

The Students

Stepan Ivanovitch Gravinov bent over his notebook, making a last-minute review of his notes on the significance of Belinsky in the development of nineteenth-century revolutionary literature. The notebook was propped against the pile of books, newspapers, and journals stacked on the back of the table for want of any other place to put them.

Pavel Pavlovitch Zagordi, his roommate, began rummaging through the pile and almost set everything tumbling. Each braced the pile with one hand while trying to reestablish some semblance of balance by rearranging the stack with the other.

"What were you looking for, Pavel?" Stepan asked.

"That crib on Pushkin that I borrowed from Samigin. I have to get through this exam with a five or at least a four."

"But, Pavel, didn't you give that to Vera last week?"

"Oh, yeh, that's right. What the hell will I do now? Hey, I'll tell you what. You bone me up on Pushkin on the way over to the exam, and I'll coach you on dialectical materialism tomorrow night before the exam in diamat."

Stepan closed his notebook quietly and smiled at Pavel.

"All right, I guess I would be better off if I stopped cramming now. If I don't know nineteenth-century Russian literature by now I'll never know anything. Come on, let's go."

They slipped on their coats and left the dormitory, walking

slowly in the direction of the auditorium in which the exam was being held.

As they walked along Stepan recited briefly the salient facts of Pushkin's life, his outstanding works, his position in world literature, his importance to the development of present-day Soviet literature. After each few sentences he would pause to let Pavel repeat after him. It was obvious that Pavel knew only the barest facts about Pushkin; and the coaching was, if anything, only confusing him more.

"Oh, the Devil take Pushkin, and the venerable Professor A. A. Gorovin too. Forget it, Stepanushka. If I'm lucky and get a question that I know, I'll get by. Otherwise I'm sunk." Pavel sighed.

Stepan looked at him walking along in silence. Pavel's worry did not take the cockiness out of his rolling gait. Even in despair he always maintained the self-assurance of a Moscow wise-guy who knew all the ropes and was confident that by some means he would get what he was after.

What a queer pair we make, thought Stepan. . . . They had met in the Army, when Pavel had "adopted" the bookish peasant lad who was so quiet, studious, likable, friendly, but just didn't know his way around. After the war they had both decided to go back to school, and here they were in the Pedagogical Institute studying together.

"Pavel, don't you care enough to study?"

"Don't I care? Boy, how can you ask a goofy question like that? Look, you know just as well as I do the fix I'm in. I don't want to end up teaching third grade out in some little hick town. If it wasn't for my background I would have gone into the heavy-machinery institute. Boy, if I don't crack this exam I won't get my stipend next year. And that's where I'll be—teaching third grade."

They were silent again for a while. Then Stepan spoke up once more.

"Look, Pavel, it's your own business. But you would be a lot better off if you spent more time in studying rather than doing so much social work. Look at yesterday afternoon. You could have skipped that Komsomol meeting. It was a general meeting, and

nobody would have missed you. I've missed four general meetings this year and the Secretary never mentioned it. I'll bet he never even noticed it."

"Not if *you* missed it, boy. But if *I* missed it, that would be different. Supposing I'm going to teach Russian literature to a lot of middle-school students. Why should I crack my head about Gogol's realism, or the meaning of Pushkin's *Freedom*? I bone up with a couple of official interpretations from the literary journals. Who are you kidding? Do you think that all those evenings you spend with old Gorovin are going to do you any good? When you get to teaching you'll have to follow the official outline like everybody else. If old Pavel is going to get any place it's through the Komsomol and the Party. Do you think the Director of the Institute is a whizz on pedagogical theory or Russian literature? Don't worry about me, Stepanush, old boy."

Pavel again, good old Pavel, thought Stepan, don't worry about him! If he were drowning his last words would be, "Don't worry about me, I'll get along. . . ."

They entered the building in which the exam was being held, and as they walked along the hall they began to hear the buzz of voices of students waiting their turns outside the exam room. As they approached the group the door opened, and a plain-looking girl of about twenty years came quietly out. It was Ludmilla Liubov.

Everyone crowded about her. "What did you get, Ludmilla? How was it?"

She pressed her lips tightly together, trying to keep the quaver out of her voice, and murmured, "Two." She ran off down the hall followed by the sympathetic assurances of her friends.

Professor Gorovin had followed her out. He stood watching the students a few seconds. "Well," he asked, "who'll be next?" He looked around. "Aha, Citizen Gladkov. I'm sure you're not afraid to answer a few questions on Russian literature!"

Gladkov glared at the professor and detached himself from the group, while a murmuring started up among the students.

"Boy, old Gorovin has his nerve," whispered Pavel.

"Why, what's the matter?" Stepan whispered back.

"Didn't you hear? At yesterday's Komsomol meeting Gladkov

accused old Gorovin of formalism in teaching the Russian classics. . . ."

"Why, the little son of a bitch!"

Pavel looked at Stepan with one eyebrow cocked: "My, my, Stepanush, is that a quotation from Pushkin? I don't recognize it."

Stepan blushed and asked: "But why would he do such a thing? Alexei Alexeievitch has been teaching Russian literature for thirty years. Why should this suddenly be 'formalism'?"

