trains loaded with those whom Soviet power – in the name of its humaneness, in the name of the best collective farm worker, both present-day and future, of the Soviet Union – did not trifle with. Soviet power sent the kulak to unsettled new lands, away from the toiling masses, away from human relationships, to lands where there is no place for one human being to exploit another human being.

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Antip Semyonovich Laptev, sitting by the window, kept looking out the window and kept saying: “Oh, the miserable, pants-less riff raff, what is there that they won’t do! . . .”

In the icon case, in front of the devils, an icon lamp was burning. Grigory Ivanovich Zaitsev was speaking with caution:

“Have you heard, Antip Semyonovich, you who taught me how to read newspapers, that thirteen men were bumped off in Astrakhan. Read it yourself, they’re all acquaintances of ours. The end is coming, our turn will come soon. What measures will you devise? Or, perhaps, you’re thinking of getting out of the way and moving aside?”

“You’re a fool, too,” said Antip Semyonovich. “The end is coming here, the end is coming there. There can’t be any side. Think about it. First scenario: they’ll win, and that will be the end of us. Okay. Second scenario: we’ll fight them, and we’ll fall into their hands, it’s likewise the end of us. Okay . . . What difference does it make whether it’s the first scenario or the second one? One is as bad as the other: either way we’ll enter the heavenly kingdom. Third scenario: we’ll fight them, perhaps topple them. Then there won’t be an end to us. You should stop reading the newspapers or else you’ll wear yourself out with agitation.”

Antip Semyonovich Laptev looked out the window, sighed, and muttered to himself: “Oh, the miserable, pants-less riff raff . . .” Then he said thoughtfully:

“Have you heard about the week of the trunks? No! Well, listen then, a revenue inspector I know told me about it. Revenue inspectors, along with the police, will be going around to all the houses in all of Russia – now in cities, now in villages, now in Astrakhan, now in Arkhangelsk – and they’re going to open up all the trunks, now those of the rich, now those of the poor, and they’re going to take all of them away and leave for each person, for the sake of equality, one fork, spoon, and knife, one set of underwear, one shirt, one sheet, one towel . . . for the sake of equality.”

The “week of the trunks” was thought up by Antip Semyonovich Laptev, the “week of the trunks” was whispered about throughout all of the Soviet Union. The “learned,” “Russian-Parisian” newspaper, *Renaissance* [*Vozrozhdenie*], published the results of enormous economic investigations into the “week of the trunks.”

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In the village of Kozyi Gorki, a dear man named Yagor learned one evening about this very same “week of the trunks” from his grandmother. In the council meeting that week they explained to him again about the collective farm, while his grandmother was cursing and swearing about the trunks the whole time. A human mind, that is to say, a mind like Yagor’s, couldn’t fit all this into itself. At night, he went out into the forest to bury his trunk; there he encountered one of his neighbors, and they looked at each other the way wolves do. He returned by dawn, but no one in

the village was sleeping, all the windows were shining with light. His grandmother said that the poor peasants had decided to go to the collective farm and that the blacksmith Lipin, Vasily Tikhonich, she says, began to kill his livestock, and after him, she says, the Lisichkin brothers, Ignat and Levonty, and Pushkin, and Krivorotikha, the miller's wife, may they all be esteemed, followed suit, and just like the blacksmith Lipin, she says, so too did Krivorotikha, she says, enjoin the good people not to lag behind, not to chase after the freeloaders at the collective farm. If they're going to go to the collective farm, she says, if they're going to be forced to go to the collective farm, well then, there you are, she says, you'll be left empty-handed. A human mind, that is to say, a mind like Yagor's, could not fit all of this into itself. From time immemorial, Lipin, and the Lisichkins, and Krivorotika were the top people in Kozyi Gorki. Nonetheless, Yagor said in a manner lacking bravery:

"But maybe, Parfenna, we should sell our livestock?"

"A-a-and," said Parfenna, "a-a-a-and, and no one is buying anything, they're all slaughtering their livestock themselves, a-a-and. The Proreshkins were going to hurry over to the train station and sell their livestock to the cooperative; they barely managed to get away and escape back here, they scared them off so much there!"

Ignaty Isidorovich Lavdovsky had become concerned about the strict order that had been issued concerning the cooperatives – "we must not give way to counterrevolution" – Yagor slaughtered his cow in secret, without telling his neighbors, just as he had hidden his trunk. He slaughtered the cow ineptly, striking the animal three times in the forehead with the butt end of an axe, both out of ineptitude and out of the darkness in his eyes, for his eyes were blurry from tears. A total apocalypse took place. Yagor cut his cow's throat and cried. Yagor skinned the animal and cried. Yagor cried. Parfenna cried. Their children cried. The grandfather cried. A total apocalypse resulted. One week or two weeks later, the collective farm sprang up. One week or two weeks later, the Komsomol members, along with the chairman of the village council, shook Lipin, and the Lisichkins, and Krivorotika out of their peasant huts, together with their trunks. Their trunks were bountiful; like the bruises left by bedbugs, they were abundantly packed with everything obtained "from an amicable out-of-court settlement:" two dozen pairs of boots, hundreds of meters of manufactured textile goods, hundred-ruble notes from the reign of Tsar Nicholas, pounds of sugar slightly moistened by mice, bars of soap nibbled by mice, fur coats and shawls, eaten away by moths. Krivorotikha rode to the station in a low, wide sled, like the boyar's wife Morozova in [Vasily Ivanovich] Surikov's painting; pious, with eyes like small pieces of coal, she railed at the universe and at Soviet power with obscene language, issuing folk curses that a fire bolt would strike them in their liver and their backbone. At the station, the special train picked her up along with dekulakized peasants, dispossessed of their property and their possessions. At that time, in Kozyi Gorki, reliable information said that there was not going to be any "week of the trunks." Uncle Yagor, the dear man, scratched his head in puzzlement. Although the cooperative was not buying any livestock, although he had slaughtered his cow (he had contrived to sell his horse to a passing profiteer), Uncle Yagor, the dear man, after scratching his head in puzzlement, set off on foot for the woods to retrieve his meager little trunk. Half of the people in Kozyi Gorki were scratching their heads back and forth

in puzzlement in honor of the headless horses and cattle, whose carcasses it was impossible to unearth right away in the snow, just like the trunks.

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Ignaty Isidorovich Lavdovsky knew perfectly the political primer, "Tsar-Hunger," including the chapter about general physiology, "On Nourishment," where it was written, in the chapter "On Nourishment," that "meat is the basic supplier of full-fledged protein to the human organism." "Tsar-Hunger," that is to say, Lavdovsky, had two "bony hands," one of which was lying upon bread and the other was clenching meat. Proletarians had not only the right, but also the duty, before history, before the fairness of a humankind that was made up of proletarians, when they were defending themselves from the enemy, to resort to violence, including executions by a firing squad. Pounds sterling and dollars flowed from "Union" through Hillfouter, Jimmy, and not only to Rulyov. One must give the enemy his due: he was audacious, masterful, absolutely cruel, absolutely – as they say – heartless. He acted in an organized way, within a plan and a system; he worked upon all sorts of darkness and poverty, spiritual as well as material. And it was precisely these "dark" and "poor" people that he drove, in a highly organized way, into poisoning, into starvation, into malnutrition. He slipped a knife into the hands of a stupid oaf; he poisoned the food of a starving man; he disrupted and disorganized everything that he could. Not hundreds, not thousands, but tens and hundreds of thousands of people were destined to suffer from the will of the enemy; to be even more exact, there were millions of people whom he wanted to drive back in the direction of Tsar Nicholas, back into "darkness" and "poverty," commanding them by means of "poverty" and "darkness."

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Following the Soviet Meat Conference in 1927, the first sixteen Komsomol members were sent to the Moscow slaughterhouses. They traveled by streetcar to the Rogozhsky Tollgate, from there they walked on foot up to the Kalitniki Station, up to the enormous bronze bulls on the gates to the slaughterhouses, up to the aesthetics of Mr. Poderni. They walked into the office.

"What?" asked an unidentified person wearing a long coat with a fitted waist, which had been impossibly soiled. "Komsomol members? What on earth do we need Komsomol members for? Oh, are you by any chance from the Settlements? From the Mikhailov District?"

The Komsomol members said that they were not from the Settlements.

"So what is it then that you understand about our business, since you haven't had any experience in the meat trade? What, for example, does the word 'carver' mean?"

The Komsomol members did not know the word 'carver.'

"So you mean to say that you've been assigned to check up on us and monitor us? Light cavalry? Well, then, go ahead and monitor us."

The leader of the brigade of Komsomol members said:

“We’re not here to monitor you, we’re here to be trained and to work. We’ve read some books about your business. You explain to us what this means: ‘pre-slaughter content on the basis of the given physiology.’ What are ‘by-products?’”

“Wha-at? . . .”

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During the spring of 1868, the engineer Charles Tellier paid an unexpected visit to the banker Geoffroy Gautier.²¹ Upon exchanging introductory pleasantries with him, Tellier told the banker that he had a profitable proposal to make. Napoleon’s empire derived its majesty from its commercial frauds, as the bourgeoisie was bursting onto foreign markets. The engineer had reason to assume that the banker would not be opposed to turning his capital to profit once more.

“My proposal is somewhat unusual,” said the engineer Charles Tellier. “I have made an invention. Speculations with shares of railway stocks have become antiquated, price fixing on the resale of municipal plots of land is waning, factories in Lyon are operating below full capacity. France ought to export meat.”

“Wha-at?” the banker asked, removing his glasses.

“France ought to export not only perfume to Austria and not only silk to Indochina. France ought also to export meat to South America.”

The banker placed the eyeglasses back on his nose. The banker burst out laughing. The banker said ironically:

“But the South Pole, after all, is not near the equator, and meat will spoil, isn’t that so? You have information that the Patagonians intend to pay gold for meat that has become rotten, isn’t that so?”

The engineer replied imperturbably:

“I have come to you, monsieur, not for jokes and causerie. You and I will transport meat in a frozen state. We will refrigerate it beforehand, that is, we will freeze it consistently so as not to damage the muscle fibers with ice crystals. And the meat will be subjected to defrosting, that is, to thawing, at the place where it is sold . . . My invention, your funds and advertising; the profits will be shared half and half.”

“But how the hell are you going to transport it? This is interesting, tell me how!” the banker exclaimed.

“No one will come in here? No one will hear us?”

²¹ The narrator for some reason misnames the “Father of Cold” (*père de froid*), calling him here (and elsewhere throughout this section of the novel) Auguste Tolier rather than Charles Tellier.

On October 5, 1868, the steamship *Cecilia* left Le Havre with a load of frozen meat, the first refrigerated steamship. It was equipped with engineer Tellier's invention: an ammonium-refrigerating machine. The ship's hold contained cork partitions and flooring that were impervious to heat. The carcasses of the best bulls of Normandy hung in the ship's hold; crates of fattened chickens and geese were lying on the floor. On January 7, 1869, at the height of the frightful summer heat, the *Cecilia* arrived in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The meat did not spoil en route. The highly respected Señor Pedro Tolvades, owner of the finest meat stores in the Argentine capital, visited the steamship. He went down into the hold of the ship to take a look at the frozen bulls and geese. In the midst of the summer, the señor was wrapped in two of the captain's blankets so that he wouldn't catch cold. While in the ship's hold, the señor started to long for some rum. They drank rum in the captain's cabin, where they signed the first and the only deal for the sale of European meat in Argentina. By that evening, as an unusual luxury, the denizens of Buenos Aires were dining on French beef steaks in the restaurants of their nation's capital. Reporters rushed on board the *Cecilia*, and newspapers were opening up with advertisements. In France, engineer Charles Tellier was dubbed the "Father of Cold." The French newspaper *Matin* printed his life story up to the time of his invention, along with pictures taken during his childhood years. The Rouen banker, Geoffroy Gautier, was preparing a new batch of frozen meat for Paraguay. The Germans broke off diplomatic relations with France, however, and the Franco-German War began. After the war, French meat was no longer shipped anywhere.

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An American, a red-haired Yankee named Samuel Swift, was working in Chicago, in the state of Illinois, purchasing cattle. News of the triumphant voyage of the *Cecilia* to Argentina reached the ears of Mr. Swift. The *Washington Post*, reporting on the voyage of the *Cecilia*, finished its report with the sentence: "South America should eat meat, not French meat, however, but meat from the Northern United States." The *New York Times* agreed with the *Washington Post*. The *Chicago Tribune* proclaimed: "There is no meat except Chicago meat." Mister Samuel Swift decided to become a meat king. He had heard from the older generation of Chicago butchers that about three years earlier a man had arrived from savage "Rashea," that is, from Russia, a certain Captain Tyuduayz, who proposed to the Russian government a project for constructing a factory where livestock would be driven in from one side, while from the other side wagons would carry out loads of cutlets, beef steaks, lard, men's shoes, leather coats, and an enormous amount of various other curious and profitable items. In *The Evening Standard* they even printed at that time a caricature of Captain Tyuduayz. Mister Swift made inquiries through a private detective agency called *Smiles* about the whereabouts of the Russian captain. The agency charged a hundred dollars and provided him with the address for the bacon factory of Mariott and Zeligman in the Latvian city of Liepaja. Swift wrote a letter to Liepaja; Mariott responded, informing him that Kapiton, and not Kapitan [Captain], Tudvasov actually had traveled once to America, but he settled in Liepaja, where he died. Swift wrote another letter to Liepaja, this time asking whether any plans or designs remained following Tudvasov's death. Tudvasov's widow sent these to Mr. Swift free of charge.

In 1879, exactly ten years after Kapiton Tudvasov had submitted his proposals to the Moscow City Council, Mr. Samuel Swift built in Chicago – in accordance with Tudvasov's plans – the

first capitalist meat packing plant. Samuel Swift introduced the utilization of the bones of a bull's tail, preserving and canning them and then issuing them for sale under the label "Soup from Tails – The Foundation of a Healthy Stomach." He introduced the drying of small meat scraps: they were run through a grinder and a series of sieves that turned them into a meat powder that he called – the "Basis of Strength."

Swift's competitor, Archibald Armour, became famous for the installation of equipment to catch the fat from the slaughterhouse's sewage water and for the historic phrase he uttered. He collected the most minute drops of fat, he organized the daily collection of scraps on the shelves of the meat shops, by virtue of which he would daily receive several tons of fat and greaves above the conventional index. And he famously said: "I utilize everything but the squeal and final breath of an animal."

By the time of the most recent world financial crisis, the spiritual heirs of Swift and Armour had more than 1,200 meat enterprises of various scale in Chicago and turnovers of three billion dollars per year. Refrigerators, which were first invented by a Frenchman, the "Father of Cold," Charles Tellier, were a decisive factor in the success of the Chicago meat industry.

The slogan of the *Washington Post* – "South America ought to eat the beef of the Northern United States" – did not prove to be correct. The Northern United States sent capital rather than beef to Argentina. As we know, Argentina has very many pampas and much grass. The pampas were fenced off with large cages; they counted up how much pasturage there was in each cage, they brought in water, they built cattle pens and shelter from the rain, and instead of mustangs they let loose cattle – the raw materials of meat – onto the pampas. Refrigerators carried meat from Argentina to Europe. No longer Mister Smith, but now Sir Samuel Swift, went to his grave with the title of meat king. The state of La Plata became the king of meat procurement. The state of Illinois bears the title of king of meat butchering . . .

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. . . Prince Parfeny Yengalychev, a lover of philosophy and medicine, reported carefully and painstakingly:

" . . . the meat of oxen, once ingested, makes the blood coarse inside a person and hardens the stomach, and it does not exit the stomach for a long time. It is better to eat the meat from wild birds rather than from birds that have been fed domestically. However, the meat of cranes is coarse and tough . . ."

Warriors in African tribes did not eat chamois meat so as not to become timid, like the chamois. They ate the meat of tigers and wild boars. Wise men were not supposed to drink cow's milk. In classical antiquity, the Roman Empire expanded and became majestic exclusively because the founders of Rome – Romulus and Remus – were fed the wise milk of a she-wolf. A thousand or more years after Suzutra, the medieval physician Paracelsus wrote: "To cure someone, one must treat like with like."

