

[FOR BORISLAV PEKIĆ]

*the sow
that eats
her farrow*

THE LAND OF ETERNITY

The first act of the tragedy, or comedy (in the scholastic sense of the word), whose main character is a certain Gould Verschoyle, begins as all earthly tragedies do: with birth. The rejected positivist formula of milieu and race can be applied to human beings to the same degree as to Flemish art. Thus the first act of the tragedy begins in Ireland, "the ultima Thule, the land on the other side of knowledge," as one of Dedalus's doubles calls it; in Ireland, "the land of sadness, hunger, despair, and violence," according to another explorer, who is less inclined to myth and more to laborious earthy prose. However, in him too a certain lyrical quality is not in harmony with the cruelty of the region: "The ultimate step of the sunset, Ireland is the last land to see the fading of the day. Night has already fallen on Europe while the slanting rays of the sun still purple the fjords and wastelands in the West. But let the dark clouds form, let a star

fall, and suddenly the island again becomes as in a legend, that distant place covered with fog and darkness, which for so long marked the boundary of the known world to navigators. And on the other side is a break: the dark sea in which the dead once found their land of eternity. Their black ships on shores with strange names testify to a time when travel had something metaphysical about it: they summon up dreams without shores, without return."

THE ECCENTRICS

Dublin is a city that breeds a menagerie of eccentrics, the most notorious in the whole Western world: nobly disappointed, aggressive bohemians, professors in redingotes, *superfluous prostitutes, infamous drunkards, tattered prophets, fanatical revolutionaries, sick nationalists, flaming anarchists, widows decked out in combs and jewelry, hooded priests. All day long this carnivalesque cohort parades along the Liffey. In the absence of more reliable sources, Bourniquel's picture of Dublin enables us to get a sense of the experience Gould Verschoyle would inevitably take with him from the island, an experience that is drawn into the soul just as the terrible stench of fish meal from the cannery near the harbor is drawn into the lungs.

With a certain rash anticipation, we would be inclined to view this carnivalesque cohort as the last image our hero would see in a rapid succession of images: the noble menagerie of Irish eccentrics (to which, in some ways, he also belonged) descending along the Liffey all the way down to the anchorage, and disappearing as if into hell.

double bracketed overcoat (see p.)

THE BLACK MARSH

Gould Verschoyle was born in one such suburb of Dublin within reach of the harbor, where he listened to ships' whistles, that piercing howl which tells the righteous young heart that there are worlds and nations outside "Dubh-linn," this black marsh in which the stench and injustice are more heavily oppressive than anywhere else. Following the example of his father—who rose from bribe-taking customs official to even more wretched (in the moral sense) bureaucrat, and from passionate Parnellite to bootlicker and puritan—Gould Verschoyle acquired a revulsion for his native land, which is only one of the guises of perverted and masochistic patriotism. "The cracked looking glass of a servant, the sow that eats her farrow"—at nineteen Verschoyle wrote this cruel sentence, which referred more to Ireland than to his parents.

Wearied by the vain prattle in dark pubs where conspiracies and assassinations were plotted by phony priests, poets, and traitors, Gould Verschoyle wrote in his journal the sentence spoken by a certain tall nearsighted student, without foreseeing the tragic consequence that these words would have: "Anyone with any self-respect cannot bear to remain in Ireland and must go into exile, fleeing the country struck by the wrathful hand of Jupiter."

This was written in the entry for May 19, 1935.

In August of the same year he boarded a merchant ship, the *Ringsend*, which was sailing for Morocco. After a three-day stopover in Marseilles, the *Ringsend* sailed without one of its crew; or, to be exact, the place of the radio operator Verschoyle was filled by a newcomer. In February 1936 we find Gould Verschoyle near Guadalajara in the 15th Anglo-

American Brigade bearing the name of the legendary Lincoln. Verschoyle was then twenty-eight years old.

FADED PHOTOGRAPHS

Here the reliability of the documents, resembling, as they do, palimpsests, is suspended for a moment. The life of Gould Verschoyle blends and merges with the life and death of the young Spanish Republic. We have only two snapshots. One, with an unknown soldier next to the ruins of a shrine. On the back, in Verschoyle's handwriting: "Alcázar. Viva la República." His high forehead is half covered by a Basque beret, a smile hovers around his lips, on which one can read (from today's perspective) the triumph of the victor and the bitterness of the defeated: the paradoxical reflections that, like a line on the forehead, foreshadow inevitable death. Also, a group snapshot with the date November 5, 1936. The picture is blurred. Verschoyle is in the second row, still with a Basque beret pulled over his forehead. In front of the lined-up group a landscape stretches out, and it would not be hard to believe that we are in a cemetery. Is this the Honor Guard that fired salvos into the sky or into living flesh? The face of Gould Verschoyle jealously guards this secret. Over the rows of soldiers' heads, in the distant blue an airplane hovers like a crucifix.

CAUTIOUS SPECULATIONS

I see Verschoyle retreating from Málaga on foot, in the leather coat he took from a dead Falangist (under the coat there was only the thin, naked body and a silver cross on a leather string); I see him charging toward a bayonet, carried along by his own war cry as if by the wings of the extermi-

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nating angel; I see him in a shouting contest with Anarchists, whose black flag is raised on the bare hills near Guadalajara, and who are ready to die a noble, senseless death; I see him under the red-hot sky by a cemetery near Bilbao, listening to lectures in which, as at the Creation, life and death, heaven and earth, freedom and tyranny are fixed within boundaries; I see him discharging a clip of bullets into the air at planes, impotent, felled right afterward by fire, earth, and shrapnel; I see him shaking the dead body of the student Armand Joffroy, who died in his arms somewhere near Santander; I see him, his head wrapped in filthy bandages, lying in an improvised hospital near Gijón, listening to the ravings of the wounded, one of whom is calling on God in Irish; I see him talking with a young nurse who lulls him to sleep like a child, singing in a tongue unknown to him, and later he, half asleep and full of morphine, sees her climbing into the bed of a Pole who has had a leg amputated, and soon thereafter he hears, as in a nightmare, her aching love rattle; I see him somewhere in Catalonia, at the improvised battalion headquarters, sitting in front of the telegraph, repeating desperate calls for help while a radio in the nearby cemetery plays the gay and suicidal songs of the Anarchists; I see him suffering from conjunctivitis and diarrhea, and I see him naked to the waist, shaving by a well of poisoned water.