"Hell, boy, you know that Gladkov. He has to be a two-hundred percenter in everything. Confidentially," he continued in a mock stage whisper so that the entire group could hear him, "I believe that Comrade Gladkov's concern with deviationism in the presentation of nineteenth century literature stems not so much from political zealousness as from a certain deficiency in intellect that makes the memorization of facts concerning various authors now dead a distasteful procedure. Not, of course, that deviationism should not be pursued with vigor on all fronts."

The students snickered. They could count on Pavel never to take anything too seriously. It was always amusing to hear him slip with no hesitation from his usually slangy speech into the official jargonese.

An intense-looking thin blonde girl was passing along the corridor. Spying Stepan and Pavel, she stopped to talk.

Stepan greeted her. "Hello, Nina."

"Hello, Stepan. Hello, Pavel."

"Hi," answered Pavel. "Say, what are you and Stepan doing this evening?"

"I'm conducting a series of lectures on world proletarian literature at the Kaganovich works. And Stepan is going to deliver the lecture tonight on the role of Jack London in the development of American proletarian literature."

Pavel nudged Stepan with his elbow, "Now, Stepan, old fellow, how does this happen? Here I try for three years to get you interested in social work, and I get no place. All Nina Ivanovna has to do is bend her little finger so, and you are up in front of a bunch of workers giving lectures."

Nina stamped her foot. "Pavel, this is no joking matter."

"Okay, Nina, okay," he answered quickly. "I respect your status as an activist of the first order. Look, Vera and I are going to a movie. But afterwards we're going to a party at Anna Trudovna's. She wanted to know if you and Stepan could come over."

Stepan and Nina looked at each other. She nodded her head slightly, and he said to Pavel, "Fine, I guess we can get there about nine-thirty."

The door of the examination room had opened again.

Gladkov stamped through the group. His face was clouded over, and he refused to answer any of their queries.

Pavel uttered a sharp, "Phew! Guess I was right."

The professor looked around the group.

Someone pushed Pavel forward, saying, "Go ahead, hero!"

Pavel suddenly became sober, and walked into the examination room.

The other students continued their chatter, arguing over interpretations of various works, checking dates, asking advice. Stepan and Nina stood off by themselves discussing the lecture he was to give that evening. Finally she announced that she had to go on to her class in counterpoint and departed. Soon the door swung open and Pavel appeared, shaking hands with Professor Gorovin, looking jaunty as ever. As he turned his back to the professor, he flashed his right hand to the group with four fingers raised, rolled his eyes up at the ceiling, and let his knees go limp in a gesture conveying a tremendous feeling of relief.

Stepan passed him on the way in, and Pavel whispered, "Phew, was that close! Hurry up, I'll wait for you."

Stepan followed the professor into the dimly lit auditorium. A girl student who had preceded him into the room was sitting, trying to organize her thoughts. Professor Gorovin beckoned her over to the examination desk.

Stepan reached into the question box and pulled out the first slip his fingers touched. He quickly ran his eyes over the three questions and then walked over to a chair to sit and wait his turn. He swiftly outlined the answers he would give to each question.

The girl finished, and Stepan walked over to the desk and sat down without waiting to be called.

Professor Gorovin smiled up at him: "How are you this morning, Stepan Ivanovitch?" he said pleasantly.

"Very fine, Alexei Alexeievitch. Here are my questions."

The examination went quickly and pleasantly. The questions were all on topics which he and Professor Gorovin had discussed many times together. Stepan, the professor's favorite among the older students, had spent many evenings at the professor's apartment conversing informally. There was little doubt from the beginning that Stepan would perform well. When he finished the third question, Professor Gorovin smiled broadly and said, "Very good, Stepan Ivanovitch. You get a five."

The students congratulated him warmly, although they too had expected this result.

Pavel caught him by the sleeve and pulled him out of the group. They started to walk back to the dormitory.

"Boy," breathed Pavel, "did I ever scrape out of that one. Look, I get these three questions: 'Pushkin and his part in the Decembrist Revolt,' 'Gorky's *Foma Gordeev*,' and 'Compare Turgenev's heroes in *Fathers and Sons* and *Smoke*.' Pushkin I know something about, mainly what you taught me on the way over. Gorky I've got cold because I just read a long criticism in *Russkaya Kniga*. But—Turgenev! I didn't know a thing. Boy, I could see next year's stipend flying out the window, or maybe I should say being buried by Turgenev's heroes. I figured the only thing that was going to save me was to get him to concentrate on the second question. So, I started in like a ball of fire on Pushkin. He figures I know that cold and shuts me off and asks me to try the second question. So I begin to fumble and act like I don't know what to say. So he dives right in, figuring he's got my weak spot, and begins asking me a lot of detailed questions. Well, bit by bit I loosen up and give him a whole barrel of stuff on Gorky. By this time we've spent almost all the time on the first two questions, and he's so pleased with what I do on the second one that he waives the third one entirely. Phew! I get a four."

"That's swell," said Stepan, "but poor Ludmilla Liubov! I'm afraid the two she got means that she'll lose her stipend. Even if she keeps doing odd jobs to support herself, I don't think her family can help her enough to get her through."

