

Book Review: [We the Living](#), by Ayn Rand, 470 pages, 1936.

In her foreword, Rand states: "We the Living is not a novel about "Soviet Russia." It is a novel about Man against the State."

The story, a semi-autobiography, takes place in Soviet Russia shortly after the Revolution of 1917. Kira is the main character. Rand explains that Kira is exposed to the same environment and challenges that she was, but otherwise the story is fiction.

We the Living is a sad story. Completely. You'll meet characters who have life's fire burning inside who must continuously adjust their hopes and efforts down to the low bar of socialism. They face the other characters who, like crabs in a bucket, pull the creative, happy and productive down into their sewer.

I enjoyed the language of socialism's excuses, as you'll see in my selected quotes. It is a completely different language - the language of the dull, of the excuse. Conversations are Rand's strength in all her books. You'll see winners talking with winners, winners talking with losers, and losers conspiring with other losers. Rand captures these conversations perfectly.

There are good books (3 stars). There are great books (4 stars). And then there are Ayn Rand's books (5 stars). We the Living is her first book, and it is different than my absolute favorite books by her, Atlas Shrugged and The Fountainhead. But you can see the connection between the strong woman, Kira, in this book and the ladies of her later books.

I recommend this book with no hesitation. I think it should be required reading at the high school level, but I suspect the public school administrators would not like the comparisons with the darker characters.

I read the Kindle version of the book - [Amazon Link](#)

Karl, October 8, 2015

We The Living [Wiki Page](#).

Selected Quotes:

Introduction:

The basic cause of totalitarianism is two ideas: men's rejection of reason in favor of faith, and of self-interest in favor of self-sacrifice. If this is a society's philosophical consensus, it will not be long before an all-powerful leader rises up to direct the faith and sacrifice that everyone has been extolling. His subjects cannot resist his takeover, neither by exercising their faculty of thought nor their passion for values, because these are the two priceless possessions they have given up. The end result is thought control, starvation, and mass slaughter.

Foreword:

I first heard the Communist principle that Man must exist for the sake of the State, I perceived that this was the essential issue, that this principle was evil, and that it could lead to nothing but evil, regardless of any methods, details, decrees, policies, promises and pious platitudes. This was the reason for my opposition to Communism then - and it is my reason now.

I am still a little astonished, at times, that too many adult Americans do not understand the nature of the fight against Communism as clearly as I understood it at the age of twelve: they continue to believe that only Communist methods are evil, while Communist ideals are noble. All the victories of Communism since the year 1917 are due to that particular belief among the men who are still free. To those who might wonder whether the conditions of existence in Soviet Russia have changed in any essential respect since 1925, I will make a suggestion: take a look through the files of the newspapers. If you do, you will observe the following pattern: first, you will read glowing reports about the happiness, the prosperity, the industrial development, the progress and the power of the Soviet Union, and that any statements to the contrary are the lies of prejudiced reactionaries; then, about five years later, you will read admissions that things were pretty miserable in the Soviet Union five years ago, just about as bad as the prejudiced reactionaries had claimed, but now the problems are solved and the Soviet Union is a land of happiness, prosperity, industrial development, progress and power; about five years later, you will read that Trotsky (or Zinoviev or Kamenev or Litvinov or the "kulaks" or the foreign imperialists) had caused the miserable state of things five years ago, but now Stalin has purged them all and the Soviet Union has surpassed the decadent West in happiness, prosperity, industrial development, etc.; five years later, you will read that Stalin was a monster who had crushed the progress of the Soviet Union, but now it is a land of happiness, prosperity, artistic freedom, educational perfection and scientific superiority over the whole world. How many of such five-year plans will you need before you begin to understand? That depends on your intellectual honesty and your power of abstraction.

... do you consider it moral to treat men as sacrificial animals and to rule them by physical force?

P3:

In the days when the shadow of a growing, nameless fear descended upon the city, hanging like a heavy mist on unlighted street corners, when sudden shots rang in the night, trucks bristling with bayonets rumbled down the cobblestones, and store windows crashed with a sonorous ringing of glass;

P6:

"But if you're not a speculator, you'll starve, but if you are, you can go in and buy anything you want, but if you buy you're a speculator, and then look out, but if you're not a speculator you have no money for a private store and then you stand in line at the co-operative."

P7:

"I was thinking about the streets. The streets of a big city where so much is possible and so many things can happen to you." Galina Petrovna remarked dryly: "You're saying that quite happily, aren't you? I should think we'd all be quite tired of 'things happening,' by now. Haven't you had enough happen to you with the revolution, and all?"

P8:

"Hey, little apple, Where are you rolling?
Hey, little apple, where are you rolling?
If you fall into German paws, you'll never come back...."

Hey, little apple, where are you rolling?
My sweetie's a White and I'm a Bolshevik.....