BETWEEN ACTS

In late May 1937, somewhere in the suburbs of Barcelona, Verschoyle requested to see the battalion commander. The commander, just past forty, looked like a well-preserved old man. Bent over his desk, he was signing death sentences. His aide, buttoned up to his neck and wearing shiny hunting

boots, stood beside him and was pressing a blotter after each signature. The room was stuffy. The commander wiped his face with a batiste handkerchief. Rhythmical explosions of heavy-caliber grenades were heard in the distance. The commander motioned to Verschoyle to speak. "Coded messages are getting into the wrong hands," said Verschoyle. "Whose?" asked the commander somewhat absentmindedly. The Irishman hesitated, suspiciously glancing at the aide. The commander then adopted the vocabulary of Verdun: "Speak up, son. Into whose hands?" The Irishman was silent for a moment, then bent over the desk and whispered something into the commander's ear. The commander rose, approached Verschoyle, and accompanied him to the door, all the while patting him on the shoulder the way recruits and dreamers are patted. That was all.

A CALL FOR TRAVEL

Verschoyle spent the hellish night between May 31 and June 1 in front of the Morse telegraph, sending stern messages to the forward positions over toward the mountains of Almería. The night was muggy and illuminated by rockets, which made the region look unreal. Just before dawn Verschoyle handed the telegraph over to a young Basque. The Irishman walked ten paces into the woods and, exhausted, lay face down on the damp grass.

He was awakened by a messenger from headquarters. Verschoyle first glanced at the sky, then at his watch; he hadn't slept more than forty minutes. The messenger gave him an order in a tone unbecoming his rank: there was a ship in the harbor whose radio didn't work—it must be repaired; when the job was finished, a report should be submitted to the second-in-command; *Viva la República!* Verschoyle

rushed into the tent, picked up the leather bag with his tools, and set off with the messenger to the harbor. During the night, someone had written a victorious slogan with white paint, still dripping, on the door of the customhouse: VIVA LA MUERTE. On the open sea far from the dock, a silhouette of a ship was outlined through the morning fog. The messenger and the sailors in the rowboat exchanged unnecessary passwords. Verschoyle got into the rowboat without looking back.

THE BRASS-PLATED DOOR

Charred timbers floated everywhere, remnants of a ship torpedoed during the night. Verschoyle watched the ashen sea, and this reminded him of scorned and scornworthy Ireland. (Even so, we cannot believe that there wasn't a touch of nostalgia in this scorn.) His traveling companions were silent, busy with their heavy oars. Soon they approached the ship, and Verschoyle noticed that they were being watched from the upper deck; the helmsman had handed a pair of binoculars to the captain.

Here follow some technical details, perhaps unimportant to the story. The ship was an old wooden steamer of some five hundred tons which was officially transporting anthracite to the French city of Rouen. Its brass parts—handholds, bolts, locks, and window frames—were almost green with tarnish, and the ship's flag, covered with coal soot, could hardly be identified.

Verschoyle climbed the ship's slippery rope ladder, accompanied by the two sailors from the rowboat (one of whom had relieved him of his leather bag, so the guest could climb more easily). There was no one on deck. The two sailors took him to a cabin below. The cabin was empty, and the door

was plated with that same tarnished brass. Verschoyle heard the turning of the key in the lock. At the same time he realized—more in rage than terror—that he had fallen into a trap, naïvely, like a fool.

The journey lasted eight days. Verschoyle spent these eight days and nights below deck, in a narrow cabin by the engine room, where the deafening noise of engines crushed the current of his thought and his sleep like a millstone. In a strange reconciliation with his fate (very deceptive, as shall be seen), he didn't bang on the door, he didn't call for help. It seemed he didn't even think of escape, which in any case was useless. In the morning he would wash himself over the tin basin, then glance at the food (herring, salmon, black bread, which they gave him three times a day through the round opening in the door), and without touching anything but water, lie down again on the hard sailor's bunk. He would stare through the porthole at the monotonous waves of the open sea. On the third day Verschoyle awoke from a nightmare: on the narrow bench across from his bunk, two men sat silently watching him. Verschoyle abruptly stood up.

THE TRAVELING COMPANIONS

Blue-eyed, with healthy white teeth, the visitors smiled at Verschoyle amicably. With an unnatural politeness (unnatural for the time and place), they also rose at once, and introduced themselves, slightly nodding their heads. To Verschoyle, who introduced himself, the syllables of his own name suddenly sounded strange and altogether alien.

The next five days the three men spent in the hot, narrow cabin behind the brass-plated door in a terrible game of chance, resembling three-handed poker in which the loser pays with his life. Interrupting the discussion only to gobble

a piece of dried herring (the fourth day Verschoyle also began to eat) or to refresh their dry throats and take a breather from their shouting (and then the deafening noise of the engines would become only the reverse of silence), the three men spoke of justice, of freedom, of the proletariat, of the goals of the Revolution, vehemently trying to prove their beliefs, as if they had purposely chosen this semidark cabin of a ship on international waters as the only possible objective and neutral terrain for this terrible game of argument, passion, persuasion, and fanaticism. With rolled-up sleeves, unshaven and sweaty, worn out from near fasting, they stopped the discussion completely only once: on the fifth day, the two visitors (besides their names, all that was known was that they were about twenty years old and not members of the crew) left Verschoyle alone for several hours. During that time, through the deafening noise of the engines, the Irishman heard the sound of a familiar foxtrot coming from the deck. Before midnight the music suddenly died, and the visitors returned, tipsy. They told Verschoyle that there was a celebration on board: a cablegram received that afternoon by the radioman had told them that their ship, the *Vitebsk*, had changed its name to *Ordzhonikidze*. They offered him some vodka. He refused, fearing poison. The young men understood and finished the vodka, laughing at the Irishman's distrust.

The sudden and unexpected halt of the engine noise abruptly interrupted the conversation in the cabin, as if that deadly rhythm was the ritual accompaniment which until then had given impetus and inspiration to their thoughts and arguments. Now they were silent, totally mute, listening to the waves splashing at the sides of the ship, to the thud of footsteps on deck, and the prolonged scraping of heavy chains. It was after midnight when the door of the cabin was

unlocked, and the three men left their quarters strewn with cigarette butts and fishbones.