"Yeh, that's tough," commented Pavel.

They walked on in silence, but Stepan kept thinking of Ludmilla. "You know, we had a girl in our village before the war just like Ludmilla—a girl named Aglaya Serovyan. She came back to the village because her stipend had been stopped by the edict of 1940, when Stalin said conditions were good enough for Soviet families to support the education of their children. Aglaya wasn't smart enough to get top grades and earn a stipend, and her mother had five younger kids to support. Aglaya tried working on the kolkhoz, but she couldn't give up her dream of going to school. The last I heard, she went to Kiev, where she was washing dishes in a cafeteria, trying to save up enough money to go back to school. I never heard of her after the war."

"Good God, Stepanush, if you will permit me a quotation from *Eugene Onegin*: 'What—another eclogue, Lensky?' Let's see, what would it be? Aha, 'Ode to Aglaya Serovyan on the day of her departure from the kolkhoz forever.' Boy, you better snap out of it. That poetry you read and write must be rotting your brain. Can't you find something more cheerful to talk about? How are you and Nina getting along? I should think she'd get some of that nonsense out of you."

Stepan both felt and looked sheepish. "Oh, we get along all right."

"I guess she's good for you—a little too serious for me though. I went around with a dish like that for a while. Wonderful figure, nice face. She wouldn't wear lipstick, and wore the most serious damned clothes you ever saw. Always talking like a *Pravda* editorial. I gave up on her after a while.

"I remember one night after a concert we walked through the Park of Culture and Rest," Pavel continued. "Just to keep the conversation going I kept yatching away with her about problems of postwar economic reconstruction, and American attempts to encircle our Socialist Fatherland. Well, we get to this park bench in a nice dark spot and I suggest we sit down and talk a while. Boy, would you believe it, that's just what we did. Talk! Christ, if I had wanted to talk I wouldn't want to do it on a park bench with a dish like that. Every time I put my arm around her she would say, 'Don't, Pavel, I'm trying to think!' Then she'd come

up with another goddamned statistic. Uh, uh! That's not for me.

"Boy, I learned my lesson. Stay away from the serious ones, Pavel. That's what I told myself. If you really want to be sure of a good time, stay away from the students altogether. Get a working girl. Less complication. They know what they want and no fooling around about it. Did I ever tell you about the girl I picked up while I was still in Moscow during the war?"

Yes, he had told Stepan, but he would tell it again anyway. There was no point in trying to keep him off his favorite topic. . . .

"Well, I'm riding the streetcar one day, and I see this cute deal of a conductor. I start kidding her about this and that, and the first thing you know I got a date with her and one with her girl friend for my buddy. We pick them up, go to a movie, and return with them to their dormitory. So they sneak us right into the dormitory and into bed with 'em. None of your sticky socialist morality for them."

"I guess I just don't know my way around like you do, Pavel." Stepan was embarrassed as always at this turn of conversation. Apparently he was too shy, or maybe too serious. Try as he would, he was uncomfortable with the sort of girls Pavel favored. He didn't know what to talk about, and he was afraid he bored them. He often wished that Nina were a little more affectionate. Even in her seriousness she was different from him and more like Pavel. They both kept scolding him for being so dreamy and contemplative. . . . Well, he must get going and do some studying. He turned to Pavel. "Look, I have to drop in at the library," he said. "I'll see you tonight at the party."

Stepan spent the rest of the day in the library brushing up for the other exams which were coming up that week. At seven o'clock he met Nina at the metro stop. As he approached the stairs to the station he was greeted by Nina's crisp voice: "Well, I'm glad to see you're on time."

They took the metro to one of the Moscow industrial districts. Nina guided him through several blocks of the city to the gate of the plant, and from there to the plant auditorium. The workmen were assembled, sitting about in ragged clothes and chatting with each other. The meeting was called to order. Nina made a few general remarks which tied Jack London into the pre-

vious lectures and related him to Charles Dickens of England as one of the great figures in Western proletarian literature. She then introduced Stepan.

Stepan talked for an hour. He began with a brief biography, outlining Jack London's history as a worker, his self-education, his difficulties in getting his work published, his own growing proletarian consciousness, and finally his impact on later Western proletarian writers. Stepan delivered his talk in a rather serious manner and somewhat nervously. The workingmen sat passively without moving, and a considerable number dropped off to sleep, which made him even more nervous. When he concluded, they applauded politely.

Nina asked if there were any questions. A few persons asked questions, mainly with a political slant. "Was the Wall Street monopoly successful in the present historical period in suppressing the publication of London's proletarian novels?" "Could you tell us more about the conditions of the English working class which awakened London to proletarian consciousness?" From their questions, their manner, and their somewhat better clothing, Stepan concluded that those who asked them were probably members of the plant's Party cell. The main body of workers remained apathetic and left hurriedly when the meeting ended.

As it was only nine o'clock, Stepan suggested that they take the metro part of the way and then walk the remainder of the distance to the party. This would permit them to stroll more than a mile along the Moscow river, as it was a clear, warm, spring night.

