

death of the evil self, portrayed in the last scene of *Days Without End*, cannot in the nature of things be a permanent answer to the poetic quest. So long as life remains in the body, spiritual struggles must continue. But the death of Loving, when John (the other half of John Loving) surrenders himself to Christ crucified, must be accepted as a symbol of that "death to the old self" which has been the familiar experience of poets and mystics from the beginnings of time. It is the kind of death which implies re-birth, and although struggle continues, it is apt to be renewed upon a higher and finer plane than ever before. Every man who gains victory over himself dies many such deaths only to be born again.

Quite naturally, the literary world has been much concerned to know what *Days Without End* signifies as to the future work of Eugene O'Neill. Many critics have tried to pry into the inner privacy of his soul in order to discover the nature of his spiritual beliefs in the light of this play. It seems to me that all such efforts are both premature and lacking in taste. We can assume that there are many struggles within the poet's soul still ahead. *Days Without End* does not represent the peace-filled consummation of a Parsifal holding aloft the Grail. It is more like the young Parsifal at the moment when he grasps the spear which Klingsor has thrown at him and finds the magic gardens withering. He has the long road of knighthood still to travel. The most we are entitled to do is to accept all of the plays of O'Neill up to the present, as marking many stages in a long and painful quest for spiritual truth, and to hope that in the days to come the same driving inner tenacity, which has led him on this quest for so many years, will carry him to that ultimate inner peace which only the poets and the saints fully understand.

RICHARD DANA SKINNER.

WHAT I SAW IN LENINGRAD

(The author of the following article, Erik von Kühnelt-Leddihn, is a young Hungarian writer already known to the English public by his novel, "Gates of Hell," of which the original German version was recently confiscated in Prussia. The article that follows is an account of some of his experiences in Leningrad, which he had the audacity to visit at great danger with a forged passport.—ED.)

I introduced myself.

The man demanded coldly whether I had been followed. Then he opened the door and looked into the corridor. The corridor was empty.

"Sit down," he said.

I sat down. He leant against the wall and began to speak. He said he'd been in this city of ghosts for thirty years. For thirty years he'd been used to seeing the cathedral of Our Lady and the white dome of the Sacré-Coeur. He was a priest. He hadn't neglected his flock, and he wasn't going to let himself be driven away. But he didn't believe in Russia either. "It's only because of my Poles that I'm staying," he said. "The Russians have no character at all." And then he painted a ghastly picture of Eastern meanness, Byzantine treachery, feminine weakness and appalling mediocrity. Until at last it seemed to me that the whole of Russia was a chain, a network, a bog of espionage, intrigue, informers, dishonour and cynicism; the whole of its social structure a sort of pagoda of prisons, torture-cells, minus-sixes, kept together by innumerable fanatical theories, neurotic ideologies, neurasthenia, bad construction and spiritual emptiness. The whole thing was a hopeless muddle of spinelessness, laziness, hysteria, cramp and terrifying reactions.

"The mystery of Russia's the terror," he burst out. "It's only by terror that you can guide and educate people. The Catholicizing of Russia could only be accomplished by a terrorist state or by Western colonization—a Jesuit state on the lines of Paraguay!"

He brought out case after case. Old countesses who pretended to be converted and went in for espionage. Professors who calumniated each other. Orthodox priests who wrote theological works about the Universal Church, the Logos Spermatikos and Bulgakov's devotion to Our Lady, but spent their week-ends at a certain mortuary near

V. I.
N. Y. - 34
Dec.
Colos.

Raschalja gossiping and giving highly-coloured accounts of what their penitents had confessed to Soviet officials who had spat in broad daylight on the holy ikons and danced round the derelict cathedrals, but who spent their nights in weeping and self-flagellation and crawling about on their knees. . . .

Gratia supponit naturam !

Gratia non destruit, sed complet et perficit naturam !

But when nature was twisted, bent, disjointed, grace failed too. *Niet.* Out of nothing comes nothing. Out of the Orthodox denial of the material came the nothingness of complete Nihilism, the nothingness of Communism. . . .

"It's only because of my Poles that I'm staying!"

For the Russians there is only Paraguay! Complete Paraguayanizing. For three or four centuries! Getting up and working to the sound of the bells! *Une éducation sentimentale!* You have to begin by learning the simplest things, by learning the difference between Yes and No, Mine and Thine, and Good and Bad. Even then everything is in a fog. Nothing seems to have any outline at present or eternal value or unchanging standard. . . . Everything is still in the shadows.

When he spoke about women he seemed to become the cavalier once more. The real chaste, upright cavalier.

"The women are far worse than the men. They're all debauched." Then he stared fixedly at me, as though he were looking through me.

"My child, never marry a Russian. My child, I advise you never to marry a Russian. Mind—never."

Then he looked lovingly down at the old woman. The old woman began to tell her story.

