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ROMAN GOUL

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY

MIRRA GINSBURG

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AZEF

"The heavy clods will fall,
The yellow clay rise high,
And gone is the gentleman
Who called himself I."

B. SAVINKOV

CHAPTER ONE

1

Driving down the Nevsky Prospect from Nikolaevsky Station, Boris Savinkov smiled. He scarcely knew himself why he was smiling. Perhaps because he was young and all of life was opening before him. As the cab drove past the Alexandrovsky Gardens, he looked around and saw the dark russet Winter Palace, glowing in all its eighteenth-century splendor in the sun.

2

In the palace, in the Emperor's study, looking out on the Neva, State Secretary Vyacheslav Konstantinovich von Plehve was reporting to the Emperor on his measures to suppress the revolutionary movement in Russia. The Emperor was, of course, aware, of how much Plehve had done to crush the revolutionaries when he was chief of the Police Department.

The State Secretary had an intelligent face, with a bristling mustache and energetic eyes. He spoke rapidly, emphatically. But it seemed to him that the Emperor was not listening, that he was thinking of something else.

The Emperor nodded absently, "Yes, yes." And his pale blue eyes stared, unseeing, at the vigorous face of his State Secretary.

3

The cab drove down Sredny Prospect on Vasilievsky Island. Looking about, Boris Savinkov noticed a sign, suspended by a cord from the third-floor balcony of a shabby gray house. Savinkov pointed to it and nudged the driver to stop.

He climbed the steep, winding, badly lit stairway to the third floor. The air was thick with back-yard odors. But all the houses on Sredny were alike. And Savinkov pulled the bell, which started shrill reverberations within.

The door remained shut. Not a sound was heard behind it. Savinkov rang several times. But as he turned to leave, the door flew open. He saw a man in a jacket, collarless, with mindless, feverish eyes. For a moment the man said nothing. Then he asked in a strange rapid patter:

"What is it you wish, young man?"

"Do you have a room to rent?"

The man with the feverish eyes seemed unable to recall whether he had a room to rent. He thought about it for a long time. Then he turned and walked away from the door, calling out:

"Vera, show the room!"

The girl had the same dark, frightened eyes. She was wrapped in a large shawl.

"You want a room?" she asked melodiously. "Come in, please."

"Here," the girl said, opening a door.

The room was oddly shaped, almost semi-circular. There was a table with a kerosene lamp, a bed, a washstand. Savinkov noticed the girl's embarrassment. "They've never taken roomers before."

"How much will it be?"

"Fifteen rubles. But if it is too much for you. . . ."

The girl blushed in confusion.

"No, I will take it at fifteen."

"Very well," said the girl, glancing at him and becoming still more confused.

4

The Imperial University appeared to Savinkov like an anthill which had been stirred up with a stick. The students, assembled from all corners of Russia, were indignant because they were young. In the university's famed corridors the crowd burned with angry protest: the Warsaw professors had sent the Minister a congratulatory message on the unveiling of a monument to General Muraviev, the suppressor of the Polish uprising. Amid the crush, the excitement, the indignation, Savinkov felt as though a steel spring were tightening within him. He pushed his way into the auditorium. Instead of Professor Van der Vleet, a student in a Russian blouse, with his hair swept back, ran up to the podium and cried:

"Com-rades!"

Savinkov was pressed against the podium. He saw the orator turn pale, he saw the beadles trying to break through the crowd as

the student screamed his speech, his mouth opening wide. The auditorium exploded in a storm of applause by frenzied young hands. Savinkov felt his palms turn cold. A sharp inner tremor ran through him. Running up to the podium, he shouted with all his lungs, "Comrades!" And he began a fiery speech.

5

The Petersburg night flowed past the window. Excited by his speech, by the crowd, Savinkov could not sleep. The excitement turned into thoughts of Vera. He saw her, fragile, with frightened eyes. Savinkov tossed from side to side and fell asleep only when the windows began to turn blue.

In the morning Vera passed a warm hand over her sleepy face, stretched, and pulled the blanket up to her chin. Behind the wall she heard Savinkov clear his throat.

"Good morning, Vera Glebovna," he said gaily in the corridor.

"Good morning," smiled Vera, adding, for some reason: "You came home late last night?"

"Yes, there are so many things to do."

"I heard you made a speech at the university." And she added, without waiting for an answer: "Oh yes, the student Kalyaev was here to see you. He said you know him. He'll come today."

"Kalyaev? He is my old schoolmate, Vera Glebovna."

Embarrassed by his direct gaze, Vera hurried lightly down the corridor. As she walked that morning to her classes at the Women's College, a blue-liveried coachman dashed by, showering her with sprays of newly fallen snowdust. The sparkling snowdust seemed miraculous to Vera.

6

Kalyaev was absent-minded. For a long time he wandered over the streets of Vasilievsky Island, and even when he came to Sredny he had difficulty in finding the house.

A samovar hissed on the table. The lamp glowed behind its green paper shade. Savinkov sliced the bread, poured tea into glasses, and listened to Kalyaev.

"I barely managed to get out. There was no money, you see. But Mother borrowed some in the end." Kalyaev spoke with a faint Polish accent.

"We'll take care of the money, Yanek. But you must see the university; it is on fire! What meetings! You've heard about the professors' message?"

Kalyaev had light, mocking eyes, very different from the quick Mongolian eyes of Boris. His face was homely, ascetically gaunt.

"Slaves. . . ." he said.

"The only revolutionary organization is the *Kassa*. I will join it. You must also join, Yanek."

Kalyaev was pensive. With his eyes fixed on the lamp shade, he said:

"I came here in a third-class carriage, crammed to the ceiling—stench, heavy boots, spit everywhere. I didn't sleep all night. At one of the junctions I got out: stillness, dawn, birds singing. I stood near the train, feeling with my whole skin: how good life is! . . . And then I came here—monuments to Muraviev, gendarmes, whips. . . ." Kalyaev waved his hand, rose, and began to pace the room.

Over the dark wall of gray, dirty buildings several stars burned in the Petersburg sky.

"The stars are shining," Kalyaev said quietly, looking out of the window. "It is so dark in the sky, yet there are stars. They burn and won't go out."

Savinkov embraced him, laughing:

"You're a poet, Yanek! Would you like to hear my latest poem?"

In the greenish twilight of the lamp, Savinkov rose and recited breathlessly:

"The Chestnut
Shakes its leaves,
Street lamps blink
Drunkenly.
Someone passes mutely.
Pale, bloodless faces
In the sultry night.
In the moonless night
Filled with silence
I hear thy sobbing.
The chestnut
Shakes its leaves
Drunkenly,
And I, though guiltless,
Seek vindication."

"I think it's good," Kalyaev said, smiling. "Do you know whom I love?"

"Whom?"

"Maeterlinck."

7

Vera recognized his rapid steps in the hallway. She heard him hastily unlocking the door. Savinkov knew why he hurried home from the meeting. Climbing the stairs, he said to himself: "There is light in the window." As he entered, he heard Vera singing quietly behind the wall, and the more he heard her, the more he wanted to see her.

The melody broke off, then rose again. Savinkov heard it move away to the dining room; then it came nearer. When it reached his door, Savinkov flung the door open.

"You frightened me!" said Vera with a start.

He moved as if to support her. He said:

"I've just returned. Won't you come in, Vera Glebovna? Let us talk awhile."

Vera did not see his agitation.

"You weren't at school today?"

"Why, no?! I was."

"You were? At Leshafft's lecture? He is the favorite of the girl students. . . ."

"You shouldn't talk like that about Pyotr Frantsevich."

"Oh?"

Ringing and screeching, fire engines veered around the corner from the Sixth Line and clattered down the street. The fire alarm sang out mournfully from a distant watchtower. Vera was glad of the pretext to get up. She went to the window, saying:

"A fire!"

"Yes."

In the dark, over the white snow, firemen were racing down the street with torchlights. People ran. Behind them, a stout woman with a stick hobbled in comical haste.

"I wonder where," said Savinkov. He was so near she did not dare to move. She wanted to close her eyes, to break away, to turn. Her head swam. Savinkov was suddenly holding her, kissing her eyes, cheeks, hands. Vera smelled the scent of eau de cologne. She

did not hear what he was saying. She saw him turn pale and felt that he was very dear to her. With the sensation of falling as he whispered, she closed her eyes. Strangely numb, feeling no happiness, she put her arms about his shoulders.

8

A stormy meeting was in progress in the room of the student Eva Gordon, on Podyacheskaya Street. The air was heavy with smoke. But the apartment was safe from the police, and the members of the Socialist circle argued with abandon. Gordon, a brunette with a fiery Semitic profile, stood near the door. In the center of the room, the Marxist student Savinkov was gesticulating, demanding active political struggle and closer ties with the populists. The worker Komay listened, his hands resting heavily on his knees, his face rough-featured, as if carved out with an axe. The student Rutenberg smoked. Dark pince-nez glinted on the alabaster, equine face of a red-haired, middle-aged man, M. I. Gurovich. Next to him sat the worker Tolmachev, dark-skinned like a Gypsy, his forehead cleft by a deep fold, the better to understand Savinkov.

Savinkov spoke of fighting, of terror. Tolmachev's heart was swept with emotion. He clapped his calloused palms. Gurovich also applauded, crying:

"Right!"

"Comrade Gurovich, a little quieter, please!" the hostess waved at him. "Look at you, and you're the eldest here!"

"Oh please now, Comrade Gordon!"

"You're right, Boris Victorovich!" exclaimed Komay. Savinkov reached for his tea, grown cold in the meantime. But his hand was intercepted and grasped warmly by Gurovich.

"You speak remarkably well, my friend. You have a great talent," and he patted Savinkov on the shoulder with a fatherly gesture.

"Time to disperse, comrades, it's late. . . ."

"You're going to Petersburgskaya, Comrade Savinkov?"

Savinkov and Gurovich turned from Podyacheskaya. They inhaled deeply, suddenly feeling how smoky the room had been. The night air rising from the damp sidewalks chilled them. And Eva Gordon opened her window. The smoke of the Socialist circle coiled in a green-blue column into the paling Petersburg night.

9

The sky was turning blue with dawn behind the Neva. A strong wind rose from the river. Gurovich, in a dark blue dressing gown with a tasseled belt, sat thinking in his study. He had decided to spend the coming spring in the Crimea. There was a look of concentration on his face. He was considering the details of his plan. Then he carefully wrote on a sheet of foolscap: "To the Director of the Police Department, Special Section."

The spacious apartment looked out on the quay. The Neva was awakening. The sun poured in through the high, wide windows, flooding Gurovich with bright light.

10

Vera was happy. Her marriage to Boris could not be described in any other way. Yet, in some corner of her heart, she wanted more. More tenderness, more sympathy. She wanted quiet words, opening the way to a loving exchange of pent-up thoughts and feelings.

"I have no life without you, Boris."

Savinkov looked at her, smiling, thinking: it is difficult to deceive a woman—she has her own way of seeing into a man.

"You love me less, Boris, than I love you. When you go away, my life stops. You can't imagine how I am tormented and afraid when you are at your meetings."

"There is still more suffering ahead, Vera. I am only entering the fight."

"Let me go with you. There have been women in the revolutionary movement."

"The women in the movement love nothing and no one except the revolution," said Savinkov, flashing his coal-black Mongolian eyes.

11

Kalyaev was paler than usual. With his thin shoulders, transparent eyes, and slender hands like hothouse flowers, he looked, Savinkov thought, like the saintly youth, Sergey of Radonezh, in Nesterov's painting. Kalyaev's eyes were fixed reflectively on some point in space. Savinkov was speaking.

"I want action, Yanek," he paced the room. "I want practical work. I don't like theory, I want living struggle, to make me feel with every nerve and every muscle. And so I am against those in our group who confine themselves to the economic approach and deny the need for working-class struggle on the political front. Take the paper, *Workers' Thought.* It is read avidly everywhere, even by drunkards, even by old men. People want to know why the students are rebelling; they think about it. No, we cannot look upon the worker as a babe in arms. He has interests transcending wages. But our comrades don't understand this, they lag behind the elemental upsurge of the masses. And this upsurge, Yanek, is growing before our eyes. What a tragedy if we, the revolutionaries, fail to find a channel for the revolution to flow into. You know Tolmachev, that handsome young locksmith. . . . I told the group at the Alexandrov steel plant about the terrorist fighters of the People's Will party. On the way home from the plant he suddenly turned to me: 'Ah, Boris Victorovich, from the moment you told us that thirteen people are still imprisoned in the Schlüsselburg Fortress, my heart can't rest!' And what will be the upshot? A man like Tolmachev will quit our fumbling, amateur circles, go out into the street, and stick a knife into the first policeman on the corner!"

Vera loved to see Boris carried away by emotion. At such moments, she thought, he really looked like a panther. She recalled Kalyaev's laughing words: "'He walked like a panther,' quoth the ancient chronicler."

Savinkov paced the room with his long stride.

"What are you thinking of, Yanek?"

Kalyaev raised his nervous face and said:

"Doesn't it make you ashamed to live today, Boris? Isn't it easier to die, or even . . . to kill?"

12

The gendarme officer bent down to peer at the name on the door; he was nearsighted. Then he pulled the bell sharply four times, without glancing back at the soldiers.

It seemed to Savinkov that the room was overrun by gendarmes, but there were only four. The officer, with a mean, shiny, dark face, stepped toward Savinkov.

"Are you the student Savinkov? Take us to your room."

Vera was standing, pale, leaning her hands on the table.

"Say good-by to your wife."

Stifling her sobs, Vera embraced Boris and could not tear herself away from his cold cheek. Without a word, she looked at him, and in his answering glance she thought she saw love and tenderness.

Buttoning his black student's coat with its gold, eagle-decorated buttons, Savinkov went out with the gendarmes. Vera heard their steps. She saw the cabs start. A terrible silence filled the room. And Vera fell upon the bed, sobbing.

13

It was a warm spring night. The city was dissolved in the yellowish haze of the street lamps. Its straight streets and endless bridges appeared even more straight and endless on this night. It seemed to Savinkov that the gendarme next to him had closed his eyes. On Zverinskaya they overtook a merry company of men and women, screaming with laughter. Savinkov saw—this was the way to the Fortress of Peter and Paul. He thought, "They found nothing. Could someone have informed?" The cab turned down the bridge toward the fortress.

With a faint shudder, Savinkov crossed his legs.

"Cold?" asked the gendarme.

The grim buildings emerged from the darkness, surrounded by mounds of shrubbery. "Like stage scenery," thought Savinkov. Motionless silhouettes of guards loomed up before them. They climbed down from the cab and crossed the prison yard. The yellow lamps illuminated only small patches of the way.

In the office the lights were so bright that Savinkov had to cover his eyes.

"This way," said the officer.

Savinkov walked down the long corridor.

"Here," said a voice.

Savinkov entered the darkness of the cell. And the door locked behind him.

CHAPTER TWO

1

On the map of European Russia which had hung in the nursery of the Savinkov brothers, the province of Vologda was colored pink. At the geography lessons Boris had always disliked the word, "Vo-log-da." There was something cold and pink in it, resembling the tundra and cranberries.

And now the political exile Savinkov walked on the soil of Vologda. The wooden sidewalks creaked in the frost. On Galkinskaya-Dvoryanskaya, where he lived in a house belonging to a Catholic church, there was not even a sidewalk. A man might drown in the flaky snowdrifts. Red-faced Vologda urchins with cheeks like anise apples were sledding all day long outside the house.

But, of course, it was not proper for the "politicals," as the northern natives called the exiles, to criticize the local customs. The natives sipped their tea from saucers, whistling through their lips to cool it. The city traded in grain, fish, and lumber.

This was a far cry from Moscow or Petersburg, seething with agitators, students, workers, and intellectuals. Nothing here but smooth, unruffled peace. Vologda was a harsh, northern province. And yet, Count Muraviev, the Governor, had his hands full. Political exiles were sent here from all corners of the empire. They had to be kept under surveillance, and a large police force was needed just to check upon them every morning.

Daily, the police guard Shchukin came to visit Savinkov and offered the same greeting: "Good morning, Mr. Savinkov."

"Good morning, Shchukin."

Shchukin shifted his weight from one foot to the other, dressed in greased boots, and hemmed and hawed. Even his mustache spoke of his good-humored simplicity.

"You see, I haven't run off anywhere."

"Where could you run, Mr. Savinkov? We've nothing but forest around, and there's no escaping through the forest. And why es-

cape? Thank God, you've nothing to complain of living here. Good-by, Mr. Savinkov."

"Good-by, Shchukin."

But Savinkov was content with Vologda only at first, while he was resting, while he was recovering his voice, which had become like a eunuch's after nine months of solitary confinement in the fortress. Now every noise no longer seemed to shatter the air, as it had in the ringing silence of the prison. But boredom soon closed in on him and grew intolerably among the snows of Vologda.

One day, as he was plowing in his high boots along Galkinskaya-Dvoryanskaya, Savinkov decided to escape. He thought about many things in Vologda, but his mind revolved most often about a certain scene, which filled with him with overpowering excitement.