In 1775, Théophile de Bordeu wrote:

“ . . . every organ is a place where special substances are being prepared; these substances, which enter the blood, are beneficial to the organism and necessary for preserving it . . . ”

As early as the time of Paracelsus, in the Middle Ages, when European medicine was just beginning, a debate arose over what one should attach significance to, when human illnesses are involved: *what* hurts or *how* it hurts. And, at that time, organ therapy and homeopathy had already come into existence. During the Middle Ages, extracts from human brains, removed from the bodies of executed criminals, were sold in allopathic pharmacies; these medicinal brain extracts cured people of headaches and nerve pain. Homeopaths would dry curative herbs, flowers, and roots, making an infusion out of them, mixing them into solutions, and selling them in their pharmacies side by side with bee poison and lycopodium. Mankind did not forget Paracelsus's truth. In the eighteenth century, organ therapists, now basing themselves upon science, used a bull's liver to cure liver diseases, a fox's lungs to cure lung ailments. After a century of organ therapists studying human nature, it was the “sweet meat” of animals – their brain and their sexual organs – that came to occupy the top spot among these therapists. From the time of [Charles-Édouard] Brown-Séquard, following the experiments he conducted at seventy-two years of age, merchants in the medical field started to buy up the intestines of pigs, sheep, and oxen, as well as the testicles of cattle, at European slaughterhouses. They brought Brown-Séquard's experiments to capitalist enterprises, preparing testicular and seminal extracts for internal application and for subcutaneous injection, and they went broke. It was at this point in time that albumin production was discovered.

In Russia at that time, at the St. Petersburg slaughterhouses some forty years ago, they released the blood of slaughtered cattle directly into the water, into the Kanonerka River, painting it a bright red color. Albumin production did not have a commercial market in Russia. The slaughter of livestock, it would seem, should have become a new starting point for new branches of production; the inertia of centuries, however, was not allowing innovations to go any farther than laboratory experiments. Antip Semyonovich Laptev “did not wish” for them to go any farther. In the nineteenth century, there was no industrial technology, no technology for processing internal organs, glands, stomachs, horns, or hooves. They didn't even know how to boil glue out of hooves; they didn't even know what to do with bones. Anatomists continued to rummage around inside living and dead organisms. In the 1860s, during the time of [Ivan Sergeyevich] Turgenev's [Evgeny] Bazarov in the novel *Fathers and Sons*, endocrine theory was no longer in any way a secret for medical science; Bazarov's real-life comrades, in particular, had worked quite a bit in this new field of endocrinology. Mankind was making progress in coming to understand the endocrine system.

At the base of the brain, on a thin crosspiece, there exists the so-called pituitary gland. It resembles a button, this cerebral appendage. It is mysterious, the pituitary gland, this receptacle for highly variegated hormones. The structure of the atom, the highly dynamic movement of electrons around the proton, its orbit, small pieces of light, photons, all of this has been studied. Any student of physics can tell you clearly and in detail about all of this, just as if he himself had traveled upon an electron during its trip around the proton. But how a molecule of a pituitary gland hormone is structured, this is still not known, yet this should be known! . . . The pituitary gland is shaped like a button, it is tiny compared to the enormity of the brain in one's head.

Inside the cranial bone, nature has prepared for the pituitary gland a receptacle that anatomists call the Turkish saddle. Sitting on this saddle, the pituitary gland controls the organism from the moment of its existence in the uterus. When the pituitary gland is working correctly – in mammals, in human beings, in bulls, rams, and monkeys – the skeleton grows normally, the bones are good, and mammals develop into healthy, muscular, wide-shouldered creatures. When the pituitary gland is hypertrophied, both the bones and the meat outgrow the norms, and giants develop. When the pituitary gland is not working correctly, when it is too small, this results in dwarfs, deformed creatures on crooked legs, creatures that have swollen up with edema. Physicians conducting experiments on dogs, rats, and monkeys felt the structure of their Turkish saddle and removed from one of each of them their pituitary gland. The selected dog, rat, and monkey stopped growing, at the same time that their brethren continued to develop normally. The experimenters made extracts out of the pituitary gland and then gave it to the dogs, rats, and monkeys to drink. The rats outgrew Siberian cats in size. The pituitary gland controls the growth of mammals. Looking through microscopes and examining chemical decompositions, physicians learned that the pituitary gland is not homogeneous; it consists of glands and a nerve substance. Upon breaking the pituitary gland down into its constituent parts, physicians determined that the pituitary gland and its hormones – in cattle, monkeys, and human beings – are homogeneous. Upon breaking the pituitary gland down into its constituent parts, humankind can increase and decrease in height, although it would remain the very same humankind. The hormones called *prolan A* and *prolan B* were discovered. They are the *gonadotropic factors* Po-1 and Po-2: they turned out to be the *gender-determining* hormones of the pituitary gland. They facilitate and anesthetize the abortion of a fetus in a pregnant female. The Americans have found a hormone that they call the hormone of the maternity instinct. It was discovered in rats. A virgin rat, in fear, flees from the newborn rats of others; when she is injected with a laboratory specimen of the *maternity instinct*, however, the virgin rat, which has never given birth before and which has not yet had sexual contact with a male rat, begins to behave like a mother: she licks the baby rats of others, she takes care of them, she protects them. And her milk glands swell, just like those of female rats who have given birth. From rats, physicians turned their attention to human beings. They found this hormone of the maternity instinct in female human organisms; it is not identical in all women, however, nor is it identical in each individual woman. It depends on time: it is always there when a psychical need for maternity appears in a woman, and perhaps it even predetermines this need . . .

By-products from oxen, swine, and sheep are actually misnamed when they are called *waste matter*. In actuality, the progeny from sires on collective farms that practice animal husbandry, if these sires are given *prolan A* with their feed, will not only be numerous, but in two generations they will double in height.

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. . . The group of sixteen Komsomol members who came to the Moscow slaughterhouses following the Meat Conference of 1927 (these Komsomol members organized the first ever FZU [Factory-and-Workshop Apprenticeship School] at a slaughterhouse in the U.S.S.R.) . . . oh, how much grief and mockery they had to suffer when they came to the slaughterhouses! . . . The lads worked in the slaughter stalls, where they were harassed as they learned how to kill the cattle, to prepackage their meat, and to strip their hide. And it was only after a year that new words and expressions – such as “the pre-slaughter content on the basis of given physiologies,” “by-

products” (instead of *waste matter*), and “endocrinal raw material” – encroached upon such old words as “small intestines” and “shank.” The old quality control inspectors would put their glasses on, examine the animal hides hypercritically, touch them, turn them over, and then say sternly:

“Give us some prime grade beef . . . You’re only damaging the product.”

Aleksey Senyukhov would not agree and would say:

“Where exactly is the damage, Ivan Ivanovich? We’re following the rules. Go look at the norms yourself. Everything is in order.”

“And who thought up these norms?”

Lectures were given at the FZU. Uncle Fedos once wandered in during one of these lectures; he sat there for four hours with the younger guys. He uttered:

“Really, it turns out that literacy is necessary first and foremost even in our business, even if only to urge on the very slowest one among us. The comrade professor will tell him: ‘Take the bull to the twenty-first cage!’ But he will mix up the digits and stupidly take the bull to the twelfth cage. And as a result of this, there will be a mix up . . . That is the point, as the comrade professor said as he waved it off as a bad job: ‘the processing of the raw material of livestock should be conducted according to the latest models of technology! . . .’ How do you like that!”

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On December 20, 1929, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) adopted the resolution to begin the construction of the socialist meat industry on the foundation of the latest technological achievements of the meat industry worldwide. A delegation of Soviet engineers, headed by Mikhail Sergeyevich Rogozhin, traveled to the United States of America, to Chicago, to study the Chicago meat industry and to conduct negotiations about the construction of several meat packing plants in the U.S.S.R. The Soviet engineers intended to propose to the dynasties of the Swifts and Armours, the Morris and Shelleys, that they design for the U.S.S.R. the best meat packing plants in the world in exchange for Soviet currency worth its full value. They sailed across the Atlantic Ocean. They traveled on the Trans-Pennsylvania Railway, on the train called “The Twentieth Century,” where for every minute the train runs late, each passenger is given a dollar refund.

Samuel Swift’s heir was just as red-haired and freckled-faced as was the founder of the firm. He received the Soviet engineers in a most gracious manner. He showed them around his enterprise. The engineers walked along a labyrinth of electric light, underground, where the earth shook from the engines, where it was deserted and smelled so strongly of urine or ammonia that it stung one’s eyes. Swift’s heir then sat down for conversations with the Soviet engineers in a spacious office. Mikhail Sergeyevich Rogozhin informed him of the purpose of this visit by the Soviet engineers. Swift listened attentively, remaining silent. When Rogozhin had finished his speech,

Swift made a telephone call. A young Negro boy in a green blouse, embroidered all over with buttons, appeared in the doorway. The boy uttered: “Sir?”

“Bring me a bottle of champagne!” said Swift.

Mister Swift quietly walked over to a safe, opened it up, and then leaned up against it. He spoke, this American humorist:

“Gentlemen, I am placing this bottle of champagne in the safe. And I am affixing a note to this bottle. We will all sign it. ‘If the Bolsheviks construct meat packing plants back home in Russia that are similar to the ones that we have here in Chicago, then I will raise a wineglass and drink a toast to their health! . . .’ – Gentlemen, all joking aside, I don’t believe that you can do it. An industrial complex of meat packing plants? Back home in Russia? – when such a complex of meat packing plants is nowhere to be found in the rest of the world, except in Chicago? Not in London, nor in Paris, nor in Rome? I don’t believe that you can do it! You don’t have the means or the possibilities, nor will you ever have them. Your workers will not be able to get accustomed to the conveyor system. You won’t have enough raw materials.”

Mikhail Sergeyevich tried to object to what Mister Swift was saying, but Mister Swift did not let him have his say. He said categorically:

“No, we won’t continue this conversation. Go ahead and build them. I wish you every success. I’ve already placed the bottle of champagne in the safe. If you do succeed in building them, I will be the first one to congratulate you. I will come to see you then so that we can admire them together . . . But I am certain that my bottle will turn sour before that ever happens.”

Swift refused to conduct business conversations with the representatives of the All-Union Association of the Soviet Meat Industry. Soviet engineers wrote to “Armour’s heir.” But Armour avoided meeting with the Soviet engineers. A little more than a year before the Soviet engineers in the meat industry arrived in America, on October 29, 1929 at 8:00 a.m., to be exact, a crisis began on Wall Street in New York that turned out to be a worldwide crisis. On the days between October 24th and November 13th, the United States, the American populace, lost a lot of money on the stock market. It threw away 50 billion dollars, a 100 billion gold rubles, a sum equivalent to the state budget of imperial Russia for a period of fifty years, if one takes the Russian state budget of 1913 as the measure . . . Chicago cold storage warehouses were immediately overloaded with meat. Ladies who were benefactresses opened free dining halls for the unemployed, where each unemployed person was given a small dish of corn soup and a sandwich free of charge. Workers were freezing cold while standing in line to enter these dining halls. Chicago mobsters had completely corrupted the Chicago police force. Swift’s heirs again turned out canned meat products with the label: “Eat Soup Made Out of the Tails of Bulls – It’s the Basis of a Healthy Stomach!” Twice the workers attacked the police. The *Chicago Tribune* published articles about the crisis, in which it argued that the crisis was a token of progress, for it forces everyone to develop dexterity in the struggle for existence. The meat trading house “Fleet

and Boss” went bankrupt; Fleet fled to Brazil, Boss put a pistol to his head and shot himself dead.

An inventor named Mr. Hauck came to see Mr. Swift.

“I have made an invention, Mr. Swift,” said the inventor Hauck. “You, of course, do not care for Armour’s historic phrase, when he said that he utilizes everything when he makes sausage, except the squeal and the final breath of an animal. We could outpace Armour, sir, while using his publicity. We could record on a phonograph record the final breaths of bulls and sell them for a dollar as a joke . . . It would cause a sensation. The profits would be shared between us fifty-fifty. We could likewise broadcast over the radio the squealing of pigs on the wheel of fortune with the corresponding staging and design of Negro jazz music . . .”

“This, of course, is not what the Frenchman Tellier did when he brought bulls from Normandy to Argentina, but, nonetheless, one should give some thought to it. Fifty-fifty: it’s my money, and it’s your ideas . . .”

It was perfectly natural that the Soviet engineers would have heard stories from some of their fellow countrymen about Vladimir Mayakovsky’s visit to America. Swift and Armour wriggled out of giving any assistance to the Bolsheviks. Alyosha Senyukhov, the junior member of the Soviet meat delegation, would often say:

“We need to act with them the same way that Mayakovsky did. Like Vladimir Vladimirovich. When he came to New York, reporters crowded around him, asking him, ‘Why did you come visit us here?’ – and he said to them flat out: ‘To earn some money!’ The Americans liked that. It would behoove us to give an interview. ‘Soviet engineers have come here to give the Americans some money!’ How long are we going to sit around here not doing any business?”

Mikhail Sergeyevich answered with a question:

“You’ve heard how Mr. Hauck, the inventor, came to see Mr. Swift concerning the final breaths of oxen? There is a crisis, brothers. We’ll wait a short while and see how the ‘misters’ reach an agreement, and for the time being we’ll open our own planning office here in Chicago.”

They actually did open an office. Designers were found. They designed two meat packing plants, one for Moscow, the other for Semipalatinsk. They selected all the best equipment the Chicagoans had, from refrigerators to conveyors and shops for *special raw materials*. Simultaneous with the establishment of this Chicago planning office, in Argentina, in accord with the task assigned by Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan, they proceeded, under the leadership of Comrade [Boris Izrailevich] Kraevsky, the chief Soviet trade representative, to study the prairie brand of animal husbandry practiced by the Argentines.

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The junior member of the Soviet meat delegation was Alyosha Senyukhov. He was one of the sixteen young Komsomol members who were sent to the Moscow slaughterhouses following the Meat Conference of 1927.

A little more than five years before the year 1927, during the winter of 1921-1922, Alyosha experienced the following incident. A light snow was whirling downwind across Arbat Square, evening was coming on, and one could not rely on the streetlights. Some lady²² was walking across the public garden, which no longer exists now, from Arbat Square to the [Nikolay] Gogol monument. A group of teenagers swooped down upon her, snatched her purse, and then scattered like peas. Right at the same time, Comrade Rozanov, a District Police Supervisor from the fifth police precinct, happened to be passing by. The lady told him about the incident. Alongside the Gogol monument, there was a cauldron for boiling asphalt left over since the summer. Comrade Rozanov leaned over the cauldron and shouted down into it: “Hey, guys!” Something started to rustle inside the cauldron, just as if mice were living there. From out of the cauldron someone answered threateningly: “What’s the big deal?”

“Here you went and snatched this dear lady’s purse. But that’s not the point. The point is that she had ration tickets for bread and her house keys inside that purse. The fact is that she will have to go pound on doors and go three weeks before getting more ration tickets, while they won’t do you any good. You have to give her back her purse.”

From out of the cauldron, someone answered peaceably:

“We’re not the ones who took it. It was Fitol. We’re going to sleep.”

“And where the hell is Fitol?”

“Well, it seems that he took off for the streetcar. He’s planning to go to the Kazan Station, up to the roof, to sleep up there.”

Fitil was notoriously well known in the Arbat neighborhood as a specialist in purse snatching, as a brave person, and as a daring schemer. Comrade Rozanov knew him by sight. Comrade Rozanov removed Fitil from the bumper of the “A” line streetcar and led him to the collection point for juvenile offenders, for street urchins, which was located on Third Meshchansky Street. There Fitil met a very remarkable Moscow personality, Comrade Litvakov, who competed in popularity among the Moscow street urchins only with Uncle Museum, that is, with [Nikolay Dmitrievich] Bartram, the director of the Moscow Museum of Toys. Comrade Litvakov worked as a counselor in the battle against child abandonment. Litvakov and Fitil met when the registration formalities were taking place. Fitil was standing by the wall, leaning up against it with an imposing look on his face, smoking and horsing around.

²² The Russian word that is used here for “lady” (*grazhdanka* [гражданка]), means, literally, “female citizen.”

Litvakov was observing the registration process. Fitol was led to a room up on the third floor. Fitol looked around contemptuously at the other children; he couldn't find any of his acquaintances there. He stopped by the window, took a look out at the courtyard, at the meager little fence, at the policeman in his sheepskin coat, and said aloud: "All the same, I'm going to run away." Litvakov asked him: "And haven't you thought up anything just a bit smarter than that, Alyosha?"

Fitil disdainfully refused to answer. He flopped down upon a bunk with his legs stretched out and looked up at the ceiling with contempt. Litvakov twice walked back and forth between the bunks.

"Can you read and write?" asked Litvakov.

"Yes, I can," Fitol' replied.

"And yet you're stupid."

Fitil did not respond. Litvakov again walked back and forth between the bunks.

"Are your mother and father still alive?"

"They're dead," replied Fitol.

"Sorry. I shouldn't wonder . . . that they were good people, unlike you."

Fitil did not respond. Litvakov again walked back and forth between the bunks.

"They were good people, weren't they?"

"Well, all right, they were."

"And yet you'd go to prison, even though your folks laundered sheets, working on your behalf. After all, didn't your mother also do laundry?"