THE HANDCUFFS

The *Vitebsk-Ordzhonikidze* dropped anchor in the open sea nine miles from Leningrad. From the cluster of distant lights on the shore, one soon separated, and grew larger, while the wind, like an advance guard, brought the noise of the boat that was approaching the ship. Three men in uniform, one with the rank of captain and the other two without insignia, approached Verschoyle and aimed their guns at him. Verschoyle put his hands up. They searched him, then tied a rope around his waist. Verschoyle compliantly went down the rope ladder and into the motorboat, where they handcuffed him to the seat. He watched the ghostly silhouette of the ship illuminated by searchlights. He saw his two companions also coming down the ladder with ropes tied around their waists. Soon all three sat side by side, handcuffed to the seat.

THE JUST SENTENCE

The true outcome of the six-day battle of words and arguments waged by the Irishman Gould Verschoyle and his two traveling companions will probably remain a secret to the contemporary researcher. It will also remain a psychological secret, and legally a most interesting one, whether it is possible for a man cornered by fear and despair to so sharpen his arguments and experience that he is able—without external pressure, without the use of force and torture—to throw into doubt all that has been developed through many years of upbringing, lectures, habit, and training in the consciousness

of two other men. Then, perhaps, the decision of the high tribunal, which, according to some loftier justice, had pronounced the same stern sentence (eight years of imprisonment) on each of the three participants in that long game of persuasion, might not seem entirely arbitrary. For even if it is believed that the two men succeeded, through dense and exhausting ideological polemics, in dispelling certain suspicions that had appeared in the head of the Republican Verschoyle (suspicions with possible far-reaching consequences), there was a perfectly justified suspicion that the other two had also felt the fatal influence of certain counterarguments: in the merciless battle of equal opponents, as in a bloody cockfight, no one comes out unharmed, regardless of which one walks away with the empty glory of victory.*

FINALE

We lose track of Verschoyle's two companions in Murmansk, on the banks of the Baltic Sea, where for a time during the terrible winter of 1942 they lay in the same section of the prison camp's outpatient ward, half blind and wasted with scurvy: all their teeth had fallen out, and they looked like old men.

Gould Verschoyle was murdered in November 1945, in Karaganda, after an unsuccessful attempt to escape. His

* During the interrogation Verschoyle stubbornly denied that, on that fatal day, during his report, he had whispered into the commander's ear that coded messages were reaching Moscow. He could not have known that the interrogator had before him the report of the second-in-command in which Verschoyle's words, expressing the dangerous and sacrilegious suspicion "that Soviet secret agents are trying to usurp the leadership positions in the Republican army," were repeated verbatim. A brief encounter with the second-in-command, Chelyustnikov, at the transit station in Karaganda revealed this secret to him: the commander had informed his aide of Verschoyle's confidential declaration as if it were a good joke.

frozen, naked corpse, bound with wire and hung upside down, was displayed in front of the camp's entrance as a warning to all those who dream of the impossible.

POSTSCRIPT

1829
In the commemorative volume *Ireland to Spain*, published by the Federation of Dublin Veterans, the name of Gould Verschoyle is mistakenly entered among some one hundred Irish Republicans slain in the battle of Brunete. Thus Verschoyle enjoyed the bitter glory of being pronounced dead some eight years before his actual death. The famous battle of Brunete, waged bravely by the Lincoln Battalion, took place the night of July 8-9, 1939.

[HOMMAGE À ANDRÉ GIDE]

the mechanical lions

THE COLOSSUS

The only historical personage in this story, Édouard Herriot, the leader of the French Radical Socialists, Mayor of Lyons, member of the Chamber of Deputies, Premier, musicologist, etc., will perhaps not play the most important part. Not because (let us state at once) this part is of less importance to the story than that of the other person—unhistorical though no less real—who appears here, but simply because there are many other documents about historical personages. Let us not forget that Édouard Herriot himself was a writer and journalist,* and a very distinguished politician whose biography can be found in any decent encyclopedia.

One source gives the following description of Herriot: "Big, strong, broad-shouldered, with an angular head covered by thick, bristly hair, a face shaped as if by a pruning

* *Mme Récamier et ses amis, La Russie nouvelle, Pourquoi je suis radical socialiste, Lyons n'est plus, Forêt normande, Jadis, Souvenirs, Vie de Beethoven, etc.*

knife, and cut off by a short, thick mustache, this man gave the impression of great strength. His voice, marvelous in itself and adaptable to the subtlest nuances and most modulated stresses, easily dominated any disorder. He knew how to control his facial expression." The same source gives the following description of his character: "It was a real spectacle to see him on the podium, alternating between serious and playful tones, between confidential and Jeremian proclamations of some principle. And if someone contradicted him, he accepted the little provocation; while the other expounded his views, a broad smile spread over Édouard Herriot's face—the preliminary sign of a devastating remark, which, the moment it was spoken, provoked a riot of laughter and applause to the utter confusion of the speaker caught in the trap. That smile, it is true, would disappear if the criticism was voiced in an insulting tone. Such attacks infuriated him and provoked in him a violent reaction, the more so since he was always cautious—a sensitivity which many saw as vanity."*

THE OTHER ONE

Of the other important person in this story, A. L. Chelyustnikov, we know only that he was about forty, tall, a little hunchbacked, blond, talkative, a boaster and womanizer and, until recently, the editor of the Ukrainian paper *New Dawn*. He was expert at poker and skat, and could play polkas and *chastushkas* on the accordion. Other testimony about him is highly contradictory and therefore perhaps unimportant. I am including it, although some of the sources are rightly suspect: he was a political commissar in the Spanish Civil War and distinguished himself in the cavalry in the battles around

* André Ballit in *Le Monde*, March 28, 1957.

Barcelona; one night, despite a high malarial fever, he slept with two nurses; by trickery he brought an Irishman suspected of sabotage to the Soviet cargo ship *Ordzhonikidze*, under the pretext that the ship's radio had to be repaired; he actually knew Ordzhonikidze personally; for three years he was the lover of the wife of an extremely prominent person (and for precisely this reason was sent to a prison camp); in his school's amateur drama group in Voronezh, he played the role of Arcady in Ostrovsky's play *The Forest*.