A secret letter delivered to him described the moments when the tall Minister Sipyagin, in a warm fur coat with a high collar, entered the vestibule of the Mariinsky Palace. The Minister was followed by a handsome young officer in an adjutant's uniform, carrying a small package. As the handsome officer handed Sipyagin the package from the Grand Duke, he fired five bullets into the Minister. The corpulent Minister Vannovsky ran down the staircase to Sipyagin's aid, shouting, "The scoundrel! Strip his uniform! He is not an officer; it's a disguise!"

Savinkov walked along the darkening streets of Vologda. The streets were dead, deserted. Their lights were hidden behind the drawn shades of overheated bedrooms, sitting rooms, and parlors with their stuffed plush armchairs, gramophones, rockers, tea with raspberry jam, saffron, sage, and corn cider.

2

The "Grandmother of the Russian Revolution," Katerina Breshkovskaya, was traveling over Russia, agitating for populist ideas. In Ufa she saw Yegor Sazonov; in Poltava—Alexey Pokotilov. The strong-willed veteran of penal labor went everywhere—to Saratov, Kiev, Kursk, Poltava, Kamenetz-Podolsk, Tsaritsyn, and Warsaw—recruiting new blood for the party.

In Yaroslavl she met the political exile Kalyaev, who gave her a letter to Savinkov. Breshkovskaya was on the way to Vologda, which Savinkov found more and more unbearable. He dreamed of

coming out upon the stage of history, flooded with millions of eyes, beckoning with death and glory.

Savinkov opened the telegram.

"Arriving Friday. Vera."

Savinkov had forgotten about Vera. True, he had written to her that he was drowning in boredom and whiteness, that verses were running through his head. But he had not expected her.

And how excited Vera was, traveling to join him! She was constantly getting up and walking out of the railroad compartment, which reeked of tobacco smoke, spilled tea, and infant urine. What drove her out had nothing to do with the bowlegged babies, squealing and crawling about on the floor of the rushing car, or the tiresome sight of the priest and his wife, drinking down their ninth pot of tea. Her thoughts refused to settle in her fragile head; they roused her from her seat and pulled her restlessly to and fro.

Standing by the window, Vera felt her longing for Boris fused somehow with her anxiety over their daughter. But the thought of Boris was like a great wing beating in her breast, quickening her heart's pulse. And Vera peered out of the window: dark fir trees rushing by, a sawmill in a clearing, with people moving about whom she would never know. Vera put her hand up, covering her face against the wind, shielding her eyes from flying cinders. She remembered his slanting, Mongolian eyes. "Boris, Boris!"

A coiling ribbon of log cabins, a rush of air. Even with closed eyes one could tell the train was now flying among buildings. On a red official-looking structure there was a sign: Vologda Freight Station. People, fir trees, piles of lumber, crossties, stacks of brick flashed by kaleidoscopically. The train bellowed. And Vera saw the platform —exactly as she had imagined it.

"Excuse me," a very thin girl who looked like a sparrow was asking her. "Are you here to visit the political exile Savinkov? Are you his wife?"

"Yes, I am Savinkova," said Vera, lowering her heavy suitcase.

"Boris Victorovich asked me to meet you and bring you home," the sparrow chattered on, blushing. "Exiles are not allowed at the station. Let me take your luggage."

"Oh no, please don't."

"Well, let us carry it together. Boris Victorovich lives far from the station."

A broad, squat porter with a badge on his chest ran up to them. Vera said, laughing:

"Take it, please; it is too heavy for us."

Vera sat down in the wide sleigh. She was happy that the porter was jolly, that the dun Siberian horse was gay and spirited, and that the girl was merry. And, most important of all, that the sun was like a jolly, fiery oil spot in the transparent blue.

3

Savinkov stood at the window, looking down the street where Vera was to appear. He was thinking that Vera was, of course, a very decent person. The dun came into sight from around the corner. He said, "Vera." And there, indeed, was Vera in the sleigh.

She never remembered how she alighted and crossed the hallway. She remembered opening the door and rushing toward Boris.

"There, Vera, there," Savinkov laughed, taking her to a chair. "First of all, we must follow discipline. Wash yourself here, and then we'll have some tea. Anisya," he called out, "bring us the samovar!"

Vera passed her hand over her face, as if she had just awakened.

"I cannot believe that I am here, with you, that it is really you. You have changed."

"I've aged; my hair is thinner. But am I just as 'infinitely dear'?"

"Oh my dear, my dear," whispered Vera.

Without knocking, the cook, Anisya, pushed the door open with her black felt boot and, stepping heavily on her heels, brought the samovar to the table.

4

The fiery sun still lingered somewhere over the Sukhona River, but long shadows were now stretching across the snowdrifts.

Savinkov and Vera walked along the creaking wooden sidewalk. The twilit winter evening was quiet. The snow was no longer white, it turned blue, and over it flowed the sound of pealing church bells from the forty churches in the city. In the winter air there was already a distant, imperceptible scent of spring thaw.

"Now that you are with me, I need nothing else. I am altogether changed myself. . . . My soul is full. Without you it always seemed

to me that I was empty, lopsided somehow," laughed Vera. "Now everything is beautiful."

Savinkov looked at the snow, pulling at his cigarette. It flared up brightly in the blue dusk.

"If you knew what a darling Tanyushka is. She is so very much like you. What a joy she is to me! You know, I feel sorry now for childless women. They all seem so unhappy to me, even those who work with you in the revolutionary movement, even women like Figner and Perovskaya."

"Those are women of another breed." Savinkov threw away his cigarette into a snowdrift.

"Perhaps. When they first brought me the baby for nursing, I thought my heart would burst. . . ."

Savinkov looked at the dissolving distance of the street.

"What is the name of this street? They have such funny names here."

"The Street of Three Saints."

The windows along the Street of Three Saints were bright with the varicolored shades of kerosene lamps.

"How quiet it is here."

"Vera, I must talk to you."

Vera was happy. Without listening, looking at a woman's figure which crossed a window, carrying a lighted lamp, she said:

"Yes?"

"In a few days someone will visit me—from the Socialist Revolutionaries. I have decided to escape . . . abroad. . . ."

They came into a square. A stream of people poured out of a church after evening prayer. Through the open door she saw someone putting out the lights in the huge chandelier. She wanted to plead, to argue. . . .

"Is this . . . final?"

"I am waiting from day to day. The escape depends on this visit, and on the weather."

The house where Savinkov lived was dark. At the gate, Vera said:

"And so I'll be alone . . . again. . . ."

Anisya was lighting the lamp in the hallway.

5

When someone knocked at the door in the morning, Vera started.

At the threshold stood a stout, old, poorly dressed woman she did not know. Her face was red, weather-beaten, rather coarse-featured.

"Thank you, dear," the woman said to Anisya, nodding to her until she left.

"Boris Victorovich Savinkov?" she asked.

"Yes."

"In Barguzin the frost is forty below," said the old woman.

"What does she mean?" thought Vera.

"Sometimes it is even colder, people say," smiled Savinkov.

"Well, now we've met! Katerina Breshkovskaya," she introduced herself, shaking Savinkov's hand. "You've heard of me, I suppose?"

"Good God, of course, Katerina Konstantinovna! But I never expected. . . ."

Breshkovskaya put up a finger to her lips.

"There are no ears behind the walls?"

"None at all, it's safe, we are in a separate wing. Meet my wife," said Savinkov.

"Delighted, delighted, one of ours? But, of course, of course," the Grandmother repeated.

"First of all, Katerina Konstantinovna, you'll breakfast with us."

"A pleasure I won't refuse; the road is far and high," laughed the Grandmother.

Vera went into the kitchen. She knew that this tall, short-haired old woman would take away her happiness. "Why? What for?" She wanted to cry.

"Anisya, dear," she said, "bring us another plate, with a knife and a fork."

As she entered the room, she heard:

"Kalyaev told you? Yanek? How is he, in good spirits?"

"Wonderful, wonderful," replied Breshkovskaya, stretching the *o*.

6

Breshkovskaya was jolly and talkative and smoked one cigarette after another. It seemed strange to Vera that this woman before her was the famous Grandmother of the Russian Revolution. Bresh-

kovskaya ate a great deal. Pausing, she looked around with her piercing, dark gray eyes. "Yes, my friend," she said. "It wasn't easy after two terms of convict labor and seven years of penal exile to plunge again into life and struggle. I lived in the Trans-Baikal region, in a wilderness, among the Buryat. Nothing but naked steppe around. No news from Russia, only rumors, and disquieting ones, at that. All the past, people said, was forgotten, denied. There was a crop of home-grown Marxists in the country, expecting to win every blessing for the people mechanically, so to speak. There's no more need, according to these, of will, of heroism. All that is old wives' nonsense and gentlemen's fancies. Oh yes, my friend, it was hard to listen to such things away in the steppe, among the wild Buryat. And yet, I could not believe them. Could all our work, I thought, have gone in vain? All the effort and will and blood and lives? I could not believe it . . . no, no. . . ." The old woman shook her gray head, smiling with her penetrating eyes.

"When did you return, Katerina Konstantinovna?"

"I started out across Siberia with the Buryat Bakhmutka in 1892. We crossed Lake Baikal. What a magnificent jewel it is in our Siberian landscape! What a mighty country we have, my friend! I did not reach Moscow until 1897, just five years ago, when they permitted me to come to European Russia. I must confess, I came with great anxiety. I kept thinking: can it be true that we've lost everything, that even the young are no longer with us? At my first meeting in Moscow there were all sorts of youngsters, but mostly Marxists. I had just begun my first speech after all those years of penal labor, when a whippersnapper comes out, looks me up and down, and says: 'Where are you pushing yourself, old lady? Your prophet Mikhailovsky* was demolished years ago by Plekhanov. And your famous "trial of 193"** was nothing but a gentlemen's trial. And your People's Will party had no connection with the proletariat! I looked around me—everyone was silent. I picked up my Siberian cap, spat, and walked out. As I was leaving, a young lady, one of the newfangled ones, shouted after me: 'Look at that antique Breshkoviad, is she still dragging around?'"

Breshkovskaya pushed away her plate, wiped her face hard with the napkin, and said, smiling gaily:

"Yes, my friend, it wasn't easy to listen to such talk. But things

* N. K. Mikhailovsky (1842–1904), sociologist and theoretician of the People's Will party.

** The trial of 193 Narodniks, or members of the People's Will party, in 1877.

are going differently now. We have a hundred times more people, our yeast proved stronger!"

"You mean the Socialist Revolutionaries?"

"Who else? Of course! But it's funny to hear everybody saying it today—Socialist Revolutionaries!—when it was I who christened them. We were thinking of a name. Well, what's the use of wasting too much time? I said, 'Look here, you consider yourselves socialists?' 'Yes.' 'And you are revolutionaries?' 'Certainly!' 'There's your name—Socialist Revolutionaries!' And everyone agreed on that. Yes, sir," the Grandmother laughed lustily, "everything great is born like this—in a flash."

After a few moments of silence, Breshkovskaya began to mumble, "Hm-m, yes. . . ." Vera understood that the old woman was waiting for her to leave. She rose, went out, slipped on her coat, and pushed aside the stiffly frozen latch. The gate screeched on its hinges. Vera walked aimlessly, clutching her muff.

7

"Well, then," the Grandmother began, lowering her voice and moving nearer to Savinkov. "I hear you were also a fiery Marxist at first? Weren't you? But now you've come around, you want some freedom . . . room to stretch your wings? No wonder!"

She did not let him speak, running on volubly.

"No, Katerina Konstantinovna," he said finally. "The Marxist program does not satisfy me. To begin with, it doesn't answer the agrarian problem."

Breshkovskaya nodded.

"Secondly, I am not made for propaganda work and quiet living. I want terror, Katerina Konstantinovna, real terror, in the People's Will tradition."

"So you want terrorist work?" she said, looking intently at Savinkov. "Very well, then, welcome and good luck, my friend! Why stand aside? Come and work with us! When you decide to chop down a tree, why, get an axe and swing! But you can do nothing from here. You must escape abroad."

"Of course," said Savinkov. "There is nothing to do in Vologda. As soon as spring comes, I'll escape. I've planned it already."

Narrowing her eyes, Breshkovskaya began to reminisce about her escape from Barguzin with Tyutchev across the dense taiga.

"Yes, yes," the old woman said quietly, with passion. "Escape,

my friend, and go directly to Geneva, to Mikhail Gotz. All our people are there now; I shall let them know. Before you start out, send a postcard to Bonch-Osmolovsky in Blonya, Minsk Province—just say, 'A Happy Birthday!'"

8

When Vera returned, the Grandmother was saying:

"At first I did not get along with Gotz. He'd always say to me: 'You're clinging too much to the peasantry, Grandmother. It's time to put an end to that.' Later we became friends. You're back?" She turned to Vera. "And I am still here, you see, I cannot tear myself away. It is so seldom that one has the opportunity to talk with people like Boris Victorovich, it does the heart good."

"Why, I am very glad to have you with us, Katerina Konstantinovna. Perhaps you will stay overnight?"

Breshkovskaya laughed.

"Ah, my dear lady, I see you're a poor conspirator. It would not do for an ex-convict to visit at the home of a political exile under surveillance. No, my dear. It happened once, in Minsk. . . ." The Grandmother began a new story, but glanced at the clock and broke off.

"Oh, heavenly powers, how late it is! I must catch the night train. Perhaps you'll see me a bit of the way to the station, Boris Victorovich?"

Breshkovskaya rose. When she was getting up, Savinkov noticed how old she was. With an effort, she straightened out her stiffened limbs.

"Where will you go now, Katerina Konstantinovna?"

"To Ufa. There are many people there. Some Marxists also—Lenin, Krupskaya. But heaven forgive me, I don't care for those mechanics, they're birds of a different feather, altogether different," the Grandmother said, putting on her Siberian fur hat with warm ear flaps.

9

Spring came. The snow began to thaw in blue rivulets. Vera left on a pale April day. Savinkov went to the piers to talk with Archangel fishermen about Archangel, about ships bound for Norway.

He looked about for a suitable man and even drank vodka with the fishermen at Proskuryatin's tavern. But their stories were not too helpful. Time flew, and it was difficult to wait much longer. Savinkov made a quick decision to escape the following Monday.

In a wide English coat he left the house at dawn. Walking in the crisp morning air, he said to himself: "It is beginning."

At the station he calmly walked with his small suitcase into a first-class compartment of the waiting train. With face averted and shielded by a copy of *The New Times*, he watched the platform through the glass door until the third bell. When the train started, Savinkov looked out of the window. A gendarme in blue trousers calmly paced the platform. The station master quietly walked to his office.

And then the fir trees ran to meet the train. The dewy freshness of the waking woods flowed into the window, mingled with the smoke of the whistling locomotive. Savinkov looked like an Englishman traveling on business to the Archangel sawmills.

But when the rails divided into double tracks again, and little wooden houses began to flash by, Savinkov's heart twinged. "Lock myself in the toilet? Then I can see the whole platform?" The train brakes hissed. "Nonsense," said Savinkov, walking down the corridor.

Sitting under the dusty palm in the first-class buffet, Savinkov ordered coffee and toast.

"What time does the boat leave for Pechenga?" he asked the waiter.

"Pechenga? At 5:15 today."

"In an hour?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long does it take to the pier?"

"About fifty minutes."

Savinkov threw an orange ruble note on the table and hurried to the door.

The old nag galloped across the Archangel square.

"Hurry," Savinkov cried to the cabman.

At the pier he saw the smoking funnels of the steamship and its gold inscription, *The Emperor Nicholas I*. People were walking up the gangway. The plump hands of the young lady in the ticket office moved slowly.

"Hurry up, young lady, the boat is leaving!"

The hands flicked out the ticket, counted the change.

A minute before departure time Savinkov slipped up the gangway through the crowd.

"Should I lock myself in?" Savinkov turned the key of the cabin door. The minute lasted a year. *The Emperor Nicholas I* bellowed hoarsely, and the shores of Archangel slowly began to recede.

CHAPTER THREE

1

The center of the party of Socialist Revolutionaries was gathered around the chair of Mikhail Gotz. Gotz was the party's fiery heart and conscience. Emaciated, with Biblical eyes and a beard curling beneath his chin, Gotz had been confined to his chair for several years. The chair was moved about on wheels. Mikhail Gotz suffered from a tumor of the spine, developed as a result of the severe beating of political prisoners at Sredne-Kolymsk, which initiated his six-year term of penal labor.

When Savinkov rang the bell of Gotz's apartment on the Boulevard des Philosophes, in Geneva, there were several people around the invalid's chair: the party's theoretician, Victor Chernov, with a shock of red hair and a squinting eye, Ekaterina Breshkovskaya, and a fair-haired student, Alexey Pokotilov, with a pleasant face marred by eczema.

When he entered, Savinkov had the impression that someone was ill. The red-haired man, he thought, must be a doctor.

"Good heavens! Mikhail Raphailovich! There he is, our fugitive!" Breshkovskaya rushed to Savinkov, embraced him, and kissed him heartily. "Here he is!" She pulled him toward Gotz's chair.

Gotz raised himself slightly, welcoming Savinkov with smiling, luminous eyes and stretching out a withered hand.

The broad-shouldered, red-haired man moved away without any visible expression of enthusiasm.

"Don't tug at him, Grandmother, let him wash up and rest a bit," said Gotz pleasantly. Pokotilov rearranged the cushions in his wheelchair.

Washing up in the next room, Savinkov heard the "doctor" speak to Gotz.