Fitil did not respond. Litvakov sat down next to Fitol on the bunk.

"You know how to read and write, you say? . . . Your parents, you say, were working people? . . . Perhaps you've heard how in the old days they used to say that every person is the blacksmith who forges his own fate? Well, what if we were to begin to forge your fate together?"

Fitil got up reluctantly from the bed, sat down next to Litvakov, and said:

"I hear you. But first you have to feed me."

“I’ll go ahead and feed you. Only here’s the thing – what am I to feed you for? For what accomplishments? For whom are you doing any good? After all, if your mother were still alive today, she would be bursting into tears on account of you. Did you happen to see what kind of sun we’ve had all morning – just like a red cannonball? . . . You’re going to work, you’re going to study, you’re going to study and work . . . You’ll become a professor, a doctor, an engineer, whatever you’d like, if we do all of this together . . .”

“What’s the point about the sun? If you’re referring to the saying that life is like the sun, well, the sun doesn’t give a damn about anything. But me, I want to live.”

“And, by the way, it’s better to live with the sun than without it.”

Incidentally, Litvakov, this elderly and very modest Party member, died an accidental death in 1926. His death came unexpectedly for everyone. About two thousand teenagers, former street urchins, walked behind his coffin as it was carried across Moscow. They were being held in custody as homeless children, but they were let out of the camps and allowed to attend the funeral, to accompany their old friend to the cemetery, upon giving their word of honor – a word of honor that was honorably kept – that they would return to their camps directly afterwards. Among those who were there to see him off was Fitol. When, in the Rogozhsky District Committee of the Komsomol, they were enlisting lads for the FZU [Factory-and-Workshop Apprenticeship School] at the slaughterhouse, a young fellow appeared at the District Committee office.

“Are you a member of the Komsomol?”

“No.”

“Then why have you come here?”

“I want to become a Komsomol member. You’re enlisting people here into the FZU at the slaughterhouse.”

“And who might you be?”

“Write it down: Aleksey Senyukhov, from the home for abandoned children.”

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The clocks in Rogozhin’s office were approaching the number 3650, approaching the date of the first decade since October 1917. Mikhail Sergeyevich was making preparations for the Meat Conference; he was wracking his brain and rummaging through books, coordinating things conscientiously. By 1927, the specific share of a private trader in the meat supply was 82.2 *percent*. The socialist sector was split up between cooperatives and the State Meat Trade of the R.S.F.S.R., the Animal Husbandry Union of the R.S.F.S.R., Moscow Meats, Moscow Prepared Meats, and numerous other meat enterprises in the district. There was no meat industry; meat

was still being produced in a primitive manner. In essence, there were no slaughterhouses or cold storage warehouses. Instead of transporting meat by railway, they transported live cattle, whose yield of meat fell to forty percent, when, consequently, sixty percent of the transport energy was being thrown away and wasted. There was not a single meat store with refrigerated cases; as had been the case during the reign of Tsar Aleksey, the meat in stores was “carved up” and “dressed” by means of an axe on a chopping block. What was brought to the meat market was not specially fed cattle that had been fattened, but rather defective, half-ill, and feeble young cows that were not suitable “for breeding.” The slaughter of cattle at slaughterhouses and at “sites of slaughter” (that is, mainly, in the areas behind peasant homes and in municipal back lots) was allocated by the following percentages:

	Cattle	Swine	Sheep (and Goats)
Slaughterhouses	58%	23%	22%
“Sites of slaughter”	42%	77%	78%

As in the olden days, the slaughterhouses, just as before, were conducting the slaughter mainly of “customer-owned” cattle, cattle that belonged to someone else, for tariffs, giving a slaughter stall to a private trader in exchange for the payment of a fee, thus making profitable municipal revenue items out of slaughterhouse tariffs. Just as before, the “slaughtering weight” remained the basis of bribes and gratuities at the slaughterhouses. And just as before, from 50% to 60% of the weight of the animal was counted as “waste matter” and was thrown into the garbage dump.

And the farther and the deeper that Mikhail Rogozhin delved into the materials that were sent to him from the Central Committee, the more he was seized by the very same feeling that he had felt at the front during the Civil War on the eve of battles: the enemy was nearby and the enemy needed to be destroyed. And along with this feeling, an awareness was becoming clearer and more certain that his practical experience, his knowledge of all the fine points of the splitting up of meat carcasses, his knowledge of the mechanics of private trading with which the meat industry was being entangled, that all of this was now insufficient. He recalled how he had gone to Bolshaya Dmitrovka Street and to Staraya Square, and how they had told him there: “Be patient, don’t get nervous.”

They were right, those friends of his he had visited there on Staraya Square. It wasn’t possible now, as it had been at the front, to grab a machine gun and to set off, without turning around and looking back. Now you had to possess knowledge. You needed an enormous amount of knowledge, it seems, in all the branches of science. Perhaps astronomy wasn’t required in the meat business, but Mikhail Sergeyevich had to call that to mind as well when the meat business reached the point of “astronomical” economic calculations. In his folders, the materials were growing: *nutrition – production – animal husbandry*. His assistant, Ernest Ivanovich Karle, a Volga German, a Communist, and a member of the intelligentsia, told Mikhail Sergeyevich about Parfeny Yengalychev, about the she-wolf that suckled Romulus and Remus, about Paracelsus, about Brown-Séquard, about the pituitary gland, and about how out of the blood, tendons, hide, and hooves of cattle they make thousands of things that destroyed the notion of “waste matter.” Ernest Ivanovich Karle had demonstrated the need to create a State Central Scientific Institute of Meat, and Mikhail Rogozhin’s folder with the inscription SCSIM grew. At the institute, dozens of young Soviet scientists were studying those specific substances that

originate in the organs of animals and are useful to humankind. This institute had to be connected with an industrial complex of slaughterhouses, with the raw materials depots of waste matter and the heads, legs, and entrails of animals. This was due to the fact that, together with the scientific work, it was necessary to establish not laboratory production but factory production of those laboratory specimens of organ therapy, to establish the socialist production of those laboratory specimens that had already been discovered and were scientifically sound. In this folder were the latest discoveries in technology, the last word in human knowledge. And, next to this SCSIM folder, there was a second folder: *Special Raw Materials Shop*. The new institute, named SCSIM, has been in existence since 1927. The Special Raw Materials Shop was built at the same time as the Moscow meat packing plant, right after Mikhail Rogozhin's trip to Chicago, and it was built under the supervision of Alyosha Senyukhov.

The folders were growing. Procurement of Raw Materials. Cattle Raw Materials. Animal Husbandry. Breeding. Fodder. Cattle Breeding Farms. It was clear that the whole complex of this problem could be solved *only* through the collectivization of agriculture. As his knowledge was accumulating, Mikhail Sergeyevich understood more and more clearly the very natural necessity of a collective farm system – under socialism – especially for the socialist meat industry. Because without the collectivization of agriculture, it would not be possible to build the socialist meat industry; without feed lot farms for fattening up cattle, without an improvement in the breeding capacity of cattle, without the sensible and nutritional foddering of cattle, it would be just the same as it had been at the slaughterhouses, the same old story of undersized, inefficient *buryonka* cattle would go on, no matter how splendidly organized the meat industry was.

Production. Slaughter. Dressing the Carcass. Meat. By-Products. Refuse.

Distribution of Meat Products. Nutrition. While Mikhail Sergeyevich was writing down and collecting material for the section on "Nutrition," he remembered how he himself had been fed as a child. In his home village, he would not see any "meat from a slaughtered animal" for months at a time. As Christmas and Easter approached, his father would bring home corned beef from the market and they would make some cabbage soup. It was in Moscow that Mikhail Sergeyevich ate roasted meat for the first time in his life; in the countryside, they did not roast meat . . . Now Mikhail Sergeyevich knew about the constant flow of elements in animate nature, a flow subordinated to the law of the preservation of matter. Plants, in their vital functions, synthesize a series of not very stable organic compounds out of stable inorganic compounds. Animals, on the contrary, in their vital functions, destroy very complex organic substances and convert them into stable, less complex compounds. Plants and animals counter each other and complement each other. And all of this taken together is animate nature. At a cemetery, grass grows and a cow grazes, eating the grass. A human being drinks the milk from this cow; a human being will subsequently eat this cow. And on the human being's grave, grass will grow again. Mikhail Sergeyevich often sensed, physically sensed, how his very own body was now fulfilling certain vital functions, how his pulse was beating, how his back was feeling warm from the woolen hunting jersey he was wearing . . . the beating of his heart, the squeezing of his hand, the smile appearing on his face: all of this was a manifestation of energy, always one and the same energy. A ray of reflected light jumped onto the desk, the sun – a source of energy – the same sun that Comrade Litvakov spoke about with Fitol, blood, chlorophyll, the same chlorophyll

that, by means of the verdure of leaves, absorbs the energy of the sun's rays, removes oxygen, and restores carbon dioxide . . . Nutrition . . . Mikhail Sergeyevich knew that meat, as a fleshly food item, contains, almost in ready form, all of the essential elements that an organism needs for its metabolism. Mikhail Sergeyevich recalled the proposition of Engels. Mikhail Sergeyevich wrote out the following:

a seamstress, working by hand, in 24 hours expends	2700 calories
a metalworker at a factory in 24 hours expends	3300 calories
a woodcutter with an axe in the forest in 24 hours expends	6000 calories
a brick carrier in 24 hours expends	8900 calories

Mikhail Sergeyevich knew to perfection the caloric theory of nutrition and knew that, before the Revolution, Russia had starved the workers and the peasants – systematically, for centuries – and that Russia had degenerated, like the undersized, inefficient “dear little *buryonka*” cow.

And he knew perfectly well that it was only with the planned allocation of nutritional resources that people can and should be fed in an organized way and that questions of nutrition can be raised and problems of nutrition can be solved. And so he drew up charts listing the elements of nutrition:

Food rations:	Proteins	Fats	Carbohydrates	Calories
basic Red Army soldier	123.7	63.7	618.2	3634
for those recovering from reduced nourishment	–	–	–	4297
for patients being treated in a medical sanatorium	–	–	–	5537

And Mikhail Sergeyevich combined the various nutritional elements: so much meat, so much white bread, so much black bread, so many vitamins . . . Mikhail Sergeyevich felt that just as he had once battled against Admiral Kolchak and the Allied Interventionists at the front during the Civil War, had battled for Soviet power, had battled for the reasonableness and happiness of the toiling masses, so now he was battling for the very same thing when he sought to get extra grams, beyond those that are reasonable, of proteins, fats, carbohydrates, and vitamins, included in the daily food rations for every worker and peasant. And these grams, when they are multiplied by the number of days in a year and by the number of citizens in the U.S.S.R., grew into the millions of tons of meat, into millions of centners [50 kilograms] of seed and grass, for which he had to fight. Because under socialism each person must receive a reasonable amount of calories for himself. And it was perfectly clear to him that there was no point in giving needless calories to a loafer, who conserves the energy in his brain and in his muscles. Those calories ought to be given instead to the people who expend their energy in research institutes, in

fields, and at construction sites where factories, tractors, or motor vehicles are being produced. Cutlets, and beefsteaks, and ham, in butter and in sour cream, tasty food, sensible food, with carbohydrates and vitamins, all of this should be given, first and foremost, to these hard-working people.

Industry, Meat Industry. Machine Building. Conveyors in Meat Packing Plants. Meat Factories, – the conversion of an animal used for its meat into an extended assortment of edibles, of manufactured items in the technical and medical fields, in a single technological process by means of machines that sometimes work without a person participating in the process and that are started up with electricity – refrigerators, isothermal motor vehicles, isothermal railway cars . . . Mikhail Sergeyevich was finding that the production of manufactured items made from animal blood had already passed over to plywood factories in 1922; that tallow-melting factories had been transferred over to (or had been selected by?) soap makers and candle makers; that hide-tanning production had passed over to tanners, mainly to handicraftsmen; that intestines and sausage enterprises had turned out to be in the hands of consumer cooperatives. All of this needed to be collected together into one entity, into one single industry. All of this needed to be constructed by means of single factories. Mikhail Sergeyevich was planning, – and he was finding that *all* of Soviet industry that remained from the days of Imperial Russia and that *all* of the Russian metallurgical and machine-building factories of 1927 were feeble and not adaptable, that meat packing plants could not be constructed out of them. And Mikhail Sergeyevich was beginning to understand more and more clearly the very natural necessity of the industrialization of the country, the industrialization that resulted in the Five-Year Plans.

The slaughterhouses that had remained from the days of Imperial Russia, including the Moscow municipal slaughterhouse, which had been in existence since 1886, slaughtered livestock, in essence, according to the principles of Aleksey Mikhailovich, and were operated, at best, by people like Fedos, but in the majority of cases by people like Dorofey. It was not necessary to speak about a slaughterhouse proletariat, although the Central Committee of the Union of Food Industry Workers has shown that 15,700 men were involved in direct slaughterhouse production, 13,315 in sausage production, 4,100 in refrigerator production, and 7,800 in intestines production. It was necessary to create new cadres, beginning from scratch.

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On day 3,641, people crowded inside the office beneath the clocks in the corridors and inside the auditorium. They had gathered from all over the country to discuss the meat question.

“Pyotr, is that really you!”

“It’s me. The very same.”

“Come here, let’s have a big hug. I heard, I heard . . . You’re running things now. Well, so are we. Let me introduce you. Some comrades and I have come here both to learn a bit and to curse a bit. We’re now Kazakhstanis, and what are you – a Siberian?”

“We need to dot the *i*’s and cross the *t*’s! . . . We’ve fed the private trader long enough. Have you heard? The scope of the total amount of livestock: one percent of it is in our hands. One puny little percent.”

“I’ve been here all morning long, studying the exhibit; I’ve already filled up two note pads, writing down numbers. I’m in total agreement. Have you seen the photographs from the Argentinian cattle-breeding farms!?”

“Have I seen them? We have only six thousand isothermal railway cars, while in America they have a hundred and fifty thousand.”

“And have you seen what Professor Lambale writes about descoration? The shortage of meat is progressing, they say, due to the fact that the growth of the human population is everywhere surpassing the growth of the total amount of livestock.”

“A decline in cattle breeding, I know. That’s true only for capitalist agriculture.”

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Rogozhin presented a lengthy report. Everything that he had studied, everything that he had come to know, he expounded in his report. Several hundred people were listening to him. He knew that he was presenting a report in front of comrades. These comrades, who had gathered together from all over the Soviet Union and who had brought with them from all over the Soviet Union their experience and their needs, *were the first* cadres of the Soviet meat industry. They were the first in the world to address the issue of a *socialist meat industry*. This issue had to be put into practice and made a reality.

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On December 20, 1929, at a meeting of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), it was resolved that the ideas of the resolution be converted into action:

“ . . . The all-out pace of the industrialization of the country and the growth of the need in cities for meat products associated with this pace, given the fact that the peasantry’s cattle-breeding is lagging behind, its low marketability and negligible productivity, resulting from the fragmentation and backwardness of individual farming, under conditions of the intensification of the class war in the countryside and in view of the insignificant role of the socialist sector in animal husbandry generally and in commercial output of meat in particular, are advancing upon us the urgent task of a radical reconstruction of our cattle-breeding foundation by means of the organization of major state-run farms devoted to meat production . . . and the construction of the meat industry on the basis of the latest data about foreign technology in this area . . . ”

“ . . . Under the jurisdiction of the All-Union Association of the Soviet Meat Industry will fall the responsibility for guaranteeing the correct organization for the feeding and fattening up of cattle and the processing of meat products, for

slaughterhouse business, for the transport and preservation of meat and meat products . . . and also for the adoption of refined methods of meat commerce . . .”

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In September 1930, the OGPU uncovered in Astrakhan an organization of economic wreckers in meat canning and refrigerated slaughterhouse enterprises, headed by Professor [Aleksandr Vasilyevich] Ryazantsev and the engineer [Samuil Grigoryevich] Estrin.

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On September 29, 1931 the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and the Soviet of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R. issued the following resolution:

“ . . . Every year millions of new workers are drawn into joining socialist industry. The population of cities is growing rapidly, new cities are springing up around numerous industrial construction sites, the old conditions of everyday material life for a working family are crumbling, public food service is growing on a wide scale, and growing even more rapidly is the need for this public food service. To guarantee under these conditions that workers are adequately supplied with food products and to improve decisively the supply of workers, a radical reconstruction of existing meat and canned meat enterprises, as well as the construction of new ones, on the basis of the advanced technology found in the latest meat packing plants and canned meat factories, combined in the best possible way with the agricultural raw materials depots that are organized around them on a socialist basis, has become an urgent necessity. . .”