Even if the cited documents exude a certain unreliability, especially the last few, one of Chelyustnikov's stories—the one relating to Herriot—although seemingly a figment of the imagination, nevertheless deserves to be recorded. I am doing so because one can hardly doubt its credibility, and because everything suggests that some of Chelyustnikov's stories, strange as they seem, are nevertheless based on real events. The most convincing proof of all is that the following story was in a way confirmed by Édouard Herriot himself, that dazzling intelligence ("*une intelligence rayonnante*"), as Daladier accurately described him. So I will tell the story of that encounter of long ago between Chelyustnikov and Herriot as well as I can, freeing myself for a moment of that awful burden of documents in which the story is buried, while referring the skeptical and curious reader to the appended bibliography, where he will find the necessary proof. (Perhaps it would have been wiser if I had chosen some other form of expression—an essay or a monograph—where I could use all these documents in the usual way. Two things, however, prevent me: the inappropriateness of citing actual oral testimony of reliable people as documentation; and my inability to forgo the pleasure of narration, which allows the author the deceptive idea that he is creating the world and thereby, as they say, changing it.)

THE TELEPHONE AND THE GUN

On that cold November night in 1934 Chelyustnikov, a contributing editor of the local newspaper responsible for cultural affairs and the fight against religion, was sleeping naked as a baby in a large aristocratic bed in a cozy room on the third floor of a house on Yegorovka Street. His shiny raspberry-colored boots were leaning neatly against the bed, while his clothes and underwear lay strewn about the room, mixed haphazardly (a sign of passionate haste) with a woman's silk underwear. The room gave off the warm smell of sweat, vodka, and cologne.

Chelyustnikov had a dream (if he is to be believed), in which he was to appear on stage in a role, probably as Arcady in *The Forest*, but he couldn't find his clothes anywhere. Terrified (in the dream), he heard the bell calling him to the stage, but he stood as if petrified, or, rather, sat, naked and hairy, unable to move. Suddenly, as if all this was happening onstage, the curtain rose, and through the dazzling side lights, which held him in the cross fire of their rays, he made out the audience, up in the balcony and down in the orchestra, their heads illuminated by purple haloes. In the first row, he thought he could recognize the members of the Provincial Committee, and among them he clearly distinguished the shiny bald spot of Comrade M., the editor-in-chief of *New Dawn*, who was choking with laughter and mocking and insulting him about his masculinity. The bell in the dressing room kept ringing, more loudly and insistently, so that Chelyustnikov thought (in the dream) that it was a fire alarm, that the curtains had caught fire, and that at any moment a general scrambling and panic would break out while he would stay there on the stage, naked as a baby, unable to

move, exposed to the mercy of the flames. His right hand suddenly broke free of the spell, and, on the border between dream and reality, instinctively reached for the gun that, by force of habit, he kept under his pillow. He turned on the light on the night table, and knocked over a glass of vodka. At the same instant he realized that his boots were now more important than his gun, and quickly jumped into them, as into a saddle. The wife of the editor-in-chief of *New Dawn* turned in her sleep and then, awakened by the ringing, opened her beautiful, slightly puffy Asiatic eyes. To their relief, the telephone abruptly stopped ringing. There followed an anxious whispered conference. Nastasia Fedotevna M., confused and frightened, tried to put on her bra, which Chelyustnikov had tossed over to her from the pile of clothes. The phone started ringing again. "Get up," Chelyustnikov said, putting the gun under his belt. Nastasia Fedotevna stared at him, horrified. Chelyustnikov walked over to the flustered woman, placed a kiss between her ample breasts, and said: "Pick up the phone." The woman got up, and Chelyustnikov covered her gallantly with his leather coat. A moment later he heard her voice. "Who? Chelyustnikov?" (The man put his finger to his lips.) "I have no idea." (Pause.) Then the woman replaced the receiver, from which an abrupt click could be heard, and sank into the armchair. "The Provincial Committee..." (Pause.) "They say it's urgent."

THE FOLDER

Before he returned to his cold apartment on Sokolov Prospect, Chelyustnikov wandered awhile through the snowy streets. He used a roundabout route along the Dnieper, and it took him a whole hour to get home. He slipped off his

leather coat, poured himself a glass of vodka, and turned on the radio. Scarcely five minutes had passed when the telephone rang. He let it ring three times before picking up the receiver. He acted as if surprised by this late call (it was already past two), then said that, since it was urgent, he'd be there in half an hour at most: he had to put his clothes on, since he had just undressed. All right, they said, since it was urgent, they'd send the car to pick him up. Comrade Pyasnikov would explain everything to him in person.

Comrade Pyasnikov, secretary of the Provincial Committee, quickly came to the point: this morning around eleven o'clock Citizen Édouard Herriot, the leader of the French workers, would arrive in Kiev. Chelyustnikov replied that he had read in the paper of Herriot's visit to Moscow, but didn't know that he would visit Kiev also. Pyasnikov asked him if he realized how important the visit of such a man was. Chelyustnikov said, yes, he knew (although it wasn't too clear to him why this visit was so important or what part he was to play in it). As if he had sensed Chelyustnikov's uncertainty, Pyasnikov began to explain: Citizen Herriot, in spite of his political persuasion, entertained certain typical bourgeois suspicions of our revolutionary movement. He cited many details from the life and works of Herriot, emphasizing his petty bourgeois origins, citing his various positions, recounting his love for classical music and progressive movements the world over, and stressing the role he played in getting the land of the Bolsheviks (that was what he said, "the land of the Bolsheviks") recognized by France. Finally, Pyasnikov took a folder out of his desk drawer and started to leaf through it. "Here," he said, "for example, I quote: 'It is impossible even for an irreligious Frenchman' (as you can see, Herriot liberated himself from religious scruples, if one can believe him) 'even for an irreligious Frenchman not to

raise his voice against the persecution of priests . . . ' " (Here Comrade Pyasnikov paused, looking up at Chelyustnikov: "You understand?" Chelyustnikov nodded and Pyasnikov added: "For them, priests are still some kind of sacred cow, as they are for our peasants . . . of former times, of course.") " . . . since that also represents an attack on freedom of thought. An attack which, after all, is totally unnecessary, et cetera, et cetera, ' " said Pyasnikov closing the folder. "I think it's clear now?" "Yes," said Chelyustnikov, pouring himself a glass of water. He stayed in Comrade Pyasnikov's office until four in the morning. And he was on his feet again at seven. He had exactly four hours until the arrival of the train.