As soon as they were seated in the metro Nina began correcting his lecture manner. "The content was very good in general, Stepan, but you did not relate it sufficiently to contemporary conditions. In that way it was too formalistic. Remember that when you are talking to workingmen you must be more concrete. Don't just talk about social forces. Tell them about the workers and their families, how they were starving, and how the capitalist police beat them up when they protested."

"But, Nina, does it make any difference? Are those workers really interested in literature? You saw them sleeping just as well as I did. They're all tired out, and I'll bet that they would rather be home in bed."

"That's not the point, Stepan. I'm sure many of them would rather be home sleeping or drinking vodka. But it is the task of the Party and our task as members of the Komsomol to raise their level of literacy. Our policy is not like that of the exploiting classes of the capitalist countries—to surfeit the masses with pornographic literature and appeal only to their lowest motives. It is true that a certain amount of coercion is required to enforce attendance at these meetings, but the workers must be made more conscious of their role in society."

By this time they had come to their stop, and they continued the argument climbing up the stairs of the metro station out into the clear evening air.

"Nina, I would understand that better if the meetings weren't so exclusively political. I would like very much to develop the aesthetic sense of the workers. I could read them a poem about our beautiful city of Moscow."

"Stepan, sometimes I just don't understand you. You don't sound like a man of peasant background at all. You sound more like the offspring of the decadent Tzarist intelligentsia. I declare, such talk!"

"No, Nina. When I lived back in the village there were only a few dozen mud huts, but I used to dream about Moscow. It was like one of the fairy tales my mother used to tell me. Moscow was as unreal as the fairy tales. Even now when I look at the river and the Kremlin it still seems enchanted—so beautiful, so big, so full of strange life. I would like to teach the workers to see beauty as I see it."

"Really, Stepan, you do talk nonsense much of the time. Of course, Moscow is a beautiful city. But it's no fairyland. It is work that created it, and work alone."

"But, Nina, how can you take so cold an attitude toward aesthetics? Don't you find any enchantment in your music? How do you feel when you listen to Beethoven's *Eroica*? Don't you feel an upsurge of nobility, of some strange power, the ability to surpass yourself and make your dreams become real?"

"Stepan, you miss the point again. Of course, Beethoven's *Eroica* is great, but it is great precisely because he rejected his original intention to dedicate it to Napoleon, a tyrant who didn't

respect the rights of the proletariat. The *Eroica* is great because it was created for the people. Music like everything else is for the people. They alone give everything value. Life has no other definition but people."

"But, Nina, it's not the people who create. That's an abstraction. It's one man who creates. Beethoven was not a mass of people. He was one man, with one brain, one soul. The very act of creation is something that distinguishes you from the masses."

"Stepan, why must you see everything in so complicated a way? Life is clear, and my goal is clear. I know what I'm supposed to do, and I do it. But you have to complicate *everything*."

"I'm not trying to complicate everything, Nina. I am only trying to find my own goal in life."

"Your what?"

"My goal in life. How can I judge that I am doing what I am supposed to do?"

"Judge? You don't have to. Your task is set out for you. To do your duty, that is it. That's your goal. You just obey, you—" Then, suddenly jerking her head, she exclaimed, "Oh, Stepan, this is absurd! Goal of life, indeed! That's something philosophers of a bygone age worried about. You can't fritter your life away in contemplation. It's like a childhood disease. If you're healthy you get over it by the time you're fourteen or fifteen. There's no such thing as *one* goal of life. There's only life, and the daily goal, or duty, of doing what you're supposed to do. . . ."

They were silent for a moment. Nina slipped her hand into his and swung it as they walked along. Finally she broke the silence again. "Look, Stepan, I don't like '*grands mots*' as the French say. Let's enjoy the party at Anna's. Come on, we're almost there."

He shrugged his shoulders. "All right."

When they arrived, the party was in full swing. There were about six couples, and the little white-washed room was so crowded that they could hardly move about. Pavel was standing with one arm around Vera, a buxom blonde girl, and he flourished a glass of vodka. They were singing Komsomol and revolutionary songs with great vigor.

Anna greeted them warmly at the door.

Pavel came over with a half-filled bottle of vodka and the two glasses. "Come on, Stepanush, you and Nina have to take a penalty drink to catch up. You're late."

Nina looked a little sternly at Pavel. "Better go easy, Pavel, or you'll be in no condition for the volunteer work brigade tomorrow morning."

Pavel grinned. "Don't worry about me, Nina. I'm on the committee. I'm the guy who told the volunteers that they were going to volunteer. Stepan and I will be there on time, and fit to dig ditches with the best of 'em."

Nina and Stepan had a drink "bottoms up."

The boy who was playing the accordion signaled to Nina, and she picked her way through the crowd, took the accordion, and began to play "Stenka Razin." Her voice came through the chorus of other voices a trifle strident in tone but clear and beautifully pitched.

Pavel pulled Stepan aside. "That swine Gladkov was here for a while, drinking up all the liquor," he said. "He's mad as hell. Gorovin gave him a one this morning. He says he's going to press the charges of formalism at the next Komsomol meeting. He was trying to get signatures on a petition to remove Gorovin, but nobody here would sign. I'm sure he'll get some bastards to sign it, though. It looks as if it might be a nasty mess."