Hey, little apple, where...."

No one knew what the little apple was, but everyone understood.

P11:

PROLETARIANS OF THE WORLD, UNITE! Kira looked at the words on the bar plaster walls of the station. The plaster had crumbled off in dark blotches that made the walls look skin-diseased.

But fresh signs had been printed upon them. Red letters announced: LONG LIVE THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT! WHO IS NOT WITH US - IS AGAINST US! The letters had been made by a smudge of red paint over a stencil. Some lines were crooked. Some letters had dried with long, thin streaks of red winding down the walls. A young fellow leaned against a wall under the signs. A crumpled lambskin hat was crushed over his pale hair that hung over his pale eyes. He stared aimlessly ahead and cracked sunflower seeds, spitting the shells out of the corner of his mouth.

P12:

A gold sickle and hammer rose over the station's exit door. Two posters hung by its side. One bore a husky worker whose huge boots crushed tiny palaces, while his raised arm, with muscles red as beefsteaks, waved a greeting to a rising sun red as his muscles; above the sun stood the words: COMRADES! WE ARE THE BUILDERS OF A NEW LIFE!

P14:

Gold letters spelled forgotten on the windows of new owners, and bullet holes with sunburst cracks still decorated the glass.

P16:

His sunken eyes were like a fireplace where the last blazing coals fought against slow, inevitable ashes.

P18:

Alexander Dimitrievitch asked hesitantly: "Have you heard what ... about the factory ... what happened to my factory?" "Closed," Vasili Ivanovitch snapped suddenly. "They couldn't run it. Closed. Like everything else."

P18:

I'm in mourning – for my country.

P21:

"New enterprises, Uncle Alexander, have a great future in this new age," said Victor. "Until the government squashes them under its heel," Vasili Ivanovitch said gloomily. "Nothing to fear, Father. The days of confiscations are past. The Soviet government has a most progressive policy outlined." "Outlined in blood," said Vasili Ivanovitch.

P25:

The office had bare walls. They had served as towel to many a dirty hand, for traces left by five fingers zigzagged across the faded paint. In the old house now nationalized for government

offices, it had been a washroom. The sink was removed; but a rusty outline with glaring nail holes still drew its picture on the wall, and two broken pipes hung out, like the bowels of the wounded building. The window had an iron grate and broken panes which a spider had tried to mend. It faced a bare wall with red bricks losing the last scabs of paint which had been the advertisement of a hair-restorer.

P33:

“Toil, comrade,” he said, “is the highest aim of our lives. Who does not toil, shall not eat.”

P36:

“But I don’t need soap, citizen,” she protested when her turn came, at the unpainted counter inside the store that smelled of dill pickles and people’s breath. “And I don’t need dried herring.” “All we’ve got today, citizen. Next!” “All right, I’ll take it,” Lydia said hastily. “We’ve got to have something.”

P39:

He said sullenly: “Times aren’t any better. They’ve called their secret police G.P.U. instead of Cheka, but it’s still the same thing. Do you know what I heard at the store today? They’ve just discovered another anti-Soviet conspiracy. They’ve arrested dozens of people. Today they arrested old Admiral Kovalensky, the one who was blinded in the war, and they shot him without trial.” “Nothing but rumors,” said Victor. “People like to exaggerate.”

P40:

Victor was saying: “A modern man of culture must preserve an objective viewpoint which, no matter what his personal convictions, enables him to see our time as a tremendous historical drama, a moment of gigantic importance to humanity.” “Nonsense,” said Kira. “It is an old and ugly fact that the masses exist and make their existence felt. This is a time when they make it felt with particular ugliness. That’s all.”

P49:

“You don’t feel so hungry when you sleep.”

P53:

“Comrades! The doors of science are open to us, sons of toil! Science is now in our own calloused hands. We have outgrown that old bourgeois prejudice about the objective impartiality of science. Science is not imperial. Science is a weapon of the class struggle. We’re not here to further our petty personal ambitions. We have outgrown the slobbering egoism of the bourgeois who whined for a personal career. Our sole aim and purpose in entering the Red

Technological Institute is to train ourselves into efficient fighters in the vanguard of Proletarian Culture and Construction!”

P55:

“Comrade students! We’ve got to stand up for our rights. We’ve got to learn to speak our proletarian will and make our enemies take notice. We’ve got to stamp our proletarian boot into their white throats and their treacherous intentions. Our Red schools are for Red students. Our Students’ Council must stand on guard over proletarian interests.”

P56:

Everyone had to rise when the “international” was played. Kira stood smiling at the music. “This is the first beautiful thing I’ve noticed about the revolution,” she said to her neighbor. “Be careful,” the freckled girl whispered, glancing around nervously, “someone will hear you.” “When all this is over,” said Kira, “when the traces of their republic are disinfected from history – what a glorious funeral march this will make!”