THE HOURS AND THE MINUTES

That important morning in the life of A. L. Chelyustnikov unfolded, hour by hour, as follows: at 7:00 he was awakened by the telephone service. He gulped down a glass of vodka on an empty stomach and, naked to the waist, washed himself with cold water. He dressed, shined his boots. For breakfast he scrambled a couple of eggs on the hot plate and ate them with cucumbers. At 7:20 he telephoned the Provincial Committee. Comrade Pyasnikov answered with his mouth full, apologizing: he hadn't left the office all night, he had dozed off sitting at the desk; he asked Chelyustnikov how he was; he had set up an appointment for him with Avram Romanich, a make-up man, in the lobby of the theater (the stage entrance) for four that afternoon; he should be prompt. At 7:25 Chelyustnikov phoned Nastasia Fedotevna. After a long pause (downstairs, the car sent by the Provincial Committee was honking) he heard the flustered voice of the wife of the editor-in-chief of *New Dawn*. She couldn't imagine why they had looked for him at her place last night. She was desperate.

If M. (her husband) found out, she'd poison herself. She wouldn't be able to stand the shame. Yes, yes, poison; rat poison. Through the torrent of her words, her babbling and sobbing, Chelyustnikov was hardly able to inject a word of comfort: she shouldn't worry, it was all pure coincidence, he'd explain everything, but not now, he was in a hurry, the car was waiting downstairs. And she shouldn't think of rat poison. At 7:30 he got into the black limousine parked in front of the house; a few minutes before 7:45 he arrived at the Provincial Committee. Comrade Pyasnikov's eyes were red and puffy. They downed a glass of vodka, talked things over, and made telephone calls from 8:00 to 9:30, using two different offices so as not to disturb each other. At 9:30 Comrade Pyasnikov, whose eyes were like a rabbit's, pushed a button on his large walnut desk, and the cleaning woman brought in tea. For a long time they sipped the hot tea, smiling at each other like those who have accomplished a difficult and important task. At 10:00 they left for the railroad station to check on the security. Comrade Pyasnikov demanded that the poster with the slogan RELIGION IS THE OPIATE OF THE PEOPLE be removed and promptly replaced by another with a somewhat more metaphysical sound: LONG LIVE THE SUN, DOWN WITH THE NIGHT. Exactly at 11:00, as the train carrying the highly important guest pulled into the station, Chelyustnikov detached himself from the welcoming committee and joined the security agents, who were standing to one side, dressed in civilian clothes. They were carrying suitcases and pretending to be casual, curious passengers welcoming the friendly visitor from France with spontaneous applause. Quickly sizing up Herriot (who seemed to be somehow insignificant, perhaps because of his beret), Chelyustnikov left through the side door, got into the car, and drove off.

He arrived at Saint Sophia at exactly 12:00.

THE PAST

The Cathedral of Saint Sophia was built as a murky tribute to the glorious days of Vladimir, Yaroslav, and Izyaslav. It is only a distant replica of the Korsun Monastery, named after the "holy city" of Kerson, or Korsun. The chronicles of the learned Nestor note that Prince Vladimir brought icons, church statuary, as well as "four bronze horses" from Korsun, the city of his baptism.* But since the first cornerstone of Saint Sophia was laid by the eternally blessed Vladimir, much water and blood and many corpses have flowed down the glorious Dnieper. The ancient Slavic gods continued to struggle for a long time against the celebrated caprice of the prince of Kiev who adopted the monotheistic faith of Christianity, and the pagan Russian people fought with pagan brutality against "the sons of Dagh-Bog," and for a long time cast their deadly arrows and spears on the winds, "the children of Stribog." The brutality of the believers in the true faith, however, was not less barbaric than pagan brutality, and the fanaticism of the believers in the tyranny of one god was still more fierce and efficient.

Holy Kiev, the mother of Russian cities, had some four hundred churches at the beginning of the eleventh century, and according to the chronicles of Dietmar of Merseburg, it became "the loveliest pearl of Byzantium and a rival of

* "Four bronze horses" (*chetire kone mediani*), some experts claim, should be rendered "four bronze icons" (*chetire ikone mediani*). In this lexical ambivalence, we can see primarily an example of the conflict and merging of the two idolatries: the pagan and the Christian. My source, Jean Descatte, discovered that all the pages relating to the Cathedral of Saint Sophia were taken almost verbatim from a French study of Russian art. He published an article on the subject in the *Journal de Police*, which is read in Bordeaux and Toulouse; like a distant echo this added another circle to the metaphysical message of the story "Dogs and Books."

Constantinople." Choosing the Byzantine Empire and faith, through Orthodoxy, Russia attached herself to an ancient and refined civilization, but because of its schism and the renunciation of Roman authority she was left to the mercy of the Mongol conquerers and could not rely on the protection of Europe. This schism, in turn, brought about the isolation of Russian Orthodoxy from the West; their churches were built on the sweat and bones of the peasants, ignorant of the high sweep of Gothic spires, while in the domain of sensibility Russia was never swept up by chivalry and would "beat her women as if the cult of the Lady never existed."

All this is more or less written on the walls and in the frescoes of Kiev's Saint Sophia. The rest is only historical data of lesser significance: the church was founded by Yaroslav the Wise in 1037, in eternal memory of the day he triumphed over the pagan Petchenegs. He ordered the magnificent Golden Door built near the portal of the church, so that the mother of Russian cities, Kiev, would not envy Constantinople. Its glory was short-lived. The Mongol hordes poured out of the steppes (1240), and leveled the holy city. But Saint Sophia was already in ruins: in 1240 her vaults collapsed. At the same time, the vaults of a church named Desatna also collapsed, killing hundreds of people who had taken refuge there to avoid brutal massacre by the Mongols. In his *Description of the Ukraine*, published in Rouen in 1651, the Master of Beauplan, a Norman nobleman in the service of the Polish king, wrote words that resemble an epitaph: "Of all the Kiev churches, only two remain as a memory to posterity. The rest are sad ruins: *reliquiae reliquiarum*."

The most famous mosaic of Saint Sophia, "The Virgin Mother Blessing," was glorified by the people of Kiev under the name *Nerushimaya stena*, the indestructible wall—a distant allusion to the twelfth stanza of the Akatist Hymn.

Legend, however, justifies this name in another way: when the church collapsed, all its walls crumbled except those of the apse, which stood undamaged, a gift of the Virgin Mother in the mosaic.