Stepan's face flushed. "To hell with him. I'll tell just what I think of him at the meeting."

"You'd better be careful, Stepanush. You know that you've been awfully close to old Gorovin, and you could get in trouble too. I'm sure this character is working with the secret section. I shadowed him one time and saw him go into the local MGB office. The son of a bitch, he was trying to make a provocation here this evening. He started telling political anecdotes to see if he could smoke somebody out to tell more. I gave him a lecture on political morality. You should have seen Vera. She almost split her sides trying to keep from laughing when I started to lay him out for furnishing weapons to the enemies of socialism."

"Say, one of his stories was pretty good. I never heard it before. It seems that the hares in Poland near the border had been noticing a lot of strange hares around their territory for a while."

They began to suspect that the strangers were coming from our beloved Socialist Fatherland. So they sent a delegation to watch the border, and sure enough the first thing they saw was a hare coming over from the Soviet side running like his pants were on fire. They stopped him and asked him what the trouble was. He looked at them sort of surprised and asked: 'Didn't you hear? The Bolsheviks are castrating all the camels.' So one of the Polish hares said to him, 'Sure, but you're a hare, not a camel. What are you worried about?' The Russian hare said: 'Okay, I know I'm a hare, and you know I'm a hare. But those damned Bolsheviks. They'll castrate you first and ask you afterward.' "

Vera heard them laughing, and came over to pull Pavel into the circle of singers. "Come on, Pavlush," she giggled, pulling his arm around her waist. "Don't you like me any more?"

Nina and Stepan stayed only until about eleven o'clock. Nina didn't approve of carousing, and she wanted to be rested for the work the next day.

Early the next morning Stepan woke and shook Pavel, who was sleeping soundly without having removed his pants and socks from the night before. Pavel groaned as he got to his feet. "Oh, boy. Volunteer digging of ditches for gas mains. Just what I need. Right in the middle of exams!"

Stepan wagged his finger under Pavel's nose. "You have no one to blame but yourself, hero of socialist labor. You're the one who put the pressure on me to go."

They reached the location at eight o'clock. Some of the students were getting shovels from a tool shed. Others were standing about talking quietly. Nobody seemed particularly eager to get to work. Vera was there ahead of them, looking very decorative as she rested against her shovel and fixed her hair. When she saw Pavel she dropped the shovel and ran to greet him.

Nina appeared shortly afterwards, walking along conversing earnestly with the Komsomol Secretary. As the students saw him, they picked up their shovels and started to dig. Stepan and Nina shoveled silently and vigorously. Vera shoveled busily when an official was around, and directed idle comments at the other students in between times. Pavel spent most of his time walking up and down, giving orders to others, or conversing with the Kom-

somol Secretary and various Party officials who appeared on the scene.

When they stopped at noon, Stepan pulled a large piece of paper-wrapped bread from his pocket. Nina came over and offered him several radishes and an apple. They sat under a tree eating their lunch quietly.

Vera and Pavel walked by, their arms about each other's waist, with Pavel talking in a low pitched voice and Vera giggling.

Nina and Stepan followed them with their eyes.

Stepan commented. "They seem to get along very well together. They are very well matched."

Nina looked at him with raised eyebrows. "I agree with you, but I can't say that it is much of a compliment to either of them. I seriously think that the Komsomol should take some action on the general question of Pavel's morality. You know perfectly well how Irena Kavka became pregnant last year, and that she got an abortion from some doctor that Pavel's brother knew. That is no conduct for an activist in the Komsomol."

"Nina, I don't see how you can pass judgment on him that way. Neither you nor I nor the entire collective of the Komsomol has authority to judge a personal relationship between two people. No one else can know all the circumstances involved."

"You are completely wrong, Stepan. I have heard that argument before. But the Komsomol has both the right and the duty to be the monitor of the moral behavior of its members. As a body it is responsible for proper socialist feelings and actions in all moral matters."

"Well, as his friend I would certainly defend him," Stepan affirmed.

"As a friend you would be right. But as a citizen you would be wrong. This is typical of you, Stepan. You either get involved in high-flown abstractions like a goal of life, or you act on the basis of personal considerations. You must have more concern with your duties to the collective."

Mercifully for Stepan, work started up again, and he was saved from further moralizing by Nina.

Stepan and Pavel returned to their room after their "volunteer" work digging ditches. In the time before supper Pavel coached

Stepan for the exam on dialectical materialism which was coming up on the following day. As there was no text for the course, they had to rely mainly on Pavel's notes. In this instance, contrary to his usual cavalier approach to things, he had extremely full and well organized notes.

"Take these notes after supper," he told Stepan. "I won't need them. Bone up on 'em. Before the library closes you'd better skip over and reread Stalin's letter on linguistics. There's sure to be a question on that. It's a red-hot issue and they won't miss it. There's a good commentary on it in the last number of *Questions of Philosophy*. And look now, boy, when you write answers on this exam, don't get so damned abstract. Concrete and to the point—that's the deal. Stress the practical side of it. Throw in a couple of references to Josef Vissarionovich Stalin, our great and glorious leader. If you have any more time for reading, take another look at chapter eight of the *Short History of the Party*. . . . Well, good luck. I'm going to spend the evening learning some German. This stuff I know cold, but I'm rusty as hell on German."