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Soviet engineers set off for the United States, to Chicago. One May morning in 1932, Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan and Lazar Moiseyevich Kaganovich arrived at the Kalitniki Station. They walked around the abandoned lot and outlined the site of the foundation pit for the Moscow meat packing plant. Behind them walked Uncle Fedos, who was looking sternly at all of this.

“What used to be here before, grandpa?”

“It's common knowledge that a farm for breeding dogs used to be located here,” answered Uncle Fedos, “that is, to put it more correctly, stockyards owned by wholesale cattle dealers.”

Uncle Fedos was silent for a moment, then he asked in turn,

“So why are you going to put a new slaughterhouse here? After all, there are three arshins of manure here, there is no end of it.”

“We'll manage to clean it up somehow; maybe you'll even help us, gramps.”

“That, of course, depends on the person,” said Uncle Fedos. “You, my fine fellow, have you heard what kind of work overalls we had before the war? A

quilted vest and a leather apron, yes, and trousers. Just for laughs, I weighed my overalls once; they weighed sixteen kilograms – a pood [36.11 pounds] to use the old measure – due to the blood. And where did we wash ourselves off? In the slaughter stalls, in the basins filled with blood . . . You, my fine fellow, you go tell those people there not to forget a steam bath, and even better than that – a shower.”

“I’ll tell them.”

“Don’t forget, my good man! . . . The crow used to come flying here from all over Moscow before; the smell of meat used to attract it here.”²³

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The issues and the laws of socialist livestock breeding were resolved; heavy industry and machine-building were realized by means of construction. The socialist meat industry had become a reality. Livestock breeding depended on state-run farms devoted to meat production and on the collective farm village. The construction of meat packing plants depended on metal, on new mines and new machine-building plants.

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“Come along, fellow Komsomol members, let’s go to the construction site of the new meat packing plant! . . . Let’s not tear ourselves away from the construction site for the entire winter!”

“Lads! I’m introducing a proposal. The fact is that carters are shipping bricks carelessly, breaking them. Let’s take the carters in tow.”

“Comrades, speaking for my part, I think that there is a large element of a lack of class consciousness at the meat packing plant: seasonal workers, carters, they’re creating a ruckus. I propose that we undertake mass cultural work! . . .”

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Construction of the Moscow meat packing plant was completed by November 7, 1933. A meat conveyor, the first in the U.S.S.R., began operating.

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In former times:

“The ‘Khvostov Heirs’ added on one and a half kopecks to the price of a pound of meat at the Polyansky Market, while at the Kaluga Tollgate the Zherebtsovs added on two kopecks.”

²³ In the original Russian, it is the “spirit” [*dukh*] of meat that used to attract crows to the stockyards. In colloquial speech, however, that word can also be used to mean “smell.”

“Police officer Bryzgalov asked, ‘And so are you the ones who are organizing a Pugachev-type rebellion!?’ And the next morning the priest got upset.”

At the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan:

“First scenario: they’ll win, and that will be the end of us. Okay. Second scenario: we’ll fight them, we’ll fall into their hands, it’s likewise the end of us . . . Have you heard about the ‘week of the trunks’?”

Since time immemorial, Moscow butchers, and All-Russian butchers as well, used to “split up” the carcass into twenty-seven different grades: that is, they would hack and mangle it in such a way that the devil himself would not have been able to make out what was where and what belonged to what. They used to allow a tendon from the leg, for example, to be included in a portion of “sirloin.” The weight would be correct, and the clerk would get a five-kopeck piece for helping the butcher to make money. A wooden chopping block and a very broad axe were a sacred tradition in meat shops; they were operating instruments in the dark terminology of the butcher’s pagan priesthood of “a pound and an eighth” and “exactly a pound minus a quarter.” The carcass of a bull used to be split up into sticking piece (400 grams), shank, brisket, navel, haunch, rump, rump butt, sirloin butt, rib, beef round, topside, tenderside, hock, scraping, loin, and – what’s more – stomachs, diaphragms. A butcher in the Okhotny Ryad District was occupied with the anatomy of the cattle and with the division of the carcass into all these various “tendrils” of the livestock’s “rump end,” cutting up the carcass with his axe on the chopping block; he was engaged in the obligatory task: swindling.

The meat packing plant replaced the axe and the chopping block, replaced the twenty-seven different grades of the bull’s anatomy, and replaced the sturdy young lad, in his peaked cap cocked to one side, who did the slaughtering. In their stead, the meat packing plant introduced marble counters and refrigerated cabinets. Meat was now being packaged not at the market stall, but at the meat packing plant. There now appeared packing materials made out of parchment that had the exact weight of 500 grams of meat indicated below the stamp of the meat packing plant. Alongside the sturdy young lads standing behind the counters, there appeared girls wearing blue berets and white bib aprons. The sturdy young lads likewise wore bib aprons and were required to exchange their peaked caps for casquettes. They also sold meat in packets made out of parchment. But it was difficult for these sturdy young lads to say good-bye to the profits of old, so in some places among the Moscow meat shops these sturdy young lads, on the sly, would remove packets from out of the refrigerators, place them on the steam-heat radiators, and keep them there until nighttime. During the night the meat would manage to spoil. In the morning, the sturdy young lads would put the packets of spoiled meat back into the refrigerator for a while and then sell the meat. The shoppers would be indignant. The sturdy young lads, who are descendants of the swindlers from the olden days, would reply: “We couldn’t know that, m’am. It’s a new method. Take a packet from another piece of meat. It’ll be better.”

The construction of the meat packing plant, naturally, helped the public food service, – and the tricks played by thieves started to occur in the kitchens of public dining facilities. On the “chef’s” table, the cook-turned-chef would imperturbably cut off about two kilograms of meat and move the meat aside to the edge of the table; then he would shift his tall white chef’s hat

onto the back of his head as a signal to the janitor. An assistant would walk past the table with a garbage pail, quickly brushing the meat into the pail, into the kitchen waste; then he would carry the garbage pail over to the bathroom and hide the meat there behind the sewage pipes. A third accomplice, standing with a briefcase and egging him on, would set out for the bathroom to relieve himself of his “natural” needs, then lock himself inside the bathroom and take what had been stolen and hidden there, transferring the meat to his moll waiting outside. His good-looking girlfriend would start saying in an enticing way around the market: “Doesn't anyone need some beef? My husband works at the factory, and he just received his food ration . . .”

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Very late one evening someone rang the bell in Rogozhin's vestibule. He unlocked the door. On the threshold stood Natalya Pavlovna, the former wife of his cousin Vasily, the current wife of Zaitsev.

“Will you let me in?” she asked.

“Come on in.”

Natalya Pavlovna had a kerchief tied around her head, but at the same time she was dressed in a fur coat made of Persian lamb. She got undressed very slowly. They walked across to his office and sat down.

“So how are things going, cousin?”

“Grigory Ivanovich . . .”

“I know. He's been executed by a firing squad.”

“How horrible! How horrible . . . there were some blunders committed there, there were some kopecks missing, and, of course, Rulyov . . .”

“Would you like some tea? I was about to reheat some boiling water for myself. How are the children?”

“How horrible! How horrible . . . and the children, the children! . . .”

“And you? How shall I put it? Tell me in plain language: how are the children?”

“What about them . . . the children? Where am I going to go with them?”

“Remember, you wanted to marry me off to a female commissar? You didn't marry me off. Give the children to me. I'll provide myself with a family right away. I'm not kidding around with you.”

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Mikhail Sergeyevich received a letter:

“Mishka! You have forgotten God! The Lord created animal creatures to rejoice at the sun, to glorify His wisdom. It is said in Scripture: ‘The Lord sings the praises of every breathing creature, hallelujah. Blessed is he who shows mercy to animals.’ You, however, have launched the killing of living creatures, not for the benefit of man, but rather for his ruin and for his sin of gluttony. You have constructed meat conveyors and as a result of this action a depravity will take hold in people’s souls, for one must slaughter livestock as it was prescribed by God’s law, by slitting their throat, and not by taunting or jeering them. Come to your senses, Mishka, and repent, in order that your soul will not perish in the infernal flames of hell with the devil and his fallen angels! . . .

Your humble pilgrim”

If this letter had not been so absolutely stupid, then one might have been able to assume that it was written by Laptev, Antip Semyonovich. This was a “death bed” letter.

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A crisis was taking place in five sixths of the globe. In Germany, the Fascists had come to power. In Chicago, one business after another was going bankrupt. The *Chicago Tribune* was publishing articles about the economic crises that argued that these crises were the key to progress.

The inventor, Mister Hauck, went back to go see Mister Swift again.

“I’ve already rendered to you an account of my invention,” said Mister Hauck. “I proposed outflanking Armour by using his own publicity to our advantage. More precisely, I proposed making a recording of the final breath of a bull and broadcasting on the radio the squealing of pigs on the wheel of fortune . . . You promised to think about my proposal.”

“It wouldn’t work out,” said Mister Swift. “You’ve lost touch with life, Hauck. You’ve heard that in addition to Fleet and Boss, Lesley has also failed. He didn’t run away, like Fleet, but instead put a pistol to his head and shot himself dead, just like Boss . . . No one would pay even a penny to hear the final breaths of Lesley and Boss before they died. And you – you’re talking about cattle! . . . An unemployed worker named Stock, whom I don’t know personally, stole a chicken, ran away from the police, ate the chicken, and then lay down on the tracks under the 7:30 New York-Los Angeles express train. The guy died on a full stomach. But I’m afraid that I’ll die looking ridiculous. Stupidity calls forth laughter. I have become stupid over the past few years. Hauck, open up that drawer to the fireproof safe over there; I find it disgusting to have to touch it. A bottle of champagne is sitting in there. Go get it. Tear off the tag without reading it. Uncork the bottle, Hauck. Yes, I have indeed become stupid. I must drink up that bottle. How does that go in Holy Scripture? ‘Let this cup pass from me . . .?’ Drink up, Hauck, if that pleases you! . . .”

The inventor Hauck had become interested in this conversation. Being a true American, that is, a man who knows only his own personal interests, he asked: "Are we drinking in honor of some new invention?"

"Almost," answered Swift. "Mainly, we're drinking in honor of my stupidity . . . In fact, it seems that I'm no longer a jokester, but simply a ridiculous man. We're drinking – in honor of the Bolsheviks!"

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As early as 1931, over twenty thousand young men and women in the Soviet Union were enrolled in courses of study, seeking to learn all aspects of the meat industry in a number of various specialized educational institutions, ranging from FZUs [Factory-and-Workshop Apprenticeship Schools] to technical colleges.

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In 1931, 1932, and 1933, they were either in the process of constructing or were finishing up the construction of refrigerated meat packing plants, besides those in Moscow and Semipalatinsk, – in such cities as Leningrad, Orsk, Sverdlovsk, Engels, Samara, and Rostov. These included the Dnepropetrovsk, Lugansk, Stalin, Zaporozhye, Upper Udin, Krasnoyarsk, Stalingrad, Ivanovo, Gorky, Baku, Kirov, Mogilyov, Kzyl-Ordyn, and Kuzbass, – as well as the Yaroslavl, Briansk, Izhevsk, Perm, Grozny, Fergansk, Karaganda, Irkutsk, Kazan, Ashkhabad, Chardzhuy, Tashkent, Tomsk, Bodaybo, Nerchinsk, Fort Aleksandrovsk, Kursk, Chelyabinsk, Nadezhdin, Arkhangelsk, Tula, Vladimir, Magnitogorsk, Solikamsk, Simferopol, Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, Voronezh, Nikolaev, Mariupol, Sevastopol, and other refrigerated meat packing plants. In the refrigeration business – in absolute numbers – the U.S.S.R. outdistanced all European countries.

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The Moscow meat packing plant was located near the Kalitniki Station, adjacent to the slaughterhouses of the Moscow municipality. The meat packing plant has many floors where the dimensions of the conveyors are measured in kilometers (and that is precisely and accurately true: the various conveyors are 43 kilometers in length), where the dimensions of the access roads are measured in the tens of kilometers, where the dimensions of electric wires are measured in the hundreds of kilometers and in the tens of thousands of kilowatts, where the consumption of water and steam is measured in the hundreds of thousands of cubic meters (and that is precisely and accurately true: it is the same volume as that consumed in the city of Ivanovo, the capital of Russian weaving crafts), where the sausage plant produces such a large quantity of frankfurters and wieners in one year alone that they could circle the globe at the parallel where Moscow is located.

On December 22, 1933, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) turned to the workers in the food industry with a proposal for improving the sanitary conditions in their enterprises and bringing them up to proper standards. At the Moscow meat packing plant, a manicure for the workers was introduced as an innovation. Ten thousand people work at the packing plant. When Comrade Glukhov, who is not a member of the Komsomol, arrives at work or when Comrade Zina Lizunova, who is a member of the Komsomol, a member of the

Moscow Soviet of People's Deputies, and the Chairman of the delegate group, arrives at work, it is not important in what attire they are dressed – whether they are dressed in their household clothes or dressed as if they planned to attend the theatre that evening. If one is a smoker, one needs to snuff out one's cigarette at the entrance to the cloakroom. In the men's and women's cloakrooms, which are painted identically in a rose oil paint, one needs to get entirely undressed, place all of one's clothes in the appropriate dressing room, and then go into the shower room, where one must soap oneself up, wash oneself off, and perform a series of calisthenics under the water spray as ordered by the person on duty. Through the door across from the shower room, one must put on special work clothes: white trousers, a white shirt, a white bib apron, and a tall white pointed hat. Beyond the doors, in the corridor that leads to the various shops, stands Grandpa Fedos. He is old and grumpy; he has not retired, but is still working, as an "overseer," and he growls:

"Did they drag the sausage over here again yesterday? Go ahead and eat some, of course, I say, I don't mind that. But what did they need to toss the skin on the floor for? Pal Vasilych will see it and again he'll say to me, 'Fedos, look after those kids!' And how am I going to keep an eye on them? Oh, they have insatiable eyes!"

On the grounds of the Moscow meat packing plant there are lacquered black boards. On one of them is written:

"Veretiev's brigade – 198% – Sazontov's brigade – 211%, Cattle – – 2,789 head – – tons – – Swine – – Sheep and Goats – –."

From the doors wafts the bathhouse smell of freshly killed meat. At the doors, the sanitation official, with the band of the Red Cross on her white sleeve, gives out orders:

"Comrade, – your hands! . . . Wash them! I'm recording this on the waiting list to go see the doctor. Make sure to clean under your nails with a brush. Scrub them evenly. Don't spare the water. Now rinse them off with chlorine water. Shake the water off your hands over the sink."

Another guy mimicked her, repeating what had been learned by heart:

"Make sure to clean under your nails with a brush, scrub them evenly . . . with chlorine. This disinfects the skin. I'm recording this on the waiting list to go see the doctor. Remove the seeds of infection from your hands, you have so many microbe colonies on your hands . . ."

So what is there to say about Zina Lizunova? It's obvious enough: she is a Komsomol member and a member of the Moscow Soviet of People's Deputies. And what about that selfsame Comrade Glukhov? Did he graduate from the FZU [Factory-and-Workshop Apprenticeship School]? Yes, he did. Did he pass the minimum requirements for sanitation? Yes, he did, Comrade Chief. Did he pass the minimum requirements for technical knowledge? Yes, sir, he did. Does he have an RLD lapel pin that says "Ready for Labor and Defense of the U.S.S.R.?"

Of course, he does. And does he have one for being a [Klimenty Yefremovich] Voroshilov marksman? Clearly he does!

In the shops, the drone of whistles could be heard. The even hum of a large conveyor started to be heard from the top floor. Two workers stopped, facing one another,

“... here’s what you need to do: go buy yourself a necktie, anything that’s available, as long as it’s colorful, and attach it to a starched dickey, then shuffle your feet and click your heels in the club, the way the performer [Vsevolod Nikolayevich] Aksyonov does at the Maly Theatre, and say, ‘Allow me, Tatyana Mikhailovna, to dance the rumba with you’ ...”

Tanya says: “Look alive, Sergunka.”

Inside a “box,” a young red-haired bull sniffed all around the iron bolt . . . Trucks piled high with crates filled with smoked and other kinds of sausage were driving out of the gates. Refrigerated motor vehicles, dark blue in color and streamlined in form, with the inscriptions “myaso – *la viande* – meat,” were driving out of the gates. Motor vehicles that were stopped at the gates were honking their horns merrily. A herd of swine was entering into another set of gates; it might have looked as if some mysterious and enormous pangolin-shaped creature, covered with gray armor-clad skin, was moving. The pangolin stretched out, grunting and squealing, squeezed through the gates, and turned in the direction of the life-stack. The pangolin will have to climb up to the fifth floor using a wide spiral staircase. There, up on the fifth floor, some rest, a last meal, and a warm shower await the pangolin . . . Inside a “box,” a young red-haired bull sniffed all around the iron door and licked a concrete ledge that looked to him like a fence post on the collective farm.