A CIRCUS IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

As irrelevant as it may seem at first (we shall see, though, that this irrelevancy is only an illusion), we cannot fail to mention at this point those strange frescoes that decorate the walls of the circular staircases leading to the upper floor, where the princes and their guests, the boyars, could participate in the service without leaving the palace. These frescoes were found under painting done in 1843; due to haste and curiosity—the mother of invention as well as error—the restoration had been carried out with the utmost carelessness: to the old patina, to the shimmer of gold and vestments, the *nouveau riche* dazzle of boyar wealth and luxury was added. Other than that, the scenes were left untouched: under the azure firmament of Byzantium, the hippodrome and circus; at the focal point, the honorary loge of the Emperor and Empress, surrounded by their retinue; behind the barrier, grooms waiting to release their rearing horses into the arena; hard-faced warriors armed with spears, accompanied by a pack of hounds pursuing wild beasts; acrobats and actors performing their skills on the stage under the open sky; a muscular athlete holding a long pole on which an acrobat is climbing, as agile as a monkey; a gladiator armed with an ax, lunging at the ^{→ animal} tamet, who is wearing a bear's head. X

The book of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, who speaks of the ceremonies at the Byzantine court in a chapter entitled "The Gothic Games," gives us the meaning of the above depiction: "The entertainments, called Ludus Gothicus, are held

every eighth day after Christmas at the will of His Gracious Majesty, and during that time the guests of His Gracious Majesty disguise themselves as Goths, wearing the masks and heads of various cruel beasts."

So much for the past.

THE BREWERY

At present, Kiev's Saint Sophia shelters under its high vaults a part of the Spartacus Brewery—the drying kiln and the warehouse. The enormous twenty-ton tanks, set on stands made of planks, run along the walls, and large, heavy steel vats are scattered among the columns as far as the apse itself. The drying kiln takes up two floors, with wooden gratings reaching from the top of the windows to the arcades. (The constant temperature of 50° Fahrenheit is particularly suitable for the growth of those useful bacteria that give beer its unique taste.) Curved aluminum pipes pass through one of the side windows, which has been removed, and connect the drying kiln and tanks with the fermentation tank, which is located in a large low building some hundred yards from the church. Scaffolding and ladders connect the gratings, pipes, and tanks, and the sour smell of hops and malt brings to the ancient walls the scent of the boundless steppes after the rain. The frescoes and altar are covered (as a result of a recent decree) with long hemp curtains, which are draped along the walls like gray flags. In the place where the Immaculate Virgin, "surprised by the sudden appearance of the Archangel," once stood (or, more exactly, still stands under the gray veil), there hangs the portrait of the Father of the People in a heavy gilded frame: the work of the academic painter Sokolov, a worthy artist. In a snowstorm an old woman makes her way through the crowd, trying to kiss the

hand of the Gracious One, to kiss it like a peasant—sincerely. He smiles at the old woman, resting his hand on her shoulder, like a father. Soldiers, workers, and children watch with admiring eyes. Under the portrait, on the same wall, where through the folds of hemp the murky light from the two windows penetrates, stand billboards and graphs. Groggy and stupefied from the smell of hops, Chelyustnikov looked at the production graph as if, feverish, he were watching his own temperature chart.

ANOTHER RESTORATION

I. V. Braginsky, "participant in the Revolution, son of peasants, Bolshevik," chief production engineer, took off his cap, scratched his head, turned the paper over in his hands, and, probably for the third time, read it without comment. Meanwhile Chelyustnikov examined the interior of the church, looked up toward the high vaults, poked behind the scaffolding, estimated the weight of the tanks and vats, soundlessly moving his dry lips as he calculated. These high frescoed vaults reminded him of a small wooden church in his native village where long ago he had attended the service with his parents and listened to the mumbling of the priests and the singing of the congregation: a distant and unreal memory, which had faded away in him, a new man with a new outlook on life. The rest of what happened that day in Saint Sophia we learn from Chelyustnikov's own testimony: "Ivan Vasilevich, participant in the Revolution, son of peasants, Bolshevik, wasted two hours of our valuable time in useless prattle and persuasion. Believing the attainment of the monthly beer production quota to be more important than religious spectacles, he crumpled the People's Committee's order and threw it in my face. Aware that time was passing, I tried to reason

with him, to explain that it was for the common good that the church be made ready for a religious service. Powerless against his stubbornness, I took him to the office and in private confided the secret to him, without mentioning the name of the visitor. Even this argument didn't convince him, nor did the several telephone calls I made from the military telephone in his quarters to the officials in charge. Finally I pulled out my last argument: I pointed my pistol at him. . . . Under my personal supervision a hundred and twenty prisoners from the nearby regional prison camp carried out another restoration of the church, in less than four hours. We leaned a part of the kiln against the wall and camouflaged it with hemp coverings and canvas, which we also threw over the scaffolding, as if the east wall were undergoing a real restoration. We removed the steel tanks and vats by rolling them on logs (by manpower alone, without technology) into the yard of the building containing the fermentation tank. At 3:45 I got into the car, and exactly at the appointed time reached the lobby of the theater, where Avram Romanich was waiting for me."

THE BEARD AND THE PRIEST'S HAT

We further cite Chelyustnikov's testimony: "Comrade Pyasnikov explained everything to him (to Avram Romanich) and, as he told me later, even made him sign a declaration promising to keep silent about the matter, as if it were a state secret. This obviously had its effect; Avram Romanich's hands trembled while he was fixing my beard. We borrowed the priest's robe from the theater wardrobe, with its purple sash, and the high priest's hat, and in a note to the management we stated that we needed these items for members of the culture brigade, who were launching antireligious shows

in the villages and workers' collectives. Avram Romanich asked no more questions, and threw himself completely into his work; his hands soon stopped shaking. He was unquestionably good in his profession. Not only did he make me into a real archpriest, but on his own initiative he also gave me a fake paunch. 'When have you ever seen a thin priest, Citizen Chelyustnikov?' I agreed with this, and regardless of what later happened to him (which I won't dwell on here), I insist that Avram Romanich deserves almost as much credit for the success of the whole affair as I do: he gave me some advice that was of great value to me despite the fact that I had some stage experience. 'Citizen Chelyustnikov,' he said, now totally forgetting his fear and completely immersed in his work, 'don't forget for a moment that a beard, especially this kind of beard, is not held up by the head but by the chest. So right now, no time to lose, you must learn to coordinate the movement of your head and body.' He even gave me some useful advice about the service and the chanting—training he had probably acquired in the theater. (Or maybe in a synagogue; who the hell knows?) 'When you don't know what to say next, Citizen Chelyustnikov, keep mumbling in a low voice. Mumble as much as you can, as if you were angry with the congregation. And roll your eyes as if cursing the god you serve, even if just temporarily. As for chanting...' 'We haven't got time for that now,' I said. 'We'll chant later, Avram Romanich!'"

