

PROBLEMS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

*Creating the foundations for a new society
in revolutionary Russia*

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posed to the other most important problem of the party—the great interest in the younger generation of the proletariat. The younger generation grows up in the conditions of the given moment, grows sound and strong according to the way in which certain well-determined problems are solved. We want our younger generation, in the first place, to develop into good, highly qualified workers, devoted to their work. They must grow up with the firm conviction that their productive work is at the same time work for socialism. Interest in professional training, and desire for efficiency, will naturally give great authority in the eyes of our young proletarians to "the old men," who are experts in their trade and who, as I said above, stand usually outside the party. We see, in consequence, that our interest in good, honest, and efficient workers serves the cause of a thorough education of the growing younger generation; without it there would be no onward march to socialism.

HABIT AND CUSTOM

[Published July 11, 1923]

In the study of life it is peculiarly manifest to what an extent individual man is the product of environment rather than its creator. Daily life, i.e., conditions and customs, are, more than economics, "evolved behind men's backs," in the words of Marx. Conscious creativeness in the domain of custom and habit occupies but a negligible place in the history of man. Custom is accumulated from the elemental experience of men; it is transformed in the same elemental way under the pressure of technical progress or the occasional stimulus of revolutionary struggle. But in the main, it reflects more of the past of human society than of its present.

Our proletariat is not old and has no ancestry. It has emerged in the last ten years partly from the petty townspeople and chiefly from the peasantry. The life of our proletariat clearly reflects its social origin. We have only to recall *The Morals of Rasteryaev Street*, by Gleb Uspensky. What are the main characteristics of the Rasteryaevs, i.e., the Tula workmen of the last quarter of the last century? They are all townsmen or peasants who, having lost all hope of becoming independent men, formed a combination of the uneducated petty bourgeoisie and the destitute. Since then the proletariat has made a big stride, but more in politics than in life and morals. Life is conservative. In its primitive aspect, of course, Rasteryaev Street no longer exists. The brutal treatment accorded to apprentices, the servility practiced before employers, the vicious drunkenness, and the street hooliganism have vanished. But in the relations of husband and wife, parents and children, in the domestic life of the family, fenced off from the whole world, Rasteryaevism is still firmly implanted. We need years

and decades of economic growth and culture to banish Rastoryaevism from its last refuge—individual and family life—recreating it from top to bottom in the spirit of collectivism.

Problems of family life were the subject of a particularly heated discussion at a conference of the Moscow propagandists, which we have already mentioned. In regard to this everyone had some grievance. Impressions, observations, and questions, especially, were numerous; but there was no answer to them, for the very questions remain semi-articulate, never reaching the press or being aired at meetings. The life of the ordinary workers and the life of the communists, and the line of contact between the two, provide such a big field for observation, deduction, and practical application!

Our literature does not help us in this respect. Art, by nature, is conservative; it is removed from life and is little able to catch events on the wing as they happen. *The Week*, by Libedinsky, excited a burst of enthusiasm among some of our comrades, an enthusiasm which appeared to me excessive, and dangerous for the young author.⁵ In regard to its form, *The Week*, notwithstanding its marks of talent, has the characteristics of the work of a schoolboy. It is only by much persistent, detailed work that Libedinsky can become an artist. I should like to think that he will do so. However, this is not the aspect which interests us at the moment. *The Week* gave the impression of being something new and significant not because of its artistic achievements but because of the "communist" section of life with which it dealt. But in this respect especially, the matter of the book is not profound. The "gubkom" is presented to us with too much of the laboratory method; it has no deeper roots and is not organic. Hence, the whole of *The Week* becomes an episodic digression, a novel of revolutionary emigrants drawn from the life. It is, of course, interesting and instructive to depict the life of the "gubkom" but the difficulty and significance come when the life of communist organization enters into the everyday life of the people. Here, a firm grip is required. The Communist Party at the present moment is the principal lever of every conscious forward movement. Hence, its unity with the masses of the people becomes the root of historic action, reaction, and resistance.

Communist theory is some dozen years in advance of our everyday Russian actuality—in some spheres perhaps even a century in advance. Were this not so, the Communist Party would be no great revolutionary power in history. Communist theory, by means of its realism and dialectical acuteness, finds

the political methods for securing the influence of the party in any given situation. But the political idea is one thing, and the popular conception of morals is another. Politics change rapidly, but morals cling tenaciously to the past.

This explains many of the conflicts among the working class, where fresh knowledge struggles against tradition. These conflicts are the more severe in that they do not find their expression in the publicity of social life. Literature and the press do not speak of them. The new literary tendencies, anxious to keep pace with the revolution, do not concern themselves with the usages and customs based on the existing conception of morals, for they want to transform life, not describe it! But new morals cannot be produced out of nothing; they must be arrived at with the aid of elements already existing, but capable of development. It is therefore necessary to recognize what are these elements. This applies not only to the transformation of morals, but to every form of conscious human activity. It is therefore necessary first to know what already exists, and in what manner its change of form is proceeding, if we are to cooperate in the re-creation of morals.

We must first see what is really going on in the factory, among the workers, in the cooperative, the club, the school, the tavern, and the street. All this we have to understand; that is, we must recognize the remnants of the past and the seeds of the future. We must call upon our authors and journalists to work in this direction. They must describe life for us as it emerges from the tempest of revolution.

It is not hard to surmise, however, that appeals alone will not redirect the attentions of our writers. We need proper organization of this matter and proper leadership. The study and enlightenment of working class life must, in the first place, be made the foremost task of journalists—of those, at any rate, who possess eyes and ears. In an organized way we must put them on this work, instruct, correct, lead, and educate them thus to become revolutionary writers, who will write of everyday life. At the same time, we must broaden the angle of outlook of working class newspaper correspondents. Certainly almost any of them could produce more interesting and entertaining correspondence than we have nowadays. For this purpose, we must deliberately formulate questions, set proper tasks, stimulate discussion, and help to sustain it.

In order to reach a higher stage of culture, the working class—and above all its vanguard—must consciously study its life. To do this, it must know this life. Before the bour-

geoisie came to power, it had fulfilled this task to a wide extent through its intellectuals. When the bourgeoisie was still an oppositional class, there were poets, painters, and writers already thinking for it.