"I'm nearly always in prison. I'm a Russian, too, a Russian by marriage. My husband died a long time ago and now I spend my time looking after M. l'Abbé's affairs. When he gets back home he often finds a bit of paper announcing my arrest. . . ."

She looked dreamily in front of her, as though trying to live over again what she was relating. "I'm a Russian, too!" It sounded so bitter. The whole bitterness over the home she'd left behind her in the West seemed to be compressed into the words.

"In prison I'm always beaten," she went on. "The Czechists hit me with their fists. Sometimes I used to be shut up for weeks on end

in a tiny cell without any light at all. . . . No heating in winter . . . frightful threats . . . and, last of all, blasphemies. These men make me terribly unhappy, they're so full of hatred for Our Lord. They're real anti-Christ.

"Raging beasts. Savages. . . ."

There was a profound sadness in her voice. She shook her head and was silent.

The priest leant against the wall without moving. The old housekeeper rested her worn hands on her knees and gazed with shining eyes through the windows into the distance. A loud-speaker was bellowing in the next room. I thought about the people there and the shadows whose substance had been stolen, and the grey day, the young hare in the tangled woods and the roofs of Leningrad under the evening sky. To-morrow if God was good I might kiss the floor in the cottage of an Esthonian peasant and put an end to my cares; but my cares were still heavy on me and the sorrows of this couple seemed almost boundless. . . .

"You suffer a lot. . . ."

A faint light came into her eyes.

"Yes," she answered, "a great deal, but I love to suffer for the Child Jesus."

For the Child Jesus she suffered gladly, for the Child Jesus on the banks of the Neva! I felt crushed and yet in a way strengthened. I must be braver, as brave as this old woman. I had a feeling that the old priest in his grey work-a-day suit, with his shrunken face, and this woman with her inspired mother-love for the Child Jesus, had taken me to them and were giving me support. It was a great thing to feel that I'd found a prop and was no longer alone in my faith.

In the street below I walked with head erect and without a stoop over the uneven paving. I went slowly in the direction of the Isaac Cathedral, through the wide streets, the splendid squares, under the arches and through courts overgrown with grass. I crossed the shining tram lines and the steel bridges, keeping steadily in the direction of my goal.

Then began a seemingly endless climb. First a stairway on to the cathedral roof, then a second leading to the tower. Step after step, turning after turning, as though the climb will never end. Then suddenly you find yourself there.

One is not alone up there. There are a dozen other people besides—neurotic figures from red-carpeted restaurants with lighted

alcoves and tasselled curtains. Robust working girls with broad hips and heavy fists, emaciated clerks with threadbare caps and unshaven chins. Almost all of them had clambered over the vibrating iron barrier and lowered themselves with swollen muscles over the horrible abyss beneath. There was no life in their ashy faces. They no more feared death than they feared the hum-drum, everyday existence. If they did fall the hare would come and eat up the flowers on their graves. Life had no meaning. The world had no meaning. Death had no meaning either. It was good to have a cigarette between one's lips, and not good to kneel in the penitential cell. It was good, too, to have a woman in one's arms, but not good to bring a child into the world. It was bad and not good to die, for death was absolute nothing. An emptiness, a nothing—that's all everyday life was. Greyness, the shadowy Nirvana of the Soviets.

"I love to suffer for the Child Jesus!" The great West!

When one looks in the direction of Gatschina and Djetskoje, towards Schlüsselburg and the south-east, one sees nothing but country behind the murky curtain of smoke that hangs above the factories. Country which has a sort of oceanic monotony—thousands and thousands of kilometres of it, stretching as far as the volcanoes of Kamschatka and the salt floods of the Behring road.

To the north about twenty-three kilometres from Nicustadt lies Suomi in Finland.

Russia is dominated by the Soviets, Finland by the Lapps.

At Bieloostrov Fascists are shot, at Rajajoki Communists are thrown into prison.

At Bieloostrov red flags wave, and at Rajajoki white flags with blue crosses.

At Bieloostrov they burn Bibles and ikons, at Rajajoki the Pravda and the newspaper *Kollektivisti*.

At Bieloostrov . . .

At Rajajoki . . .

But at Bieloostrov and at Rajajoki one can write theses to disprove the existence of God.

The devil is in both places.

But over all is God.

Rajajoki!

Bieloostrov!

The devil! God! God! The devil!

The spectral beings from Nicustadt peer with expressionless eyes

into the abyss. Below them men crawl like ants. Sometimes they form little dark knots.

Ghostly beetles.

Below in the depths of the abyss.

But the houses are like Venetian houses, mostly built on piles. A town with clay feet. With grass between the cobbles. With ghostly beetles. A town of darkness. A town built on a morass, on the frontier, on the coast of earth's ocean. A town engulfed in mist and rain. A town that belongs to the past, conceived in the night and in the night it decayed and was abandoned.

Neva, Neva, Neva . . . (Sound of lamentation over the river!)

Niet, Niet, Niet . . . (Din in the streets!)