But the moment of death in the conveyor of a meat packing plant was in no way the main production moment. An electric current removed consciousness and the sensation of pain. In front of this red-haired bull and behind him on the conveyor, there were hundreds of other red-haired bulls, and brown-haired ones, and piebald ones. The first spurt of blood from its heart flowed in streams along hoses into clean zinc-coated buckets sitting on conveyor carts, the first collection of bovine alimentary albumin. The last drops of its blood dripped into a wide trough beneath the conveyor, flowing down, in accord with the laws of the earth’s gravity, into the shop for technical albumin. Besides electric energy, the law of gravity, by the way, is the basic driving force here. All of the products of slaughter – by means of chutes, pipes, and hatches – descended by their own weight from one floor to another on their way down to the ground, all of these products of slaughter that were once called a bull. The bull hangs upside down. It has been drained of all its blood. Its hide has been removed. The red hide at slaughter resembles an old rag. With a stroke of the mechanical knife, the head is separated from the torso. The eyes on the horned, skinless, purple skull look enormous. The torso starts floating farther along the conveyor. The head is hung in a row with hundreds of others on a head conveyor. It starts to float away from the torso, while hanging in the air, for a veterinary examination. Following the veterinary examination, the head is placed in front of Glafira Stukova beneath a disk-shaped saw, and the saw in turn slices off the horns from the cranial bone. The horns are thrown down a hatch, a funnel-shaped aperture; they speed down there, making a clatter. The head is no longer

hanging, now it is crawling along a moving table; and knives on the table cut off from its face the animal's lips, cheeks, chewing muscles, and the meat scrapings that were made at the point where its head was cut off: they will go into the sausage filling. The head crawls along toward the tooth crusher, a machine that tears out the teeth, and the teeth are poured into a receptacle. The toothless head is transferred by the toothcrusher over to the jaw breaker; the lower jaw is crunched and torn off from the head, sliding down into the glue-making shop. The head then crawls along toward Tanya Smirnova; Tanya Smirnova cuts out the bull's eyes with a lancet. The head then moves along toward the guillotine, across from Tanya Smirnova, to Sergunka Zavyalov. The guillotine is lifted up, and Serezha slides the bull's head under the guillotine. The guillotine chops the cranial bone in two, lengthwise along the forehead,

"Look alive, Tanyushka!"

The brain falls out of the brainpan; remnants of the skull follow the lower jaw into the glue-making shop. The brain goes to the zinc-coated dripping pans.

"Tanyushka, will you go to the movies with me?"

"... oh, and I'll have to go buy myself a dickey! ... and tickets cost five rubles each ..."

"... meat is a polydisperse system of lyophilic colloids in which the dispersion medium is a water solution of electrolytes and extract substances, but the dispersion's phase is lipids and proteins ..."

The brains, rosy waxed pieces of marble in a fine net of dark blue and red veins, are sunk into icy cold water. Zinc washtubs filled with brains and ice are lowered by an elevator to the special shop below that deals with raw materials. The female laboratory assistants examine each brain individually, and the female laboratory assistants carefully remove the pituitary appendages, packing them in glass flasks. And in the laboratory at the Institute, behind enormous windows, amid microscopes and flasks, a man wearing eyeglasses says to a girl, just barely flirting with her:

"My dreams are real, they're real just as the Moscow Metro and the Volga-Moscow Canal are real. A hundred years ago, [Friedrich] Wohler prepared urea in a test tube. This dealt an enormous blow to mysticism, to theories about a special 'life force.' And here we are already preparing adrenaline, and our Soviet scientists have already prepared vitamin C ... My dear assistant! Primitive man used to kill an animal, devour the meat, wrap himself up in the stripped-off hide of the animal, and that was that. For Puzodralov, a merchant in the meat business, the main thing was to sell the meat, and that was that. Puzodralov did not leave primitive man very far behind. But just as the tyrosine in cheese is an amino acid, so is the juice in meat an amino acid. And the time is not very far off, when we will be able to make meat juices, cheeses, and canned meats by chemical means in laboratories, and that will be the end of ..."

The man wearing eyeglasses looked affectionately at his female laboratory assistant, affectionately and yet at the same time triumphantly. He touched his mustache with his ring finger.

“With regard to the history of medical thought, its schools and theories and even its fantasies, through the maze that scientific experimentation has stubbornly and persistently been making its way in the space of centuries, peoples, and continents – an entire novel would have to be written about all of this. It would take one hundred and fifty years in order to master the position of Théophile de Bordeu. You have heard, of course, about the Egyptian, Chinese, and Tibetan physicians who worked even before Hypocrates . . . Doctors and pagan priests at that time confused their functions and got them mixed up. The pharmacy of those days knew the bile, blood, urine, and liver of lizards, snakes, lions, and wild boars as well as the astronomical heavenly bodies and their position in the firmament along with ‘sins,’ ‘iniquities,’ and the ‘evil’ eye. But at that time even the facts of direct observation were accumulating. Hence, the concept of ‘injury:’ where ‘injury’ amasses, that is where it hurts, ‘injury’ carried by the bodily fluids of the organism. Fluid, liquid is, in Latin, *humor*. Hence, the entire direction of medicine during past centuries has been – *humoral*. Fluids, according to the notions of the humorists, determined not only the health and illness of people, but also their characters. Hence, for the English, and following them the entire world, there is humor, drollery, the humorous, the ludicrous, the absurd . . .”

“In Germany, there lived and worked Rudolf Virchow. By his time, the microscope had appeared. Man could see the very thin, fine structure of the meat he was eating. Man at that time must have become frightened, when he saw that he himself consists of billions of cells that are exactly like that of a unicellular infusorian. For an entire century, Virchow directed medical thought along a cell-like – along a *cellular* – path. Writing about *humorists*, medical journals at that time wrote in a *humoristic* fashion, having forgotten that the words ‘gumor’ and ‘humor’ both come from the same etymological family; there is no cell, except the cell, and that was that. The human organism is a multi-cellular, infusorial wonder, and within this infusorial wonder sits the immortal ‘soul.’ They even pointed out where exactly the soul sits: *in the thalamus opticus*. And that was that. And then suddenly, in May 1889, the seventy-two-year-old Brown-Séquard started to inject himself under the skin with an extract made out of the seminal organs of a rabbit, and old age receded from this man. Brown-Séquard started to run up the stairs of the Physiological Institute at the Sorbonne, just like a young man. On June 1, 1889, young Brown-Séquard, with youthful ardor, presented a paper on injections of testicular fluids at the French Academy of Sciences. Medicine once again remembered about *humorists* . . . In the process of vital behavior, the organism acts like an organic whole, a single entity. In the process of the coordination of its parts, the nervous system and hormones take part, and how well it succeeds! The nervous system, for example, gives the command to an organ to secrete one hormone or another, and that hormone in turn acts upon the nervous system. Famous gluttons in the old days used to fatten up geese and at

the same time anger them: they were acting according to the principles of the humorists. And that was that.”

The female laboratory assistant smiled kindly.

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As for Comrade Glukhov, who is not a member of the Komsomol, he currently works as a Stakhanovite. He is an outstanding worker. Yet there was a time when he behaved in a manner that was not worthy of a shock-worker: he used to be a hard drinker and, under the influence of vodka, he would sometimes kick up a row. Komsomol members, on the initiative of Comrade Romanov, the manager of the club, straightened him out. While the club's conference was taking place, the Komsomol members nominated Comrade Glukhov as a candidate for the club's board of directors. People were astonished; an entire public debate ensued. Comrade Glukhov was cleansed; his roughness was, as they say, scoured away with sand. Comrade Glukhov attended the debate, terribly nervous due to the unexpected nature of the situation he was in. He nearly broke down and cried. He asked permission to speak. He gave his Komsomol word of honor that, if they elected him, he would do a good job at the club and that, in general, he would mend his ways. They elected him to the board. He mended his ways. He became an exemplary person. And now, if he sometimes still feels like he needs to have a drink, – say, if his brother or his parents, who are collective farm workers, were to arrive in town from the countryside, – then Comrade Glukhov goes to see Comrade Romanov, the club manager, and warns him ahead of time: either way, he says, yes, I will have a drink, but I won't leave the house to go anywhere to do that.

As for Comrade Romanov, the club manager, he is a metalworker and an active member of the revolutionary cadre. He turned out to be an enthusiast in club matters and possesses enormous authority. For example, a group of hooligans was making mischief at the Kalitniki Station: they locked the doors of the club from the outside, they tripped people walking into the club, and they knocked the hats off people's heads. Comrade Romanov gathered these hooligans together and set up a meeting with them. He found out that the kids were mostly interested in dancing, especially tap dancing and dancing the rumba. Comrade Romanov searched to find a dance instructor for these kids, an expert in tap dancing, and paid him a salary of 250 rubles. The kids really got behind this idea, and now they're supporting the club. Or to give another example: the teenager Shalashov, an orphan, was a petty thief who was thrown out of grade school and lived the life of a homeless waif out on the streets. Comrade Romanov won him over and got him involved in club business: he assigned him to work as the person who issues chess sets, checkers, and Japanese billiards to club members. You should see how conscientiously this Shalashov maintains public property: he cried when two chips disappeared. He is now enrolled in the FZU [Factory-and-Workshop Apprenticeship School].

As for Zina Lizunova, she is a Komsomol member, a member of the Moscow Soviet of People's Deputies, and an intestines remover. She, too, like Comrade Romanov, has business matters to attend to. For example, there is the case of Toroptseva, a worker in manufacturing, who had been a Komsomol member. Due to a production misdemeanor she committed, and to what was called flighty conduct on her part, she was expelled from the Komsomol and removed from the production line. Zina Lizunova developed an interest in this worker when she realized that

Toroptseva was an orphan, homeless, without a family, and illiterate to boot. Zina Lizunova had Toroptseva move in with her, taught her how to read and write, and taught her the *politminimum* [the necessary minimum of political knowledge]. Currently, Toroptseva is a Stakhanovite worker, the top foreman, and an excellent organizer. She got married and is living very happily with her husband in a housing unit on the grounds of the meat packing plant.

As for the other delegate of the meat packing plant, Comrade Markelova, she is a Party member and a member of the District Soviet. In addition to everything else, she turned out to be the leader of all the housewives at the meat packing plant. She already knew how to pickle cucumbers very well, and her neighbors carried her pickles off, taking one or two each, saying, "The ones you're making now are so good, Markelova!" Last autumn, when it was time to pick cucumbers, Markelova gathered all the housewives together, like for a course, and taught them how to pickle cucumbers. And then there was the time when the sanitation officials inspected all the apartments at the meat packing plant and found an incredible amount of dirt in the common use areas on the floor where the engineer Terekhov, the engineer Burtsev, and the Chernykh couple resided. The two engineers started to place the blame on each other. At that point, Markelova and Monoshina organized a group of housewives, equipped them with buckets filled with boiling water and sponges, gave them a GOMZ Fotokor camera, and had the editor of the plant's wall newspaper accompany them. They washed the floor until it was spotlessly clean and then posted a photo of it in the wall newspaper. A declaration was subsequently received:

"To the Housing Office of the Moscow Meat Packing Plant,
Copies to the FZK [Factory Committee], the Communist Party Cell, and the
Editorial Office of the newspaper *For the Meat Industry*.

A Declaration

From the Lodgers in Apartment 19,
N. P. Terekhov and L. E. Burtsev

Upon returning home from work, we learned that a Commission had entered our apartment and purportedly discovered a disgraceful condition there. Without having spoken to the lodgers about how this condition had originated and what reasons had engendered this filth, the Commission, with the use of camera equipment, photographed items hung on the walls that belonged to the *Chernykh* couple, as well as items passed off as belonging to all of us in common. For the purpose of providing clarity to this question, we must declare the following:

1. The lodger *Chernykh*, who has a wife with openly bourgeois inclinations and a tendency to live off the labor of others, litters all of the common use areas, and everything that was photographed by the Commission are items belonging to *Chernykh*.
2. In order to avoid any scandals, we have been forced to refrain from using the bathroom and frequently from being in the kitchen.

3. *Mrs. Chernykh* has influenced her housemaid, who behaves like a hooligan, saying rude things to us and deliberately clogging the sink in the bathroom . . .”

And so on.

All of this was printed in the factory newspaper. Once they published there an article about how one should be concerned not only about live shock workers, but also about deceased ones. To wit, a comrade had died, and at his funeral they hired an orchestra, consisting of three trumpet players, to play music. An unintended mockery resulted: his wife was crying, not out of grief over the death of her husband, but out of embarrassment from the performance by the musicians.

As for the Fotokor camera, someone once hung up in the cloakrooms, corridors, and smoking rooms the placard, “Respect the Labor of the Cleaning Women,” along with an accompanying photo. The words on the placard were formed out of cigarette butts and then photographed, while the photo on the placard depicted a mountain of cigarette butts, six thousand cigarette butts, as the inscription in fine print explained, that had been thrown on the floor of the smoking room, and not into the urns. And there was another placard, one having something essentially in common with Yegor, the founder of the tavern in Okhotny Ryad, who found his happiness from flies. To wit, the fly on the placard was photographed by various lenses and in various scales, while the placard on the whole appealed for the categorical, necessary (in an elementary way) destruction of flies at the meat packing plant. It was a photographic placard: “Don’t spit!”

As for the newspaper, it likewise discussed some inventions that had something in common with those of the inventor Hauck.

For example, bulls would be divided in half on the large conveyor, cut into two equal parts along their spinal column by an electric saw made by the American firm Vaton. The blades often deteriorated and new ones had to be ordered from America. The metalworkers in the locksmith workshop, including Comrade Romanov, the club manager, redesigned the Vaton saw and they themselves now make the replacement blades.

For another example, fat used to be packed in aspen containers, in barrels, on the model of the American practice. Comrade Nefedov, an inventor, calculated that each barrel of this kind, whose sides were made out of aspen, absorbs into itself seven kilos of fat. So Comrade Nefedov suggested that the barrels be enameled on the inside.

For yet another example, prepackaged meat, five hundred grams worth, used to be packed in paper wrappings, on the model of the American practice. Comrade Vorobyova, an inventor, proposed that meat, for the purposes of hygiene and optimal preservation, be glazed, basically by gelatin, with an admixture of glucose and food dye. The glazing can be done in various colors: pork chops in green, filets in blue, like blue steel, just like pieces of hard candy. This way the product is entirely visible: wash the glazing under the faucet and you have before you a fresh piece of meat, without it being touched by human hands. This is cheaper than a paper wrapping; the meat is glazed in the refrigeration shop after “ripening.”

And as for the Americans from Chicago, who came to Moscow and examined the Moscow meat packing plant, they were astonished by things they saw at the plant that are lacking in Chicago: namely, dressing rooms and showers for the workers, dining halls, clubs as well as “Red corners” for the workers, sanitation arrangements for the workers, and a permanent museum on sanitation as well as a permanent exhibit on meat hygiene for the workers. And the Americans would often say in their native tongue, that is, in English, roughly the same that Uncle Fedos repeatedly said when the first Komsomol members had come to the slaughterhouses, namely: “Wow! . . . how do you like that! . . . Wow! . . . It really is turning out well here, and in our business . . .”

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At the former Nikitsky Gates, on the former Nikitskaya Street, across from the former large Cathedral of the Ascension, adjacent to the former Church of Saint Fyodor the Stylite, there is a genuine canned foods store.

Canned foods are sold there there:

pineapple, peaches, pears, cherries, oranges, seventy-two different sorts of fruits .

. .

pike perch, mullet, white sturgeon, bream, sturgeon, sterlet, small mackerel, common fish, whitefish, zaran, Atlantic bonito, Siberian whitefish, white salmon, peled, vimba bream, arctic sculpins, burbot, and other sorts of fish . . .

chicken ragouts and chicken filets, partridge, hazel grouse, black grouse, and other sorts of fowl . . .

boeuf bouilli and corned beef, ox, pig, and ram tongues, liver and giblets *pâté*, bovine, pork, and goose *pâté* (Strasbourg pie), bovine, pork, sheep and deer meat, sixty-eight different sorts of meats . . .

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For New Year’s Eve, Mikhail Sergeyevich Rogozhin planned to go visit his native village, the Pecherniki Settlements, which he had not found time to visit since the day when he left it as a child. Alyosha Senyukhov, a young friend of his, went with him. The train left at 8:05 in the evening; the tickets turned out to be for coach seats. It was warm and not very crowded in his train car, where it smelled slightly of overheated radiators and of creolin, from the disinfectant. The light was not burning very brightly, which made it conducive for sleep. On the bench across from them sat two people, apparently a husband and wife, who were excited; dressed in short sheepskin coats and felt boots, they put their things down as they took their seats. The woman removed the shawl from her head, smiled, and got ready to relax.