In France, the eighteenth century, which has been named the century of enlightenment, was precisely the period in which the bourgeois philosophers were changing the conception of social and private morals, and were endeavoring to subordinate morals to the rule of reason. They occupied themselves with political questions, with the church, with the relations between man and woman, with education, etc. There is no doubt but that the mere fact of the discussion of these problems greatly contributed to the raising of the mental level of culture among the bourgeoisie. But all the efforts made by the eighteenth century philosophers towards subordinating social and private relations to the rule of reason were wrecked on one fact—the fact that the means of production were in private hands, and that this was the basis upon which society was to be built up according to the tenets of reason. For private property signifies free play to economic forces which are by no means controlled by reason. These economic conditions determine morals, and so long as the needs of the commodity market rule society, so long is it impossible to subordinate popular morals to reason. This explains the very slight practical results yielded by the ideas of the eighteenth century philosophers, despite the ingenuity and boldness of their conclusions.

In Germany, the period of enlightenment and criticism came about the middle of the last century. "Young Germany," under the leadership of Heine and Boerne, placed itself at the head of the movement.⁶ We here see the work of criticism accomplished by the left wing of the bourgeoisie, which declared war on the spirit of servility, on petty-bourgeois anti-enlightenment education, and on the prejudices of war, and which attempted to establish the rule of reason with even greater skepticism than its French predecessor. This movement amalgamated later with the petty-bourgeois revolution of 1848, which, far from transforming all human life, was not even capable of sweeping away the many little German dynasties.

In our backward Russia, the enlightenment and the criticism of the existing state of society did not reach any stage of importance until the second half of the nineteenth century. Chernyshevsky, Pisarev, and Dobrolyubov, educated in the Belinsky school, directed their criticism much more against the back-

wardness and reactionary Asiatic character of morals than against economic conditions.⁷ They opposed the new realistic human being to the traditional type of man, the new human being who is determined to live according to reason, and who becomes a personality provided with the weapon of critical thought. This movement, connected with the so-called "popular" evolutionists (Narodniks) had but slight cultural significance.⁸ For if the French thinkers of the eighteenth century were only able to gain a slight influence over morals—these being ruled by the economic conditions and not by philosophy—and if the immediate cultural influence of the German critics of society was even less, the direct influence exercised by this Russian movement on popular morals was quite insignificant. The historical role played by these Russian thinkers, including the Narodniks, consisted in preparing for the formation of the party of the revolutionary proletariat.

It is only the seizure of power by the working class which creates the premises for a complete transformation of morals. Morals cannot be rationalized—that is, made congruous with the demands of reason—unless production is rationalized at the same time, for the roots of morals lie in production. Socialism aims at subordinating all production to human reason. But even the most advanced bourgeois thinkers have confined themselves to the ideas of rationalizing technique on the one hand (by the application of natural science, technology, chemistry, invention, machines), and politics on the other (by parliamentarism); but they have not sought to rationalize economics, which has remained the prey of blind competition. Thus the morals of bourgeois society remain dependent on a blind and non-rational element. When the working class takes power, it sets itself the task of subordinating the economic principles of social conditions to a control and to a conscious order. By this means, and only by this means, is there a possibility of consciously transforming morals.

The successes that we gain in this direction are dependent on our success in the sphere of economics. But even in our present economic situation we could introduce much more criticism, initiative, and reason into our morals than we actually do. This is one of the tasks of our time. It is of course obvious that the complete change of morals—the emancipation of woman from household slavery, the social education of children, the emancipation of marriage from all economic compulsion, etc.—will only be able to follow on a long period of development, and will come about in proportion to the extent to which

the economic forces of socialism win the upper hand over the forces of capitalism.

The critical transformation of morals is necessary so that the conservative traditional forms of life may not continue to exist in spite of the possibilities for progress which are already offered us today by our sources of economic aid, or will at least be offered tomorrow. On the other hand, even the slightest successes in the sphere of morals, by raising the cultural level of the working man and woman, enhance our capacity for rationalizing production, and promoting socialist accumulation. This again gives us the possibility of making fresh conquests in the sphere of morals. Thus a dialectical dependence exists between the two spheres. The economic conditions are the fundamental factor of history, but we, as a Communist Party and as a workers' state, can only influence economics with the aid of the working class, and to attain this we must work unceasingly to promote the technical and cultural capacity of the individual element of the working class. In the workers' state culture works for socialism and socialism again offers the possibility of creating a new culture for humanity, one which knows nothing of class difference.

VODKA, THE CHURCH, AND THE CINEMA

[Published July 12, 1923]

There are two big facts which have set a new stamp on working class life. The one is the advent of the eight-hour working day; the other, the prohibition of the sale of vodka. The liquidation of the vodka monopoly, for which the war was responsible, preceded the revolution. The war demanded such enormous means that czarism was able to renounce the drink revenue as a negligible quantity, a billion rubles more or less making no very great difference. The revolution inherited the liquidation of the vodka monopoly as a fact; it adopted the fact, but was actuated by considerations of principle. It was only with the conquest of power by the working class, which became the conscious creator of the new economic order, that the combating of alcoholism by the country, by education and prohibition, was able to receive its due historic significance. The circumstance that the "drunkards'" budget was abandoned during the imperialist war does not alter the fundamental fact that the abolition of the system by which the country encouraged people to drink is one of the iron assets of the revolution.

As regards the eight-hour working day, that was a direct conquest of the revolution. As a fact in itself, the eight-hour working day produced a radical change in the life of the worker, setting free two-thirds of the day from factory duties. This provides a foundation for a radical change of life for development and culture, social education, and so on, but a foundation only. The chief significance of the October Revolution consists in the fact that the economic betterment of every worker automatically raises the material well-being and culture of the working class as a whole.

"Eight hours work, eight hours sleep, eight hours play,"

From *Pravda*, July 12, 1923.

says the old formula of the workers' movement. In our circumstances, it assumes a new meaning. The more profitably the eight hours work is utilized, the better, more cleanly, and more hygienically can the eight hours sleep be arranged for, and the fuller and more cultured can the eight hours of leisure become.