"Well, good-by, good-by, Mikhail, I'm in a hurry." He spoke in a rapid shopkeeper's patter, with rounded, singsong intonations.

"Where are you off to, Victor? He'll have many interesting things to tell us."

"I'll hear them next time," the red-haired man replied with a quick little laugh and walked out into the hallway with a heavy stride.

Savinkov felt as if he were visiting a family of friends, and Katerina Konstantinovna, who was getting a towel for him, was not a famous ex-convict, but indeed a grandmother.

2

Leaning his elbow on the arm of his chair, Gotz never took his eyes away from Savinkov, who sat before him.

"Your name is Boris Victorovich?" he smiled. "Well, Boris Victorovich, although we are all comrades here, let us leave discussion of business for tomorrow; we'll choose the time. Now tell us about your escape. How did you do it? When did you leave Vologda?"

"I left Vologda on the third," began Savinkov. At that moment a young man came into the room. He was brown-haired, slender, of medium height, in a dark suit and pince-nez.

"Ah, Vladimir Mikhailovich! Meet a comrade who has just escaped from exile."

"Zenzinov," the young man introduced himself.

"Savinkov."

"But go on, go on, let us hear your story!" Breshkovskaya urged impatiently.

No one interrupted Savinkov, who was a remarkable storyteller. He painted an amusing picture of Vologda and of himself as an Englishman on the way to Archangel. He told about his threats to whip the cabby if he did not hurry, and the anguish he had suffered at the cashier's plump, slow hands. Everyone laughed. He told them how he had locked himself in the cabin, described the White Sea and the Norwegian fiords. There was laughter again when he recalled how he had taken the Norwegian customs officials for gendarmes and how impressed he was with the heroic proportions of the Norwegian women. Gotz laughed as gaily as a child, repeating, "No, no, you are exaggerating; I've been to Norway myself. I never met such Amazons." "But I swear it's true, Mikhail Raphailovich!" And the whole family, with father Gotz and grandmother Breshkovskaya, delighted in the arrival of such a talented and energetic comrade.

It was late when Savinkov, Pokotilov, and Zenzinov left the apartment on the Boulevard des Philosophes.

"It seems to me all the time that I am still in Vologda, that all this is unreal, nothing but stage scenery. Everything has happened so quickly."

"No, this is a long way from Vologda," said Pokotilov.

"Will you sleep over at my place? I live near by," said Zenzinov, and Savinkov sensed respect in his words.

"Let's go," he said, "I can barely stay awake."

3

When Savinkov came to see Gotz in the morning, he found him in his wheelchair in the middle of the room.

"Well, how did you sleep in the new place? Was it better than Vologda, with your Shchukin?"

In the daylight Savinkov saw how pale the sick man's hands were, how feeble his emaciated, wasted body. Only the youthful Jewish eyes were alive, as if taken from another man.

"Grandmother told me you wish to take part in terrorist work, Boris Victorovich?"

"Yes, in terrorist work."

"But why just terrorist work?" Gotz was agitated. "That's strange. Why not party work generally, since you are in sympathy with it?"

"This is difficult to talk about," Savinkov hesitated slightly, and Gotz seemed to like the hesitation. "If necessary, I shall work in the party, too, but I would prefer terrorist work."

Gotz fixed his glittering eyes on Savinkov's face, and Savinkov felt that Gotz liked and trusted him.

"Let us wait a bit, Boris Victorovich. Live in Geneva for a while, meet the comrades, and I shall talk it over with the proper people. To begin with, you must become acquainted with Chernov and with Ivan Nikolaevich."

"Who is this Ivan Nikolaevich?"

"You will meet him."

4

The theoretician of the Socialist Revolutionary party and father of the idea of land socialization in Russia, Victor Mikhailovich Chernov, lived in Geneva, in a lakeside district of the beautiful

Swiss city. From his study, Victor Mikhailovich could see a picturesque view of the violet-blue mountains.

The interior of this study was not Swiss. Books and newspapers were piled on the desk. The ash tray overflowed with cigarette butts. Manuscripts covered with a tiny, even hand and proof sheets of *Revolutionary Russia* littered the room. Over the desk hung an autographed portrait of Mikhailovsky.

The room might easily have been in Moscow. Its only unexpected feature were the six fishing rods with wound lines and red floats, leaning directly against Mikhailovsky's portrait.

Every day after work, Victor Mikhailovich fished for perch in Lake Leman. The fishing was good. The perch warmed his heart: they, at least, were the same as the perch of his native province, Tambov.

When Savinkov entered Chernov's room, he saw behind the desk the broad-boned man with the shaggy red hair and squinting eye whom he had taken for a doctor when he first came to Gotz. But this time Savinkov scarcely looked at Chernov, for next to him sat a man who caught his entire attention.

The man was huge, fat, with a puffy yellow face and protuberant eyes like two dark olives. His skull was narrow at the top, and his forehead was low over the cold, scowling eyes. Above the thick, flabby lips the nose was wide and flat. The man was repulsively ugly, well-dressed, unintellectual in appearance. He looked like a merchant. But the hideous figure sprawling in the chair distilled an air of extraordinary calm and composure.

"Ah, how do you do, how do you do, young man," Chernov said rapidly, rising to greet his guest. His eyes squinted without looking at Savinkov. The hand that pressed Savinkov's was square and short-fingered.

"Mikhail spoke to me about you. Be acquainted."

Without rising or introducing himself, the fat sprawling man held out a long slim hand like a woman's, in striking contrast to Chernov's. "A freak," flashed through Savinkov's mind.

Savinkov sat down with a sudden feeling of constraint, which increased when he looked up and caught the glowering, stony stare of the fat man, who was breathing heavily with his belly.

"Why are you staring at the comrade, Ivan?" Chernov laughed loudly. "Whatever Kasyan eyes, dies! Don't you see the young man is embarrassed?"

"Why no, I am not embarrassed at all," protested Savinkov.

"I'll be going, Victor," the fat man announced suddenly, getting up. And without glancing at Savinkov he walked to the door.

"Won't you stay to dinner? I have some fine perch broth. No? You'd rather go to an expensive restaurant, with wine and all the trimmings?" Chernov said, clapping the fat man's sloping shoulders.

Savinkov saw that the huge man had disproportionately thin legs; they seemed to wobble under the enormous weight of his body.

"Well," said Chernov, closing the door. "Mikhail spoke about you. Let's talk things over. Ours is a common cause, you know, we are all in it together. As the saying goes, one man complains, ten fight to break their chains! So you want to work with us, in the terror. It is a good cause, young man, a very good cause, but you must have a clear idea of the work." Chernov spread his large hand on the table and spoke rapidly.

"Yes, the terror is a holy cause, my friend, holy; the comrades who work in it dedicate themselves completely. Take stock, young man, of your spiritual and physical resources, and also prepare yourself theoretically. You should know that there are three kinds of terror: inciting, disruptive, and agitational. Our party regards all three forms of terror as necessary and sacred. No, we must not allow ourselves to oversimplify the idea of terror."

A pleasant-faced woman entered the room with a bowl in her hands.

"I've brought you some cherries, Vitya," she said, placing the bowl between Chernov and Savinkov.

"Thank you, Nastenka! Help yourself, young man. Let's combine business with pleasure, as they say." With extraordinary speed, Chernov slipped cherry after cherry into his mouth, as if they were sunflower seeds, spitting out the stones into a saucer. He spoke more slowly now, bending over the bowl, and Savinkov watched the thick fingers dig busily among the cherries, scarching out the ripest.

"For my part," Chernov went on, "I have no objections to your working in the terror, young man. I don't know you, but the Grandmother's recommendation is sufficient. But if you think that I direct the terror, you are mistaken. It's not my department. I am, so to speak, our party's theoretician. You may have read some of my writings. I sign myself Gardenin. As for terrorist work, you will, of

course, have to speak to Ivan Nikolaevich, Comrade Azef, whom you have just met. He is also known as Planter. He is a great man, great. Talk it over with him. I will support you, yes, I will."

When he finished the cherries, Chernov rose, as though bringing the lecture to an end, and held out his hand.

"Yes, young man," he said, seeing Savinkov out. "The struggle demands sacrifices. There is no choice, they must be made. You can't lure a hare from its lair by music, as the saying goes. We must make sacrifices, for the love of our suffering people. Well, good-by now!"

Savinkov walked along the Geneva street, swinging his cane. "Interesting," he muttered, thinking more of Ivan Nikolaevich than of Chernov. The huge, paunchy, thin-legged freak with the heavy black eyes and thick flabby lips left a strange impression. Savinkov liked Azef: there was strength in the freak.

5

Three days later, walking along the quay, Savinkov looked at the bluish-white Mont Blanc. Racing boats flew over the lake, the sunburned bodies of the rowers bending forward over the oars. A baker's apprentice in cap and apron, with a cart full of loaves, greeted Savinkov like an old acquaintance. The day was hot and sultry. When he came home, Savinkov undressed and lay down on the sofa in his underwear. His mind was vacant, and his body seemed to sway and float, dissolving into drowsiness.

The doorbell made him sit up sharply. No one went to answer it. Madame Dossier had gone to church. Savinkov threw his coat over his shoulders and went to the door. The bell rang a second time. The visitor was evidently determined to wait.

"Who is it?" asked Savinkov, looking into the peephole. He saw the dark yellow face and fleshy lips of Ivan Nikolaevich.

"My, how conspiratorial you are! Looking out through peepholes!" Azef gurgled with a nasal laugh, following Savinkov into the hallway. "I see you are without trousers. Were you sleeping?"

"Sit down, please, Ivan Nikolaevich. I won't be a moment."

Standing at the window, Azef looked out into the street. He glanced at the desk, with its sheets of manuscript. Turning away, he sat down heavily and lowered his head. He resembled a bull ready to charge and gore.

When Savinkov returned, there was a moment—or was it an hour? —when Azef looked at Savinkov and Savinkov at Azef. "Like a stone," thought Savinkov.

"I was told you want to work with the Fighting Organization?"* Azef spoke nasally. "Is this true?"

The dark eyes, seemingly without pupils, and the whole face suddenly became lazy, almost sleepy. Azef wore an expensive gray suit, yellow shoes, and a greenish tie.

"You were informed correctly."

"But why just that?" Azef turned his head slowly, and his opaque eyes stared at Savinkov from under the heavy brows.

"This work suits me better psychologically."

"Psy-cho-logic-ally?" Azef drawled and suddenly burst into shrill, nasal laughter. "And do you know that you must be prepared to face the rope for this psychology?" And Azef drew his hand quickly across his short neck.

"You don't smoke?" Savinkov opened his cigarette case.

Azef did not seem to see the cigarette case. He rose and walked across the room, his huge body rocking on the thin legs. Savinkov noticed that the feet, like the hands, were small. Azef stopped at the window, looking out. Without turning, he rumbled gutturally:

"Very well, you shall work in the terror."

Then he muttered, turning around:

"I am accepting you only because Gotz and the Grandmother asked me to. Otherwise I wouldn't; there are too many people hanging around here." Without glancing at Savinkov, he walked to the table. On the table were illegal pamphlets—"The People's Will," "For Land and Freedom." Azef picked one up and muttered:

"What do you think of them? Good?"

"Well, how shall I put it. . . ."

"These little books will make Russia's bones start creaking in a few more years," Azef said nasally and, picking up his soft hat, he walked to the door. At the door he stopped:

"Do you have money?" He took two bills from his vest pocket and threw them on the table. "Tomorrow at eight. I'll meet you at the Café Nationale," and, with a toss of his neckless oxlike head, Azef closed the door.

* The Fighting Organization was the terrorist arm of the Socialist Revolutionary party.

6

An orchestra was playing at the Café Nationale on the Mont Blanc Quay. The waiters darted about with flapping coattails. The veranda looked out on Lake Geneva and the distant mountains beyond.

Yachts, rowboats, and steamships glided over the lake. A chill breeze rose from the water. Two mummylike Englishwomen sipped some drinks at a table near the balustrade. At other tables sat a French writer, a Rumanian minister, and two Prussian officers in civilian clothes.

In the twilight, Azef watched the shimmering lights on the lake. He looked in no way different from anyone else; one might have taken him for a director of some large concern. He wore a diamond ring on his third finger. Next to him, in a white suit, sat an elegant young man who might have been his secretary.

Leaning his fat chest against the table, Azef muttered in a low voice:

"You will have to go to Russia soon. We are setting up an important job. The day after tomorrow you will go to Germany. Live there for a while and make sure no one is watching you. If all is clear, go to Berlin. We shall meet there on Sunday at noon at the Bauer Café, on the Unter den Linden."

The Englishwomen were laughing at something. The stout Frenchman with fine curly hair was reading *Le Matin*. Next to him a pale-faced boy was eating a pastry. The violin sobbed and the first violinist in the orchestra swayed in time with the Brahms dances.

"Fine! But if I am going to work, don't you think I ought to know a little more than you've just told me?" Savinkov asked, sipping his wine.

"If you are going to kill, it will not be an unknown, but a specific person," Azef said lazily. "In Berlin I shall give you instructions, a list of rendezvous, all the information," he drawled nasally, with a bored look around the terrace.

A dark-skinned woman with black hair piled high over her forehead walked across the terrace. She looked like a Creole.

"Not bad?" Azef smiled into his wineglass. His fleshy lips spread out in a strange expression.

"Are you married? Where is your wife?"

"In Petersburg."

"That's bad. She may be watched. Have you written her?"

"No."

"Don't write. She is sure to be watched. Where does she live?"

"On Sredny. And you, Ivan Nikolaevich, are you married?"

"My wife is in Switzerland," Azef answered reluctantly. "This morning," he went on, "Breshkovskaya told me a certain Kalyaev is coming to Berlin on Sunday. I'll have to see him. Do you know him?"

"He is my friend."

"Do you think he is suitable for our work?"

"Absolutely. This is the only reason for his coming. Take him, Ivan Nikolaevich, certainly take him."

"I take only those whom I choose."

Azef was silent. Then he smiled suddenly and his eyes kindled, making his face warm, almost tender.

When they walked down the veranda, people turned to look at them. The contrast was striking. Savinkov was much shorter, slender, aristocratic. Azef was stout, clumsy, massive, with a heaving paunch.

7

"What a fine evening," Azef said, and it seemed to Savinkov that he had become simpler and more approachable.

"Since we have started out along the same road and may yet have to hang together," Azef spoke nasally, "we ought to become better acquainted. You are of the gentry, aren't you?"

"I am. Why?"

"I am a Jew," said Azef, smiling. "Two big differences. I believe you went to school in Warsaw? Your father was a justice of the peace?"

"How do you know this?"

"Gotz told me. But I don't understand why you became a revolutionary. You lived well, you could have gone into the civil service or the Army. What did you need it for?"

"Need what?"

"The revolution."

Savinkov laughed shortly.

"And the Decembrists, Ivan Nikolaevich? And Bakunin? And Gotz? He is a rich man! You have a strange idea of revolutionaries."

"They're exceptions," muttered Azef.

"Well, then, why are you in the revolutionary movement? You are an engineer?"

Azef glanced briefly at Savinkov.

"I am another matter. I am a small-town Jew. Who is to make the revolution if not I? I've seen much grief at the hands of the Tsarist government."

"So have I."

"What does that mean? What you saw was one thing—you saw others suffer. I've seen my own—that's quite different. Oh well, it's time for me to go. Don't forget, then, Sunday at twelve, at the Bauer Café." Azef said good-by and turned back.

The dim crescent of the moon swam out of the clouds over Lake Geneva. Azef did not see it. He walked, swaying heavily. Near a café on Rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Azef began to look around for a woman.

8

"I am so glad you came." Gotz rose slightly in his chair. "I asked you to? I've forgotten. I am so tired; we have just had a meeting. But never mind, sit down, let's have a talk."

Gotz looked even more ill and ashen than before.

"You saw Victor and Ivan? They told me. You made an excellent impression on the comrades. Ivan Nikolaevich is taking you to work with him. He knows people. He is a great man. You will have to submit to him completely. There can be no terror without discipline. . . . Yes, he spoke very well of you. So you are leaving tomorrow. Two other comrades will be going, too. Ivan Nikolaevich has all the passports, schedules, money. We have nothing to do with the organizational plans or mechanics of the work."

Looking at Gotz, Savinkov thought: "He won't live long. A pity."

"That much for business. And so you have your wish. You will be starting now. . . ." Gotz broke off, looking affectionately at Savinkov, who was young, who had endured jail, fortress imprisonment, penal exile, and was now facing death.

"You know who the man is?"

"I have an idea."

"It's Plehve," said Gotz quietly. "You understand how necessary it is, and how important? He has thrown out a challenge to us; he is binding Russia in chains."

"I consider it the greatest honor to be chosen for this action."

"We may not meet again. Let us remain friends. You can do much: you are courageous, educated, talented. Take care of yourself, Boris Victorovich. I hear you write. Your article in *The Workers' Cause* was highly praised by Lenin in his *Iskra*. Did you know that? But articles are one thing, and you look like a fiction writer. Have you ever tried it?"

"I have," said Savinkov. "I wrote something recently."

"What was it?"

"A story."

"What about? Tell me, I am interested!" Gotz asked excitedly.

"It was a story about the French Revolution. It is called 'Longing for Death.'"