P56: Kira addressing a red:

“You must be new here. I’d advise you to be careful. Our stairs are slippery and there are four floors to climb, so be careful when you come to arrest me.”

P59:

Do you think you’ll live your whole life under a Red boot?

P65:

It’s a curse, you know, to be able to look higher than you’re allowed to reach. One’s safer looking down, the farther down the safest – these days.

P67:

I feel so sorry for all these people here, selling the last of their possessions, with nothing to expect of life. For me, it’s different. I don’t mind. What’s a few knick-knacks more or less? I’ll have time to buy plenty of new ones. But I have something I can’t sell and can’t lose and it can’t be nationalized. I have a future. A living future.

P71:

“And when you think you’re right, you do it at any price?” “I know what you’re going to say. You’re going to say, as so many of our enemies do, that you admire our ideals, but loathe our methods.” “I loathe your ideals.” “Why?” “For one reason, mainly, chiefly and eternally, no matter how much your Party promises to accomplish no matter what paradise it plans to bring

mankind. Whatever your other claims may be, there's one you can't avoid, one that will turn your paradise into the most unspeakable hell: your claim that man must live for the state."

"...don't you know that there are things, in the best of us, which no outside hand should dare to touch? Things sacred because, and only because, one can say: 'This is mine'? Don't you know that we live only for ourselves, the best of us do, those who are worthy of it? Don't you know that there is something in us which must not be touched by any state, by any collective, by any number of millions?"

P72:

What are your masses but millions of dull, shriveled, stagnant souls that have no thoughts of their own, no dreams of their own, no will of their own, who eat and sleep and chew helplessly the words others put into their brains?

...with you than the enemies who fight you, have. I don't want to fight for the people, I don't want to fight against the people, I don't want to hear of the people. I want to be left alone – to live.

P73:

"Do you go to the theater often?" "Not very often. Last time was six years ago. Being a bourgeois, I can't afford a ticket."

P91:

"Comrades! Let me greet in you the awakening of class consciousness! Another step in the march of history toward Communism! Down with the damn bourgeois exploiters! Loot the looters, comrades! Who does not toil, shall not eat! Proletarians of the world, unite!

P96:

...they're going to return houses to owners before long.

P99:

"You see, you and I, we believe in life. But you want to fight for it, to kill it, even to die – for life. I only want to live it."

P110:

...you don't make a revolution with white gloves on.

...what damn fool thinks that a revolution is all perfumed with cologne?

P111:

...don't try to leave the country. You're in this Soviet Russia; you may hate it, and you may choke, but in Soviet Union you'll stay.

P116:

The gifts of the Revolution were to come.

P117:

The new little stoves were called "Bourgeoise," for they had been born in the homes of those who could not afford full-sized logs to heat the full-sized stoves in their once luxurious homes.

P118:

She was impatient to return home, as she had been when, a child in school, on her birthdays, she had known that presents awaited her at home. Nothing awaited her there now, but the Primus, and millet, and cabbage to chop for soup.

He did not like the books. They were novels by foreign authors in which a poor, honest worker was always sent to jail for stealing a loaf of bread to feed the starving mother of his pretty, young wife who had been raped by a capitalist and committed suicide thereafter, for which the all-powerful capitalist fired her husband from the factory, so that their child had to beg on the streets and was run over by the capitalist's limousine with sparkling fenders and a chauffeur in uniform. But Leo could do the work at home, and it paid well, although when he received his money at the Gossizdat, it was accompanied by the remark: "We have deducted two and a half percent as your contribution to the new Red Chemical Society of Proletarian Defense. This is in addition to the five percent deduction for the Red Air Fleet, and three percent for the Liquidation of Illiteracy, and five percent for your Social Insurance, and..."

P123:

"I suppose I'm old-fashioned. I was born that way and that's the way I'll die. But all of you young people are rotted before you're ripe. Socialism, Communism, Marxism, and to hell with decency!"

P127:

Comrade Lenin had had a second stroke and had lost his power of speech. Pravda said: "... no higher sacrifice to the cause of the Proletariat than a leader burning out his will, health and body in the superhuman effort of the responsibility placed upon his shoulders by the Workers and Peasants."

P134:

The guest sat huddled in corners, shivering under old shawls and sweaters, tens and self-conscious and too carelessly nonchalant in their old best clothes. They kept their arms pressed to their sides to hide the holes in their armpits; elbows motionless on their knees – to hide rubbed patches; feet deep under chairs – to hide worn felt boots.

P135:

An anemic girl who sat sulkily in a corner, miserably hiding her feet and heavy felt boots, said with a dull stare, incredulous of her own words: “Abroad ... I heard ... they say they don’t have provision cards, or cooperatives, or anything, you just go into a store just when you feel like it and just buy bread or potatoes or anything, even sugar. Me, I don’t believe it myself.” “And they say you buy your clothes without a trade-union order – abroad.”