The question of amusements in this connection becomes of greatly enhanced importance in regard to culture and education. The character of a child is revealed and formed in its play. The character of an adult is clearly manifested in his play and amusements. But in forming the character of a whole class, when this class is young and moves ahead, like the proletariat, amusements and play ought to occupy a prominent position. The great French utopian reformer, Fourier,⁹ repudiating Christian asceticism and the suppression of the natural instincts, constructed his *phalansterie* (the communes of the future) on the correct and rational utilization and combination of human instincts and passions. The idea is a profound one. The working class state is neither a spiritual order nor a monastery. We take people as they have been made by nature, and as they have been in part educated and in part distorted by the old order. We seek a point of support in this vital human material for the application of our party and revolutionary state lever. The longing for amusement, distraction, sight-seeing, and laughter is the most legitimate desire of human nature. We are able, and indeed obliged, to give the satisfaction of this desire a higher artistic quality, at the same time making amusement a weapon of collective education, freed from the guardianship of the pedagogue and the tiresome habit of moralizing.

The most important weapon in this respect, a weapon excelling any other, is at present the cinema. This amazing spectacular innovation has cut into human life with a successful rapidity never experienced in the past. In the daily life of capitalist towns, the cinema has become just such an integral part of life as the bath, the beer-hall, the church, and other indispensable institutions, commendable and otherwise. The passion for the cinema is rooted in the desire for distraction, the desire to see something new and improbable, to laugh and to cry, not at your own, but at other people's misfortunes. The cinema satisfies these demands in a very direct, visual, picturesque, and vital way, requiring nothing from the audience; it does not even require them to be literate. That is why the audience bears such a grateful love to the cinema,

that inexhaustible fount of impressions and emotions. This provides a point, and not merely a point, but a huge square, for the application of our socialist educational energies.

The fact that we have so far, i.e., in nearly six years, not taken possession of the cinema shows how slow and uneducated we are, not to say, frankly, stupid. This weapon, which cries out to be used, is the best instrument for propaganda, technical, educational, and industrial propaganda, propaganda against alcohol, propaganda for sanitation, political propaganda, any kind of propaganda you please, a propaganda which is accessible to everyone, which is attractive, which cuts into the memory and may be made a possible source of revenue.

In attracting and amusing, the cinema already rivals the beer-hall and the tavern. I do not know whether New York or Paris possesses at the present time more cinemas or taverns, or which of these enterprises yields more revenue. But it is manifest that, above everything, the cinema competes with the tavern in the matter of how the eight leisure hours are to be filled. Can we secure this incomparable weapon? Why not? The government of the czar, in a few years, established an intricate net of state barrooms. The business yielded a yearly revenue of almost a billion gold rubles. Why should not the government of the workers establish a net of state cinemas? This apparatus of amusement and education could more and more be made to become an integral part of national life. Used to combat alcoholism, it could at the same time be made into a revenue-yielding concern. Is it practicable? Why not? It is, of course, not easy. It would be, at any rate, more natural and more in keeping with the organizing energies and abilities of a workers' state than, let us say, the attempt to restore the vodka monopoly.

The cinema competes not only with the tavern but also with the church. And this rivalry may become fatal for the church if we make up for the separation of the church from the socialist state by the fusion of the socialist state and the cinema.

Religiousness among the Russian working classes practically does not exist. It actually never existed. The Orthodox Church was a daily custom and a government institution. It never was successful in penetrating deeply into the consciousness of the masses, nor in blending its dogmas and canons with the inner emotions of the people. The reason for this is the same—the uncultured condition of old Russia, including her church. Hence, when awakened for culture, the Russian worker easily

throws off his purely external relation to the church, a relation which grew on him by habit. For the peasant, certainly, this becomes harder, not because the peasant has more profoundly and intimately entered into the church teaching—this has, of course, never been the case—but because the inertia and monotony of his life are closely bound up with the inertia and monotony of church practices.

The workers' relation to the church (I am speaking of the nonparty mass worker) holds mostly by the thread of habit, the habit of women in particular. Icons still hang in the home because they are there. Icons decorate the walls; it would be bare without them; people would not be used to it. A worker will not trouble to buy new icons, but has not sufficient will to discard the old ones. In what way can the spring festival be celebrated if not by Easter cake? And Easter cake must be blessed by the priest, otherwise it will be so meaningless. As for church-going, the people do not go because they are religious; the church is brilliantly lighted, crowded with men and women in their best clothes, the singing is good—a range of social-aesthetic attractions not provided by the factory, the family, or the workaday street. There is no faith or practically none. At any rate, there is no respect for the clergy or belief in the magic force of ritual. But there is no active will to break it all. The elements of distraction, pleasure, and amusement play a large part in church rites. By theatrical methods the church works on the sight, the sense of smell (through incense), and through them on the imagination. Man's desire for the theatrical, a desire to see and hear the unusual, the striking, a desire for a break in the ordinary monotony of life, is great and ineradicable; it persists from early childhood to advanced old age. In order to liberate the common masses from ritual and the ecclesiasticism acquired by habit, antireligious propaganda alone is not enough. Of course, it is necessary; but its direct practical influence is limited to a small minority of the more courageous in spirit. The bulk of the people are not affected by antireligious propaganda; but that is not because their spiritual relation to religion is so profound. On the contrary, there is no spiritual relation at all; there is only a formless, inert, mechanical relation, which has not passed through the consciousness; a relation like that of the street sight-seer, who on occasion does not object to joining in a procession or a pompous ceremony, or listening to singing, or waving his arms.

Meaningless ritual, which lies on the consciousness like an

inert burden, cannot be destroyed by criticism alone; it can be supplanted by new forms of life, new amusements, new and more cultured theaters. Here again, thoughts go naturally to the most powerful—because it is the most democratic—instrument of the theater: the cinema. Having no need of a clergy in brocade, etc., the cinema unfolds on the white screen spectacular images of greater grip than are provided by the richest church, grown wise in the experience of a thousand years, or by mosque or synagogue. In church only one drama is performed, and always one and the same, year in, year out; while in the cinema next door you will be shown the Easters of heathen, Jew, and Christian, in their historic sequence, with their similarity of ritual. The cinema amuses, educates, strikes the imagination by images, and liberates you from the need of crossing the church door. The cinema is a great competitor not only of the tavern but also of the church. Here is an instrument which we must secure at all costs!

which, given the requisite form for their organizing abilities, can be made to do excellent work, side by side with the state. A genuine leadership of creative organizing, especially in our "culture period," must aim at discovering suitable ways of utilizing the constructive energies of individual groups, persons, and cooperative units, and must base itself on the increasing independent activities of the masses. Many of these voluntary associations will collapse or change, but on the whole their number will increase as our work deepens and expands. The league for the inauguration of the new forms of life will doubtless occupy the foremost place among them, working in conjunction with the state, local soviets, trade unions, and particularly with cooperative units. For the time being, the formation of such an organization is premature, however. It would be far better to form local groups in factories for the study of questions relating to working class life, the activities of these groups to have a purely voluntary character.