“Are you collective farm workers?” asked Alyosha.

“For sure. We’re from Kozyi Gorki. Our collective farm is called ‘Victory.’ Perhaps you’ve heard of it? It’s near Dedinovo; you need to get off at the Lukhovitsa Station.”

“Which Dedinovo is it? The one on the Oka River? Isn’t that the one where Tsar Aleksey is said to have built the first Russian frigate, ‘Eagle’?”

“What’s that you say?”

“Well, that’s where they used to build ships, on the Oka River.”

“Yes, on the Oka, that’s right. But we haven’t heard anything about ships. No one has said anything about them . . . And we’re going a bit farther, to Yegoryeva, in the foothills.”

“Well, so how are things going? Has life, as Comrade Stalin proclaimed, become better? Has life become more joyous?” Alyosha asked.

“Oh, for sure! . . .” his conversation partner said, smiling slyly. “You go ask Parfenna why it is that we went to Moscow?! Just you go ahead and ask her! . . . We went there on New Year’s party business! At our collective farm, we had gathered together and decided to hold a New Year’s party for the children. Before the war, Parfenna used to serve as a chambermaid, but now she’s a milkmaid, a Stakhanovite. So they sent her to go buy some treats for the New Year’s party. Would you like us to show you what we bought? – beads made out of pieces of hard candy, chocolates, party favors. And we’re also carrying back with us – it’s funny for me to say this word – tangerines. They instructed us to be sure to buy some. Not everybody in our village has seen them, and if there are some who have seen them, no one seems ever to have eaten any. We’re bringing some home with us! . . . Parfenna, as I said, used to work as a chambermaid, and now she’s a Stakhanovite-milkmaid. She’s trying to receive a medal.”

“Well, so how are things at the collective farm?”

“What’s that?”

“How is it living there?”

“Great, of course,” his conversation partner smiled slyly.

“You go ahead and tell them about Shakh, Yagorushka,” said Parfenna insistently.

“Have you heard about Shakh?” asked Yagor.

“About whom?”

“Well, there’s a famous bull renowned all over the world, he’s nicknamed Shakh. You really haven’t ever heard of him? . . . He had a son, who’s nicknamed Azimuth, and then there was a grandson – named Artiste. And the most important

son of Artiste is called, going back to the grandfather, Shakh. And this Shakh lives with us at our animal breeding farm. I work there as a deputy zoological technician. What doesn't he do, that son of a bitch . . . the zoological technician, that is!"

Yagor looked in a precautionary way on all sides, leaned over, and lowered his voice.

"He's a son of a bitch, the zoological technician, that is, Sergey Mikhailovich. He has surpassed everyone in that regard. He collects Shakh's semen into a nasal aspirator and, according to a schedule, inseminates the cows out of this nasal aspirator. There is no escape of any kind available to the cows, so they all walk around covered. And he also feeds the cows according to a schedule. Last fall he even built a warm dining hall for the cows, just like for the workers at a factory . . . So where is it that you're going? Perhaps you could make a small detour and come see us. We're just the blink of an eye away from the Lukhovitsa Station. We could make merry together at the New Year's party. Parfenna, untie the package and show them what all we bought."

"Consequently, things are getting better for you and you're enjoying yourself?"

"Of course."

"Well, that's just the point."

"Let me tell you something, just you listen. We make che-eese, che-eese! Datch and Russo-Swiss cheese. And soon we will also be making Li . . . Libursky and Canaber, in a silver wrapper.²⁴ Never in all my born days did this ever happen, it's ridiculous: you just have to laugh! . . ."

They fell peacefully asleep. They awoke to unbelievable amounts of snow, to vast expanses, to freezing temperatures, and to dawn. They spent the morning in Mikhailov, at the offices of the District Committee. They were staying at the hotel on the grounds of the Swine Breeding Trust. Mikhail Sergeyevich walked around the small town, which once – during his childhood – seemed to him grandiose in comparison to the Settlements, but which was actually the embodiment of the most ordinary, banal, settled way of life in Central Russia. Alyosha disappeared, returned before dinner, and dropped a heap of news items he had found in the local museum that Mikhail Sergeyevich had at no time and in no way been aware of before. Alyosha was in a cheerful mood. For all one knew, he had stopped by the Mikhailov District as if he might be stopping by America and was discovering the land anew.

²⁴ In his enumeration of the several different kinds of cheeses that are now being produced (or will soon be produced) on the collective farm where he works, this Russian peasant distorts the names of some of the foreign cheeses (Dutch, Limburger, Camembert) with which he is evidently not familiar.

“The ethnographic study of a region, it turns out, is a useful thing, Sergeyich, especially if you do something to improve that region.²⁵ Let me tell you something, just you listen. Brighten your mood and enjoy yourself, since you’ve come to visit your native land. Never in all my born days did I run into something like this: in no way can one call this a museum, it’s just ridiculous. You just have to go down to see Zonin, the local pedagogue and regional ethnographer.”

The irregular tetragon formed by the Oka, Osyotr, and Pronya rivers constituted the basic territory of the Ryazan principedom in the eleventh century – the Ryazan Lands. Slavic newcomers were assimilated here with the Finnish tribe of Yerzan. Ryazan at one time fought against the Polovtsians, was ravaged by the Tatars, was subdued by the Moscow principedom, and was turned into military outposts facing the *steppe*. Ryazan was fenced off from the steppe by little wooden fortresses; it was fenced off from *the wild field*. That is how the town of Mikhailov arose, on the Pronya River, on the high Pronya bank. Moscow advanced upon the steppe; it put forward newer and newer towns. Thus, in the middle of the sixteenth century, the town of Pecherniki, built by a certain Prince Pechura, was moved seventeen versts to the south of Mikhailov. In the cadastres for 1616-1677 and in the overlay books, it is told how the town of Pecherniki stood near Mount Ulybe as a large and strong burg, how the town was surrounded by an earthen wall and by moats filled with water, by walls made out of logs and by deaf towers [towers having no entry from the ground level], along with gates leading into Mikhailov. There lived and served in Pecherniki forty-four musketeers, thirty-three Cossacks, thirteen artillerymen-snipers (who fired their arquebuses out from behind a palisade), two gate keepers, two guards, ten stagecoach drivers-postmen, and eight soldiers of an elective regiment, that is, the police of that time. They lived there with their families, and they were surrounded by tax-paying landowners and also by non-tax-paying tradespeople who did not own land.²⁶ There were seven cannons in Pecherniki; there were also thirty-two poods of gunpowder as well as twenty-three poods of cannon balls (and the lead to be used for them) stored in cellars. The locales here were wooded. The villages and settlements here are named Gornostaevka, Zaichino, Bobriki, Dobrye Pchely, Dubki, and Oreshino.²⁷

In 1612, Ataman Zarutsky marched through Pecherniki and Mikhailov on his way to attacking Moscow. In 1618, the Hetman Sagaidachny laid siege to Mikhailov for ten days and would have destroyed it if the citizens of Pecherniki had not come to its defense. From the days of Tsar

²⁵ In the original Russian, Alyosha coins a new term here when he says that ethnography (*kraevedenie* [краеведение], literally, the ethnographic “study” of a region), is an especially useful thing when it is also *kraedelanie* [краеделание], literally, the “doing” or “making” of a region.

²⁶ The adjective that is used here (*tyaglovyi* [тягловый]) means “taxed” or “assessed” when it is applied to a person, but “draft” or “draught” (as in “draft horse”) when applied to animals that pull heavy loads.

²⁷ The names of these villages and settlements derive from some of the local geography, fauna, and flora of this region: mountain runoff, bunny rabbits, beavers, honey bees, young oak trees, hazel-nut trees, etc.

Aleksey, the steppe, together with the tsarist border, quickly moved backwards, receding in the opposite direction. Towns ceased to be fortresses. Gunners and musketeers dispersed between Dobrye Pchely and Gornostaevka. Villages were formed with the following names: Streltsy, Pushkari, Pecherniki Settlements. Peter the Great handed the town of Pecherniki over to the State; Catherine the Great abolished it and converted it into a village. But the denizens of the Settlements, and of Pecherniki, and of Streltsy, and of Pushkari – musketeers, Cossacks, gunners, and postmen – were not tax-paying people. These were the descendants of people who were, after all, defensive forces, military personnel, border guards, and state servants. And they became state serfs: that is, serfdom passed them by and they did not work for gentry landowners. And from those times, on the strength of its social anatomy, the village of Pecherniki Settlements had its own social physiognomy. The town of Mikhailov was not abolished, but remained an administrative center. “State people” in government service degenerated there into bureaucrats, indentured people remained indentured, some of them grew to become entrepreneurs, merchants, and innkeepers. As far back as the seventeenth century, *all the land* of the Mikhailov District had been seized by landowners and monasteries. Fifty thousand peasants from the Mikhailov District *had no land* before 1861, after which time they received abandoned land with poor soil and gullies on ground that had grown barren from a lack of forests. The Pecherniki Settlements lived on – they are an individual entity by means of an article of law.

Due to a combination of imperial measures and of natural occurrences that happened by chance, the Mikhailov District was the property of Catherine’s “eagles.” And in the nineteenth century, during the reign of Nicholas I, shortly before the abolition of serfdom, there occurred an unusual tragedy involving a landowner, one that was in accordance with the laws of nature: namely, on his Mikhailov estate, His Serene Highness, Prince Gagarin, strangled his household serf, Andrey Fyodorov, and kept the peasant Leonov tied on a chain in his threshing shed and gave him food to eat and water to drink once every four days. Emperor Nicholas – even he! – ordered an investigation. Neighboring landowners wrote affidavits, saying that “the prince did not commit anything unworthy or obscene against the honor of a nobleman.” The Emperor and the investigatory authorities insisted on having their way. His Serene Highness, the Prince, had to die for what he had done to his household serf. And so they killed yet another nondescript little peasant and gave him a funeral service befitting a prince, while His Highness departed abroad incognito, to Paris and Nice, for having led a just life.

Serfdom was abolished in 1861, and intermediaries showed up to handle arbitration. Lands belonging to landowners and lands belonging to peasants were allocated in the manner of a puff pastry, and they were partitioned off not only on the basis of geographical distribution, fences, guards, and fines, but even by snares, for one of the Mikhailov landowners actually tore out a ditch for peasant cattle and placed snares in the ditch. Tragedies involving landowners did not come to an end. The former serfs who belonged to the retired Hussar officer, Mr. Izmailov, the former owner of four thousand peasant “souls,” were planning to take the reforms seriously. To be precise, the barin used to chase rabbits with his borzoi hounds across peasant pastures; the peasants complained to the justice of the peace, but the Leader of the Nobility, Prince Gorchakov, ordered that the instigators who wrote the complaint be put in the Mikhailov jail. The Hussar Izmailov was renowned throughout the district for his hospitality, his lavish home and lavish table, his Hussar drinking sprees, his champagne, and his merry heart. Izmailov – the lavish heart – sent blinis “from the barin’s table” to his prisoners in jail for Shrovetide. The

prisoners died: besides sour cream and butter, the blinis contained strychnine, which the barin, out of softheartedness, used for poisoning those of his borzoi hounds that had grown too old.

The zemstvo appeared in Mikhailov. In the district budget, they made the following plans:

“Exigencies for improving the economic condition of the peasants 0.8%,
exigencies for maintenance of the district jail 1.2%.”

In an “Explanatory Note,” they wrote:

“. . . the people do not yet need education and do not feel any necessity for it.
And since this is the case, then we will grant this at some future time . . .”

The future, by the way, was not far off: its first storm swept around the year 1905.

Serfdom bypassed the Pecherniki Settlements thanks to its benefactor. Serfdom even had an effect – to the naked eye – upon the structure of the human body, upon the anthropological qualities of the serf. In the Mikhailov District, even to this day, one can almost determine with the naked eye whether someone is a former “tax-paying” person or an artilleryman. State peasants were broad-shouldered, tall, strong, while former serfs were more often undersized, small-chested, and sunken-eyed. From the time of the “great reforms,” all those, who could, fled their homes to go find seasonal work elsewhere. The forests were disappearing more and more, soon they disappeared entirely: it was no longer the people of the Mikhailov District who moved upon the steppe, but rather the steppe that moved upon the people of the Mikhailov District. The forests were disappearing, the rivers were drying up, yet the spring waters, which had nothing to cling to, were pouring forth in torrents, washing out the fields down to the bedrock. Ravines developed before one’s very eyes, just like canyons in the state of Arizona in America.

This impoverishment began even before the reforms. Mikhailov lay on the road leading from the steppe to Moscow; herds from Cherkassk passed by Mikhailov on their way from the steppe to Moscow. Growing poorer, the people of the Mikhailov District started to trade in pelts and calves, reducing the total head of livestock. And long before the designation of the Mikhailov commercial nesting sites, two families from the Settlements set out for Moscow, for what was then still the combined Customs Yard-Cattle Yard. And this was because some cattle drover started to spend an overnight in Pecherniki, after getting tipsy at Ovsiannikov’s tavern (whose heirs had twenty inns in the vicinity before the October Revolution), and in his tipsy state this cattle drover boasted about the life in Moscow that was being enjoyed by those who were working in the meat business, a life where bribes were plentiful. Slaughtering livestock fit the people from the Settlements as snugly as galoshes fit new felt boots.

One would have to think that the genes and reflexes of their forebears – the artillerymen, the snipers, the musketeers, and other military personnel – had left their traces. The bribes had a direct connection with the privileged position of the “state” peasants in the Settlements. For when the remaining denizens of the Mikhailov District transferred over to trades during the district’s final impoverishment, their trades did not resemble the trades of those in the Settlements. The villages of Kostyli, Maryino, and Studenets provided caulkers all across

Russia; the villages of Shamovo, Loknya, and Neteka provided glaziers. There were no bribes to be found either among the caulkers or the glaziers. Inside their peasant huts, their wives occupied themselves with handicraft activities, such as crocheting and embroidering lace (these embroideries are now exported abroad, particularly to America and Mongolia). The Settlements grew rich, although they had never been especially poor. The family names among the people of the Settlements changed; there now appeared the Prasols, the Skornyakovs, and the Shibaevs.²⁸ The people of the Settlements did not allow the caulkers and glaziers to come close to them. Only the inhabitants of Izheslavl and Poyarkovo managed to adjust to those who were working in the meat business, and that adjustment was made only on their part. With the arrival of those people who were working in the meat business, the inhabitants of Izheslavl and Poyarkovo started to work as draymen.

A new century arrived. No longer, as had been the case in the nineteenth century, did 25% of the male population leave the villages of the Mikhailov District to go live in towns. Now 30% of them left their native villages, thus further severing their connection with the land. Sweet buckwheat gave way to millet. Flax disappeared. Hemp remained somewhere in the background. Just before the year 1905, the peasants in the Mikhailov District computed the following:

households without cows	35%
households without horses	47%
households without cows or horses	28%

All of this was the case before the days when Mikhail Sergeyevich was brought to the Yakimanka District in Moscow to work for the butcher Khvostov. Listening to Alyosha's stories, Mikhail Sergeyevich did indeed feel, as did Alyosha, like a "foreigner" hearing about his native land. Mikhail was fourteen years old when he left these places. At that time, he considered himself already an adult and was astonished by how Alyosha looked at things in an entirely different way. And it was only after Mikhail Sergeyevich had already departed his homeland that the year 1905 passed in the Mikhailov District. Throughout the district, pamphlets were being circulated: "Down with Autocracy!" "Workers of the World, Unite!" The police chief summoned the village constables and ordered that the pamphlets be confiscated. Police officer Pakhalov stepped out of his house the next morning and was stunned: an enormous bomb was lying on the threshold to his porch. His wife went out through the window and headed for the police chief. The police chief cordoned off the block with firemen, intending to douse the bomb with water. The physics teacher talked the mayor out of that plan, arguing that the bomb might explode from the least vibration, even when wet. While he was at it, the teacher gave the mayor a lecture on detonation. Policeman Okhrimchuk, a menace to drunkards at the market, took it upon himself to destroy the bomb. Facing the church, he vigorously made the sign of the cross, bowed in all four directions, and then began to steal up to the bomb cautiously. Once he had stolen right up to it, he took the bomb into his two hands and, moving it away from

²⁸ These three Russian surnames – Prasol, Skornyakov, and Shibaev – all derive from the trades of personnel involved in slaughterhouse operations. In English, they mean, respectively: "cattle drover," "furrier," and "middleman."

his face as much as possible, carried it over to the bridge. Right after Okhrimchuk came the fire wagon. The bomb was thrown into the Pronya River and peacefully floated along with the current. The laws of detonation did not prove to be true, and volunteers in boats rushed to retrieve the bomb. The bomb turned out to be a watermelon, painted and lacquered in imitation metal. In their panic, everyone forgot about police officer Pakhalov, who had fainted from fright and was transported to a hospital, where he died three days later from cardiac arrest. The bomb was made by members of the SR [Socialist Revolutionary Party].