"For death?" repeated Gotz. "Longing? I don't understand. Tell me about it."

"The plot is simple. A young woman lives in Paris in '93, the daughter of a cloth merchant. Her father is an influential member of the Montagnards; his party is powerful and his family lives well. Jeanne is a calm and cheerful girl. But one day she goes to the window and throws herself out. Everybody is in despair and no one understands the reason for her suicide. The injured Jeanne is brought into the house. Her mother sobs over her. Everyone asks Jeanne why she had done it, but her only answer is 'I don't know.' A few moments later she dies, whispering, 'I am happy.'"

Gotz seemed troubled.

"Is that all?" he asked.

"That's all."

"Nothing else? And so she died? Just plopped out of the window, without rhyme or reason?"

"The story is called 'Longing for Death.'"

"I understand," Gotz spoke excitedly. "But that is decadence! A healthy young girl throws herself out of the window and says she is happy!"

"Perhaps she was not healthy?" smiled Savinkov.

"But of course! Your girl is a psychopath! It's a very bad plot. How did you come to think of it? I don't know, perhaps you wrote it

well, but the idea is a bad one. Why do you write such stories, you, a revolutionary?"

Gotz was silent for a while.

"You're undertaking such a task, and, suddenly, these moods! Is this how you feel?"

"Not in the least."

"But, then, how could it have occurred to you? You know, Boris Victorovich," Gotz said after a pause, "they say cracked violins have a beautiful tone. This must be true. But a tone is one thing and action quite another." Gotz sighed. "I have a name for you now--'cracked Stradivarius!' What do you think of that? Do you write poetry, too?"

"I do."

"Let me hear some of it."

"The guillotine's my life!
I do not fear the guillotine!
I mock the executioner,
I laugh at his big knife!"

"But that's excellent, that's talented!" Gotz said delightedly. "Well, go now, my dear friend," he raised himself slightly. "Shall we ever meet again? God grant it."

They embraced and kissed warmly.

9

A yellow sun hung over Berlin. At noon the Bauer Café on the Unter den Linden was empty, except for three prostitutes, drinking coffee to clear their heads after the night's work.

At five minutes past twelve, Azef walked in heavily. Without glancing around, he sat down by the wall. Ordering coffee, he picked up the *Vossische Zeitung* and began to read the news.

At ten minutes past twelve, Savinkov entered, dressed like a tourist. He walked like a man who loves life and has no worries or anxieties. He saw Azef through the window, from the street.

"Hello, sit down." Azef put aside the *Vossische* and held out his hand without getting up.

"Where were you?"

"In Jena."

"Why not in Freiburg? I told you to go to Freiburg."

"What is the difference—Jena, Freiburg? I'll go to Freiburg next time."

"Very strange," Azef said angrily. "I might have needed you. Oh well. No one has trailed you?"

"No."

"Are you quite sure?"

"As sure as I am facing my chief, Ivan Nikolaevich."

Azef turned away his heavy-jowled head.

"So you are ready to go?"

"At any moment."

"Two comrades will be coming soon." Azef looked at his watch. "They will go with you." Then he added in his nasal rumble: "Kalyaev will be here at one."

"Really?"

"I don't see why 'really?'" Azef said, picking up the *Vossische* once more and scanning the advertisements. "I am only saying he'll be here; I have not seen him yet."

Azef studied the illustrated advertisement of the Gerzon Brassière Company. Then, looking up, he said:

"Oh yes, your party name is Pavel Ivanovich. Don't forget."

The window into the street, which extended almost across the entire length of the wall, was raised. But Berlin is quiet on Sunday. No noise reached them from the street. A monumental policeman in a blue uniform stood idly on the corner. From time to time he raised his large, white-gloved hands.

Two men entered the Bauer Café, looking about them. Azef noisily folded his newspaper. Savinkov understood that these were comrades.

One, he guessed unhesitatingly, was an elementary school teacher: a small wedge of a beard, ash-gray eyes, hollow chest. He was very thin, possibly tubercular.

The other, dark-skinned with red, smiling lips, was taller and stronger than his companion. His hand gripped Savinkov's like a cast-iron glove.

Azef ordered for both without consulting them. Their whole figures expressed ignorance of the language. The waiter looked at them with tolerant condescension. When he left, the four leaned forward over the table.

"First of all, be acquainted," Azef spoke in his rapid, nasal mumble. "Comrade Pyotr, Ivan Fomich, Pavel Ivanovich."

Comrade Pyotr continued to smile. Ivan Fomich studied Savinkov.

"I have already told you the meeting places," Azef said to Ivan Fomich and Pyotr. "I'll tell you later, Pavel Ivanovich," he said to Savinkov, using the familiar "thou."

Savinkov understood that he was expected to use the familiar address.

"You, Ivan Fomich," Azef went on, "will go to Petersburg tomorrow, via Alexandrovo. You'll buy a cab and horse, a middling good one, not a nag and not a trotter. Your job will be to watch Plehve's coming and going. He lives in the Police Department building on Fontanka. He visits the Tsar every week to deliver his report. You can easily discover the days and hours when he drives out. His movements are attended by such safeguards and pomp that you will recognize them at once. He has a black lacquered carriage. I think the spokes and coat of arms are white. He is followed by secret agents on bicycles and in cabs. You must establish all the facts exactly and relay the information to Pavel Ivanovich. He will be in contact with me."

"Will you be coming to Petersburg, too?" asked Ivan Fomich in a hollow voice.

"It does not concern you where I go," Azef interrupted him in a lazy drawl. "You will keep in touch with Pavel Ivanovich, and he will be in touch with me and get all the instructions. Comrade Pyotr, you will leave the day after tomorrow and travel via Verzhbolovo. After a day or two in Petersburg, get yourself a police license for peddling tobacco and cigarettes. You obtain it at the precinct station. You had better stop at some overnight lodging house on Ligovka; there you can find out the best and quickest way of getting the license. And don't forget to bribe the officer. This is imperative, so there will be no suspicion. The most convenient place for Ivan Fomich to set up his observation post is directly on Fontanka. But you must try the Baltic Station. That's where Plehve takes the train for Tsarskoye. With proper observation you will determine the exact days and hours and the route of the carriage. Then the bomb throwers will do the rest of what the party needs done."

"But aren't we going to be the throwers?" Pyotr asked in his firm, forthright manner.

"That is too early to discuss," Azef rumbled. "Any questions, comrades?"

"I think that everything is clear," said Savinkov.

Azef gave them a quick glance from under his brows.

"In that case there is no need for us to go on sitting here together. You may go, comrades. Pavel Ivanovich will remain. You know your trains?" Azef took out his notebook. "You will go via Alexandrovo tomorrow at 7:24 in the evening. Your train is through Verzhbolovo, 12:15, the day after tomorrow. The first rendezvous with Pavel Ivanovich will be on Sadovaya, between Nevsky and Gorokhovaya. Comrade Pyotr will come to the rendezvous."

"Right," said Ivan Fomich in his hollow voice.

Everyone shook hands. Comrade Pyotr and Ivan Fomich left the large Bauer Café. The two who remained saw them start across the street, then stop to wait for traffic near the white-gloved policeman.

10

When Savinkov and Azef were alone, Azef suddenly lost his composure. He seemed agitated. His breath was heavy, and his cheekbones worked convulsively.

"It will be a pity if we don't succeed," he said. "Do you think we'll bring it off?"

"I think so."

"If there is no betrayal, we'll do it," said Azef. "How do you like Comrade Pyotr? Do you trust him? The devil take it, I don't know him well enough. It's difficult to be sure of people you have seen five times in your life. He has good recommendations; the Grandmother spoke for him; she is a good judge of men."

"Ivan Nikolaevich," said Savinkov, "everything will work out well. If Plehve escapes us, we are not the last of the Fighting Organization. He won't escape from the party. I'm sure of that."

Azef looked at Savinkov with his impenetrable pupil-less eyes. It was difficult to judge his expression. The eyes appeared to be smiling, affectionate, grateful.

"You are right," he said and looked at his watch:

"Odd that Kalyaev is not here."

"He must have lost the way."

In the meantime, Kalyaev, cursing himself for lateness, hurried

down the Friedrichstrasse. It never occurred to him to hail a cab.

Savinkov would have recognized him among a million people: the same light, young walk, the same mocking eyes, nervous gestures, and strange smile.

"Yanekl"

Kalyaev rushed to him.

"You are mad," grumbled Azef. "Your embraces will attract attention; this is not Russia."

Azef wheezed; he was furious. To make the conversation short, he spoke in the quick guttural rumble that Savinkov was already familiar with:

"I've been told you want to work in the terror?"

"I do," said Kalyaev loudly.

"Let us lower our tone a bit," Azef rumbled irritably. "Why do you choose terror rather than other work in the party?"

"If you have the time," Kalyaev said, arrogantly throwing back his head—a sign of resentment, "I shall explain it to you."

"Ivan Nikolaevich, I have known Yanek from childhood. If I am going into terrorist work, I can vouch to you. . . ."

Kalyaev flushed. His eyes darkened, he was offended.

"At the moment," Azef muttered indifferently, "I don't need more people. Return to Geneva. If I need you, I'll send for you."

"I shall not attempt to convince you of anything," said Kalyaev still more arrogantly, his tone emphasized by his Polish accent. "I serve the party and the cause of Russian liberation. I shall work wherever I feel it is most necessary and useful." Kalyaev lost his composure altogether. He broke off and stared with hatred at the freak in the gray suit.

Azef dropped his eyes under Kalyaev's stare.

"Then there is nothing more for us to talk about," Kalyaev rose, noisily pushing away his chair. "Will you see me off, Boris?"

11

After they left, Azef sat on for another ten minutes.

"*Zahlen.*" He beckoned the waiter, paid him, and rose heavily.

Azef strolled down the Unter den Linden like a merchant on Sunday, waddling as he walked. The prostitutes in the street looked at him with pleasure. He wore an expensive suit and had a huge paunch. This excited them professionally.

12

"Yanek, you did not like him?"

"Did not like him?" Kalyaev burst into a nervous, hollow laugh. "I never in my life saw anyone more repulsive than this potbellied merchant." Kalyaev was excited. Red blotches appeared on his pale face. He had been rebuffed in his most cherished aspirations, denied his life's work—assassination in the name of Russia, in the name of his love for the people.

The cab drove through the stone gates of the Anhalter Bahnhof. At the station, in the midst of hurrying people, Savinkov and Kalyaev embraced warmly, saying good-by.

13

A handsome man—a former cavalry officer and a lover of the theatre—sat anxiously in his study at 75 Rue de Grenelle in Paris. He was the director of the Police Department's foreign secret service, Leonid Alexandrovich Rataev. And not really Rataev, but Richter. Rataev-Richter was far from stupid. And he was anxious because a net of intrigues, denunciations, and gossip was being spun in the department, and because he had not heard from Azef for two months.

Rataev thought things over carefully. Then he began to write in an exquisite hand, parrying the thrusts and gossip in the department:

"My Dear Alexey Alexandrovich,

"I have received your coded telegram, and will not conceal that its contents grieve me in the extreme, since I detect a lack of confidence in me on the part of the Department. I dare to think, however, that I have not deserved this in my many years of service, and that your reproaches are unmerited. Thus, quite recently, the blow threatening the life of the Minister of Internal Affairs, State Secretary von Plehve, was averted by an agent working under my direction. Permit me to recapitulate briefly the circumstances of that affair: on October 11, 1902, I reported to you in a most confidential letter that the Fighting Organization had drawn up plans for an attempt on the life of State Secretary von Plehve. There was to be

an open attack on the Minister's carriage by two men on horseback, armed with large-caliber Mauser revolvers. Two men were prepared to sacrifice themselves in the attempt. They were officers, residing in Petersburg; one was to shoot at the horses, while the other fired at the Minister. Having received my general instructions abroad, the secret agent under my direction met with two members of the Fighting Organization, Melnikov and Kraft, and discovered that the former was the originator of the plan. Melnikov also mentioned to the agent the name of one of the officers who had volunteered to execute the plot. The officer was Lieutenant Evgeny Grigoriev of the 53rd Artillery Brigade. Permit me to stress the fact that it was my information that had provided grounds for the arrest of Lieutenant Grigoriev and made it possible to obtain his full and frank confession, which served as the principal evidence against Gershuni and Melnikov, leading to their timely arrest and death sentences (later commuted to life imprisonment). Thus, it was my work and the work of my secret agent that had saved the life of the Minister of Internal Affairs, State Secretary von Plehve.

"Begging you to recall my services to the Department, and drawing your particular attention to the above, I trust you will agree that the intrigues, which aim at compromising me and my secret agent in your eyes, are malicious and detrimental to our common cause.

"With sincere devotion,
"L. Rataev"

"P.S. Within a few days, I shall send you new and interesting information. Kindly address your letters to 75 Rue de Grenelle."

CHAPTER FOUR

1

Vyacheslav Konstantinovich von Plehve was a man of cold and formidable strength. As a secretive boy with veiled eyes he had been adopted by a Polish landowner and had never known warmth or affection in his childhood. Some people said his father had been a church organist; others, a school inspector; still others, an apothecary. But no one had known Plehve's parents. He was an orphan.

When Slava, as the landowner called him, was seventeen, he denounced his adopted father to General Muraviev as a Polish patriot. The general hanged the Polish landowner. The boy had will power. He dreamed of a dazzling career.

He went through school on pennies. Returning to the university after vacations, he trudged along the muddy highways on foot. His dreams persisted. Imperious, pliant, and self-confident, he renounced Catholicism for the Orthodox faith and quickly began to climb the bureaucratic ladder. Pobedonostsev, the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod, called him a scoundrel, for rumors linked him to provocateurs and the assassination of Governor Bogdanvich. Plehve was ambitious and hated people.

Neither the post of a department director nor that of a Deputy Minister satisfied him. Only once in his life was Plehve happy. This was in April, 1902, after Balmashov had killed the Minister of Internal Affairs, Sipyagin. The Adjutant General informed Plehve of the Emperor's decision to appoint him to the vacated post. Plehve drove down the Palace Quay. The black cube of his lacquered carriage swayed rhythmically on its springs, his horses' hoofs clip-clopping on the pavement. These were happy minutes.

The elegant trotters stopped at the palace entrance. Plehve ascended the Jordan staircase. The first to greet him were the Minister of the Imperial Court, Baron Frederiks, and the Palace Commandant, General Hesse. From the pressure of their hands and the inclination of their heads, Plehve knew his power. With firm

steps he crossed the antechamber. The Emperor came forward to meet him graciously and affably. Plehve felt a touch of vertigo.

Blinking at the light, Nicholas II said:

"Vyacheslav Konstantinovich, I am appointing you to Sipyagin's post."

Plehve paled slightly.

"Your Majesty, I know that malefactors may assassinate me. But while there is blood in my veins, I will cherish the precepts of the monarchy. I know that the liberals will brand me a villain, and the revolutionaries, a monster. But whatever happens, I am ready for it, Your Majesty."

"The decree announcing your appointment will be issued today," said Nicholas II, shading his eyes with his hand.

Plehve bowed his head.

And when he left the Emperor's chamber, a crowd of courtiers surrounded him with congratulations. Plehve knew people well. To those with whom he had been affable the day before, he rapped out through his bristling mustache:

"This is the time for action, gentlemen, not talk."

And he walked down the magnificent palace staircase to his carriage.

2

Plehve's dream was realized. "Within two months, the revolution will be crushed," he said. A stream of secret instructions flowed from his office to the governors of provinces.

Plehve shunned the court. He called the State Council a herd of oxen, castrated to make them meatier. He sought out only the friendship of the ruler of Moscow, Grand Duke Sergey, with whom he discussed plans for the suppression of revolutionary unrest.

"Is your bodyguard reliable enough, Vyacheslav Konstantinovich?" the Grand Duke asked him frequently.

"My bodyguard is entirely reliable, Your Highness. I think that a successful attempt could only occur by some mischance," answered Plehve, who knew that Azef was protecting him and that Gershuni and Melnikov, whom Azef had betrayed, were in prison for life.

3

Savinkov walked in Petersburg, whose bridges, arches, and streets he loved so much. The same fast horses, coaches, carriages, gay and crowded restaurants. The music boxes in the beer halls, blaring out their "Transvaals," waltzes, and "Broken Hearts." The mighty flow of the wide Neva under the bridges. The most majestic palaces in the world, guarded by uniformed sentries.

Newsboys ran by, calling out, *"Novoye Vremya!" "Russkoye Slovo!"* Savinkov stopped a *"Novoye Vremya."* It would look better if he carried a newspaper. He glanced at it: the same advertisements of the Alexandrinsky Theatre; the same restaurants—the Aquarium, Content, Donon, Tivoli; Chaliapin in *Boris Godunov,* Sobinov in *The Pearl Fishers.*

He reached Sadovaya and looked at his watch. A police inspector in a pale blue, beaver-lined coat rode by in a cab. He seemed to be dozing.

"Here they are! First-class cigarettes! 'Uncle Kostya!' 'Duchesse!' Ten for five kopeks, won't you buy some, sir?"

Savinkov saw Comrade Pyotr, whom he had met in Berlin, with the same smile on his red lips.

Savinkov's eyes laughed, as if to say: "Excellent!"

"Let me have ten."