P136:

“I have a cold,” said the anemic girl. “Mother got a union order for galoshes and there were none my size and we lost our turn and we have to wait three months and I got a cold.”

“We had a reduction of staffs last month, but they didn’t touch me. I’m socially active. I’m teaching a class of illiterates – free – an hour every evening – as club duty – and they know I’m a conscientious citizen.”

P142:

Lights burned in the windows of barred, padlocked shops. Many doors carried a notice: “Comrade burglars, please don’t bother. There’s nothing inside.”

P144:

Once, Kira and Leo attempted to spend a night in the country. “Certainly,” said the landlady. “Certainly, citizens, I can let you have a room for the night. But first you must get a certificate from you Upravdom as to where you live in the city, and a permit from your militia department, and then you must bring me you labor books, and I must register them with our Soviet here, and our militia department, and get a permit for you as transient guests, and there’s a tax to pay, and then you can have the room.” They stayed in the city.

P147:

“Well, I guess everybody knows it. The villages – that’s the dark spot on our future. They’re not conquered. They’re not with us. They have a red flag over the local Soviet and a knife behind their backs. They bow, and they nod, and they snicker in their beards. They stick pictures of Lenin over the barns where they hide their grain from us.”

P148:

“Comrade Kovalensky, did it ever occur to you to consider what we think of men who merely work for their pay and take no part in social activity in their spare time?” “Did it ever occur to you that I have a life to live – in my spare time?”

P149:

Told me I had a bourgeois attitude. I’m not social-minded.

P152:

Near broke, you say? Well, what do you want here, you bum? Expecting us proletarians to give jobs to every stray bourgeois?

P155: (corruption)

A citizen of no visible means of support, who owned an automobile and a five-room apartment, and who held long, whispered conversations with officials of the Food Trust, decided that his children had to speak French.

“The world revolution is not a matter of years, comrades, not a matter of months, but a matter of days now. The flame of a Proletarian Uprising will sweep the Earth, wiping out forever the Curse of World Capitalism.”

P158:

Social duty comes above all.

P161:

“So-called impartial justice, citizen, is a bourgeois prejudice. This is a court of class justice. It is our official attitude and platform.”

P167: (Lavrova had an abortion. She was ‘given’ one of Kira’s rooms by the government.)

“Citizen Lavrova, will you please clean the bathroom? There’s blood all over the floor.” “Leave me alone. I’m sick. Clean it yourself, if you’re so damn bourgeois about your bathroom.”

P171:

“Andrei, why doesn’t your Party believe in the right to live while one is not killed?” “Do you mean Syerov or – yourself?” “Myself.” “In our fight, Kira, there is no neutrality.” “You may claim the right to kill, as all fighters do. But no one before you has ever thought of forbidding life to those still living.”

“When one can stand any suffering, one can also see others suffer. This is martial law. Our time is dawn. There is a new sun rising, such as the world has never seen before. We are in the path

of its first rays. Every pain, every cry of ours will be carried by these rays, as on a gigantic radius, down the centuries; every little figure will grow into an enormous shadow that will wipe out decades of future sorrow for every minute of ours.”

P174:

The “House of the Peasant” occupied someone’s former mansion. It had a stairway of pale pink marble with a bronze balustrade, lighted by a huge stained-glass window where purple grapes and pink peaches rolled out of golden cornucopias. A sign was posted over the stairs: COMRADES! DO NOT SPIT ON THE FLOOR. There were other signs: a huge sickle and hammer of gilded papier-mâché, a poster with a peasant woman and a sheaf of wheat, more posters of sheafs, golden sheafs, green sheafs, red sheafs, a picture of Lenin, a peasant grinding under foot a spider with the head of a priest, a picture of Trotsky, a peasant and a red tractor, a picture of Karl Marx, “Proletarians of the World, Unite!” “Who does not toil, shall not eat!” “Long live the reign of workers and poor peasants!” “Comrade peasants, crush the hoarders in your midst!”

P175:

A habit which had sprung from nowhere and spread over the country, which even Party members could not check or resist, for which no one was responsible nor could be punished, referred to all products of local inefficiency as “Soviet”; there were “Soviet matches” that did not light, “Soviet kerchiefs” that tore the first time worn, “Soviet shoes” with cardboard soles. Young women like Nina and Tina were called “Soviet girls.”

P179:

The leads to a waste of valuable time and is not at all in the spirit of proletarian efficiency.

P182:

WE, TOILERS OF PETROGRAD, GREET OUR BRITISH CLASS BROTHERS! WELCOME TO THE LAND OF THE SOVIETS WHERE LABOR IS FREE! THE WOMEN OF THE STATE TEXTILE PLANT NUMBER 2 PLEDGE THEIR SUPPORT TO ENGLAND’S PROLETARIAT IN ITS STRUGGLE WITH IMPERIALISTS.