Greater attention must be paid to the facts of everyday life. Central experiments must be tried where material and ideal conditions would make for their success. The widening of boundaries in a block of flats, a group of houses, a district, will all make for practical progress. The initiatory associations should have a local character. They should set themselves definite tasks, such as the establishment of nurseries, laundries, common kitchens for groups of houses. A wider scope of activity will follow greater experience and the improvement of material conditions. To sum up, we want initiative, competition, efficiency!

The primary task, the one that is most acute and urgent, is to break the silence surrounding the problems relating to daily life.

ATTENTION TO TRIFLES!

[Published October 1, 1921]

The ruined economy must be reconstructed. We must build, produce, patch up, repair. We are operating the economy on a new basis that will ensure the well-being of all working people. But the meaning of economic production, reduced to its essentials, is the struggle of humanity against the hostile forces of nature, and the rational utilization of the natural wealth to serve humanity's own ends. The general trend of policies, decrees, and instructions can only regulate economic activity. The actual satisfaction of human needs can be achieved only by the production of material values through systematic, persistent, and stubborn effort.

The economic process is the composite product of innumerable elements and parts, of countless details, particulars, and trifles. The reconstruction of the economy is possible only by focusing the greatest attention on such trifles. This we have not done, or, at best, we have done only very, very little. The central task of education and self-education in economics is to arouse, stimulate, and sharpen attention to these particular, trivial, everyday needs of the economy. Let nothing slip by; take note of everything; take the appropriate steps at the appropriate time; and demand that others do the same. This task stands squarely before us in all areas of our government activity and economic work.

Supplying the army with boots and uniforms under existing conditions in industry is no easy task. Our distribution apparatus is frequently subject to long delays. At the same time, we see almost no attention or concern for the preservation of ex-

Volume 21 of Trotsky's *Collected Works*, entitled "Culture in the Transitional Period," was published in 1927—the final work by Trotsky to be published in the Soviet Union. In the section of Volume 21 entitled "Problems of Everyday Life," Trotsky included the previous nine articles, as well as the following two, "Attention to Trifles!" and "'Thou' and 'You' in the Red Army," which are printed here for the first time in English.

"Attention to Trifles!" is from *Pravda*, October 1, 1921. Translated for this volume from Trotsky's *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, by Marilyn Vogt.

isting uniforms and boots or their timely repair. Our boots are hardly ever polished. When you ask why, you receive the most varied answers: sometimes there is no boot wax; sometimes it was not delivered in time; sometimes the boots are yellow and the wax is black; and so on, and so on. But the main reason is the absence of a businesslike attitude toward things on the part of either the rank-and-file Red Army soldiers, or the commanding officers and commissars.

Unpolished boots, particularly when they get wet, dry up and wear out after several weeks. The factory falls behind and begins to do a sloppy job sewing. The new boots wear out quicker than ever. It is a vicious circle. Meanwhile, there is a solution, and it is a very simple one: the boots should be polished regularly; and they should be properly laced, or else they will get out of shape and get split or worn through more quickly. We quite often spoil a good American boot simply because we have no laces for it. It is possible to get them if you keep insisting; and if there are no laces, it is because no one is paying attention to such economic trifles. But it is from such trifles that the whole is created.

The same applies to the rifle, and to an even greater degree. It is a difficult item to make, but an easy one to ruin. It should be cared for—cleaned and oiled. And this demands tireless and persistent attention. This demands training and education.

Trifles, accumulating and combining, can constitute something great—or destroy something great. Slightly damaged areas in a paved road, if not repaired in time, become larger; small holes turn into deep ruts and ditches. They make travel on the road more difficult. They cause damage to wagons, shake automobiles and trucks to pieces, and ruin tires. A bad road gives rise to expenses ten times greater than the cost of repairing the road itself. It is precisely in this way that petty details cause the destruction of machinery, factory buildings, and houses. To maintain them requires tireless, day-to-day attention to trifles and details. We lack this active vigilance because we lack the appropriate economic and cultural training. It is necessary to get a very clear idea of this, our main shortcoming.

We often confuse concern over details and trifles with bureaucracy. To do this is the greatest blunder. Bureaucratism is concentration on hollow form at the expense of content and the business at hand. Bureaucratism wallows in formalism, in hairsplitting, but not in practical details. On the contrary,

bureaucratism usually side-steps business details, those matters of which the business itself is composed, anxious only to see that everything adds up on paper.

The rule against spitting or dropping cigarette butts in public corridors and stairways is a "trifle," a petty rule. Nevertheless, it has great cultural and economic significance. A person who spits on the floor or stairway in passing is a dissolute slob. We can never revive the economy on the basis of the likes of these. Such an individual breaks glass out of sheer carelessness, never polishes a boot, and is certainly a carrier of typhus lice. . . .

To some it may seem, I repeat, that persistent attention to such things is nagging, is "bureaucratism." The slovenly and the dissolute love to cover themselves with the disguise of struggling against bureaucracy. "Who cares whether cigarette butts are left on the stairs?" they say. This attitude is so much rubbish. Leaving cigarette butts on the floor with no regard for tidiness shows a lack of respect for the work of others. Those who have no respect for the work of others are careless in their own work. If we really intend to develop institutions based on communal living, it is imperative that every man and woman devote full attention to order and cleanliness and the interests of the house as a whole. Otherwise, we end up (as happens all too often) with a foul, louse-ridden pit, rather than a communal dwelling.