"Five kopeks. Twenty of yours." Pyotr's eyes twinkled.

"Today on Sennaya, at the Friends' Rest Tavern."

"Very good, sir," and he went on, singing in his gay tenor: "Cigarettes, cigarettes! 'Katyk!' 'Uncle Kostya!' 'Duchesse!'"

Savinkov had nothing to do. He had called on the writer Peshekhonov to see if any instructions had come from Azef. "And then, look out, Mr. Minister! Your bodyguard won't do you any good!" But Azef was still away, and silent.

Savinkov walked down the French Quay to Fontanka. He stopped to admire a white yacht on the Neva. But on Fontanka there was some confusion in the pedestrian and carriage traffic. The cabbies swung aside. Policemen drew up to attention. A team of spirited black horses dashed out, drawing a lacquered carriage which breathed lightly on its springs. There was a glimpse of someone behind the window, perhaps an old woman or an old man, someone in black with a white face. Behind the carriage, keeping pace with

it, galloped men in fur coats, in coaches drawn by three fine horses. The rear was drawn up by cyclists, flying close behind the horses with risk to life and limbs. Savinkov stopped motionless against the wall: "But this is Plehve!?"

4

At the Friends' Rest Tavern the music box played continuously. Whenever it stopped to catch its breath, one of the "friends" would call out drunkenly, "Music!"

And without respite the old machine would creak and start a new roll, hoarsely blaring out a waltz from *Faust* or *The Polish Coquette.* It was impossible to distinguish the tunes amid the fumes, smoke, and noise.

Everything was chaos and confusion in this truly Russian, muddled tavern which Savinkov had chosen as a rendezvous. Its patrons were mostly cabbies, draymen, peddlers, prostitutes, and street urchins, with a sprinkling of well-dressed individuals. No one would notice the two terrorists in the motley crowd.

The untidy waiters ran about with servings of cold veal, tea, vodka, and sausage. They carried metal bowls of cabbage soup, filling the room with the reek of sauerkraut.

Savinkov sat down at a corner table at the far end of the room, from where he could see the entire noisy beehive of the tavern. He ordered dinner for two from the young, consumptive-looking waiter and leaned back, lighting one of Pyotr's cigarettes.

Pyotr came promptly. He wore a dark Russian blouse, a black jacket, high, polished boots, and a black cap over his unruly jet-black hair. "How like a Gypsy," thought Savinkov. Pyotr came toward him with a smile.

The lanky youth with the sickly flush on his cheeks set the table, clattering with the greasy forks and knives. He placed a decanter of vodka at the center of the table.

"Well, how are things going?"

Pyotr smiled, as though he wanted to prolong the pleasure of reporting his good news. When Savinkov finished his questions, Pyotr gulped down a glass of vodka, coughed because it went the wrong way, and said:

"Everything is fine. I saw him four times. Once at the Baltic

Station, on Friday, and three times on Fontanka, in different places."

"Can you describe the outfit?"

"Most imposing, Pavel Ivanovich," Pyotr smiled broadly, showing his strong, predatory teeth. "Black horses, like wild beasts. A stout, bearded coachman, all bemedaled, with a padded backside, up on his box like an idol, and next to him, a liveried footman. Behind the carriage there's a whole train of detectives in cabs and on bicycles. If you ever chance to meet them, you'll know them at once. He rides out with a lot of noise."

Pyotr filled the glasses and, pointing to Savinkov's, raised his own.

"To his health, Pavel Ivanovich."

"You drink a lot," Savinkov drawled reluctantly.

"I can take my drink, and I can hold it. But don't worry, it will not harm the work. There's only one trouble, Pavel Ivanovich—competition. The places in the street are all bought up; the peddlers are always out for a fight, the scum. 'Who are you? Where did you come from? We've never seen you before!' I've got to beat them off all the time. One day I almost landed in the precinct. Well, I thought, that's the end of me."

"But why the end? Your passport is registered; everything is in order?"

"That may be so, but it's best to stay out of the clutches of those Pharaohs anyway," smiled Pyotr.

The music broke off. The room was suddenly filled with clatter and the rolling hubbub of voices. Someone very drunk screamed in a voice that seemed to come from the floor: "Music, landlord! Music!"

The machine brayed out a march.

"Do you keep in touch with Ivan Fomich?"

"Every second day. His work is getting on, too. He sees the carriage often. He keeps moving from corner to corner along Fontanka, toward the station. He checks the time, to bring it down exactly to the minute, so we'll know just where he is and when."

"They must change the route sometimes?"

"So far, they've gone along the same route."

"When will you see Ivan Fomich?"

"Tomorrow."

"Tell him to wait for me the day after tomorrow on Liteynaya, near Number 33, at ten o'clock."

"Fine. But pardon me, Pavel Ivanovich, what about Ivan Nikolaevich? Has he come?"

"Not yet. What do you think, Pyotr; is anyone watching you?"

Pyotr shook his head.

"And Ivan Fomich?"

"He's altogether clear. He stops right outside the Police Department; he's driven colonels of the gendarmerie many times." Pyotr laughed quietly.

"So everything is smooth as butter?" smiled Savinkov. "Tell me, do you think we'll make it?" he asked quietly, leaning over to Pyotr.

"Who knows," shrugged Pyotr. "We should, by all appearances. But everything is in God's hand. With His help," Pyotr laughed.

Savinkov said evenly and coldly: "You must have no doubts, Comrade Pyotr. It is clear as day, he is ours, and that's that!"

"I think so too, Pavel Ivanovich, except . . . well, we are doing the watching and all that, but who will throw? Nobody knows. As I see it, if I am risking the rope, it should be for the real job, with a bomb." Pyotr looked at Savinkov searchingly. Savinkov realized there was devilish strength in the man, behind his mask of amiability and banter.

"No, I say, if you risk your neck, it should be for something worthwhile, for the real business. As it is, we're getting the information, and then another comrade will come and blow him up after all we have done, and what does it leave us with?"

Savinkov smiled. Such a turn of thought seemed unwholesome.

"You are taking the wrong view of it, Comrade Pyotr. To us, to the party, it makes no difference who does it. The man must be killed. Whether it's done by you, by me, by this one, or that one, it's all the same: the Fighting Organization kills, not you or I. What you are saying is wrong and harmful," Savinkov said quietly.

Pyotr listened with knit brows. Then he picked up the little round decanter, squeezed the last glassful from it, and muttered, as if to himself:

"Maybe so. But, if I may say it, everybody has his own point of view."

"And we," Savinkov smiled, "should keep to the point of view of the party. Otherwise we'll have brigandage, Comrade."

"Now, that's stretching it a bit, Pavel Ivanovich," smiled Pyotr, meeting his eyes.

5

Ivan Fomich had already noticed a man who seemed to watch him. Comrade Pyotr also sensed something suspicious when he talked with the porter at the inn. And one morning the door to Savinkov's room opened slightly.

"Come in!" cried Savinkov.

An old Jew in a shabby frock coat, with frightened eyes, entered the room. In a strange walk, bobbing up and down, he approached the table and sat down.

"Good morning, Comrade Semashko," he said, and his face screwed up into a multitude of wrinkles.

"I do not have the honor of your acquaintance." The visitor smiled like an old friend and studied Savinkov as if intending to paint his portrait.

"I believe we are slightly acquainted, Mr. Semashko?"

"What do you wish?"

"Aren't you the writer Semashko? I should like to invite you to contribute to our publication."

"I am a representative of Kramer Brothers, manufacturers of rubber articles. You are mistaken. Will you please excuse me?" Savinkov rose, pointing to the door.

"What do you mean, you are not a writer? What do you mean you are a business representative? My name is Gashkes, but if you do not wish to talk. . . ." Gashkes rose, shrugged his shoulders, and his whole figure shrank pathetically. Walking to the door, he looked back twice at Savinkov.

"I am done for. They're watching. In a moment the gendarmes will burst in with Gashkes." And before Gashkes reached the door, Savinkov quickly formed his plan of escape from the hotel.

The corridor was quiet. "The back stairs, into the second courtyard!" Savinkov slipped on his coat, threw away his hat, put on a cap, and ran to the mirror to glance at himself.

The exit to the back stairs was at the far end of the corridor. The stench of rotting refuse, slops, and lavatories hit his nostrils. He ran down. The thought was drumming in his head: "I will not get away, they'll catch me, I'll hang. . . ." He came into the dusty yard. A ragman was quarreling with the porter. Savinkov took a few steps across the yard and realized there was no second exit. He would

have to come out into the street, where spies and gendarmes would be waiting at the gate.

Savinkov stopped at the outhouse, as if intending to use it, and watched the gateway for an empty cab. The porter shouted:

"Hey there, you frozen to the spot? Fine place to do it! Too lazy to go inside, you devil?"

At this moment Savinkov caught sight of an empty cab, going by at an easy pace, the driver half-turned in his seat.

Savinkov waved and ran to the gate. The cabby reined in. Slowing down to a walk in the gateway, Savinkov rapidly crossed the street without looking around and jumped into the cab.

"The Nevsky Gate! Fast!"

The horse broke into a rapid trot, flinging up his sorrel, white-spotted legs. Savinkov glanced back. At the hotel entrance he saw the excited figure of the doorman; Gashkes and two men in pea-green coats ran to the corner, evidently looking for a cab. But the driver never turned, intent only on keeping his thoroughbred from running down some chance old woman. He galloped down the street, shouting, "Hey, ho, look out!" Streets, alleys, people flashed by.

"I'm safe, I'm safe," Savinkov thought exultantly when the lathered horse slowed down at the outskirts of the city near the Nevsky Gate. The street was deserted. Savinkov climbed down, paid, and entered the nearest tavern.

The tavern was empty. Savinkov ordered cutlets, Cossack style, and a bottle of beer. "Plehve will live," he thought. "The comrades must be taken off the job. But where is Ivan Nikolaevich?"

Azef spent all those days in Berlin, in great anxiety. Someone contrived to get a message to the party out of the Fortress of Peter and Paul, saying that Gershuni and Melnikov had been betrayed. The lieutenant of the gendarmerie, Spiridovich, turned out to be more stupid than Azef had thought. This was the lieutenant's first case. He clumsily hurried the investigation and arrests in the affair of the Tomsk illegal printing shop. Rumors of treachery were in the air, and understandably so. The gendarmes blundered, without thought of protecting their agent. Azef had warned that the nurse Remyannikova, who transported clandestine literature, should be left alone. They arrested her. He asked that Argunov, the head of the Moscow Union of Socialist Revolutionaries, should not be touched. They arrested him as well.

Azef was agitated. Now it was necessary to wait it out. He kept remembering the details of his secret meeting with Argunov at the Sandunov Baths. Naked in their private room with mirrored walls, they discussed the Union's plans. Azef recalled the contrast of their bodies in the mirrors. His was fat, with a huge belly, with black curly hair on chest and legs. He soaped himself continuously, rubbed the lather down with a sponge, and showered himself with pails of water. The scrawny Argunov looked absurd without clothes. He stood there naked, talking all the time. When the attendant knocked at the door to let them know the hour was up, Argunov was still dry. He dressed, while Azef dried himself with a colored towel, squatting and grunting. Argunov should not have been touched. Azef knew this. But they exiled him to the Yakutsk Province in Siberia.

Azef had a mathematical brain. He needed clarity. And so he wrote to Gotz:

"Dear Mikhail,

"My conscience troubles me because the comrades in Petersburg are left to fate. I am worried that something may happen, especially to Pavel Ivanovich. He is hotheaded and a poor conspirator. But I can do nothing. I am detained in Berlin by the technical side of the business. Let me know the news.

"With warm kisses,
"Your Ivan"

6

But Savinkov was already jogging along in a bumpy cart. He was being driven to the German frontier by the shrewd old drayman Nekha Neyerman, who had been smuggling Russian émigrés across the border from Suvalki for twenty years. On moonlit nights his cart was always full.

Savinkov frequently jumped out of the cart and ran alongside, swinging his arms to get warm.

"You'd better get in, sir, and sit still. We cannot all be running, or else everybody would run instead of riding!"

And Savinkov laughed and jumped back into the cart, drawing his coat tightly about him and pulling up the burlap mat for greater

warmth. With a low creaking in the night, the wagon lumbered across the frontier, and everyone in it was as silent as if old Neyerman were carting bags of oats.

7

Chernov's window sills were lined with cacti. Savinkov rang and heard the approach of heavy, bearlike steps. The chain was slipped off. The lock clicked. In the dim light stood a large figure with an angry face and rumpled hair.

"What can I do for you?" Chernov asked in bad French.

"It's I, Savinkov."

"What?" Chernov muttered with astonishment. "Come in," he growled angrily.

Savinkov saw the same portrait of Mikhailovsky, cigarette butts in the ash tray, and, despite the weather, the five fishing rods with red floats.

"What's wrong? Why are you here?" shouted Chernov.

Savinkov saw his rage. The red beard shook, and the round, squinting eyes darted furiously.

"I wanted to see Gotz, but he was out."

"Mikhail is away. What is wrong?!"

"Azef abandoned us. We were being watched."

"What nonsense! Ivan is there! I know! You ran away from your post!"

"Please, Victor Mikhailovich. . . ."

"How did you dare! You wrecked the whole affair! You have to obey Ivan without question! He is the chief! He was appointed by the Central Committee! You were ordered to be in Petersburg! You must remain on your post at any cost!" The more Chernov shouted, the more shrill his voice became, and the wider his squint. Chernov was shaken with indignation. He paced the room with loud steps. "The devil knows what this is! While you are here, Plehve is flogging peasants, filling the jails, sending our best men to Siberia! . . ."

"Victor Mikhailovich, I want some food."

"What!? What do you want!"

"Some food! Give me something to eat. I have traveled two weeks without money."

"You know what?" cried the stunned Chernov. "You are a young man with a good streak of impudence! I must say!"

8

On the following day, at dinner in a restaurant, Victor Mikhailovich Chernov laughed his good-humored shopkeeper's laugh, speaking like a kindly uncle:

"But you must agree, my young friend, we've planted corn and we are reaping weeds. We've started an affair of utmost importance to the party, everyone felt confident—Pavel Ivanovich is in charge! And you let things slide any old way, and without a care. This can't be done, my friend. Wait till you hear from Ivan! Young and green, that's the trouble. What would Vera have said?"

"Which Vera?"

"What do you mean, which? Vera Nikolaevna Figner," Chernov answered, chewing his schnitzel.

"Tell me, Pavel Ivanovich," Chernov said later, over the coffee. "You have come to us from the Social Democrats; you say that you find their agrarian program inadequate. But what is your opinion—say, on the same agrarian question? Eh? I'll wager you know little of the literature. Do you? Have you heard of the French utopians, Enfantin, Bazard? Have you read about Lassalle's producers' associations?"

Savinkov sipped his coffee, listening to the distant strains of music from the restaurant.

"You are right, I have not heard of them," he said, smiling and swallowing his coffee. "I am not a specialist in the agrarian question."

"Not a specialist?" Chernov roared with laughter, shaking his leonine mane. "A revolutionary of your own brand, is that it? But that's bad—not a specialist! You are a member of the party; you should be."

"Not in the agrarian question. I have nothing to do with your department. Who knows how much land a peasant needs? Tolstoy says three arshin. I believe you suggest a considerably higher figure?"

"What's all this talk, my friend, about Tolstoy and the rest of it? This is crass indifference to the party's program!"

"Not at all. I simply accept what you propose, without objections. It's not my province, Victor Mikhailovich. You are a theoretician; books are your business. I choose another field. Division of labor is

the surest way to achievement. You take theory. As for us, permit us to take bombs. I suspect that your friend Ivan Nikolaevich isn't much concerned with the French utopians either."

"So, an aristocracy of the spirit? I see, I see! We shall not bother with such trifles as agrarian theory; give us bombs! Well, well," Chernov sang out in his rapid patter. "Two are standing, two are bending, the fifth is for deeds, and the sixth one leads. Nothing left in the bottle? We won't order a new one."

Pushing back his chair, Savinkov said, "To tell the truth, Victor Mikhailovich, I sympathize with the People's Will tradition."

"Too bad, sir, too bad. That's altogether to no purpose. It's bygone history, nothing else. Yes, yes. But let us go, let us go, we have been sitting here too long."

9

Every Thursday at noon the closed carriage of Minister Plehve dashed out of the house on Fontanka. Surrounded by cabs and bicycles, the black lacquered cube flew past the Troitsky Bridge and down the Palace Quay toward the Winter Palace. Through the misted glass there could be seen the figure of a stout man looking out at the white, icebound Neva.

10

This time Savinkov was not the only one to travel from Geneva. Others were sent to Russia: Kalyaev, high-strung, with bright, mocking eyes; the dynamite expert, Maximilian Schweitzer, sturdy as a rock; Yegor Sazonov, equally sturdy, but fresh-faced and merry; the wavering Borishansky; and the eczema-afflicted Alexey Pokotilov. Azef himself was also coming to Russia.

They went to different cities: Riga, Kiev, Moscow. But when spring came, all were to converge in Petersburg to kill the Minister.

11

Before the start of preparations for the attempt, several members of the Fighting Organization were in Moscow. Assigned to this work by the party, they still did not know of one another. Savinkov stopped at the fashionable Hotel de Luxe. One day, as he stood

vacantly at the window, the ponderous, stony figure of Azef appeared on the threshold.