Stepan passed the exam in dialectical materialism with a four. He got fives on all his other exams. Pavel did well also. He had all fives except for a four in Russian literature and in German. It seemed certain that they would both receive their stipends for the following year and be able to return to the Institute.

Nina and Stepan had their last exams on the same day. In celebration Stepan bought two tickets to a concert, a luxury that he could not often afford on his student's budget. He had thought at first of asking Pavel and Vera to come along, but decided that it would be more pleasant to spend an evening alone with Nina—if he could keep out of political arguments. They had known each other for several years, but had been going around together only for about three months. It seemed that Nina had used her entire time trying to remedy the deficiencies in his political training.

Tonight was different. The music swept politics and social problems out of her mind. She leaned over to Stepan in the midst of the piano concerto and whispered, "Some day, Stepan, I will be up there on that stage. I work so hard at it. I *must* succeed, I must." She slipped her hand into his and held it tightly, not in the comradely fashion with which she swung hands when they

walked, but in a warm feminine manner. Stepan glanced at her face. It had lost its usual quality of intenseness and seemed to have become softer.

But once the concert was over, she was her old militant self. The matter of Gladkov came up again. Nina informed Stepan that Gladkov's charges would be heard at the Komsomol meeting the next day. She advised him to be present.

They said good-bye at her door, and he returned to the room. Pavel was still out. Stepan found a heel of bread on the window sill and munched it as he read for a while. Finally, when Pavel did not show up, he crawled into bed and went to sleep. He was disappointed not to see Pavel. It would have been good to discuss the next day's meeting with him. What could be done about Gladkov?

In the morning Pavel was sound asleep and refused to be roused. Stepan had certain details to take care of in connection with his summer studies and had to arrange for work during the vacation months. He left once more without talking to Pavel. The meeting was at two o'clock, and he got back just in time to find a seat in the hall next to Pavel; but the room was so crowded that there was no possibility of talking at length.

The meeting opened with the acceptance of two new members into the Komsomol.

Andrei Zumkov, a second year student, got up and gave a report on his past life. Pavel accompanied Zumkov's account with a series of caustic whispered comments.

"I have considered this step seriously for several years . . ." Zumkov said.

"You bet your life he has," whispered Pavel. "I've been on his tail for two years myself, trying to get him."

"A series of considerations intervened. . . ."

"You betcha. The first time he said he was politically unprepared. Then he lost the application blank. Then he couldn't find his fountain pen. Then he couldn't get anybody to recommend him. Phooey! I finally had to recommend him myself, and damned near had to fill out the blank and sign it for him."

Zumkov went on for fifteen minutes. The other candidate talked for twenty minutes. Finally they were voted in. Silly for-

malities, thought Stepan. Everybody knows these two were virtually forced in. . . .

Finally the moment came. Gladkov rose and made his charges. Professor A. A. Gorovin had taught Russian literature in exactly the same way, year after year, since the time of the Revolution. Obviously he was incapable or unwilling to learn from the experiences of the Revolution. First there was his blatant cosmopolitanism. Half of his course was devoted to the influence of Western writers on the Russian authors of the last century. Where in this course was there an adequate discussion of the effect of classical Russian writers, those pioneers on the forefront of progressive thought, on world literature? Next, Professor Gorovin takes a completely formal approach to his subject matter. There is no reference to contemporary problems. Russian literature is not taught from the point of view of the present day, but in an abstract fashion as though it had no relevance to the building of socialism or to the struggle for peace under conditions of capitalist encirclement.

Gladkov flourished a sheet of paper. "I have here a petition signed by seventy-five of our fellow students," he declared, "requesting that Professor Gorovin be removed from his post on the grounds that his teaching is politically inadequate."

Immediately frantic voices arose from various points in the hall. It was obvious that Gladkov's partisans had organized themselves as a clique. They began applauding Gladkov and shouting for the dismissal of Gorovin. A handful of students started to join them after a minute or so. This handful was composed almost exclusively of those drifters who tried to react as rapidly as possible to each developing trend. They thought it might be unsafe not to seem sufficiently enthusiastic in supporting Gladkov.

The secretary rapped for order. "Professor Gorovin has asked to speak. He has the floor."

Professor Gorovin, flushed and agitated, rose in the back of the hall and walked toward the platform. The clique began hissing and booing. The Secretary rapped for order again.

Gorovin began speaking hesitatingly, confusedly. Stepan writhed in sympathy with Gorovin. It was so embarrassing to see such a distinguished scholar in so humiliating a position, to

hear his voice, which could deliver such crisp, incisive analyses of world trends in literature, shaking with anger, confusion, impotence. Gorovin could not come to grips with Gladkov's arguments. He spoke only of the glorious tradition of Russian and Soviet scholarship, of his long service in the Institute, of the immaturity of Gladkov and the students who made such charges. Even this he did poorly.

The claque took up their call again. "Dismiss him." "He's not a fit teacher." More and more students took up the cry as it looked as if the turn of events was going against Gorovin.