The workers and peasants of the Mikhailov District reacted differently to 1905. The workers at Gagarin's factories went on strike. A Gagarin warder killed one of the peasants. All of the peasant's fellow villagers seized a carriage in which the Gagarin family was joyriding and beat the ugly mugs of Their Highnesses until they were black and blue. Their Highnesses abandoned their family estate and hid in the cellar of the local priest's home. The village constables arrived at that time, but the villagers moved against the village constables in an organized fashion, having sent out ahead of themselves some small children who were not scared either of the village constables or of the police guards and who were whistling and screeching. The police chief wrote to Ryazan: "Some insolent hand is directing this movement . . ." That hand was found: it was three metalworkers at the Putilov factory – Vorobyov, Sadovy and Pribylov – who had come to the village to see their relatives for a short visit. These three metalworkers were arrested. Crowds of people from the nearby villages moved on Mikhailov, surrounded the jail, and shouted at the police chief: "Let the arrested men go free!" The police chief sent a telegram to Ryazan, and Ryazan sent Cossack squadrons to Mikhailov. At this time, already toward fall, the railroad remained majestically and frighteningly speechless during the All-Russian labor strike. In 1906, gentry estates around Mikhailov and the Pecherniki Settlements started to be set ablaze. Political trials were taking place in the Mikhailov court around 1905. They prosecuted one peasant for saying, "This is our land, and we're not Japanese," another for saying, "I wag my tail at his Majesty, Nikolashka," and a third for this statement about the Empress: "The daughter of a bitch forgave thieves so that they could steal even more; it would have been better if she had forgiven tax payments of five rubles per soul!"

Rogozhin was lying on his bed, his hands behind his head. Senyukhov was pacing back and forth in the room, having fun and getting excited from all the merriment. When he was a child, Mikhail's father had taken his son with him to the bazaar several times. A river, a mountain, churches, semicircular stone rows, a long row of bazaar carts, the singing of blind men, the heat, the flies, the noise of a tractor, the return trip home toward evening, and, necessarily for some reason, the rain – all of this came back to him . . .

The room where Rogozhin and Senyukhov were being lodged, in the hotel on the grounds of the Swine Breeding Trust, was exceptionally clean, light, and fresh; it reminded one of the nice little motels at American camps. An instructor at the Trust, dressed in leather trousers, had arrived, and he was saying:

"It is essential that you go for a ride through our state farms, Comrade Rogozhin. We, of course, are flattered that you have come to see us in person. I understand, of course, that you have come here about meat as such; swine breeding is not the

aspect of our operations that you had in mind. But you're wrong to think that. Swine are a meat resource."

Senyukhov did not allow the instructor to finish what he was saying, swamping him with questions:

"You have your own large-scale, mechanized bakery in town, you say? Does it produce fancy white loaves? Fancy buns? It isn't Borisov, by any chance, who constructed the building, is it? Or someone from the All-Union Association of the Meat Industry? Did they convert an old church? . . . Have you heard, Mikhail Sergeyich? . . . In one church, there's a grain-collection station; in another, there's an archive; in a third, there's a factory. And the cathedral is now a fire station."

The instructor nonetheless kept the floor:

"In keeping with local conditions, the swine here, in general, just sprang up. But by 1922, just imagine, the swine in our region had disappeared. From that time forward, they started to breed them anew. Now you need to take a quick trip to take a look for yourselves, it's impossible to describe in words how things are going at the farms . . . What hogs! What sows! Each worker has his own room, and there are two dining halls available for all of them – one with hot dishes and the other with cold ones. Before the Revolution, Chichkin and his sons and the Blandov brothers had their own storehouses in our region. It's clear that we have surpassed them."

Rogozhin said that he remembered Chichkin and the Blandovs well and that he himself, Rogozhin, was originally from the local area.

"You're from around here? So that means you remember Kochkin, too, Maksim Filippovich? After all, he's one of your own, a native of the Settlements. After the Revolution, the old man contrived to receive a pension from us here. He arrived here, hung around for a while, settled down as a pensioner, and then left for Moscow, where he built a house for himself beyond the Spassky Tollgate. And soon after that, he was killed in his own home in a rather mysterious way. It's not known who killed him. He had a son who set off for the construction projects on the canals. But do you remember how the old man used to shine before the Revolution? He was a king, a baron! The police chief went down to the train station to meet him; he was a pillar of the right-wing Society of the Archangel Michael, may you gore his frogs! . . ."

They went to the dining hall to have dinner. They walked past the town square, where the bazaar used to be. Everything all around was frightfully familiar and yet absolutely new. Using Alyosha's stories about his native land, Rogozhin determined that just as the ancient Slavs had once poured, in trickles and torrents, into the Yerzan tribe, so now, too, was the culture of Soviet power pouring, in trickles and torrents, into imperial Mikhailov, into feudal Mikhailov. A young male collective farm worker wearing a necktie. A brood of female skiers dressed in ski pants

and ski boots. A statue of Lenin, Lenin here on planet Earth, his uplifted arm pointing forward, and a second monument, on the mountain itself, at the summit of the small town: a column with a red five-pointed star, a monument to the Revolution, to a fraternal grave. Opposite the department store, rows of collective farm sleighs, carriages whose well-fed horses were chewing oats out of feedbags tied on their snouts. A cart was loaded with zinc buckets, milk pails, basins, and frying pans. A fine-looking old man dressed in a sheepskin coat, whose pointed Van Dyck beard, which clearly had just been trimmed and smelled of eau de cologne, was standing on end and sticking out in front of him, was talking merrily:

“Some twine, attach some twine, Comrade Yelenina, use as much as you need, the collective farm pays up to seven thousand rubles for it! . . . Twine comes in handy, I’m telling you. Have I brought you a New Year’s tree yet or not?”

The loudspeaker: Moscow speaking. There is a multitude of radio masts. Electricity, telephone wires, motor vehicles are making a honking sound as they drive to and from the station.

In 1919, kulak farmers moved upon the city of Mikhailov and tried to subdue the Communists. Just as three hundred years earlier the Crimean Tatars and Hetman Sagaidachny had laid siege to Mikhailov from the direction of Pecherniki, so, too, in the nineteenth century, did former “state” peasants come to Mikhailov from the same direction, from the Pecherniki and Lobany Settlements, and they came to Mikhailov – in a historically natural way – from the villages of Pushkari and Streltsy. The old Pushkar blood and freedom from serfdom determined their social fate. They were organized by officers, they were armed with rifles and Winchester repeating rifles provided by gentry landowners. Students from Ryazan, three dozen of them, came to the aid of the Soviet and the Communists in Mikhailov. Comrade Fadeyev, the District Commissar, drove the enemy away from the Pronya River. The “Pushkars” scattered along the ravines. The Red students returned to Ryazan. And then that night the “Streltsy” burst into town.²⁹ Comrade Fadeyev fled. Being a peasant from Mikhailov and a pauper, he hid in the home of some relatives in the countryside. The “Pushkars,” armed with Mausers and revolvers, came to visit his aunt. His aunt was standing at the stove, tinkering with oven prongs.

“Where is Fyodor?”

“The devil only knows where the hell he’s gone off to! Why, what about it?”

²⁹ The narrator’s description here of the struggle waged in the city of Mikhailov between loyalist forces (supportive of the White Guard) and revolutionary forces (supportive of the Red Army) is complicated by the fact that he refers to the two main groups of local loyalists – kulaks from the villages of Pushkari and Streltsy – by the names of the villages in which they reside, plural nouns that can also serve to denote types of military combatants: that is, *pushkari* [пушкари] can also mean “gunners,” “artillerymen,” and “cannon founders,” while *streltsy* [стрельцы] can also mean “musketeers,” “riflemen,” and “shooters.” Indeed, these two villages originally received their names precisely because most of their residents at that time were, respectively, “gunners” and “musketeers.”

“Really, is it possible that you haven’t heard? He wanted to seal up all the wells in town and leave people without water.”

They searched her house. Then they left. About two days later, his aunt took some manure out to a field and stuck a pitchfork on top. Kulak patrols stirred the manure around with the pitchfork. The aunt took the manure as far as the ravine at Bezdonka, where she looked all around and then said: “Okay, you can go ahead and jump out now.” Two people, Comrade Fadeyev and a second Communist who was escaping with him, spent two days and nights sitting at the bottom of that ravine in the Propashchy copse. Then they made their way to Ryazan. A Red Army cavalry detachment rode from Mikhailov to the villages of Pushkari and Streltsy. The “Pushkars” and the “Streltsy” delivered thirteen ringleaders – landowners and priests – to the Soviet authorities.

The three of them, Rogozhin, Senyukhov, and the instructor at the Swine Breeding Trust, stood for a while on the precipice near a monument to the Revolution, at precisely the same spot where, from near the mountain, the “Pushkars” had sneaked into the city. Snow was lying on the ground in the expanses beyond the river, and roads were weaving their way across the snow like brown cords, toward Pecherniki in particular. Young people were flying down the hill on their skis, from the monument to the ice on the river.

“Hey, letttt’s gggooo, you guys from OSOAVIAKhIM!³⁰ . . .”

“Are you enjoying this?” Rogozhin asked a young lad, without giving any thought to what exactly it was, in fact, that this young lad should have been enjoying.

The young lad looked Rogozhin over, then he asked him in a business-like manner,

“Are you from Moscow?”

“Yes. What of it?”

“Well, then, tell whoever it is that’s in charge back there in Moscow to send us more recreational equipment. We’re playing hockey with sticks. Is that any way to play the game, uncle? And during the summer they ought to send a hydroplane boat here, oh, that would be something! . . .”

They arrived at the dining hall. Again it was clean, light, tidy, simple, and plain inside. Again it reminded one of an American camp somewhere in the state of New Jersey. A woman with a ruddy complexion who was wearing a hospital gown served soup with dumplings for the first course; for the second course, she served pork chops, fruit compote of dried pears, and a pitcher

³⁰ OSOAVIAKhIM was the acronym for the Society for Assistance to Defense, Aviation, and Chemical Construction (*Obshchestvo sodeistviia oborone, aviatsionnomu i khimicheskomu stroitel'stvu* [Общество содействия обороне, авиационному и химическому строительству]), a voluntary paramilitary sport organization in the Soviet Union that was established in 1927.

of milk. There were flowers, heliotropes, on the table, and rubber tree plants were sprouting in the corners.

A tall man, wearing white felt boots and the type of peasant blouse that Tolstoy had made famous, entered the dining hall. He was very red-cheeked from the frost, and his skin in general was sunburned from the freezing temperatures. He asked:

“Are you the people from Moscow? Comrade Rogozhin?”

He introduced himself:

“I’m Comrade Bakin from the MTS [Machine and Tractor Station]. I’ll be going with you to the Pecherniki collective farms.”

He fell silent for a moment. Then he asked sternly:

“Do you wish to feast your eyes on your native land?”

“Why do you ask that so angrily?”

“There’s nothing to admire there. Your Settlements people are disfiguring the entire church chandelier for us. They and the folks from the Lobany Settlements as well. After all, up to now the priest there has been howling and wailing to God every day until two o’clock.”

Comrade Bakin reached into his briefcase, which he had placed under the table in advance and which was leaning up against one of the legs of the table. He grabbed a note pad, and opened it up to a page filled with figures:

“3,975 people. Average sowing per person³¹ – 0.55 hectares. Unsowed – 66. With sowing up to a hectare – 34, with sowing from 1 to 3 hectares – 235, from 3 to 5 hectares – 245, from 5 to 10 hectares – 67. Without cows and horses – 254 farmsteads. With one cow – 372, with 2 cows – 19. Without horses – 167 . . . That was in 1929. At the collective farm, there were just barely twelve families, and this was in 1931. Do you understand? Twelve families for six hundred farmsteads. The spirit of Kochkin is evaporating, of course, but some suffocating gas fumes still remain. As recently as last year, some kulaks scorched the shed at the collective farm. And what were things like before this? And how are things at the present time? Go judge for yourself. For one hundred and forty individual

³¹ Before the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, the word *dusha* [душа], which means “soul,” was also used in tsarist Russia to denote those agricultural laborers who were bound under the feudal system to work on their lord’s estate. Since that time, *dusha* has come to be used to mean “person” when counting the number of people involved in some group project or activity. Comrade Bakin does that here when he reports the statistics regarding plowing in 1929.

households, which are the only ones regarded as households, there are only seven horses. Yet they have one hundred and fifty hectares of land divided into sections. And this meat business of yours is a hindrance to the entire church chandelier . . . How many people work at your meat packing plant?”

“Ten thousand.”

“Well, three hundred of them are your own people from the Settlements; they’re more like summer vacationers than workers.³² Perhaps in Moscow you consider them proletarians, I don’t know, but out here the wives from the Settlements are definitely individualists and they’re the first ones to do favors for the priest. The husband sends his wife money, and she sits around doing nothing: she gathers up eggs, sour cream, and cottage cheese. What good is cottage cheese? Doesn’t one want an entire sheep or half a hog? At our market, a kilo of pork costs five rubles, while in Moscow it costs seven. A year doesn’t pass without the old women traveling to Moscow, in groups of two hundred each, in entire special trains filled with pork. They adapted themselves to slaughtering sheep. One of the kulaks in the Lobany Settlements even arranged to have a slaughterhouse built; the chairman and I looked into this matter. The kulak himself worked at the collective farm, while his spouse bought up sheep. A sheep for secret slaughter is an irreplaceable animal; he remains silent while they slit its throat. That’s not a hog for you; with them, the instances when they squeal are beyond count. The chairman and I take a look through the crack: in their yard – as it used to be the case in Okhotny Ryad – there are sheep carcasses. The meat is sent to Moscow, while the kulak and his wife gobble up the entrails that are cooked in simple fashion at home. He sold an item and put the money into a pile. Both the husband and the wife were given five-year sentences of forced labor, working on the White Sea-Baltic Canal.”

“Your workers at the meat packing plant in Moscow, perhaps they play at being proletarians, but here with us? They come here as if they were coming to a vacation resort. They have an extra hundred rubles in their pockets. They walk around with their hands in their pants pockets. It’s understood that they will help their wives with the farming, but help the collective farm? – God forbid! One of them will even joke: ‘A collective farm worker, they say, has to work? Well, go ahead and work, God loves work! . . .’ Their wives sponge off the State; they don’t provide any kind of benefit. They scarcely pay the farm tax, they don’t fulfill the government’s supply and delivery quotas, and they don’t do any work on the collective farm. They’re like a female summer vacationer. And the priest is among them, pleased like a cat in sour cream. For example, the priest works as an entrepreneur for them, organizing benefit performances. For example, quite recently he summoned the archdeacon from Moscow; they howled for two days straight, singing operas . . . They didn’t need to go far to find people to join them;

³² The narrator uses here the word *dachnik* [дачник], literally, “the occupant of a *dacha*,” to characterize workers who were not pulling their weight.

it would take no more than a week. The man who works as the village librarian in the reading room in the Settlements scraped together the most active members, about sixty-five people in all. Suddenly only twenty people came to our collective reading session. Where were the rest of them? They had gone to the priest's home for some kind of night prayer service. The Christmas fast, you see, was ending! . . .”

“Why am I setting forth all of this for you? You say that you have ten thousand men working at your meat packing plant? It is imperative that you take the Pecherniki workers in tow, you need to take them under your wing, provide some discussion, some ventilation, between you and them, since these are the very same inhabitants of Pecherniki who from time immemorial have worked in the meat business. We need to put an end to their backwardness and their musty smell of class decay. We need to put an end to their cheating and swindling. Theirs is the worst collective farm in the region.”

Comrade Bakin smoked a cigarette, ordered himself a bottle of cranberry water, and poured it into four glasses.

“And yet we, for our part, will support the cause. We now have about one hundred and eighty farmsteads at the Pecherniki collective farm. Last spring, we look and see a widow with four children asking for work. We take her in. We give her a heifer and a pig. This pleases her. Others start asking for the same things. But the sowing is planned according to who was there earlier. I told you that there were seven horses for a hundred and forty individual farmsteads. Their land needs to be transferred over to the collective farm. The MTS is currently signing a contract with them for 1936. Let's go and find out what they've decided, whom they're sending as a delegate to the tractor courses. In our MTS, there are fifty-two tractors, there are combines, there is a full complement of machines, silage buildings, everything that's needed, repair shops, nearly a factory. But that's not the point. Once spring arrives, I'm going to send to the workers at the Pecherniki collective farm the very best model of tractor from the Cheliabinsk Tractor Works, one with sixty horsepower, to plow up virgin soil fourteen centimeters deep. I'm going to drive it there myself; I'm going to take a look at it myself at the start. I'm going to outplow Kochkin . . .”