Azef did not offer his hand. He asked shortly, as a judge might ask the accused:

"How did you dare to leave Petersburg?" He fixed his eyes on Savinkov.

"I left because you abandoned us. We were threatened with arrest; we were discovered by the police. I withdrew the comrades so as not to wreck the whole plan. But permit me to ask how you dared to leave us to the mercy of fate and the police, without either instructions or money? Why wasn't there a single letter at the address you gave me?"

Azef stared heavily at Savinkov. He wanted to know: "Does he suspect anything?" There was no suspicion.

"I was detained by the technical side of the dynamite problem," said Azef. "I was unable to leave earlier. But that makes no difference; you had no right to leave your post."

"To the point of hanging for nothing?"

"No one watched you."

"If no one had watched me, I would still be in Petersburg. I was about to be arrested. I barely managed to escape from the police spies."

Azef was silent. He was reassured—there were no suspicions. Then he asked in his rusty mumble, as if throwing the words to one side:

"Tell me the results of your observation."

This signalized the end of the unpleasant conversation. Pacing the room, Savinkov described Plehve's movements. Azef sighed ponderously, lazily, heaving his great belly.

"I knew all this without you. So you've accomplished nothing. You will kindly proceed to Petersburg and resume your observation work."

"This is why I've come from Geneva."

"You will meet Pokotilov tonight at midnight. He will expect you in a private room at the Yar Restaurant. He will be disguised, with a long blond beard. Room Number 3. There you will make arrangements for the trip. Pokotilov will prepare the bombs. Schweitzer is waiting in Riga. I have already summoned him by telegram to Petersburg. Are you in contact with Kalyaev?"

"Yes. He is living here, in a hotel."

"Take him with you. Leave tomorrow. The first rendevous with me will be on March 20, at the masquerade in the Merchants' Club. Is everything clear?"

"Clear enough."

"I am glad. I think we shall work better from now on."

"If you will be available, I think so, too."

Azef suddenly smiled a broad, slow smile, stretching his cheekbones. It was a token of favor.

"Oh well," he said. "Let us not quarrel. You know I am very fond of you. You will be my assistant in the Plehve affair. All right?" He laughed, rising heavily from the low chair. "I've said once that you are a gentleman, but no matter, there is nothing wrong with it. We need both gentlemen and cabbies in our work." Azef laughed nasally.

Then, pressing Savinkov's hand with both of his, he said:

"Tonight you will meet Pokotilov at the Yar. Tomorrow the three of you will leave for your post."

12

The snow gleamed in the Moscow streets, as if the capital were paved with white parquet. From Tverskaya, the fast, hard-driven Moscow horses, hung with bells and ribbons, were beginning their run to Petrovsky Park. The horses snorted. A motley throng flew down the streets in rug-lined sleighs. Courtesans and officers, merchants in old-fashioned raccoon coats, Europeanized merchants' sons with beaver collars, visiting provincials, officials on a spree, drinking away government money. Everyone seemed to be out for an evening's fun. Pleasantly leaning back in a smart gray sleigh, Boris Savinkov flew lightly down the Petersburg highway, leaving others behind. Only one pair raced past him at breakneck speed, as if the passengers had staked their very lives on being first to reach the Yar.

Foaming, winded horses carried devotees of melancholy Gypsy music which made the bones ache to the small, one-story building with the ordinary sign, "Yar."

The Yar had a low ceiling, tables, and an open stage. There was nothing unusual here at first glance, and yet something in this roadside tavern attracted hundreds of dreamers, rich men, fools, and

madmen who shot themselves in its private rooms to the strains of Gypsy songs and dances.

"Room Number 3."

"This way, please," the Tartar boy bowed. Savinkov followed the gaily trotting Tartar boy in a frock coat. They crossed the crowded main hall. Savinkov inhaled the scent of flowers, perfume, alcohol. He saw evening coats, décolleté gowns, smockings, and dinner jackets. To the wild ringing of guitars which seemed about to burst with frenzied sorrow, a woman was singing on the stage. She was all in vivid red, with burning Gypsy eyes, dark as the earth.

"That fa-atal ho-ur when I me-het you. . . ."

She seemed to Savinkov to be full of despair.

"Here," the Tartar boy bowed again.

The door closed behind Savinkov. A tall Russian country gentleman with a long wavy beard rose from the table.

"Pavel Ivanovich? You don't recognize me?" Pokotilov said, shaking his hand.

"Incredible! I would not have known you at a distance of two feet, after four hours of conversation."

"All the better. I am delighted. I don't drink, but here one has to. May I?"

"Thank you." Savinkov held out the slender goblet.

In the mirror Savinkov saw two elegant Russian gentlemen. One, bearded and very Russian. The other, clean-shaven, with laughing Mongolian eyes, resembling a young priest.

"How scratched the mirrors are, have you noticed? People must have been writing on them for centuries."

"They tried their diamonds. I've been reading the inscriptions while I waited for you. They're quite amusing."

Savinkov rose and went to the mirror. The first to strike his eye was the word "Love," scratched in a sprawling, drunken hand across the width of the mirror.

"Let me try mine." Savinkov scratched a quick line, then tried to write "Death" over "Love," but nothing came of it. The lines slipped and wavered. He laughed into the mirror and walked away.

"Did you see Ivan Nikolaevich?"

"Yes."

"He told me that you and I and the Poet are to go to Petersburg tomorrow. Schweitzer has just left, and Yegor is already there."

"Yes, yes, Ivan Nikolaevich told me. All the facts and the results of our observation will be reported to you, and you will be directly. . . ."

Suddenly behind the wall a chorus burst into song, to the accompaniment of stamping, shrieks, and the sound of breaking dishes. Many feet were dancing. Amid the whooping, whistling, and ringing of merry balalaikas, the chorus sang out the gay refrain of a rowdy old Russian song.

"Some merchants, I guess, out on a spree," smiled Savinkov, who loved abandon, songs, and the sound of popping corks.

"So you will be in touch with Ivan Nikolaevich?"

"Yes. Sazonov and Matseevsky will be cabbies. Kalyaev will peddle cigarettes. You and Schweitzer will prepare the bombs."

"Yes, yes, I see." Pokotilov sipped his champagne, listening to the unending revelry behind the wall.

It was strange to see Comrade Alexey, whom Savinkov had known as an émigré in Geneva, sitting here as a Russian gentleman and to hear Pokotilov's voice and ideas coming out through this alien beard.

"Pavel Ivanovich, I certainly submit to discipline and to the orders of Ivan Nikolaevich. He is an excellent organizer and a fine comrade. But you must understand, it will be terrible for me if I am left out again."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, think of it," Pokotilov said with quiet intensity. "I wanted to kill Bogolepov; I was quite ready, everything was arranged. I came to Petersburg from Poltava, obtained an audience, and suddenly Karpovich was there ahead of me. I began preparations against Sipyagin; Balmashov got him. I went to Poltava to see Gershuni, I asked him, and it was decided that I would kill Obolensky. Then I was told it was not I, but Kachura. Kachura was a worker; he had preference."

Pokotilov spoke too heatedly; he brought his face too near to Savinkov's. Small drops of blood came out on his forehead from the eczema.

"Pavel Ivanovich, don't you see? I cannot bear it any longer. I'm worn out with the strain. The bomb against Plehve must be mine. But I see that Ivan Nikolaevich does not trust me."

"Why do you think so?"

"It seems to me. I beg you, speak for me. I shall prepare the

bombs, but that isn't enough. I want to come out myself. You understand, myself?"

"I understand."

"So you see. You will support me, then?" Pokotilov laid his slender white hand on Savinkov's.

"I will."

"Then let us drink to our success," smiled Pokotilov.

Both raised their glasses.

"You believe in our success?" asked Savinkov.

"Absolutely," said Pokotilov, wiping his wet mustache. "You know Ivan Nikolaevich. With him there can be no failure. He is prudent, exact, cool, and a most careful conspirator—this is very important. I am convinced we'll kill. But it is difficult to wait. I have the dynamite. Living in suspense, with dynamite, is unbearable."

"It won't be long now." Savinkov did not want to listen to Pokotilov on the torment of waiting. "Shall we go to the general room now?" he asked. "It might appear suspicious that we are sitting here alone. Or perhaps invite some girls? What do you think?"

Pokotilov wrinkled his face.

"No," he said, "I'll be going now, it's late; although, you know, I suffer from insomnia. That's why I drank more than usual. I never fall asleep before four."

Savinkov saw Pokotilov to the door. Returning, he sat alone, finishing his glass. Then he lit a cigarette and rang.

A Tartar waiter came in.

"Who is that singer in red? She was on stage when I came in."

"Shishkina."

"Invite her."

"With the guitarists?"

"No, alone."

"If I may say so, sir, she is not one of those, you understand," the waiter said familiarly.

Savinkov looked at the waiter coldly.

"Go and invite her. Here is my calling card."

On the card was the name, "Engineer McCulloch."

13

Music burst into the opened door. On the threshold stood a woman in a bright red dress, trimmed with gold. Her black hair was fastened with a large glittering pin.

As a well-bred man, Savinkov rose to greet her. She approached him, smiling. Two guitarists followed her in, wearing colorful Gypsy costumes. The door was closed, and the room became quiet.

"Would you like to hear a Gypsy song?" the woman asked in a low voice, her white teeth gleaming as she smiled.

She was tall, with beautiful, bare, dark arms and a dark face. Her hair was thick and long, combed simply, blue-black like a horse's mane. Her eyes were fiery, with a faintly elongated slant. They seemed to burn with some secret despair. Or perhaps the woman was slightly drunk. The guitarists stood back at a distance. Both were dark and curly-haired.

"I long to hear your song," said Savinkov, kissing her hand with many rings.

The waiter brought champagne. Another one brought fruit. Behind them came a shabbily dressed girl with a basket of flowers. Savinkov gathered all the red roses and presented them to Shishkina.

"Oh, oh, what a kind gentleman!" she laughed, mimicking the speech of the Gypsy camp. "You aren't Russian?"

"I am English."

"You're joking, sir," Shishkina winked and laughed. "An Englishman would buy a rose or two. You're buying like a Russian. And an Englishman would not invite a singer to a private room, just for himself." Taking a deep drink of champagne, Shishkina said: "Well, shall I sing for you, Mr. Englishman?"

She was extraordinary; there was so much life and fire in her. And in her eyes, together with the fire, fluttered a wild despair. She sang as she sat, merely moving slightly away from the table. The guitarists stood on either side of her. She was in red. They were bright, varicolored. First, one began an aching melody, beating the rhythm with his foot. Then the other caught it up, piercingly, but plucking too hard at the guitar so that his fingers could be heard catching the strings and making them vibrate shrilly. Shishkina took a breath, and suddenly the room was filled with the strong, low music of her husky voice. But that was only for a moment. The voice expanded; it rang against the mirrors. She sang mournfully:

"Tell me something with your eyes, my dear."

Savinkov felt a shiver running down his body as he listened to this wild, untutored singing. Shishkina's eyes were half-closed, her

hands were folded. She uttered the last words of the song enchantingly, as if she tore them from her heart and placed them before him. Then she sat motionless while the guitars were ending the accompaniment, shifting nostalgically from the major to a minor key.

"Beautiful," said Savinkov. The windows of the room were curtained. But Savinkov knew it was already light outside. Shishkina said something to the guitarists in the Gypsy tongue. They nodded and suddenly struck their guitars with strange outcries. Rocking in her chair, shuddering as she sobbed out, spoke out her words, she sang something very old, ancient, perhaps Indian.

Everything swayed and rippled in the room—the song, the singer, the guitarists. How strange that a grown man in a tavern should be moved so close to tears.

Shishkina finished and came back to the table. She asked in the same low, throaty voice, laughing with her eyes:

"Well, was it good, the Gypsy song?"

"Very good."

"But now, Mr. Englishman," the eyes laughed, "I must leave you." She spoke again with Gypsy intonations, and her narrow despairing eyes were laughing.

"Thanks for the song. How much do I owe you?"

"That, my dear gentleman, I wouldn't know. Ask my guitarists."

She held out her hand with its silver rings and, with her red dress rustling, went out. At the door she sent him a last fiery glance and a wave of the hand.

"We get twenty rubles for a song, sir," grunted the older guitarist.

Savinkov threw a hundred-ruble note on the table.

The main room of the Yar was empty now. Noise, dance music, singing were still heard from the private rooms. The breathless waiters hurried back and forth with wine, food, plates, and silver.

"If we fail, they'll hang us," thought Savinkov while the porter brought his beaver hat and cane. "Here you are, sir." Two sleighs dashed to the entrance, their harness tangled, and the drivers swore at one another, waving their thick-coated arms. Savinkov took a third one. The frisky mare snorted and sped him away from the Yar.

Savinkov flew along the Moscow streets. The wind was pleasant on his wine-flushed face. When he passed the North Pole, Rooms

for Visitors, where Kalyaev was staying, Savinkov smiled. "He must be sleeping, the happy child, and dreaming of the Minister's death." The mare carried him rapidly toward the Hotel de Luxe.

14

Azef was in a difficult position. Plehve's death was demanded by the will of the terrorists and the party. It was demanded by the rumors of provocation, which had to be dispelled. But after the assassination? Azef was afraid of the Police Department: what if it exposed him, handed him over to the revolutionaries? The idea made him close his eyes and turn pale. He was afraid of those young people, who would not stop at anything. To get a clearer picture of the situation, he went to Warsaw.

The old detective and provocateur, State Councilor P. I. Rachkovsky, was a strange man. He was tall, stooping, with a sharp nose, dark brown hair, and a scanty beard which grew only below his chin. He spoke in a soft tenor with a slight lisp and was fond of white waistcoats and turned-down collars. His eyes were always shifting, darting restlessly, never quiet. He was like a razor, folded in its dark sheath.

Rachkovsky began his career during the reign of Alexander II. For twenty years he planned and directed the work of provocateurs, striking at the revolutionaries, wrecking their audacious plans, making raids and arrests. But Plehve threw out the razor-sharp old man like an old dog. In the rather shabby rooms on Burakovaya lived the man to whom the French had once entrusted the protection of President Loubet, the man who had a finger in the Vatican through his friendship with Bishop Charmentin, who had close ties with Delcassé and had made his influence felt in the Franco-Russian alliance.

The Tsar himself was fond of Rachkovsky. When the Minister omitted shaking hands with the provocateur, the Tsar personally introduced him to Plehve, saying: "This is Rachkovsky, whom I particularly favor." And the Minister pressed his hand warmly.

But in his report Plehve requested the Sovereign to "put an end to Rachkovsky's activities, once and for all." Through his personal spies, Plehve caught and compromised Rachkovsky. The report charged him with: assistance to the anarchists in blowing up the Liége cathedral; participation of his agent in the assassination of

General Seliverstov; theft of documents required by Witte; corrupt dealings with foreign firms in awarding concessions in Russia.

What hatreds rankled in the soul of old Rachkovsky, grown yellow with years of plotting and spying! "They've killed me," he whispered, pacing the worn carpets of his rooms—not with despair, but like an old wolf at bay, looking out for an opening where he might lunge, escape, an opportunity to sink his fangs in someone's throat.

"Dinner is served, Pyotr Ivanovich," called his wife, a Frenchwoman, Xénia Charley.

Muttering something to himself, Rachkovsky went in to dinner. But even the food seemed tasteless to him, as to a man condemned to die. "And who? That scoundrel, the son of an organist, the murderer of Bogdanovich!" Rachkovsky thought of Plehve, choking with hatred.

15

Pyotr Ivanovich had just swallowed two spoonfuls of goose-giblet soup when someone rang quietly. "Who can that be?" thought Rachkovsky, putting down his spoon. He went to answer the bell, closing the dining-room door.

In the dim vestibule Azef held out his hand:

"How do you do, Pyotr Ivanovich."

"Excuse me, sir, I am afraid I do not recognize you," said Rachkovsky, coming nearer. "Ah! Evgeny Filippovich! What a guest, by the grace of God! I am delighted, come in, please, this is so unexpected!"

"I am just passing through," muttered Azef, catching his breath after the climb up the long staircase.

In the shabby study, with its worn, once brightly flowered carpet which Rachkovsky had just been pacing, Azef sat down in a rocking chair, planted his feet on the floor, leaned back in the seat, and did not rock. The conversation had not yet begun.

"The work is going badly, Pyotr Ivanovich," Azef rumbled nasally, and it was obvious that he was troubled over something. "Judge for yourself how I am treated! I won't speak of the money, you know yourself it's small change. But the job itself! After all, I'm not some occasional piece worker. I have been at it many a year, thank God, and how do they use me?"

"Why, what is wrong?" Rachkovsky asked quietly, thrusting all of himself forward.

"I turned in the Northern Union, I turned in Barykov, Verbitskaya, Selyuk, the literature, the printing shop. I only asked them not to touch the nurse Remyannikova. She is unimportant herself, except that her rooms were used to store the material. And I had been there myself a few days earlier. But no, it wasn't enough for them; they arrested Remyannikova, too."

"Well?" Rachkovsky asked, pretending not to understand.

"Oh, drop it," Azef muttered. "I did not come to hear you joke. You understand, there are rumors in the party; they'll blow my brain out."