He stopped speaking and rushed down the aisle and out of the hall with tears running down his face.

Suddenly Stepan found himself on his feet, shouting above the din, demanding the floor. The Secretary recognized him.

He spoke so infrequently in meetings that the group fell into silence. The silence became deathly as his anger rang out through his first trembling words.

"This is a scandal." He could hear his voice pealing out as though it came from someone else. "Who would have dreamt that we would be confronted with the spectacle of Soviet youth being stampeded into demanding the dismissal of so distinguished a scholar as Professor Gorovin! Professor Gorovin is a man whose scholarship is respected throughout our country. He is even recognized throughout the world as one of the outstanding authorities on nineteenth century literature. If these baseless charges are to be accepted, our Institute will be robbed of one of its finest teachers, and a tremendous injustice will—"

By the end of his second sentence it had become clear to Gladkov's claque that Stepan was defending Gorovin. Now they started in to heckle him, to shout him down. There was a rising tide of voices. "Listen to the scholar talk!" "Sit down!" "You're the same kind." "Are we going to listen to such nonsense?" "Boo!" Then a concerted hissing and stamping began.

Stepan could no longer hear his own voice. He stood there bewildered and frightened. He felt Pavel jerk him back into his seat.

Gladkov arose again and was recognized.

"It is clear," said Gladkov, "what Comrade Gravinov's motives

are. He has been very closely associated with both Professor Gorovin and the latter's point of view. Thus it is no accident that he alone should speak out in defense. I should further note that Comrade Gravinov has an additional ax to grind. His own grade record is enhanced by an unbroken string of fives given him by Professor Gorovin. He knows full well that if Professor Gorovin were dismissed, all of the grades which Professor Gorovin has given will be stricken from the record."

He looked about the hall with a smirk and sat down.

Stepan began to sense the danger of his own position. He did not regret having spoken up, but he realized that he had put himself in a position of jeopardy. This feeling was not at all relieved when Pavel whispered in a disgusted tone of voice, "Now you did it! Who the hell's going to get you out of this one, pal?"

Several short speeches were made attacking Gorovin and Stepan. Finally Pavel drew himself slowly to his feet and demanded the floor.

He began to speak slowly, sounding somewhat weary, as though he were having a distasteful task pushed off on him.

"Comrades, I will speak frankly," he said. "As you know, Comrade Stepan Gravinov is my roommate, and we have been friends for many years. Yet this in no way must blind me to the essential error he has made in his defense of Professor Gorovin. Comrade Gladkov has charged Professor Gorovin with formalism, with not relating his teaching of Russian literature to present day problems. But my friend here answers that Professor Gorovin is a distinguished scholar. That is not the issue."

His voice was getting more vibrant, and he spoke faster. Gladkov's supporters sent up scattered cheers.

"Let us speak to the point. What lies behind the charge of formalism? I think if we examine this point we will have something quite different to say from what our friend Comrade Gravinov has said."

There were more cheers.

"This does not mean that I necessarily agree with Comrade Gladkov. As a matter of fact, I think that as we examine this matter closely we will find that Comrade Gladkov is in very serious error. As our great leader Comrade Stalin has pointed out on

many occasions, we must be extremely wary of those who are free in their use of 'leftist' slogans. This form of juvenile adventurism that we see expressed in Comrade Gladkov's charges is one of the most dangerous of the deviations which we must combat. If we were to take him seriously we would end up by ignoring our great literary heritage, developed by progressive Russian thinkers and writers of past centuries. In this period of conflict with the West we must guard on one hand against rootless cosmopolitanism which bows in admiration to the West, and against underestimation of our own historical heritage the dialectical elements of which are a source of strength in the present situation. Comrade Gladkov would like to have our history interpreted in terms of the present, but in so doing we must not reduce that history to meaningless phrases. We must understand it fully, richly, and not in the manner of the pet slogans of the leftist litterateurs of the RAPP period. I therefore move that Comrade Gladkov be found in error, and that he be instructed to attend better to his own political education."

A tremendous din arose. Gladkov's partisans booed and hissed, trying to offset some of the effect of Pavel's speech. Other students who had been silent to this point cheered him. Pavel leaned over to Stepan and under cover of the noise grunted, "That's the way to do it!"

Gladkov tried to get the floor, but the Secretary motioned toward the back of the hall and rapped for order.

A girl's voice came from the back of the room—strident, vibrant and live. It was Nina's.

"Comrades, I must agree with Comrade Zagordi. Comrade Gladkov's charges are a clear case of adventurous leftism. But I believe we must link these charges to the circumstances under which they are made. I would consider it in bad taste to raise such an issue if Comrade Gladkov had not already done so in connection with Comrade Gravinov's defense of Professor Gorovin. I join Comrade Zagordi again in my feeling that Comrade Gravinov is quite deficient in his defense. But, if Comrade Gladkov is to raise the question of motives, let us look into his own case. He has constantly lagged in his studies, particularly in literature. He has not kept his grade average up. He has never shown the dili-

gence that is to be expected of a Komsomol member. It takes no great wisdom to see that he would benefit greatly by Professor Gorovin's dismissal, particularly in view of his own very poor performance on a recent examination." She paused. "Comrades," she continued, "you know me well, and you know the seriousness with which I hold our organization, the Komsomol. We cannot afford to let the morality of Soviet youth be perverted by such blatant opportunism as we see here this afternoon. The ability to mouth phrases cannot become a substitute for merit and truth. I move that Comrade Gladkov be officially censured for irresponsible and immoral conduct."