P183:

Kira’s eyes saw but one person: the woman delegate of the British Trade Unions. She was tall, thin, not young, with the worried face of a school teacher. But she wore a tan sports coat and that coat yelled louder than the hurrahs of the crowd, louder than the “Internationale,” that it was foreign. With firm, pressed folds of rich material, trim, well-fitted, serene, that coat did not moan, like all those others around Kira, of the misery of the muscles underneath. The British comrade wore silk stockings; a rich, brownish sheen, tight on feet in trim, new well-polished brown shoes.

P189:

“Well, it’s war. It’s war. You don’t give up, do you, Kira? It’s not dangerous so long as you don’t give up. And the harder it gets the happier you should be that you can stand it. That’s it. The harder – the happier. It’s war. You’re a good soldier, Kira Argounova.”

...all her thoughts of love reduced to a tortured hurry to get it over with.

P190:

They saved the money for many months and on a Sunday evening they bought two tickets to see “Bajadere,” advertised as the “latest sensation of Vienna, Berlin and Paris.” They sat, solemn, erect, reverent as at a church service, Kira a little paler than usual in her gray silk dress, Leo trying not to cough, and they listened to the wantonest operetta from over there, from abroad. It was very gay nonsense. It was like a glance straight through the snow and the flags, through the border, into the heart of that other world.

P191:

THE PURGE The notice directed all students to call at the office, receive questionnaires, fill them out promptly, have the Upravdom certify to the truth of the answers and return them to the Purging Committee. The schools of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics were to be cleaned of all socially undesirable persons. Those found socially undesirable were to be expelled, never to be admitted to any college again. Newspapers roared over the country like trumpets: “Science is a weapon of the class struggle! Proletarian schools are for the Proletariat! We shall not educate our class enemies!”

When they signed the questionnaires, they knew they had signed the death warrant of their future;

P192:

Kira’s hand trembled a little when she handed to the Purge Committee the questionnaire that bore the answer: What was your father’s occupation prior to the year 1917? Owner of the Argounov Textile Factory.

...one’s “social origin” was most important - ...

P193:

“Factory owners were the chief exploiters of the Proletariat.” “Worse than landowners.” “Most dangerous of class enemies.”

P195:

“It’s not dangerous so long as we don’t give up.”

P197:

“He joined the Party. The All-Union Communist Party. With a red star, a Party ticket, a bread card, and his hand in all the blood spilled, in all the blood to come!”

P198:

Because there was no future, they hung on to the present.

P203:

In the third hospital, the official refused to see her. There were lines to wait in, ghastly lines of deformed creatures, of scars, and slings, and crutches, and open sores, and green, mucous patches of eyes, and grunts, and groans, and – over a line of the living – the smell of the morgue.

P204:

She wondered sometimes why the words: “But he’s going to die,” meant so little to them, and the words: “But he’s not a registered worker,” meant so little to her, and why it seemed so hard to explain.

P220:

Men brought earth to fill a swamp where no living thing existed but mosquitoes. And like mosquitoes, men died and fell into the grunting mire. No willing hands came to build the new capital. It rose by the labor of soldiers, thousands of soldiers, regiments who took orders and could not refuse to face a deadly foe, a gun or a swamp. They fell, and the earth they brought and their bones made the ground for the city. “Petrograd,” its residents say, “stands on skeletons.”

P236:

“Sasha is studying history,” said Irina, “that is, he was. He’s been thrown out of the University for trying to think in a country of free thought.”

P240:

“Under the Soviets,” drawled Sasha, “there is no exploitation.”

P241:

I think it’s hard for us to understand kindness and what used to be called ethics. We’re all turning into beasts in a beastly struggle.

“We’re living in difficult times. But things will change. Things are changing. There still are men whom freedom is more than a word on posters.”

P252:

...and it is the duty of every conscientious citizen to be acquainted with the history of our revolutionary movement in order to become a trained, enlightened fighter in the ranks of the World Revolution – our highest goal.”

P268:

“I’m not risking much when I risk my life.”

P271:

A picture of Lenin hung on the wall of the inner office, over a broad, new desk; it hung between a diagram showing the progress of the railroads, and a sign with red letters saying: COMRADES, STATE YOUR BUSINESS BRIEFLY, PROLETARIAN EFFICIENCY IS THE DISCIPLINE OF PEACETIME REVOLUTIONARY CONSTRUCTION.

P279:

“Comrades, in these days of peaceful State Construction, the workers of Proletarian culture are the shock battalion in the vanguard of the Revolution.