"Yes, of course, it isn't wise," said Rachkovsky, with a sudden intuition that this conversation might prove useful. "But what else? Were there other cases? After all, the Remyannikova business was quite some time ago?"

"I am not sure there are no suspicions over her."

Rachkovsky narrowed his eyes as he peered into Azef's and said slowly, smiling with his bluish lips:

"I can reassure you. The revolutionaries won't hang you yet. You are talking about Lubov Alexandrovna Remyannikova, aren't you? The nurse? I know, I know. They suspect Verbitskaya of betraying her; in fact, they know that she was tripped up and named Remyannikova to Spiridovich during interrogation. No, no, there's nothing here to worry about. Verbitskaya is pretty well set up, the Socialist Revolutionaries are blaming her, and so the Remyannikova affair is covered. Does that put your mind at ease? Was this why you came?"

Azef rocked slightly.

"The whole business is a mess," he muttered quietly. "Rataev pretends he is displeased with my information. He doesn't understand that I must be careful. I can't ask stupid questions. Then there was this Krestyaninov, who learned about me from the police spy Pavlov. But that is over now. And the case of Serafima Klitchoglu! Judge for yourself. She wanted an appointment with me in Petersburg. I reported to Rataev and asked whether I should keep it. But I explained to him: if I met her, she must not be touched because suspicion would again point to me. They had a conference, Rataev told me, with Lopukhin himself and decided that the meeting should take place and that she was not to be touched. I set the date.

She came. A few days later they arrested her. Is that the way to work? What do they think? That life is worthless to me? That I would gladly stick my own head into a noose? But to hell with what they think! Don't they need me?" Azef was excited, he was going into a rage, and the saliva foamed on his thick lips. Rachkovsky stared at him, at the saliva.

"They have no one else; they're lying that they have. There's no one?" Azef pressed Rachkovsky, peering at him closely.

Rachkovsky was quickly putting things together. His eyes were scurrying like mice under his eyebrows.

"There is no question that your services are great. It's not a matter of some petty, one-time job—it's serious work," he said, pausing to think. Then, as if making up his mind, he went on: "They have no people in the department now, Evgeny Filippovich, that's the reason for all this confusion. The Minister throws out the good, devoted men and takes in new ones. He doesn't understand, the fool, that in this work experience is everything. Everything!" he added for emphasis.

After a short silence, Azef drawled listlessly:

"Plehve dismissed you?"

"As you see, after twenty-five years of service." A crooked smile full of malice, more like a crying grimace, twisted Rachkovsky's face.

Azef gave him a sidelong glance.

Rachkovsky turned and asked with something like a laugh:

"And what do you think of the Kishinev business, Mr. Azef?

"What business?"

"The pogrom."

Azef's face darkened.

"His work?"

"Whose?"

"Plehve's?"

"What do you think?" Rachkovsky laughed. "He's going to establish law and order! Killed thirty thousand Jews! I'll tell you in confidence," Rachkovsky leaned over, "but, of course, this is between us. The Minister thought he'd open up a vent, release some tension. Not so much for his own sake as for the delectation of his secret master, the Grand Duke Sergey Alexandrovich. To please him, so to speak. But he miscalculated, as you see. He didn't reckon with the West. Now, after the *Times* article, he is expelling the

correspondent, and this and that. But it is not so simple with Europe, as it turns out. He sees he overdid it, with the thirty thousand. But he isn't Jesus Christ; he cannot bring the dead to life again." Rachkovsky laughed shrilly, without taking his eyes off Azef's face.

Azef waited, although this was, perhaps, what he had come for.

"But tell me, Evgeny Filippovich," said Rachkovsky, getting up, "is it true that the revolutionaries are preparing important actions?"

Azef looked at Rachkovsky's half-turned face. His eyes bored into the snakelike profile. Were his associations correct?

Rachkovsky turned quickly to Azef, as if to say: "You don't think I'm afraid of you, do you?" Azef drawled reluctantly:

"It looks as if they are. I don't know."

"Not a central act, not the Emperor, I hope?" Rachkovsky came closer, then began to pace the room again. "That would not go past you?"

"No, not a central one," Azef said, straightening his waistcoat and glancing at Rachkovsky.

"On the ministerial level, then?"

Azef rose, as if he were not too interested.

"They are preparing an action, Pyotr Ivanovich, but you're a private individual now, and I really have no right. . . ." Azef smiled with his fleshy lips.

"Ho, ho! So that's it now!" Rachkovsky clapped him on the shoulder. "But never fear, my friend!" He suddenly spoke boldly, coming close and stressing every word: "I've seen worse days. There's only one thing, and then I shall no longer be in disfavor, and you, my dear friend, won't have to work with idiots and risk the noose for small change."

Looking straight into Azef's eyes, Rachkovsky added:

"You don't want to dangle, do you?"

Azef understood the hint. But he laughed.

"Why are you laughing?" Rachkovsky was offended.

"Oh nothing, Pyotr Ivanovich."

"Ye-es," drawled Rachkovsky, and without releasing Azef's hand, he came closer again:

"Drop the pretense, my friend. Think of it, I am speaking seriously. We must come out onto the highroad, yes, it's time. You know my connections?"

Azef realized with astonishment that Rachkovsky had a strong

hand. It pressed his own flabby one almost painfully as he said, "You know."

"Let's try our luck," muttered Azef, so low that Rachkovsky might not even have heard. He was saying, as he escorted Azef to the door:

"So you are leaving us today?"

"By the evening train."

Azef walked down the staircase slowly, as any man burdened with a heavy body.

16

Savinkov was confident of killing Plehve. The results of the observation promised success. The route was established. Pokotilov's impulsiveness was balanced by Sazonov's coolness. Kalyaev's nervous energy, by Schweitzer's logical will. Dressed in a faultless evening coat, Savinkov drove impatiently to the masquerade. A Nevsky barber had carefully combed his thinning hair. At Eiler's he bought an orchid. Ascending the gleaming, mirrored staircase, in the midst of masks, laces, sequins, and dominoes, Savinkov looked like a gilded Petersburg youth who thought of nothing but the pleasures of living. He was foppish and spoke to the lackey who took his overcoat in the languid tones of a dandy.

In the ballroom the band was playing a waltz. The hall was glittering, enormous. A thousand people were dancing. It seemed impossible to find Azef among all the masks. Savinkov crossed a corner of the hall. A red domino rushed toward him, seized his elbow, and whispered:

"I know you."

She was a plump woman. Savinkov laughed and freed his elbow.

"My dear mask, you are mistaken. You don't know me, and I don't know you."

"Well, anyway, you're a darling; let's dance."

"Tell me where you will be. I'll see you later; I'm busy now."

"You aren't!"

Three white clowns squealed, showering Savinkov and the mask with handfuls of confetti and binding them with paper streamers. Savinkov laughed, warding them off. The mask leaned on his arm, pressing herself to him. It was clear what the red domino wanted.

From the hallway Savinkov caught a glimpse of Azef ascending

the staircase, wearing a black suit. Azef walked with assurance, solidly, like a successful merchant who was in no hurry to join the fun of the masquerade.

"Excuse me, mask, go back into the dance hall. . . ."

"No, you'll deceive me."

"Look, I'll tell you plainly—go away, I'm tired of you."

"Beast," the mask hissed, striking his hand with her fan, and walked away.

Savinkov watched Azef greet a young man in a light suit standing in the doorway. The young man was about twenty-five, stocky, of medium height.

Savinkov saw that Azef noticed him. Trying not to lose sight of him and the young man, he followed them into the buffet and put his hand on Azef's shoulder.

"Ah," Ivan Nikolaevich turned, warmly taking him by the elbow. "Be acquainted."

Savinkov shook hands with the young man, who introduced himself:

"Leopold."

Savinkov guessed it was Maximilian Schweitzer.

The buffet of the Merchants' Club rang with plates, forks, knives, spoons, and the popping of corks. Azef and his friends looked vainly for a table. The waiter led them to the conservatory. Here they were virtually alone under the palms. Azef was deep in thought. Savinkov and Schweitzer exchanged trivial remarks. Schweitzer resembled an automaton—sure and precise.

"Have you brought the dynamite?" Azef asked him in low tones.

"Yes."

"And you've made the bombs?"

"Yes."

"How many?"

"Eight. I can make three more," said Schweitzer, puffing on his cigarette.

"Yes, yes," Azef said, after a moment's pause.

"And how is your observation work, Pavel Ivanovich?"

"Fine. Yegor and Yosif saw the carriage three times. They are both cabbies, stationed just outside the department building."

"That is dangerous. Warn them not to do it."

"I spoke to them. They were certain they were not observed."

"Nevertheless, warn them. There is no need to stand right next

to the building. It's pointless. And how is our Poet, Kalyaev? And you, do you have a plan?"

"Yes. There has been enough external observation. We know that on Thursdays Plehve drives out from Fontanka to the Neva, and then down the embankment to the Winter Palace. He returns by the same route. This is clear now, and the bombs are ready. We have the people. What else is needed? Plehve will be killed—it's simple arithmetic."

Azef glanced at him and said:

"It not only isn't arithmetic, it is not even integral calculus. This is no way to discuss plans. If everything went so smoothly, we should have killed off all the Ministers a long time ago."

Schweitzer was silent. He was not looking at either of them.

"There's no calculus about it," Savinkov flared up. "The plan is simple, and simplicity is always a point in favor of any plan."

"Let's leave philosophy out of it," Azef interrupted him, smiling. "How do you propose to do it?"

"I should think this would be the best way: Pokotilov wants to be the thrower at any cost. Very well. . . ."

"What does it mean, at any cost?" Azef broke in.

"He says that others anticipated him—Karpovich, Balmashov, Kachura. He cannot bear to wait any longer."

"What rubbish! I don't give a damn whether he can or not. I am head of the Fighting Organization, and I decide who will throw. I won't risk the whole business over Pokotilov's hysterics."

"It's not a question of hysterics. Pokotilov is a good revolutionary. I have confidence in him. He will do the job. And I see no reason why he should not go first?"

"Well?" Azef broke in again.

"Pokotilov, with two bombs, will make the first attack—near the Stieglitz house on Fontanka. Borishansky will wait with two bombs nearer to the Neva. If Pokotilov is unable to throw or misses, Abram will finish it off. Sazonov will also take a bomb and station his cab near the Police Department. If it is convenient for him to throw the bomb as Plehve leaves, he will throw."

Azef traced something with a pencil on his paper napkin, apparently without listening.

"And what if Plehve decides to drive down Panteleymonovskaya and Liteyny, what then?" he looked contemptuously at Savinkov.

"Then there will be Kalyaev—on Tsepnoy Bridge. If Plehve drives

down Liteyny, Kalyaev will give a signal. Pokotilov and Borishansky will have time to cross."

"Ridiculous," said Azef. "This plan is worthless. It isn't a plan, it's junk. It is a plan for killing old beggar women, not the Minister. We have to postpone the attempt. You didn't do enough, and nothing can be started with insufficient information. It would only mean a needless sacrifice of people and the whole plan. I won't agree to it."

"Waiter." Azef turned and signaled with his hand. "Some seltzer, please!"

Savinkov was in a rage, especially because the undeserved reproaches were made in the presence of the new comrade. He was silent while the waiter uncorked the bottle and poured the foaming seltzer into Azef's glass. When the waiter left, Savinkov spoke excitedly.

"If you don't like my work, take it over yourself. My plan has the approval of Sazonov, Pokotilov, Matseevsky, the Poet, and Abram. I don't know the view of Comrade Leopold," he turned to the silent and imperturbable Schweitzer, "but all the other comrades are sure that with this plan we have ninety-nine chances in a hundred of killing Plehve."

"I don't see it," said Azef, sipping the seltzer.

"Then speak to the comrades yourself; perhaps they will convince you."

"It must be a sure hit. If not, it's better not to try at all." Azef threw himself back in his chair, staring hard at the excited Savinkov.

"As you please. I've told you my opinion. I stand by it," said Savinkov. "Let us hear your plan then."

Azef was silent.

"What do you think, Comrade Leopold?" he asked Schweitzer.

Schweitzer glanced at Azef with calm self-confidence.

"My job is purely technical. I have done it. Eight bombs are ready. As for the plan offered by Pavel Ivanovich, it seems to me that, with some further elaboration of details, it is quite suitable." And Schweitzer fell silent without looking at either of his companions.

"Well, I think it is a poor plan," Azef repeated stubbornly, "and I shall not agree to it."

At this moment the red domino appeared in the door of the conservatory, leaning on the arm of a medieval knight. It seemed

to Savinkov that the mask pointed him out to her escort. Azef saw her out of the corner of his eye. He leaned forward across the table and asked in an undertone:

"Who is that red domino, Pavel Ivanovich? She was with you earlier?"

Azef's face turned pale. Schweitzer sat without changing his position. The domino walked past them with her varicolored knight, laughing.

"The devil knows; she simply attached herself to me."

"It may not be so simple at all," Azef muttered. "You are too damned careless. We must pay and go."

"But I tell you, she simply tried to pick me up."

"And how do you know who she is under the mask?" Azef snarled at him. Leaning back in his chair, he called out with feigned calm:

"Waiter, the bill!"

They pushed the chairs back noisily, getting up. In the large ballroom they went in different directions. Azef was the first to leave the club. He hailed a cab. And it was only when he saw that no one followed him in the deserted street that he got out, paid the driver, and walked to the next corner.

"They will kill him," he thought. "Nothing will hold them back now." But suddenly Azef smiled and stopped. "And what if all of them were turned in? It would mean two hundred thousand!" he muttered and perspired under his hat. "A hundred and fifty sure!" His mind was in a whirl. The scent of money always filled Azef with overpowering excitement. "I must see Rataev. Tomorrow," Azef decided and turned into a side street.

17

L. A. Rataev arrived in Petersburg at the same time as Azef. The situation in the Police Department worried him. His career was in danger. The department, recently reorganized under its new chief, seemed to ignore the services of the engineer Azef in the fight against the revolutionaries. Rataev knew that all this was due to Colonel Kremenetsky's intrigues, and he meant to expose them. He nervously paced the floor of the secret-police apartment on Panteleymonovskaya Street, waiting for Azef.

After lunch, exactly at four o'clock, Azef left the Russia Hotel.

Rataev himself opened the door. But he had never seen his agent in such a black mood. Azef entered without a word.

"What is it, Evgeny Filippovich? What happened?"

"The worst of all possible things that could happen," muttered Azef and walked past him into the room like a man who knew the apartment well. Rataev followed him in.

Azef stood before him, drawn to his full height. His face was contorted with rage, the thick lips jumping like two rubber balls, the whites of his eyes bloodshot, and the opaque, pupilless stare bulging with hatred. He waved his arms and shouted:

"Leonid Alexandrovich! If things go on like this I shall refuse to work! I want you to know it! Those idiots put my life in danger every moment! For all they care, I may be shot, hanged, the devil knows what!"

"But what's the matter? What happened?"

"This is what happened!" Azef threw him a letter. It began, "Dear Ivan." Rataev glanced at the signature, "Fondly, Your Mikhail."

"Gotz?" he asked.

Azef did not reply. He sat there, furious, yellow-white, like a giant beast ready to leap.

Rataev's astonishment grew as he read. Azef turned to him.

"Well, what will you say now? You see, the actions of the department are already giving me away. This Rubakin writes to Gotz plainly that I am a provocateur!" Azef choked on his own saliva and began to cough. "The devil knows what they are doing! And do you imagine the Klitchoglu arrest will have no consequences? You think the revolutionaries are more stupid than your imbeciles in the department?" Azef shouted. "No, if you pardon me, their documents don't disappear like the department documents. What will you say to that? One of their men was planted in the department; that's obvious now. But, of course, what do you care if I dangle from some hook or rot in a ditch like a dead mongrel for the wretched kopeks I get from you!"

Azef walked round and round Rataev, his face purple. He looked hideous. Rataev was silent, tugging at his mustache.

"Do you think, Evgeny Filippovich, that Gotz might believe it? After all, he writes you that it's nonsense, that you must not be upset by it. It seems to me that you need only. . . ."

"Never mind telling me what I need! Better tell me what you

need, to prevent such blunders. This never could have happened in Moscow under Zubatov! There's such chaos here, Satan himself could break a leg. One man gives orders not to arrest, the other grabs. . . . Who can do anything under such conditions? And all of it for kopeks! I can earn these kopeks by peaceful work! But this is not what I'm here for!"

Rataev got up.

"Wait, Evgeny Filippovich, I shall make some coffee, and we shall talk things over quietly. You've really given me a fright for a moment. But I am sure things are not quite so black."

Azef did not speak. Left alone in the room, he paced from corner to corner, then went to the heavily curtained window and looked out through a crack into the empty street. A cab drove by; some people shuffled past with tired, heavy steps. Azef saw nothing. He stared into the void of the street and made a decision: Plehve must be killed. Because it was impossible to go on working like that. Because Rachkovsky had hinted betrayal. Because of the Kishinev pogrom.

There were steps in the corridor. Now that he had made up his mind, Azef was calm. But when Rataev entered, he resumed his sullen expression.

Rataev came in carrying a tray. His elegant figure suggested the cavalry, and there was a surprising air of coziness about him as he puttered with the cups, the coffee pot, and the toast. It was strange to think that this middle-aged ex-cavalry man, with his buoyant walk and his coffee tray, was waging war against the terrorists.