THE RASPBERRY-COLORED BOOTS

Chelyustnikov stayed in the dressing room a little over an hour—a relatively short time, considering the transformation he underwent. A. T. Kashalov, simply called Alyosha, the chauffeur of the Provincial Committee, who had driven him

there, kissed his hand when he got in the car. "It was like a dress rehearsal," writes Chelyustnikov, "and I lost the stage fright I had felt when left without the coaching of Avram Romanich. At first I thought that Alyosha was kidding, but I soon realized that there was no limit to human credulity: if I had appeared with a crown on my head, he would probably have fallen on his knees in the mud and snow. It will take a great deal of time and effort," adds Chelyustnikov, not without bitterness and self-righteousness, "before all traces of the dark past are weeded out of the peasants' souls."

(Let us say at once: A. T. Kashalov never once admitted during the long interrogation, not even under the worst torture, that he had been made a fool of that day. When confronted with Chelyustnikov in the investigator's office, less than a month after the event, he obstinately maintained that he was only joking with Citizen Chelyustnikov. Despite his physical exhaustion, despite his broken ribs, he was quite convincing in his own defense: how could he have believed that an arch-priest was getting into the car, when it was Citizen Chelyustnikov he had brought to the theater? Asked if it was true that on that day—November 21, 1934—he had asked the alleged ecclesiastical personage, i.e., Comrade Chelyustnikov, "And what about Citizen Chelyustnikov, should we wait for him?", Alyosha answered in the negative. Asked if it was true that he had said to the alleged ecclesiastical personage, i.e., Comrade Chelyustnikov, "It will soon be easier to meet a reindeer than a priest in Kiev," he again answered in the negative. Asked if it was true that the alleged ecclesiastical personage, i.e., Comrade Chelyustnikov, had inquired in a grave tone of voice, "And why do you need priests, my son?", he, A. T. Kashalov, answered, "To pray for sinful souls," the answer was again in the negative.

At 5:30 the black limousine stopped in front of the

unlit entrance of the church. The archpriest Chelyustnikov raised the skirts of his robe; for a moment there was a flash of his shiny raspberry-colored boots. "Do you get it now, you fool?" Chelyustnikov asked Alyosha, who was gaping in bewilderment first at his beard and then at his boots. "Now do you get it?"

THE CENSER

"The service began a few minutes before seven," writes Chelyustnikov, who actually gives us a detailed account of the ceremony. (But a certain creative need to add to the living document some possibly unnecessary color, sound, and smell—this decadent Holy Trinity of the moderns—urges me to imagine what is not in Chelyustnikov's text: the flickering and crackling of the candles in silver candelabras brought from the treasury of the Kiev museum—and here again, the document becomes intertwined with our imagined picture; the reflection of the flames on the saints' ghostly faces in the arched apse, on the folds of the long robe of the Virgin Mother in the mosaic, and on the purple cloak with three blazing white crosses; the shimmer of black and gold on the halos and frames of the icons, on the church vessels, the chalice, and the crown, and on the censer swung in half-darkness to the accompaniment of its squeaking chains, while the smell of incense, the soul of the evergreen, merged with the sour smell of hops and malt.) "The minute Comrade Rilsky ran into the church," continues Chelyustnikov, "and began to cross himself, I picked up the censer and began to swing it over the heads of our congregation. I pretended not to notice the arrival of the new believers, although in the half-darkness, through the incense smoke, I could clearly make out the bald spot of Comrade M. and the bristly hair of

Citizen Herriot. Quietly, on tiptoe, they walked to the middle of the church, and stopped there. The stage fright I had felt when they suddenly entered had left me and, still swinging the censer, I moved toward them, mumbling. Citizen Herriot's hands were folded, not as in prayer, but one fist in the other near the groin, tightly squeezing his Basque beret. After I swung the censer over them, I continued another few steps and turned around: Citizen Herriot looked at the ceiling, then leaned over toward his interpreter, who was leaning toward Comrade Pyasnikov. Then I swung the censer over Nastasia Fedotevna, who knelt down and lowered her head, which was covered with a black kerchief. Without moving, she threw me a quick glance full of encouragement, which erased the last traces of my anxiety. (Not a shadow left on her face from this morning's fear.) Zhelma Chavchavadze, her hands folded in prayer and her head also wrapped in a black kerchief, was kneeling beside Nastasia Fedotevna. She was the wife of Comrade Pyasnikov, and herself an old Party member. Her eighteen-year-old daughter, Heva, a member of the Komsomol, was kneeling beside her mother. Except for an old woman whose face I didn't know and whose presence I couldn't explain, all the faces were familiar: next to Comrade Alya, who brought us tea that morning in Comrade Pyasnikov's office, sat the editorial staff and the secretaries of the Provincial Committee, while some of the women, those I couldn't place, were without a doubt the wives of comrades from the Cheka.* I have to admit that without exception all played their roles with discipline and dedication. Along with the above-mentioned, here are the names of the rest of the comrades, since, as I said, I believe that their contribution is no less important than my own." (There follow forty names,

* Chelyustnikov always uses this word (denoting the Soviet secret police of 1917-22).

interspersed here and there with the comment "with wife.") "With twelve workers from the cultural brigade and their two bodyguards, this makes a total of sixty *believers*." After listing the names, Chelyustnikov concludes: "Comrade Herriot and his retinue stayed in the church for only five minutes, although it seemed to me they stayed a full fifteen."