P287:

“My dear friends,” Victor’s voice was clear, vibrant with his warmest persuasiveness, “I have no words to describe my deep gratitude to all of you for your kindness on this great day of my life. Let us all join in a toast to a person who is very dear to my heart, not only as a relative, but as a man who symbolizes a splendid example to us, young revolutionaries starting out on our lives of service to the cause of the Proletariat. A man who had devoted his life to that cause, who had risen bravely against the tyranny of the Czar, who has sacrificed his best years in the cold wastes of a Siberian exile, fighting for the great goal of the people’s freedom. And since that goal is ever paramount for all of us, since it is higher than all thoughts of personal happiness, let us drink our first toast to one of the first fighters for the triumph of the Worker-Peasant Soviets, my beloved father-in-law, Gliob Ilyitch Lavrov!

Hands applauded noisily; glasses rose, clinking; all eyes turned to the corner where the gaunt, stooped figure of Marisha’s father got up slowly. Lavrov was holding his glass, but he did not smile; his gnarled hand motioned for silence. He said slowly, firmly, evenly: “Listen here, you young whelps. I spent four years in Siberia. I spent them because I saw the people starved and ragged and crushed under a boot. Only the boot is red. I didn’t go to Siberia to fight for a

crazed, power-drunk, bloodthirsty gang that strangles the people as they've never been strangled before, that knows less of freedom than any Czar every did! Go ahead and drink all you want, drink till you drown the last rag of conscience in your fool brains, drink to anything you wish. But when you drink to the Soviets, don't drink to me!"

P292:

"COMRADES! THE UNION OF SOCIALIST SOVIET REPUBLICS is surrounded by a hostile ring of enemies who watch and plot for its downfall. But no external enemy, no heinous plot of world imperialists is as dangerous to us as the enemy of dissension within our own ranks."

"Comrades! A grave new danger has been growing among us in the last year. I call it the danger of over-idealism. We've all heard the accusations of its deluded victims. They cry that Communism has failed, that we've surrendered our principles, that since the introduction of NEP – our New Economic Policy – the Communist Party has been retreating, fleeing before a new form of private profiteering which now rules our country. They claim that we are holding power for the sake of power and have forgotten our ideals. Such is the shining of weaklings and cowards who cannot face practical reality. It is true that we've had to abandon the policy of Military Communism, which had brought us to the brink of total starvation. It is true that we've had to make concessions to private traders. What of it? A retreat is not a defeat. A temporary compromise is not a surrender. We were betrayed by the spineless, weak-kneed, anemic socialists of foreign countries who sold out their working masses to their bourgeois masters. The World Revolution, which was to make a pure world Communism possible, has been delayed. We, therefore, have had to compromise, for the time being. We have had to abandon our theories of pure Communism and come down to earth, to the prosaic task of economic reconstruction. Some may think it a slow, drab, uninspiring process; but loyal Communists know the epic grandeur of our new economic front. Loyal Communists know the revolutionary value and significance of our ration cards, our Primuses, the lines at our co-operatives. Our great leader, Comrade Lenin, with his usual farsightedness, warned us several years ago against the danger of being 'over-idealistic.' That perilous fallacy has smitten some of our best heads. It has taken from us the man who had been one of our first leaders – Leon Trotsky. None of his past services to the Proletariat could redeem the treachery of his assertion that we've betrayed Communism. That is why these purges will continue. We must follow, with absolute discipline, the program dictated by our Party – and not the petty doubts and personal opinions of the few who still think of themselves and of the so-called conscience in terms of bourgeois individualism. We don't need those who are not afraid of a little compromise. We don't need the obstinate, unbending Communist of iron. The new Communist is of rubber! Idealism, comrades, is a good thing in its proper amount. Too much of it is like too much of a good old wine: one's liable to lose one's head. Let this be a warning to any of Trotsky's secret sympathizers who might still remain within the Party: no past services, no past record will save

them from the axe of the next Party purge. They are traitors and they will be kicked out, no matter who they are or what they've been!"

P305:

"Once upon a time, we made a revolution. We said we were tired of hunger, of sweat and of lice. So we cut throats, and broke skulls, and poured blood, our blood, their blood, to wash a clean road for freedom. Now look around you, look around you, Comrade Taganov, Party member since 1915! Do you see where men live, men, our brothers? Do you see what they eat? Have you ever seen a woman falling on the street, vomiting blood on the cobblestones, dying of hunger? I have. Did you see the limousines speeding at night? Did you see who's in them? There's a nice little comrade we have in the Party. A smart young man with a brilliant future. Pavel Syerov's the name. Have you ever seen him open his wallet to pay for a whore's champagne? Did you ever wonder where he gets the money? Did you ever go to the European roof garden? Not often, I bet. But if you had, you'd see the respectable Citizen Morozov getting indigestion on caviar. Who is he? Just assistant manager of the Foot Trust. The State Food Trust of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. We're the leaders of the world proletariat and we'll bring freedom to all suffering humanity! Look at our Party. Look at the loyal members with ink still wet on their Party tickets. Watch them reaping the harvest from the soil that our blood had fertilized. But we're not red enough for them. We're not revolutionaries. We're kicked out as traitors. We're kicked out for Trotskyism. We're kicked out because we didn't lose our sight and our conscience when the Czar lost his throne, the sight and the conscience that made him lose it. We're kicked out because we yelled to them that they've lost the battle, strangled the revolution, sold out the people, and there's nothing left now but power, brute power. They don't want us. Not me nor you. There's no place for men like you, Andrei, not anywhere on this earth. Well, you don't see it. And I'm glad you don't. Only I hope I'm not there on the day when you will!"