We must wage a tireless and relentless struggle against such slovenliness and lack of culture—by word and deed, by propaganda, and higher standards, by exhortation, and by calling individuals to account for their behavior. Those who tacitly overlook such things as spitting on the stairs or leaving a yard or house looking like a pigsty are poor citizens and unworthy builders of the new society.

In the army, all the positive and negative features of national life are combined in the most vivid way. This also holds true in relation to the problem of training people to be economical. The army, whatever else it does, must improve itself at least some degree in this regard. This can be done through the mutual efforts of all the leading elements in the army itself, from top to bottom, with the cooperation of the best elements of the workers and peasants as a whole.

During the period when the Soviet state apparatus was only beginning to take shape, the army was suffused with the spirit and practices of guerrillaism. We carried on a persistent and uncompromising struggle against the guerrilla partisan mental-

ity, and undoubtedly produced important results. Not only was a centralized leadership and administrative apparatus created but—and this is even more essential—the idea of partisanism itself was severely compromised in the eyes of the working class.

We have before us now a struggle no less serious: the struggle against all forms of negligence, slovenliness, indifference, imprecision, carelessness, lack of individual discipline, extravagance, and wastefulness. All of these are merely varying degrees and shades of the same affliction. At one extreme there is a lack of attentiveness; at the other, conscious misbehavior. This calls for an extensive, day-to-day, persistent, tireless campaign by every means, as was done in the case of the campaign against partisanism: agitation, example, exhortation, and punishment.

The most magnificent plan, without attention to details and to particulars, is mere dabbling. Of what value, for example, is the most carefully considered battle plan if due to sloppiness it arrives too late, or if it is copied incorrectly, or if it is carelessly read? Whoever is true in the small matters will also be true in great ones.

We are poor, but we are wasteful. We are careless. We are sloppy. We are slovenly. These vices have deep roots in our slavish past and can be eradicated only gradually by means of persistent propaganda by deed, by example, and by illustration—and by means of careful control, vigilance, and persistent exactitude.

In order to implement great plans, you must devote great attention to very small trifles! This must be the watchword for all the conscious elements in our country as we enter the new phase of construction and cultural ascent.

"THOU" AND "YOU" IN THE RED ARMY

July 18, 1922

In Sunday's *Izvestia* there was an article about two Red Army men, named Shchekochikhin and Chernyshev, who had behaved as heroes on the occasion of a fire and explosion at Kolomna. As the article recounts it, the commander of the local garrison approached the soldier Shchekochikhin and asked:

"Do you (*ty*) know who I am?"

"Yes, you (*vy*) are the commander of the garrison."

I doubt that the dialogue has been recorded accurately in this case. Otherwise, one would have to conclude that the garrison commander does not use the proper tone in speaking to Red Army soldiers. Of course, Red Army personnel may use the familiar form in speaking to one another as comrades, but precisely *as comrades* and only as comrades. In the Red Army a commanding officer may not use the familiar form to address a subordinate if the subordinate is expected to respond in the polite form. Otherwise an expres-

From *Izvestia*, July 19, 1922. Translated for this volume from *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, by George Saunders.

In Russian, the polite form of address is the second person plural, *vy*. The second person singular, *ty*, expresses intimacy, but also can be used rudely to express overfamiliarity or disrespect. Adults or older people may use it towards younger people, and under the old regime the nobility used it towards peasants, servants, or any other "underlings," who were still expected to respond in the polite mode. The distinction in English between *thou* and *you* has largely disappeared; but readers who know French, Spanish, or German, where such formal-informal distinctions are still alive (*tu* and *vous* in French, *tu* and *Usted* in Spanish, *du* and *Sie* in German), will be familiar with the many ramifications of this convention. In English, the closest parallel to the expression of superiority and subordination in forms of address occurs when the "superior" addresses the other by the first name, and the "subordinate" replies with the polite title "Mr." or "Mrs." and the last name.

sion of inequality between persons would result, not an expression of subordination in the line of duty.

Of course, the polite and familiar forms are only matters of convention. But definite human relationships are expressed in this convention. In certain cases the familiar form may be used to express close comradely relations. But in which? In those where the relationship is mutual. In other cases, the familiar form will convey disdain, disrespect, a looking down the nose, and a shade of lordly hauteur in one's relations with others. Such a tone is absolutely impermissible in the Red Army.

To some this might seem a trifling matter. But it is not! Red Army soldiers need to respect both themselves and others. Respect for human dignity is an extremely important element of what holds the Red Army together in terms of morale. Red Army soldiers submit to their superiors in the line of duty. The requirements of discipline are inflexible. But at the same time, the soldiers are conscious of themselves as responsible citizens called upon to fulfill obligations of the highest sort. Military subordination must be accompanied by a sense of the civil and moral equality of all, and that sense of equality cannot endure if personal dignity is violated.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TATAR-LANGUAGE EDITION

October 29, 1924

Dear Comrades:

I will, of course, be very pleased by the appearance of my book *Problems of Everyday Life* in the Tatar language. In writing this book, I leaned heavily on the Russian experience, and consequently did not take into account the special features characterizing the ways of life among the Muslim peoples. But because the book only touches upon *fundamental* and *general* problems of everyday life, I trust that much of what is said is applicable to the daily experiences of the Tatar working masses. There is no need to say that the discussion of the problems of daily life is by no means exhausted by my book; rather, the problems have merely been posed and partially outlined.

The central task in the transformation of everyday life is the liberation of women, forced as they have been into the role of mere beasts of burden by the old conditions of the family, household, and economy. In the East, in the countries of Islam, this task is posed more acutely than anywhere else in the world. If this book succeeds in arousing or intensifying a critical interest in the problems of everyday life among the more advanced Tatar workers and peasants, its translation will have been justified in full.

With communist greetings,
L. Trotsky

ON BIBLIOGRAPHY

May 18, 1924

We very much need a good bibliographical journal. Setting it up is an exceptionally difficult affair. Such a journal must be a source of counsel and information on literature for the reader who needs advice—and the majority do.

Reviewing is the most responsible kind of literature. A good review presupposes that the author has an acquaintance with the subject, an understanding of the place of the given book within a series of other books—and conscientiousness. We do not need two or three hasty thoughts thrown up "about" the book, but a review that acquaints us with the book itself. It is sometimes better to give the detailed contents of the book and two or three quotes than a hasty, dilettante, and unconvincing evaluation. It would be very desirable for your journal to become *an educator* of reviewers, campaigning mercilessly against superficiality, slovenliness, and that specific favoritism which, alas, is an all too common phenomenon in reviewing.