THE EXPLANATION OF THE CIRCUS

The frozen ritual of the liturgy was still in progress as in a fresco—where in the ecstasy of prayer believers first lower their gaze toward earth, the mother of hell, and then raise it to heaven, the seat of Paradise—when Herriot and his entourage tiptoed out to look at the famous frescoes painted along the circular staircases. An art historian, Lydia Krupenick, engaged for this occasion, explained to Herriot in impeccable French (on which he sincerely congratulated her) the presence of profane scenes in the temple of God—an enigma that could not escape the attention of the curious visitor. "Although the circular staircases are some distance from the shrine, a fact Comrade Herriot can verify for himself, they are nevertheless an integral part of the church and in this light, as we see it, the presence of circus scenes in the temple of God should have astonished and scandalized the priests. *Mais ce sont là des scrupules tout modernes,*" continued Lydia Krupenick, "*aussi étrangers aux Byzantins du onzième siècle qu'aux imagiers et aux huchiers de vos cathédrales gothiques.* Just as the piety of your ancestors was not in the least offended by the obscene and often grotesque carvings of gargoyles and on misericords, so the introduction of secular painting into churches did not seem in the least scandalous in the eyes of our pious ancestors. It is known," continued Lydia Krupenick, as Comrade Herriot nodded his head, star-

ing at the frescoes, particularly drawn to the musical instruments, "it is known that in Constantinople, during the reign of the iconoclasts, the faces of Christ and the saints were replaced with various satanic scenes: horse races and bloody spectacles of hunts for wild beasts and human beings." (Comrade Herriot nodded his head, turning his beret in his hands like a schoolboy.) "While making this comparison, we shouldn't forget," Lydia Krupenick continued in her charming voice, which nevertheless seemed to conceal a certain anger, "other cultural monuments in the West with similar motifs—for example, the ceiling of the palatine chapel in Palermo, which depicts the same profane motifs as Saint Sophia of Kiev: the fighting of athletes, and slaves playing flutes and reed pipes. And finally, we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that Saint Sophia of Kiev was, *tout comme les chapelles de vos rois normands*, a palatine church, and that the circular staircases led to the apartments of the princes. Seen in this light, the profane themes were perfectly appropriate, *n'est-ce pas?*"

Comrade Herriot, whose feet were cold,* looked at the frescoes silently, sunk in contemplation.

THE MECHANICAL LIONS

The next day, still fresh from the impact of the trip, sitting in a warm compartment of the Kiev-Riga-Königsberg sleeping car, feverish and wrapped in blankets, Édouard Herriot recorded his first impressions in his notebook. Only one fact (one that relates to our story) marred the purity of his ob-

* It is a known fact that Herriot returned ill from this trip, and that he barely survived. One malicious contributor to *Charivari* wrote in this connection that Herriot doubtless became ill "while visiting cold churches and overheated palaces." This allusion provoked much vehement commentary at the time.

servations: the presence of beggars in front of Saint Sophia. He formulated his perplexity in the following way: "These beggars in front of the church, most of them lame and old, but some very young and seemingly healthy, who flocked around us as we left the splendid Saint Sophia, are no doubt that tenacious race of Russian paupers and idiots who gave old Russia its bizarre fauna." (There follow comments on the tasks awaiting the young nation.)

That same detail about beggars (and this is the only reason we mention it) we find also in Chelyustnikov: "As we left the church, we arrested a bunch of parasites who had swooped down on us from out of nowhere, probably attracted by the smell of incense."

Leafing through his notes (from which emanated faces, landscapes, conversations, an entire world so similar to, and yet so different from, the one that existed twelve years earlier, when he had first visited Russia), Herriot tried to condense his impressions, to reduce them to essentials. With his typical pragmatism and wit, he decided that the simplest and most efficient way to do so (for now) would be to repeat the dedication that appeared in his book twelve years ago, as a symbol of the consistency of his views, and thereby silence the malicious. He would repeat it *in extenso*, the same way he wrote it then, in November 1922, and address it to the same person: Élie-Joseph Bois, editor-in-chief of *Petit Parisien*. To confirm the validity of this decision, he took out of his briefcase a leather-bound copy of his book, the last of the twenty copies of the special edition (*il a été tiré de cet ouvrage 20 exemplaires sur Alfa réservé à Monsieur Herriot*), and glanced at the dedication (which we will give here in translation, thereby losing much of the authenticity and style of the original): "Dear friend: When I set off for Russia not only was I heaped with insults from our most prominent critics, but they fore-

saw the worst misfortune befalling me. They saw in me the very image of that wretched monk who during the Middle Ages set out from Lyons to convert the Tartars and Khans. That was the time when the princes of Moscow, to frighten their visitors, would hide mechanical lions under their thrones, whose duty it was to growl at the right moment and in the right place during the conversation. But you, my dear friend, were prepared to understand my intentions and to believe in my impartiality. I am returning from a journey that passed with ridiculous ease. They didn't signal their mechanical lions to growl at me. I was able to observe everything freely and in peace. I edited my notes unconcerned as to whether I would please someone or not. And I dedicate them to you as a sign of recognition: accept them. Sincerely yours, Édouard Herriot." Satisfied with his decision, Herriot set the book aside and continued to stare at what he called "the melancholy of the Russian landscape."

(The consequences of Herriot's second journey to Russia are of historical significance and therefore outside the interest of our story.)

POST FESTUM

A. L. Chelyustnikov was arrested in Moscow in September 1938, four years after the murder of Kirov (and in connection with it), and a little less than four years after the Herriot incident. He was sitting in a movie theater when the usherette approached him and whispered that he was urgently wanted outside. Chelyustnikov got up, adjusted his holster, and walked out into the lobby. "Comrade Chelyustnikov," a stranger said to him, "you are urgently needed at the Provincial Committee. A car is waiting." Chelyustnikov swore inwardly, thinking that it involved another big comedy like

the one concocted four years ago, and for which he had received a medal and a promotion. He got into the car without suspecting anything. He was then disarmed, handcuffed, and taken to Lubyanka prison. He was beaten and tortured for three months, but he would not sign a declaration that he had sabotaged the Soviet rule, that he had participated in the conspiracy against Kirov, or that he had joined the Trotskyites in Spain. They left him in solitary for another ten days to think it over: sign the confession or his wife would be arrested and their one-year-old daughter taken to an orphanage. Chelyustnikov finally broke down and signed the declaration, admitting the charges made in the indictment—among them, that he was a member of a conspiracy led by Avram Romanich Shram. He got ten years. In the prison camp he met an old NKVD acquaintance alongside whom he had fought earlier in Spain. Chelyustnikov became an informer. He was rehabilitated in 1958. Status: Married, three children. In 1963, with a group of tourists, he traveled to Bordeaux, Lyons, and Paris. In Lyons he visited the memorial library dedicated to its famous mayor, and wrote in the guest book: "An admirer of the work of Édouard Herriot." Signature: A. L. Chelyustnikov.

A NOVEL BY *Danilo Kiš*

TRANSLATED BY DUŠKA MIKIĆ-MITCHELL

INTRODUCTION BY JOSEPH BRODSKY

*a tomb
for Boris
Davidovich*



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