P306:

"Did it ever occur to you, Comrade Taganov, what a peculiar thing it is that so many of our Party comrades are dying of overwork? You've read it in the papers, haven't you? Another glorious victim fallen on the path of the revolution, a life burned out in a ceaseless task.... You know what they are, don't you, those comrades dying of a ceaseless task? Suicides. That's what they are. Suicides. Only the papers will never say it. Funny how many of them are killing themselves these days. Wonder why."

P311:

What's going to happen to all of us? That's what frightens me. Not the question itself, but that it's a question you can't ask anyone. You ask it and watch people, and you'll see their eyes, and you'll know that they feel the same thing, the same fear, and you can't question them about it,

but if you did, they couldn't explain it, either... You know, we're all trying so hard not to think at all, not to think beyond the next day, and sometimes even not beyond the next hour... Do you know what I believe? I believe they're doing it deliberately. They don't want us to think.

P315:

"Why, Mother!" Kira gasped. "You're wedding gown!" "You see," Galina Petrovna explained very quickly, "it's the school. I got my salary yesterday and ... and they had deducted so much for my membership in the Proletarian Society of Chemical Defense – and I didn't even know I was a member – that I haven't ... You see, your father needs new shoes – the cobbler's refused to mend his old ones – and I was going to buy them this month ... but with the Chemical Defense and ... You see, you could alter it nicely – the dress, I mean – it's good material, I've only worn it ... once ... And I thought, if you liked it, for an evening gown, maybe, or ..."

P318:

He turned away, to the fire. He said: "My Party." Then he whirled back to her. "You know it, Kira. Perhaps you knew it long ago. You were right. Perhaps you're right about many things, those things we've tried not to discuss." She whispered: "Andrei, do you want to discuss it – with me? I don't want to hurt you." "You can't hurt me. Don't you think I can see it all, myself? Don't you think I know what that great revolution of ours has come to? We shoot one speculator and a hundred others hire taxis on Nevsky every evening. We raze villages to the ground, we fire machine guns into rows of peasants crazed with misery, when they kill a Communist. And ten of the avenged victim's Party brothers drink champagne at the home of a man with diamond studs in his shirt. Where did he get the diamonds? Who's paying for the champagne? We don't look into that too closely." "Andrei, did you ever think that it was you – your Party – who drove the men you call speculators into what they are doing – because you left them no choice?"

P334:

"I'll be afraid only on a day that will never come," said Kira. "The day when I give up."

P335:

...you know how you made us do it. All I know is that we've done it. We made a revolution. We had red banners. The banners said that we made it for the world proletariat. We had fools who thought in their doomed hearts that we made it for all those downtrodden ones who suffer on this earth. But you and me, Comrade Morozov, we have a secret.

P355:

"The revolution. Do you know what a revolution is? I'll tell you. We killed. We killed men in the streets, and in the cellars, and aboard our ships ... Aboard our ships ... I remember ...

There was one boy – an officer – he couldn't have been more than twenty. He made the sign of the cross – his mother must've taught him that. He had blood running out of his mouth. He looked at me. His eyes – they weren't frightened any more. They were kind of astonished. About something his mother hadn't taught him. He looked at me. That was the last thing. He looked at me."

P356:

Once, men were ruled with a god's thunder. Then they were ruled with a sword. Now they're ruled with a Primus. Once, they were held by reverence. Then they were held by fear. Now they're held by their stomachs.

"We started building a temple. Do we end with a chapel? No! And we don't even end with an outhouse. We end with a musty kitchen with a second-hand stove! We set fire under a kettle and we brewed and stirred and mixed blood and fire and steel. What are we fishing now out of the brew? A new humanity? Men of granite? Or at least a good and horrible monster? No! Little puny things that wiggle. Little things that can bend both ways, little double-jointed spirits. Little things that don't even bow humbly to be whipped. No! They take the lash obediently and whip themselves! Ever sat at a social-activity club meeting? Should. Do you good. Learn a lot about the human spirit."

P357:

There's an honor in blood. But do they know that it's not blood we're bathed in, it's pus?