Allow me with these few words to express my support for your undertaking and to wish it every success!

A FEW WORDS ON HOW TO RAISE A HUMAN BEING

June 24, 1924

When I received the invitation to the meeting to celebrate the first teaching year of the Karl Liebknecht Institute, I found myself in a difficult position. Work in our Soviet Republic is becoming extraordinarily specialized, a larger and larger number of separate regions are being formed, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep up with a tenth or a hundredth, much less all, of this work with any degree of attention and conscientiousness. When you have to speak about an establishment such as your institute, which is connected with a factory and workshop school, an establishment of exceptional importance, then you naturally find yourself in difficulties. I therefore ask you in advance not to expect a report on the significance and role of your Institute. I shall limit myself only to some considerations of principle, or more exactly considerations concerning the questions of principle that arise when one starts to think about the tasks of your Institute, and in general about the tasks of any education that strives to set up an unbreakable link between physical and mental labor.

In the preparatory class of socialism, we learned long ago that the main curse of capitalist society consisted in the division between mental and physical labor. This division started before capitalism, with the first steps of the development of class society and culture; since that time, the task of management has become ever more bound up with mental labor and is operated through various categories of mental labor. In serving production, mental labor becomes separated from material production. This process goes on throughout the whole development of culture. Capitalism puts mental and physical

From *Kniga o knigakh* [A book about books], May 1924. Translated for this volume by Iain Fraser.

A speech to the anniversary meeting of the Karl Liebknecht Institute. Translated for this volume from Trotsky's *Problems of Cultural Work* (1924), by Iain Fraser.

labor in the greatest contradiction, raising the division to an extraordinary degree of tension. Capitalism transforms physical labor into repellent, automatic labor, and raises mental labor, at the highest level of generalization, into idealistic abstraction and mystical scholasticism.

Here there seems to be a contradiction. You know that scholasticism arose from the church of the Middle Ages. Then, still in the depths of the old feudal society, natural science began to develop and fertilize production. Thus, the development of bourgeois society is closely linked with the development of natural science, and consequently with the struggle against church scholasticism. But at the same time, the more the bourgeoisie grew, the more it feared the application of the methods of science to history, sociology, and psychology. In these fields, bourgeois thought wandered off ever higher into the region of idealism, abstraction, and a new scholasticism; and then, to cover up its traces, it began to introduce elements of idealism and scholasticism into natural science, too.

Science is a part of the historical praxis of man; in its development it strives to grasp the world from all sides, to give an all-embracing orientation to creative man. The division of theory and practice cannot help striking at mental labor with one end of a broken chain, and at physical labor with the other end. We know this from the first pages of the first books about socialism. There we also learned that capitalism, bringing this contradiction to the highest degree of tension, ipso facto prepares the way for the reconciliation of mental and physical labor and for their union on the basis of collectivism.

Our socialist country is striving for the reconciliation of physical and mental labor, which is the only thing that can lead to the harmonious development of man. Such is our program. The program gives only general directions for this: it points a finger, saying "Here is the general direction of your path!" But the program does not say how to attain this union in practice. It cannot say this, since no one could or even now can predict under what conditions, along what lines, socialism will be constructed in all countries and in each individual country, what the state of the economy will be, or by what methods the younger generation will be educated—precisely—in the sense of combining physical and mental labor. In this field, as in many others, we shall go and are going already by way of experience, research, and experiments, knowing only the general direction of the road to the

goal: as correct as possible a combination of physical and mental labor.

This factory and workshop school is interesting in that it is one of the practical attempts at a partial solution of this colossal social and educational problem. I do not mean by this that the problem has already been solved or that the solution is very near. On the contrary, I am convinced that to reach the goal we still have considerably further to go than the small distance we have already gone. If we could say that through the factory and workshop school we were actually approaching the combination of mental and physical labor, that would mean that we had already gone perhaps three-quarters or even more of the way to establishing socialism. But there is still a long, long way to go to that. A precondition for combining physical and mental labor is the destruction of class rule. In outline we have done this; power here is in the hands of the workers. But it was only when the working class had taken power into its hands that it understood for the first time how poor and how backward we still are, or, as the Russian critic Pisarev once said, how "poor and stupid" we are. By the word stupidity here we must understand simply cultural backwardness, since by nature we are not stupid at all, and when we have had time to learn we shall stand completely by ourselves.

The working class had to take power into its own hands so that there would be no political obstacles to the construction of the new society. But when it had won power, it found itself faced with another hindrance: poverty and lack of culture. Here is the difference between our position and the position of the proletariat in the advanced capitalist countries. On their road there is a direct obstacle: the bourgeois state, which allows only a definite area of proletarian activity, the area the ruling class considers permissible. The first task in the West is to overthrow class rule, the bourgeois state. There, it is more difficult to solve this problem than here, for the bourgeois state is stronger there than here. But when it has overthrown class rule, the Western proletariat will find itself in a more favorable position with respect to cultural creation than ours.

If now we have run ahead by a few years, this does not at all mean that we shall get to the realm of socialism earlier than the English or German proletariat. No, that has not been proven. On the road to the kingdom of socialism there are a few trenches or barricades. We took the first barricade—

the political one—earlier, but it is altogether possible that the Europeans will catch up on the second or third barricade. The economy, production, is the most difficult barricade, and only when we take it, when we raise the productive forces of socialism, will the cursed distinction between "worker" and "intellectual," which results from the fact that mental labor is separated from physical labor, disappear. It is not at all impossible—on the contrary, it is very probable—that the German proletariat, if it takes power into its hands in the next three years (I am speaking approximately), will with two or three jumps not only catch up with us, but even overtake us, because the "inherited" material basis for cultural creation is considerably richer there than here. Today the working class of Germany marches on paved roads, but its hands and feet are bound in class slavery. We walk in ruts, along ravines, but our hands and feet are free. And that, Comrades, typifies the difference between us and the European proletariat. Under the yoke of capital, it is now powerless even to start solving the problem of physical and mental labor. It does not have the power.