Nitschewo . . . (Murmur of voices in rooms!)

Churches without crosses. Tabernacles without Christ. Men without bodies. Bodies without nourishment. Children without parents. Day without sun. Night without darkness. A city without a soul. . . .

Leningrad.

Leningrad, a port without a sea.

Leningrad, forgotten home of Czechs and Bolsheviks.

Leningrad . . . betrayed . . . sold . . . forgotten. . . .

The madness of a Caesar created you, Leningrad, but the scourge of God drove the people out; none returned—only beasts and shadows. You lived in shame, Leningrad, because you bore the name of a destroyer. A capital you may be, but you will disappear into the morass of the earth's ocean.

The way back led through the streets where night was falling. The ghosts are weary but the clanging of the trams is as shrill as ever. Their hideous screeching shatters the heavy, stifling air of the late summer evening.

Men go about with even more of a stoop than in the morning. The street-vendors, who all day long had displayed hard, wooden-looking apples in a cunning, furtive manner at dark street-corners, had disappeared with their wares. A smoky light is still burning in the tavern and a gramophone hammers out its grating tune into the night.

In the room below I spoke for some time with the post-office girl. The day before a girl with a Bohemian snub nose sat behind the partition. She said "Kapecks" instead of "Kopecks" and called the

stamps of the Republic of Tanu-Tuva the postage stamps of "our colony." To-day a blonde woman with dyed hair sat in her place and gossiped about foreign towns. When I pointed to picture post-cards of Budapest and Vienna she smiled in a deprecating way and said that one could always make a town look nice in a photograph though the reality was very different. Once she'd seen lantern slides of Moscow and had always longed to see the real Moscow. What a disappointment when she did!

Later on I was sitting by myself above in the restaurant, swallowing down some food. Waiters came and went. The stars came out. A kettle-drummer hammered away monotonously like natives in some primeval forest. This evening Russia suddenly seemed like a kingdom of white niggers.

In my room I boldly counted my money, reckoned how much my ticket and tips would cost altogether, turned over the pages of a timetable, folded up some brand new rouble notes, and opened my passport. The stamp of the Jew at Ploschtschadj Uritzkavo had come off a little on to the opposite page and the red-cross stamps were stuck in the shape of an amphitheatre on the bottom margin. I slid my hand almost lovingly over the surface. Time passed slowly.

I almost dreamt that I was already in England, wandering over the bright green lawns, or sitting in a club chair drinking oily Malaga, or reading an exciting detective story, or flying over asphalt streets (Oh, eternal youth!) on a bicycle. Then suddenly, like a grey shadow that had been hidden all day, fear came over me again and stifled every cheerful thought.

All at once I jumped up from my chair, stiff with fear—the lamp at my bedside table threw a long, heavy shadow on the wall—and stared in front of me. The terror, which a minute ago had been masked, annihilated, gripped me anew with overwhelming force.

A sudden turn to the left—the passport forgotten, the English landscapes, the Malaga, the rouble notes and the meadows—and I staggered to the door like a hunted bull.

After wandering aimlessly through the corridors I went to the Swedish girl's room. I stood in front of the door with beating heart. If only she were not asleep already. I knocked very gently. A muffled "Come in." I went inside. Then I felt safe.

The girl was sitting at her writing table, reading. When I went in she guessed what I wanted—not to be alone, to talk, to hear a human voice. I was so thankful to be near her. A smell of eau-de-Cologne,

clean washing, faded flowers and soap hung over the room and gave it a homely feeling. One would have known, even with one's eyes shut, that it was a girl's room; and this knowledge brought with it a mysterious warmth, such a warmth that everything else (the reality that hung over me the other side of the door) was forgotten.

She shut the book with a snap, and to distract me as much as possible said that she had spent the afternoon in a cinema, that she kept a diary, had never been to Oslo though she had a married sister living there, and thought that Sigrid Undset was miles better than Selma Lagerlöf. Then she grew tired of talking and stared in front of her.

"Am I disturbing you?" I asked.

"No, I like you," she answered, quickly, "because as long as you're here I can't go to sleep."

Then, after a pause.

"Are you ill?"

"No, not at the moment!"

I was really strong again. I knew that there was someone by me and this gave me confidence. I was grateful to this person. The person was good. I took her hand. The back of her hand was like a small, white trapeze. The one solid thing in the midst of chaos. The only thing you could hold on to. I kissed it reverently.

I am no "gallant." This is a caricature of a cavalier. I am only a child. And she was my mother.

She was tired and her eyelids began to droop. I stood up to go. With bent head I went sorrowfully back to my own room. I undressed slowly. Then I began to turn over the pages of the telephone book restlessly again. Then I turned out the light and at last the woodwork of the window with its blue background disappeared. Sleep came like an iron coffin lid that extinguished all thinking.

Outside the sirens moaned sleepily.

ERIK VON KÜHNELT-LEDDIHN.