Comrade Bakin suddenly smiled and became cheerful.

“I'm going to tell you a story, Comrade Rogozhin, that will make you laugh a little! . . . In the Shchetinniki Quarter – some military commander of the Shchetinniki established this quarter exactly three hundred years ago – well, so last fall a combine worked in this quarter for the first time. One old man climbs up onto the platform by himself: with one hand, he catches a trickle of grain; with the other, he reaches out for the straw. Suddenly he lets out a howl, like a wild boar. He falls off the combine and comes running toward me howling. ‘What's the matter with you?’ I ask him. And he screams: ‘Write a letter off to Moscow

this very minute!’ ‘What am I to write about?’ ‘Write to Comrade Stalin about my triumph. Did you see me, an old man, up there? I want to cry from joy, and I feel like dancing. But you – you go write to Comrade Stalin!’ And suddenly he again lets out a howl at the top of his lungs. ‘People, look here! Here there’s some grain, and yet here it’s mowing. I’ve never seen anything like it, even in my wildest dreams!’ And off he goes, dancing in a squatting position.”

A fellow from the office of the secretary of the District Committee stopped by the cafeteria and advised the visitors to postpone their trip to the Settlements until the next day, to greet the New Year in the town of Mikhailov, to go to the New Year’s party at the high school, and to sit for a while with local Party members. They discussed these suggestions and decided not to postpone their trip. They put on their sheepskin coats. They drove out into blinding expanses of snow. They arrived in the Settlements an hour after a frosty blue twilight. Everything there was catastrophically in the old way. There was a church with an icon of the Holy Sign on the entrance gates; inside the church, lights were shining. The thought struck Rogozhin that presently Kochkin would exit the church and shout out, after rapping his walking stick against the ground, “March, you little rascal, to vespers! . . .” Next door stood the Kochkin tearoom. Comrade Bakin, who was driving in the rear sleigh, shouted out to the lead coachman: “Turn towards the village library and reading room!”

They drove up to the former Kochkin tearoom, a two-story house. Rogozhin even remembered the old stairs, made of stone: they were sour, dank. Why, yes, it was the very same tearoom in which his father used to drink vodka out of the teakettle, and his mother used to walk up these very same stairs to retrieve his father; and right here, at this doorpost, is where she used to cry. Neither his mother nor his father was alive any longer. All this happened thirty years ago. Here were the same dark entrance halls with black floorboards that looked just as if they had been chewed up. This is where Andreyka Shlepok, Uncle Fedos’s brother-in-law, once beat up his pregnant wife while he was drunk. Could it really be the case that everything now is just as it was back then, as Comrade Bakin had said?

In the room, there was fresh air, fresher than the warm heated stoves. Up on the stage, two guys were playing a game of billiards. In the middle of the room, a dozen people were sitting at a very long table, reading newspapers. All the corners of the room were dirty, smoky, and damp. It turned out that the village library and reading room had just been opened, in the nineteenth year of the Revolution. There weren’t any books. The person working at the house reading room right away started complaining,

“There aren’t any chess sets, the checkers are homemade, and yet we’ve started a tournament. There aren’t any skis; if we did have skis, we’d put all the kids on them. Have you seen what hills we have around here? . . .”

Rogozhin didn’t find any of his relatives. Those kids with whom Rogozhin used to run, rolling up their pants and baring their legs, were now bearded folk, scattered about the world. Comrade Filin, the chairman of the collective farm, arrived; he and Rogozhin remembered each other. As far back as before the Revolution, as far back as during Kochkin’s reign, Filin had worked at the Moscow slaughterhouses as a winder. He reported that, so he says, “from those times forward, I

wiped myself down and dried myself off a little in a proletarian way.” There wasn’t anything for them to reminisce about. They started a conversation about the present.

“Well, so how are things going with the selection of a delegate for the tractor courses?” asked Comrade Bakin.

“We’ve found one!” Comrade Filin answered very joyously.

“And do you know whom we selected? A girl! Markova, Pelageya Vasilyevna, Polyusha! . . .” Comrade Filin addressed Rogozhin. “Our *virgin soil* here, Sergeyich, has broken out, after having been delayed for four years . . . Do you know what a tractor driver is in a village? He is, clearly, the leading person. Pelageya Vasilyevna came forward. And, please note this, not one guy from our village, not a single one, went to the course. And she announces, ‘I wish to go to the MTS to learn how to drive a tractor! . . .’ Well, so there is a howl raised across the entire village. And what would be the best approach to take? If she sets off to become a tractor driver, that means she should wear men’s trousers. But for a woman to wear men’s trousers, especially when she’s still a girl, is shameful and sinful. And no one will choose to marry her. And they all said this unanimously, with one voice.”

“I was already about to devise some way for her to combine wearing trousers with a skirt. And do you know what helped? The Metro! Yes, precisely, the Moscow Metro. Word was getting out about it; that was a natural thing, of course. And suddenly they’re telling Polyusha that all the female Komsomol members who work on the Metro are, without fail, wearing trousers and that all of them are heroines. I cut out a clipping from a magazine for this occasion that showed women in trousers and it wasn’t the end of the world, as the priest used to explain it . . . Suddenly, oh, I don’t know . . . they say that Polyusha went to Moscow on the sly to check this out with her own eyes, and she saw, they say, girls at the Belarus Station who really were wearing trousers. Pelageya Vasilyevna Markova is now the leading person among us. She now plows virgin soil fourteen centimeters deep! She went in defiance of those who spread gossip! . . . Or take Dunyasha, the female Stakhanovite who works at our hog farm . . . We have fifty-two sows; the manager is Khorokhorkin, who, perhaps you remember, used to work at Pushkin’s fat rendering plant? . . . Well, Dunya is in charge of the kitchen, where she cooks dinner and supper for the hogs . . .”

The door opened, letting out steam, and a man, dressed – just like Rogozhin, Senyukhov, and Bakin – in a sheepskin coat, entered unhurriedly, shaking the snow off his felt boots. It was the regional zoological technician. While passing through town, he had decided to spend the night at the village library and reading room. He grunted from the cold, removed the icicles from his mustache, greeted everyone, and said: “Barkhanov.”

“You’re not by any chance related to Professor Vasily Vasilyevich Barkhanov, are you?” asked Rogozhin.

“Did you used to know that old man? . . . The old man was a rogue and a swindler! . . . Why, yes, I do have the misfortune of being related to him. He was my father’s cousin. He passed away, and it’s unpleasant for me to remember him.”

Shortly the zoological technician delivered a speech. Rogozhin listened inattentively:

“ . . . we zoological technicians are currently bursting with pride. The perspectives are boundless . . . To speak in zoological terms, there were actually no breeds of cattle of any kind in Russia before the Revolution, but there were instead feeble half-breeds produced from bad seeds. But now there really are breeds: thirteen breeds of our own cattle – Russian and Soviet – and five foreign breeds . . . Nearby is the state farm for cattle breeding, the former patrimonial estate of Gagarin, the self-same landowner. It is luxurious there. They have houses with columns as well as apartments for personnel, and linden-lined walks, and ponds . . . Other state farms arose on sites where there was nothing there before . . . But the whole highlight is the people, and the main thing is, uh, what a battle is being waged for every five hundred grams. A bull, for instance. Bulls were always considered blood-thirsty wild beasts. A bull walks through the village and everybody jumps aside. And why is that? It’s because in olden days the bull was kept in tightly locked, dark stalls! . . . My male bull-tenders and female calf-tenders have figured this out. A bull, in fact, is not at all a toreador . . . ”

Recalling for a moment Professor Barkhanov and the war, Mikhail Sergeyevich began not only to think, but also to feel that he had not found a homeland at his birthplace in the Pecherniki Settlements. His homeland was elsewhere, in other places. He remembered Moscow and his comrades there; he pictured to himself the merry and festive pre-New Year’s bustle and those homes where his friends used to gather at this hour. And he regretted the fact that he had not remained in Mikhailov, among fellow Communists, to greet the New Year.

A group of young people with an accordion walked past beneath his window. Male voices sang out:

“God got angry at us,
Flew off into heaven
And left us a collective farm
And an eight-ounce ration of bread! . . . ”

Female voices responded:

“Let’s begin to build a life ourselves,
A life that is new and free,
There is no need for us to serve God,

Sing him a prayer for the dying!”³³

From afar could be heard:

“For a half-bottle of vodka, Uncle Kochkin
Would indeed flog the shirt off everyone’s back,
But nowadays a tractor is doing the mowing,
And Filippych has hightailed it out of here! . . .”³⁴

— —

Alyosha Senyukhov was daydreaming aloud:

“Regarding domestic animals, Marx said: ‘ . . . they are domesticated; consequently, they are already changed by means of labor . . . ’ Various contemporary breeds of bull are the product of the labor of your grandfathers and great grandfathers, and of mine. Right now we are doing planning: cotton fields for the textile industry, sugar-beet fields for the sugar industry, wheat fields for the mechanized bakeries, well, and cattle-breeding farms for the meat packing plants, much as you would do with cotton for textiles . . . ”

“You listen up, Sergeyich, before, under the tsars, a worker and a craftsman in Moscow ate on average eighteen grams of meat and six grams of fat, while bureaucrats ate forty-three grams of meat and twenty-one grams of fat; factory owners and merchants ate forty-eight grams of meat and thirty-five grams of fat. Now, according to the data provided by the Institute of Public Nutrition, any normal dinner at a public cafeteria should include forty-six grams of meat protein and thirty-four grams of fat. And the dinners served at one public cafeteria in Moscow in 1923 numbered thirty-five thousand, while now there are forty-two million various servings and entrées. Divide that up among the Moscow

³³ The “prayer for the dying” refers to the canon that is read at the bedside of a Russian Orthodox believer right before his or her death. The final line of this song – *poi emu otходnuiu* [пой ему отходную] – can also be read idiomatically, however, as “give Him [God] up as hopeless” or “write Him off.”

³⁴ The second line of this song – *s miru vpryam’ rubakhu dral* [с миру впрямь рубаху драл] – seems to be alluding to the Russian idiomatic expression: *s miru po nitke golomu rubakha* [с миру по нитке голому рубаха], literally, “a single thread from everyone, and there’s a shirt for a naked one” (figuratively, “many hands make light work”). In this song lyric, the narrator is perhaps intentionally distorting this idiomatic expression (one that suggests a spirit of charity, cooperation, compassion, even communitarianism – “it takes a village”) by using it to underscore the cruelty and tyranny that reigned when the cruel, selfish, autocratic Kochkin was in charge of things on the farm. Rather than pitching in to help clothe the naked (by making a poor man a shirt), Kochkin is instead stripping the shirt off the back of that poor soul.

population: how many merchants and factory owners in Moscow do we get as a result?"

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In Moscow, in Mikhail Sergeyevich's office, the clocks struck twelve o'clock midnight. Their chorale was long and festive: they were accompanying the outgoing year into the ages and welcoming in the New Year, the new times. On the faces and dials of clocks, new numbers were springing up. The "Days Since the October Revolution" clock showed the number 6,627. The year 1936 was arriving.

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J. S. Hillfouter was welcoming in the New Year in Berlin. As before, he was serving as the "Union" representative for Eastern Europe. He knew that the agrarian crisis in the United States had turned out to have all sorts of unexpected consequences. Several firms got into breeding wild animals; a new saying came into being: "In the United States, it's easier to sell a wild lion than a dairy cow." In the state of Arizona, farmer Brooks, the father of five children and a husband to his wife, got into breeding crocodiles instead of breeding bulls, and he was right on the money. Many followed his example. One of Brooks's neighbors, a Mister Williams, who had bought crocodile meat in the state of Arizona for a year in advance, opened a canned goods factory. He began to prepare crocodile ragout in straw oil. He advertised it as being 99% protein, 99% fat; the rest was phosphorus and carbohydrates! . . . At the same time as the crocodile ragout in America, there appeared an announcement in Europe, in Madrid, in the Madrid newspapers:

"Smoked yak meat, from the sacred bull of the Tibetan monastery. Blessed and sent to us by his Holiness, the Dalai-Lama, in accordance with our special order."

Being a lonely man, J. S. Hillfouter, in the vernacular, Jimmy, was greeting the New Year, naturally enough, in a restaurant, and greeting it, naturally enough, with a prostitute. The woman, with her quinine-treated hair and submissive sheep's eyes, was hungry and taciturn. The restaurant resounded with the sounds of jazz music and the clatter of dishes. Jimmy was patiently feeding his companion. Jimmy spoke for a while about how hard it was to welcome in the New Year far away from one's homeland and he spoke for a while about his homeland in general. He called the waiter over and said to him: "Herr ober, precisely at midnight, would you please open a bottle of champagne for us."

In a word, the New Year was being welcomed in appropriately, far away from his homeland, but in an entirely nice way. Two hours after midnight, Jimmy and his companion were in his hotel room; he helped her take a bath at around four o'clock, and then, tired out, they both fell asleep.

At eight o'clock in the morning, J. S. Hillfouter was awakened by the delivery of a registered letter. The letter carrier had the look of a Gestapo agent.

"Dear Sir, Mister J. S. Hillfouter!

On the basis of §7 of the legal code concerning sterilization, we request that you appear tomorrow, January 2, 1936, at the municipal slaughterhouses for the purpose of having a sterilization operation performed on you. In the event that you fail to appear before 12:45, you will be forcibly delivered there. You are required to appear at the slaughterhouses absolutely sober, cleanly washed and shaven, and in clean underwear. It is obligatory that you take a dose of stable iodine, as well as rheum and sodium sulfate, on the eve of the operation. You are charged with the responsibility – under the threat of a fine of 750 marks – for bringing with you dressing materials for wounds. If you wish, you have the right to order an ambulance to return you to your home following the operation.

Commission for the Preservation of Racial Purity”

J. S. Hillfouter’s nighttime companion was enjoying a sound, tranquil sleep. J. S. Hillfouter started to run around the room. He assumed that he was scheduled for this operation precisely in connection with the fact that such female companions were not a rarity with him, and the desk clerk, naturally enough, knew about this. He thought with anguish about the extent to which his refrigeration business had experienced a decline when the slaughterhouses had been re-equipped to accommodate sterilization. He called to mind that he was a foreigner. He hurried to the telephone to call the consul and became disheartened, since at this sacrosanct New Year’s hour on January 1st there was no possibility of finding the consul. Soon J. S. Hillfouter was leafing through the railway guide. He got dressed noiselessly. He was pale. The next train was heading to Poland, the nearest border was likewise the Polish one. J. S. Hillfouter ran, furtively and without his things, leaving his nighttime companion in bed in his hotel room. The letter he had received was so verisimilar, so plausible, that he did not for a moment surmise that a letter of this kind had been sent out in hundreds of copies to people on that morning by certain jokesters.

Moscow – Pecherniki Settlements.
March 6, 1936.

Memorandum

This memorandum is written by Sergey Belyaev and Boris Pilnyak on the following occasion: – the day of the successful, agreeable, and final completion of the collective novel *MEAT*.

And this memorandum is written precisely to confirm that:

1. The novel was written in a truly collective manner:
 - a) the ideas in it were mulled over jointly by the two authors,
 - b) Sergey Mikhailovich, toiling splendidly, doggedly, and cheerfully, converted these ideas into specific materials and concretenesses,
 - c) Boris Andreyevich, toiling after the model of Sergey Mikhailovich, lacquered these specific materials and concretenesses, simultaneously with the original ideas, to render them ready for appearance in printed form;
2. The novel was truly completed in a spirit of love and friendship, and with an extraordinarily small number of conversations between the two authors;
3. And profits from the the novel will be split evenly on the basis of a fifty-fifty computation and, as far as possible, the novel will be sold the largest number of times and in the largest number of places, so that *MEAT* may indeed become nourishing, enlivened by, besides its own protein-rich caloric content, the no less plump and calorie-rich Russian ruble;
4. And the fairy godmother during the writing of the novel was KIRA GEORGIYEVNA, our number one critic and captivator;
5. And this scientific, highly historical, widely philosophical and deeply technical, and likewise truly social and socialist novel, *MEAT*, is written for a broad array of readers, ranging from the feudal-bourgeois reader, so that his nose will be tweaked, to the proletarian reader, so that he may take a rest and, after enjoying a few laughs, he may, together with the authors, glance back at the past and take some pride in the present, glorying, as is his natural right, in his achievements.

And this memorandum is to be kept and preserved by our beloved wives: Yelena Fyodorovna and Kira Georgiyevna.

Signed by: S. Belyaev, B. Pilnyak

Editorial Offices of *Pravda*
Frunze Street, Moscow
Saturday, March 7, 1936