State power is the material capability and the formal right to say to the subject class: there, you have the right to come up to this line, but no further—as we, the ruling class in our country, say to the NEPmen. We are our own authority, but as soon as we look beneath our feet, there are puddles, holes, ditches of all sorts, and we hobble and stumble along; we move slowly. But the European proletariat, freed from the fetters on its hands and feet, will catch up to us; and we will of course welcome this, for they will help us, too, to get to the end of the matter.

I am saying this to point out that with just our own pedagogical measures we shall not complete the full solution of the basic problems of socialist education and the merging of physical with mental labor; but if we make a series of experiments on this road and reach partial successes, then that will already be an enormous plus both for us and for the European proletariat, who will be able to develop these partial successes on a wider scale. Thus, we must work along this road the more energetically, the more persistently, the more stubbornly.

In the field of pedagogics, i.e., in the field of the conscious cultivation of man, people have perhaps been learning even more blindly than in other fields. The social life of man had, as you know, an elemental character: human reason did not immediately start to work through, to think through social

life. Peasant production, the peasant family, church life, the "patriarchal"-monarchic state forms were laid down behind people's backs imperceptibly, over hundreds and thousands of years. Only at a certain level, and especially with the appearance of the natural sciences, did people begin to organize production consciously, not according to tradition, but according to planned design (of course, not on a social scale, but on a private one). Then they began to criticize the class structure and the royal power, to demand equality and democracy. Democracy meant the application of the reason of the young and still fresh bourgeoisie to the cause of the construction of the state. Thus, critical thought was transferred from questions of natural science and technology to the state. But social relations in the broad sense continued under the rule of the bourgeoisie to be laid down spontaneously. The proletariat arose spontaneously against capitalist spontaneity. Then conscious criticism arose. On this the theory of socialism was built.

What is socialist construction? It is economic construction according to reason, no longer only within the limits of the enterprise or trust, as under the rule of the bourgeoisie, but within the limits of the society, and then of all humanity. In socialism we have the application of scientific thought to the construction of human society. Just as earlier the bourgeoisie built factories "according to reason," and constructed its state according to (bourgeois) reason, so the working class says: "I will construct the whole of social life from top to bottom according to reason."

But man himself is also an elemental thing. Only gradually does he apply the criticism of reason to himself. The effect of education on man went, as we said, unseen. Only under a socialist society will the conditions for a scientific approach to man be established. And man needs such an approach. For what is man? Not at all a finished and harmonious being; no, his being is still very incoherent. In him there is not only the vestige of the appendix, which is no use to him—only appendicitis comes from it—but also, if you take his psyche, then you will find there as many unnecessary "vestiges" as you like, from which come all sorts of illnesses, all sorts of spiritual appendicitis.

Man, as a type of animal, developed under natural conditions, not according to plan, but spontaneously, and accumulated many contradictions in himself. One of these serious contradictions, not only social but physiological, is reflected in the sexual process, which has a disturbing effect on the young.

The problem of how to cultivate and adjust, how to improve and "finish" the physical and spiritual nature of man, is a colossal one, serious work on which is conceivable only under conditions of socialism. We may be able to drive a railway across the whole Sahara, build the Eiffel Tower, and talk with New York by radio, but can we really not improve man? Yes; we will be able to!

To issue a new "improved edition" of man—that is the further task of communism. But for this it is necessary as a start to know man from all sides, to know his anatomy, his physiology, and that part of his physiology which is called psychology.

Vulgar philistines say that socialism is a structure of total stagnation. Rubbish, the crassest rubbish! Only with socialism does real progress begin. Man will look for the first time at himself as if at raw material, or at best, as at a half-finished product, and say: "I've finally got to you, my dear *homo sapiens*; now I can get to work on you, friend!" To perfect man's organism, using the most varied combinations of methods, to regulate the circulation of the blood, to refine the nervous system, and at the same time to temper and strengthen it, make it more flexible and hardier—what a gigantic and fascinating task!

But this, of course, is the music of the future. What we have to do is lay the first stones in the foundations of socialist society. And the cornerstone is to increase the productivity of labor. Only on this basis can socialism develop. For each new social structure conquers because it increases the productivity of human labor. We will only be able to talk of a real, complete, and invincible victory of socialism when the unit of human power gives us more products than under the rule of private property. One of the most important means to this is the education of cultivated, qualified workers. Such education is now taking place here in this factory and workshop school. To what extent will these schools solve the problem of preparing a "change" in production? I shall not go into that question. That needs the serious test of experience. But let us impress on our memories the fact that the fate of our economy, and hence of our state, depends on the solution of this problem.

The education of qualified workers is one side of the matter; the education of citizens is the other. The socialist republic needs not robots of physical labor, but conscious builders. The educated man of the land of workers and peasants, what-

ever he may be by profession, with a narrow or broad specialization, must also be armed in one other field. This is the social field. Nothing protects one from the humiliating effect of specialization so well as the Marxist method, as Leninism, i.e., the method of understanding the conditions of the society in which you live, and the method of acting upon those conditions. And when we try to understand the relations between states, we again need the same method of Marxism-Leninism. Without the understanding of the connections between the private and the social, there can be no educated man.

The basic peculiarity of petty-bourgeois thought is that it is specialized in its own narrow sphere, locked in its own closet. There are learned bourgeois intellectuals who, even though they write learned books a thousand pages thick, still go on looking at questions separately, each for itself, without connections, and thus they remain limited petty bourgeois. One must be able to take every question in its development and in its connections with other questions; then the conclusions are so much the more guaranteed to be right. This guarantee is given only by the Marxist school. And therefore whatever the specialization, passing through the school of Leninism is essential for every educated worker, and especially for every future teacher.

The school of Leninism is a school of revolutionary action. "I am a citizen of the first workers' and peasants' republic in the world": that consciousness is the precondition of all the rest. And for us that consciousness is a requirement of self-preservation. We would be utopians, wretched dreamers, or dreamy wretches, if we began to think that we are assured for all eternity of a peaceful development for socialism. Not at all! In the international sense things have become easier for us, that is unquestionable. But do you think, Comrades, that the more the communist movement develops in Europe, the more we will be insured against the dangers of war? Anyone who thinks that is wrong. A dialectical approach is necessary here. While the Communist Party remains more or less dangerous, but not yet frightening, the bourgeoisie, being wary of giving it nourishment, will seek truces with us; but when the Communist Party of a given country becomes a threatening force, when the water starts to come up to the neck of the bourgeoisie, then the danger will grow again for us, too.