This time the hall was silent. The students waited for the Secretary to speak. He spoke quickly and to the point, endorsing the views of Nina and Pavel, but limiting the action against Gladkov to an unofficial rebuke.

Stepan was too much shaken by his own narrow escape to feel more than a sense of relief. Pavel took him by the arm and steered him through the crowd as the meeting broke up.

Stepan waited until they were clear of the others to speak. Before he had a chance to say anything, Vera came running up and took Pavel by the arm.

"Pavlushka, guess what!" she exclaimed. "I've been waiting for half an hour. Mother sent me a basket of fruit and some sausages. I just saw Nina, and we're all four going to have supper at my room."

Stepan saw that there was little chance of serious conversation as long as Vera was there. He walked along beside Pavel and Vera, listening to Vera chat away. They arrived at her room to find that Nina had preceded them. She had arranged the food on the table, and in the center stood a bottle of wine.

"My present," she announced, pointing to the bottle.

"Why, Nina!" quipped Pavel, "I didn't expect to find you contributing to the destruction of my morality."

"Oh, stop it, Pavel," she said half severely.

Vera went off down the hall to borrow a knife. Stepan looked at Nina and Pavel and said, "I must thank the two of you for saving Alexei Alexeievitch Gorovin this afternoon."

Pavel grimaced. "Look, wise guy!" he said. "As far as I'm con-

cerned your friend Professor Gorovin can drown and old Pavel wouldn't risk his neck for him. Just don't get yourself in a position like that again. If you feel like Sir Galahad, at least learn how to handle such situations. Don't expect me to pull you out again. I could have gotten in just as much trouble as you if the decision went the wrong way. Whatever you do, learn how to take care of yourself if you get into one of those arguments. If a guy charges formalism, don't argue how pretty Pushkin's poetry is. Accuse him of left deviation. . . ."

Nina fixed her eye on him. "Pavel, who do you think was right? Is Gorovin a formalist?" she asked.

"Well," he shrugged his shoulders, "maybe! What difference does it make?"

She shook her head. "I must say that my remark about the ability to mouth phrases being no substitute for merit and truth applies to you as much as to Gladkov," she said.

Pavel looked at her and grinned. "Well, is he a formalist?"

"Yes, in my judgment, he is."

"Then, Nina, how does it happen that you spoke so eloquently in his defense?"

Nina blushed.

"There is no need to blush, Nina," Pavel added. "You were impelled by the same base motive I was; you couldn't let a comrade down. And I agree with you that even if he is a little naive at times he's a first-rate pal. I propose a toast to our pal." He poured four glasses of wine as Vera returned with a knife. "To Comrade Stepan—may he never need rescuing again."

Stepan blushed. Nina looked pleased, but slightly disapproving of Pavel's flipness. Vera said, "Bottoms up," and they drank the toast.

They had a round of bread and sausage, and then Stepan proposed another toast. "To Nina, who couldn't hide the warmth of her heart if she tried."

Nina raised her glass, smiled at Stepan, and turned to Pavel. "No," she said, "on the contrary, I propose a toast to all of us, because we can be each so different, and yet have something real within us that others can value."

Stepan smiled at her and said, "To that I can add only 'bot-toms up.'"

Vera busied herself with more sandwiches, and sighed, "Oh, it's a shame that you're all going away for the summer. Are you going to take a vacation at the rest home in the country, Nina?"

"No," said Nina, "I decided not to ask for a pass. I would rather work for the month and earn a little extra money and hear some of the summer concerts."

"Same with me," added Stepan. "I have to get a little money."

Vera pouted and looked at Pavel. "Oh, Pavlushka, I suppose you're the only one who's leaving, and I'll be all alone."

Pavel grinned. "No, I'm staying too."

Vera giggled and put her head on his shoulder.

"How come, Pavel?" said Stepan. "I didn't know you were that hard up for money."

"Money? Hell no!" said Pavel. "But I know what I'd be in for in one of these so-called rest camps. There'll be three or four 'volunteer' brigades a week to go out and work in the kolkhozes. I'd rather be back with Vera than breaking my back in a cabbage patch." He slid his arm around Vera's waist and gave her a squeeze.

Stepan caught Nina's eye. They both looked over at Pavel and shrugged their shoulders in despair.

"I was taught," said Stepan, "that the new Soviet man should be like the mythical Greek hero, Antaeus, springing up with renewed strength from each contact with his mother earth. I suppose Pavel is the closest approximation of that I'll ever meet."

But Pavel and Vera were too engrossed in whispering to each other to pay attention.

Stepan reached for the wine bottle. "Would it be permissible, Nina, to propose a toast to the two of us?"

Nina nodded her head, smiling. Her glance was warm and friendly. . . .