P361:

In the village Vasilkino, in the Kama region, the peasants, goaded by the counter-revolutionary hoarder element, burned the local Club of Karl Marx. The bodies of the Club president and secretary, Party comrades from Moscow, were found in the charred ruins. A G.P.U. squad is on its way to Vasilkino.

P363:

SAT AT THE DESK IN his office, correcting the typewritten copy of his next speech on "Railroads and the Class Struggle."

P364:

...he was to make a speech on the "Proletarian Distribution of Food Products..."

P366:

COMRADE LENIN SAID: "OF ALL THE ARTS, THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE FOR RUSSIA IS THE CINEMA!"

P367:

“THE PROLETARIAT STAMPED ITS MIGHTY BOOT DOWN THE TREACHEROUS THROAT OF DEPRAVED ARISTOCRATS”

“BUT THE SPIRIT OF OUR RED WARRIORS FLAMED WITH LOYALTY TO THE PROLETARIAN CAUSE”

P375:

The treacherous counter-revolutionary activities of speculators, who deprive our toilers of their hard-earned food rations, must be brought into the full light of proletarian justice. The workers must be reminded that their class enemies are plotting day and night to undermine the only workers' government in the world. Our toiling masses must be told that they have to bear their temporary hardships patiently and lend their full support to the government which is fighting for their interests against such heavy odds, as the case you've discovered will display to the public.

P377:

“Oh, nothing to fear, Comrade Taganov. Those gentlemen are easy to handle. He'll be promised life to say only what he'd told to say. He'll be expecting a pardon even when he hears his death sentence. One can make promises, you know. One doesn't always have to keep them.”

P378:

One has only so many hairs to turn gray. But only one head under the hair.

P387:

If you taught us that our life is nothing before that of the State – well then, are you really suffering? If I brought you to the last hell of despair – well then, why don't you say that one's own life doesn't really matter?

P388:

And who – in this damned universe – who can tell me why I should live for anything but for that which I want? Who can answer that in human sounds that speak for human reason? ... But you've tried to tell us what we should want. You came as a solemn army to bring a new life to men. You tore that life you knew nothing about, out of their guts – and you told them what it had to be. You took their every hour, every minute, every nerve, every thought in the farthest corners of their souls – and you told them what it had to be. You came and you forbade life to the living. You've driven us all into an iron cellar and you've closed all doors, and you've locked us airtight, airtight till the blood vessels of our spirits burst! Then you stare and wonder what it's doing to us. Well, then, look! All of you who have eyes left – look!

P391:

You said that your end justified your means. But your end, comrades? What is your end?

P392:

Comrades! Brothers! Listen to me! Listen, you consecrated warriors of a new life! Are we sure we know what we are doing?

Now look at what you're getting. Look at those whom you allow to triumph. Deny the best in men – and see what will survive. Do we want the crippled, creeping, crawling, broken monstrosities that we're producing? Are we not castrating life in order to perpetuate it?

P393:

What are we doing? Do we want to feed a starved humanity in order to let it live? Or do we want to strangle its life in order to feed it?

"Our child," said Comrade Sonia, "will be a new citizen of a new state. It will be brought up in the free, healthy ideology of the proletariat, without any bourgeois prejudices to hamper its natural development."

P408:

...it is recommended by the Party Council as indispensable to the political education of a conscientious worker.

P412:

...we pay a last tribute to the unknown warriors of the Army of the Proletariat. Comrade Taganov is dead. He committed suicide under the strain of a nervous collapse caused by overwork. His health and body were broken by the demanding, ceaseless task which his Party membership imposed upon him. Such was his sacrifice to the Revolution. Such is the sacrifice of a Party that rules, not for the sake of personal loot and fame, like the rulers of capitalistic countries, but for the sake of assuming the hardest work, the most pitiless tasks in the service of the Collective. And if, in these days of struggle and privation, some of us may weaken in spirit, let us look up to the great All-Union Communist Party that leads us, that spares not its strength, its energy, its lives. Let us make the Red funeral of a Party hero an occasion of tribute to our leaders. Let all toilers of Leningrad join in the process that will escort Comrade Taganov to his last place of rest.

P418:

THE COMMUNIST PARTY SPARES NO VICTIMS IN ITS FIGHT FOR THE FREEDOM OF MANKIND.

P419:

The individual may fall, but the Collective lives forever. Under the guidance of the Soviets, under the leadership of the great All-Union Communist Party, we are marching into a radiant tomorrow when the honest toil of free toilers will rule the world! Then labor will no longer be slavery, as it is in capitalistic countries, but a free and happy duty to that which is greater than our petty concerns, greater than our petty sorrows, greater than our very lives – the eternal Collective of a Proletarian Society! Our glorious dead shall be remembered forever, but we are marching on.

P437:

There still were people and there still were lives. She was not dead. She was only waiting to be born.