It was not for nothing that Vladimir Ilyich warned that we shall still be faced with having to go through a new explosion of the furious hatred of world capital for us. Of course,

if we were an isolated state, or the only one in the world, then after conquering power we would have built socialism by a peaceful path. But we are only a part of the world, and the world that surrounds us is still stronger than we are. The bourgeoisie will not give up its position without cruel fights, considerably more cruel than the ones we have already been through. The attacks from the bourgeoisie will take on a fierce character again when the Communist parties start to grow above the head of the bourgeoisie. It would therefore be an unforgivable piece of thoughtlessness to suppose that we will pass to socialism without wars and upheavals. No, they won't let us do that. We'll have to fight. And for that we need hardness, education in the spirit of revolutionary valor. The name that is written on the walls of your Institute — Karl Liebknecht — must not have been written in vain.²⁴

I had the good fortune to know Liebknecht over a period of some twenty years. He is one of the finest human figures that lives in my memory. Liebknecht was a real knight of revolutionary duty. He knew no other law in life than the law of the struggle for socialism. The best of German youth has long connected its best hopes, thoughts, and feelings with the figure of Karl Liebknecht, the fearless knight of the proletarian revolution. Education in revolutionary duty is education in the spirit of Karl Liebknecht. We must remember: we still have enormous difficulties to go through. And for that it is necessary for each one of you when you leave the walls of this Institute to have the right to say to yourself: the Karl Liebknecht Institute has made me not only a teacher, but a revolutionary fighter! [Applause]

LENINISM AND LIBRARY WORK

July 3, 1924

Comrades, let me first extend a welcome to your congress, the first Soviet congress of library workers. This congress, convened by Glavpolitprosvet,²⁵ has a special significance for our country. Here, a librarian — and everyone who has read the remarks of Vladimir Ilyich on this subject knows this — here, a librarian is not an official dealing with books, but rather he is, must be, must become a cultural warrior, a Red Army soldier fighting for socialist culture. Such a congress of troops of socialist culture I welcome with all my heart! [Applause]

Having scarcely begun, Comrades, I have already used the word "culture" two or three times. Just what, then, is culture? Culture is the sum total of all knowledge and skills amassed by mankind throughout all its preceding history. Knowledge for skills! Knowledge of everything that surrounds us, that we may change everything that surrounds us — change it in the interests of mankind. Of course, there exist other, quite different definitions of science and culture — idealistic, abstract, high-flown, false through and through, linked with the "eternal verities" and other such trumpery. We reject all these. We accept the concrete, historical, materialistic definition of culture that Marxism-Leninism teaches us. Culture is the conjunction of the skills and knowledge of historical mankind, the mankind of nations and classes. Knowledge grows out of the activities of man, out of his struggle with the forces of nature; knowledge serves to improve these activities, to spread the methods of combating each obstacle, and to increase the power of man.

If we assess the meaning of culture in this way we shall

A speech to the First All-Union Congress of Librarians. From *Pravda*, July 10, 1924. Translated for this volume from *The Generation of October* by Tom Scott.

ON STENOGRAPHY

October 27, 1924

I owe so much to stenography and stenographers that I find it difficult to know how and where to start. My close working connection with stenographers starts with the October Revolution. Up till then I never had the chance to take advantage of this wonderful skill—at least, not counting the trial of the first Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies (1906), when stenographers noted down the testimony and speeches of the accused, including myself.

Looking back on these seven years of revolution, I am completely unable to imagine how it would have been possible to get through them without the constant help of stenographers. I always watched with grateful amazement while my young friend Glazman, now dead, used to write under rapid dictation on speeding trains, over weeks, months, and years, orders and articles, and take minutes of the decisions of meetings, and thus carry out a huge part of the work that without him would never have been carried out at all. Taking shorthand on a train at full speed is a really heroic task. And when I received from Glazman or his colleagues articles for our newspaper *V Puti* [On the Road], orders or notes of speeches made from the steps of carriages, I always silently "blessed" the wonderful skill of stenography.

All the pamphlets and books written by me since 1917 were first dictated and then corrected from shorthand notes. This method of working admittedly also has certain negative features. When you write by yourself, you construct your sentences better and more accurately. But on the other hand, your attention gets too taken up with the details of expression and the very process of writing, and you easily lose sight

of the overall picture. When you dictate, individual omissions are unavoidable, but the general construction gains tremendously in consistency and logic. And the individual omissions, inaccurate formulations, etc., can be corrected afterwards on the shorthand record. This is the method I have mastered. I can now say with full conviction that in these years I would not have written a third of what I have done without the constant help of the stenographer comrades.

At first I experienced a certain embarrassment; it's as if you're working under surveillance—you can't slack off, your co-worker is waiting. But then I got used to it, accustomed myself to the system and began to find in it a force of discipline. When two people are sawing wood with a handsaw, they have to work rhythmically; when you learn how, it makes the work very much easier. It's the same with shorthand: thought becomes disciplined and works more rhythmically in harmony with the stenographer's pencil.

In our journal, some contributors express the hope that in the more or less near future ordinary cursive writing will be supplanted by shorthand. I do not undertake to judge how feasible this is. My colleagues whom I consulted on this point expressed doubt: the better, they say, a man writes shorthand for himself, the more difficult it tends to be for others to read his notes. I repeat, I do not undertake to judge this. But even in its present form, when stenography is a complicated, delicate specialization, the profession of a relatively small number of persons, its social role is invaluable and will without fail increase. In the first Soviet years, stenography mainly served politics. This is a field in which it will go on doing a lot. But at the same time it will increasingly serve economic tasks, science, art, and all branches of socialist culture. In a certain sense it can be said that the cultural growth of our society will be measured by the place that stenography has in it. The education and training of young stenographers is a task of primary importance. I hope that this task will be carried out successfully. But for now I'll finish these quick lines with a big hearty *thank you* to stenography and stenographers.