"Let us have a cup of coffee; it's still my old Parisian stock, you know; and then we can talk about ways and means of preventing all these troubles. I will write Lopukhin at once. Please," said Rataev, offering Azef a rococo cup bordered with garlands of tiny roses.

Azef silently took some sugar and silently sipped his coffee. Everything was decided. He had put a period to hesitation, and the period became his center of calm.

"You see, Evgeny Filippovich," said Rataev, who was fond of the most expensive and fragrant coffee, "you were so inflamed over that letter from your Moshe," Rataev smiled, "that I did not even attempt to answer you. And yet, my friend, you have said a few rather insulting things. You have! But then, we are old friends. And, in fact, I am even ready to agree with you on many points. Of

course there was never such confusion under Zubatov. And the blunders affecting you are most regrettable. The Klitchoglu arrest, I have learned, was one of Colonel Kremenetsky's tricks. He has an agent who lies to him without shame, and the two of them supposedly could not resist the temptation to get her. All of this, of course, is being done to spite me, as you well know. As for the loss of documents, that's also true. But Rubakin's denunciation is not so serious a danger. We will put an end to these things once and for all. I promise you, I'll have a talk with Lopukhin. And there is nothing, really, to be so excited about. The revolutionaries trust you, and Rubakin's letter. . . ."

"They will not trust me forever," Azef mumbled, putting down his cup.

"You are right, but there are no actual grounds for distrust, only rumors?"

"Rumors may be confirmed by facts, Leonid Alexandrovich. I would ask you not only to speak to Lopukhin but to arrange an interview for me as well."

"With Lopukhin? What for?"

"First, I want to ask him for more money. I cannot work for what I am getting now. And then, I have important information for him."

"But you can report it to me." Rataev's eyes became suspicious.

"I want to report to him directly, to reinforce my request."

"I see. What a diplomat you are, what a diplomat, Evgeny Filippovich. Very well, I shall speak to him. You know my feelings toward you. I shall speak to him, and I think he will receive you."

"And it should be as soon as possible, or I'll be gone."

"Very well," said Rataev. "More coffee?"

Azef moved over his cup.

Pouring the coffee, Rataev spoke again. He felt that the storm was over, and it was now possible to return to business.

"I meant to ask you, Evgeny Filippovich, we have been getting some disturbing reports. I suppose you know that a certain Yegor Sazonov escaped abroad from exile, presumably with the firm intention to return and kill Minister Plehve?"

"Oh?" Azef said sourly, as if Rataev were telling him something entirely uninteresting.

"Have you met him abroad? Do you know of him? Do you know how much truth there is in these reports?"

"No, I don't." Azef shook his head and sipped his coffee. "Did you say Yegor?"

"Yes, yes, Yegor Sazonov."

"I know of no Yegor. I remember meeting Izot Sazonov in Ufa, but no Yegor."

"Izot is his brother."

"I don't know. Where did you get this information?"

"Of course the information is unverified, but its source was not bad, though accidental."

"Nonsense," said Azef. "I've never heard of him."

"But, Evgeny Filippovich, they even insist that several terrorists are here now."

"They are."

"Well?"

"Well, what? You know yourself I came here two days ago. I am not the Holy Ghost to see through everything."

"But you've just told me they are here?"

"I said there are some terrorists here, but I haven't yet discovered who. I think they aren't even from abroad; some local people, from other cities. I'll let you know when I meet them."

"Yes, do, this is most important, most important," Rataev spoke urgently. "Could this mean they are preparing, God forbid, for a central act? What do you think?"

"I don't know as yet. But I think I would know if they intended action against the Tsar."

"In other words, you have no information except what you have told me?"

"I have. Chaim Levit is in Orel. He should be picked up. He is launching wide activity; he can be taken red-handed."

Rataev drew out his notebook and made some rapid jottings.

"And what about Sletov; did you get him?"

"On the border, as you had written me."

"He is also dangerous. Keep a close grip on him," drawled Azef.

"Tell me, Evgeny Filippovich, is it true that Sletov is the brother of Chernov's wife?"

"It is," said Azef, getting up. "And so, Leonid Alexandrovich, I hope you will arrange the interview with Lopukhin. It is essential. And also clear things up and talk to him about putting an end to this impossible state of affairs. Tell him plainly that I cannot work like this. It puts my life in danger."

"I know, I know, Evgeny Filippovich. Don't worry."

"Let me know by *poste restante.*"

"Don't worry. And, forgive my asking, are you certain that Levit is now in Orel?"

"Quite certain. Send a telegram, and they can pick him up. He will be there for another month."

"It is too early to pick him up; we must give the bud a chance to open."

"That's your business. Well, good-by now," said Azef. "I must be off."

Rataev watched Azef cross the street. The pavement was wet from the fine Petersburg drizzle. Rataev automatically checked the time: the clock in the secret-police apartment showed a quarter past five.

18

At five, two cabs were standing on Gorokhovaya, but not at the usual cab station. One stood at Number 13, the other at Number 24. One was elegant, with fine gear and a lacquered dashboard. The other was a shabby hack; the horse stood with its head hung low, the driver huddled in his seat. Both cabs were engaged and refused fares.

At a quarter of six, a well-dressed gentleman in a brown coat and a matching wide-brimmed hat appeared on Gorokhovaya. A typical Petersburg dandy, the gentleman sauntered along with an absent-minded air, swinging his cane.

When he came up to the first cab, he glanced at the driver. But, of course, anyone may glance at a driver. Perhaps the gentleman wished to go somewhere, but changed his mind. He crossed the street and was already past the second cab when he remembered something, turned abruptly, and signaled with his cane. The blue-coated coachman picked up the reins and shifted in his seat. The gentleman stepped in, and the cab started.

As they trotted slowly past the first cab, the gentleman caught a look of envy in the driver's eyes: his rival had a fare, while he still had to wait. But no one else on Gorokhovaya saw the driver's look. Besides, it quickly changed. A stout merchant was coming toward him from the opposite direction. He wore a black, tightly buttoned coat and a bowler hat and carried an umbrella. The

merchant walked slowly, heavily. Glancing back as he reached the cab, he climbed in, and the carriage sagged under his weight. The driver started.

From the bright center of town the cabmen drove toward the outskirts, into the squat Petersburg darkness scarcely lighted by the yellow street lamps. They passed through outlying workers' districts, evil-smelling and smoky. The cabs jogged up and down over the badly paved streets. At the Nevsky Gate, factory chimneys were smoking with banked fires. The cabs drove on. They were now in an unfamiliar suburb dotted with wretched taverns. The streets here were like poorly paved provincial roads. The carriages went slowly. Soon, turning off into a dirt road, they disappeared in the darkness.

The first cab stopped in the field. Savinkov muttered, climbing out, "What devil's hole is this, Yosif?"

Matseevsky jumped down from the driver's seat in true cabman's fashion and went to see the horse. In the darkness he straightened out the slipped harness. The horse snorted and dripped foam on his coat.

The second cab appeared in silhouette. The horse halted, and Azef's heavy figure walked slowly in the dark toward the first cab.

"They won't get us here?" he asked, greeting Savinkov.

"How the devil could they! It's pitch dark. You have a revolver?"

"Yes. Were we clear? Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

"All right then," said Azef. "We'll get into the first cab and talk things over. That will be most convenient, especially if we were followed."

His long coachman's coat rustling, Sazonov joined them, leaving the second cab. Greeting Savinkov and Matseevsky, he said in his singsong voice, laughing:

"So dark you cannot recognize your own."

Matseevsky climbed up to the driver's seat. Azef and Savinkov sat down in the carriage, and Sazonov stood by, his foot resting on the step.

"Well, Ivan Nikolaevich," said Matseevsky, "it's time to get done with it. Everything is clear. He drives out every Thursday at twelve. I've seen the Minister himself through the window."

"Where?"

"On Fontanka, not far from the department."

"And you, Yegor, did you see him?"

"Once, for a second," said Sazonov.

"All this is nonsense, nonsense," Matseevsky said passionately. "There is no possibility of a mistake. We know the day, the hour, there's no mistaking the carriage. It is followed at top speed by detectives in cabs and on bicycles. The carriage has white, clean spokes, a black lacquered body, the horses are either black or gray, the coachman has a wide beard, and next to him is a detective dressed as a footman; there can be no mistake. Let me throw the first bomb, I guarantee success."

"Wait," said Azef, "what do you think, Yegor?"

"It's difficult for me to say," answered Sazonov. "I saw him only once. But if Comrade Yosif is certain, if, let us say, he will signal to confirm the carriage, then I am ready."

"No, this is impossible," said Azef with irritation. "It must be absolutely sure."

"Ivan Nikolaevich," said Savinkov, "I don't understand it; we shall never have more exact information. The comrades saw the carriage three times at a distance of two feet. Hence, Plehve could have been killed three times already. If we continue street observation any further, we merely jeopardize the whole business. I propose that we confirm the plan at once and carry out the attempt next Thursday."

Azef did not answer. Matseevsky said:

"He is perfectly right; there is no reason for losing time."

There was a silence.

"They'll kill him," thought Azef.

"Very well," he said, "but I find it hard to believe that everything will go precisely according to plan. You do not know the route, and to make the attempt right outside the department as you suggest, Pavel Ivanovich, is about as foolhardy as for a mouse to step into a cat's maw. I cannot agree to it."

"And I say, Ivan Nikolaevich, that we cannot go on watching. We'll fall into the hands of the police. We must finish quickly. If we fail, we are not alone in the Fighting Organization; others will do it. But we cannot sit about waiting for better conditions."

"True," said Sazonov. "Let us discuss the plan."

Azef was silent. The second horse snorted loudly, spraying them with froth. The field was dark and silent.

"Well, Ivan Nikolaevich, do you agree?" asked Savinkov.

"If you insist, very well, let us try our luck," Azef answered slowly.

Matseevsky sighed and shifted on his box.

"What do you propose, Pavel Ivanovich, your original plan?" asked Azef.

"Yes, on the whole it's the same plan; the comrades know it."

"The details are not worked out sufficiently," said Azef. "But there is time enough till Thursday. Meet me tomorrow at the Aquarium Restaurant at 9:30; we shall discuss the details. Then you will let the comrades know."

There was a shout in the field near by. A man's hoarse voice cried, "Halt, halt!" and there was a crash as of colliding carts.

"What's that?" hissed Azef, jumping out of the carriage.

Sazonov ran into the blackness in the direction of the noise. Everyone was silent. Sazonov was invisible in the dark. The shouts changed to oaths, and the cursing of several voices spread across the field. Two peasant carts had evidently collided in the darkness.

Sazonov returned.

"And so, tomorrow at 9:30 at the Aquarium?" said Savinkov.

"Are they coming this way?" asked Azef.

"Yes, but they are still far off."

"All the same, we must go. You will get the details from Pavel Ivanovich."

After shaking hands with Matseevsky and Savinkov, the fat black coat and bowler disappeared into the other cab. The horses turned the cabs with difficulty in the plowed field. Pulling them out onto the road, they trotted off briskly in the dark. All that could be heard now was the merry snorting of the horses and the soft tapping of eight hoofs on the well-packed earth.

19

"What do you think, Yosif, will Plehve be killed?"

"I am sure," replied Matseevsky, reining in his horse, which was pressing too close upon the first cab.

"I am, too."

They turned into the wide, uneven, badly paved road. The second cab slowed down, while the first set off into a rapid trot and disappeared.

Sitting half-turned on his box, Matseevsky spoke with Savinkov.

"You know what, let's go by way of Sredny," suggested Savinkov.

"All right. What's there?"

"My wife and children." Savinkov's voice smiled.

"Really? And you don't see them?"

"I haven't seen them for a year and a half. The boy was born without me."

Matseevsky shook his head and muttered a long "Eh-h. . . ."

"What number?"

"Twenty-eight."

Sredny was deserted, spotted yellow here and there by the street lamps. The figure of a policeman floated by, next to the strange silhouette of a night watchman. Matseevsky drove slowly past Number 28.

"It's dark," said Savinkov.

"What floor?"

"The third. The last window. It's dark." He took out his watch. "It's almost two."

"Where to now?"

"Take me to Nevsky Prospect."

20

Vera stood in the darkness over the child's bed. With one hand she held the sleepy little body, smelling of warmth and baby; with the other she was changing the wet diaper, muttering something drowsily to the whimpering boy. There were no words, only the ancient, mysterious communication between mother and son.

21

At a quarter of nine, a gentleman in pince-nez, with a squeamish expression and a curled mustache, was finishing his coffee. He glanced at the clock several times. The coffee was finished. His carriage waited at the entrance. At nine the director of the Police Department, Lopukhin, usually arrived at his office on Fontanka. It was now five to nine, but the person whom he had given an appointment was not yet here.

A letter lay on the table near his cup. Although he had read it once, Lopukhin looked at it again as he waited:

"Dear Alexey Alexandrovich!

"Forgive me for troubling you once more, but I am prompted to do so by extremely serious circumstances. Last autumn I received definite information from a secret agent known to you that sometime in January an attempt was to be made upon the life of State Secretary Plehve. The agent also supplied the names of the persons most closely involved in terrorist activity. They were Serafima Klitchoglu, Maria Selyuk, and Stepan Sletov. Serafima Klitchoglu was discovered living clandestinely in Petersburg and was placed under careful surveillance. With your permission, I requested the agent to visit Serafima Klitchoglu and establish contact with her. He did so, and she gave him the following information:

"The Fighting Organization, she said, was an existing fact, and six of its members had volunteered to sacrifice their lives in terrorist action. The attempt on the Minister's life was to be made with dynamite, of which the organization had two and a half *poods.* None of the bomb throwers were as yet in Petersburg, but she was here as an advance guard; the rest were to report to her. The leader of the attempt was to be sent from abroad, and she thought that he was already in Russia, but not yet in Petersburg. Klitchoglu also described to our agent in detail how the Minister was watched, and said that the terrorists intended to attack him as he came out after a visit to a certain lady residing on Sergievskaya.

"I submitted the above information to you both in writing (Reports Nos. 26 and 32) and verbally. Unfortunately, surveillance over Klitchoglu was entrusted to an agent of the chief of the Okhrana* Division, Colonel Kremenetsky. The agent, who has a tendency to report exaggerated and not always accurate information, took lodgings in the rooming house where Klitchoglu was living at the time. On January 28, Klitchoglu had a visit from Mendel Wittenberg. It 'seemed' to the agent that he had brought bombs. And, presumably in view of this, Colonel Kremenetsky ordered liquidation of the case. Klitchoglu was arrested on the same night, but the arrest yielded no tangible results, and indeed could yield none, since it was clear from her earlier information that the plan was in the first stages of development and that the bomb throwers had not yet arrived in Petersburg.

"Because of lack of evidence, Klitchoglu was released. But our

* Secret political police in tsarist Russia.

secret informant, who supplies such valuable data, is now in danger of exposure as a result of Colonel Kremenetsky's unwise and unwarranted haste, as may be seen from the enclosed copy of a letter to the informant from the well-known member of the Central Committee of the Socialist Revolutionary party, Mikhail Gotz.

"In submitting the above, I most urgently beg you, Alexey Alexandrovich, to put an end to the intrigues of certain officials of the Police Department and the Okhrana, which damage our common cause and threaten our most valuable informant, who deserves every consideration, with inevitable exposure.

"With sincere devotion,
"L. Rataev"

Lopukhin organically detested laxity. He had told Rataev clearly that Azef was to come at a quarter to nine. "Of course it is revolting to speak to a provocateur," Lopukhin thought, wrinkling his face with distaste. "Who knows, he may even offer his hand? N-no, my dear man, you are indispensable, but at the proper distance."

At nine, Azef waddled heavily into the study after Lopukhin. He was obviously agitated. Lopukhin interpreted it as an expression of embarrassment.

"Sit down, please," said Lopukhin, pointing to the armchair facing his desk. Azef sat down. The light from the window fell upon his face. Lopukhin remained in semi-darkness.

"How repulsive he is," thought Lopukhin, looking at Azef. Azef was pale with a grayish morning pallor, his face was creased, and the lips seemed especially red and fleshy.

"You are the engineer Yevno Azef?"

"Yes," said Azef with a slight grimace. He resented Lopukhin's mention of his first name and the slight tinge of anti-Semitism he thought he had discerned in the sound of the word "Yevno."

"Leonid Alexandrovich told me that you have important information which you wish to report to me directly?"

"Yes," said Azef. He had not looked at Lopukhin before, but now he glanced at him quickly. "It's not too likely to work," thought Azef, and said, placing his hands on the arms of the chair:

"Alexey Alexandrovich, I believe?"

"Yes," Lopukhin answered dryly and with some distaste.

"To begin with, I wished to tell you that you must," Azef hesitated "that you must give serious attention to the revolutionary

organizations in Orel. The terrorist Chaim Levit is at present conducting extremely dangerous activity there."

Lopukhin sat like a statue, silently. Only his eyes slid over Azef's face, and because they were so penetrating Azef lowered his opaque black olives toward the table, the chair, the corner.

"Chaim Levit is organizing mass terror in the form of armed demonstrations. Besides, he is preparing a terrorist act of the first importance."

"Where did you get this information?" asked Lopukhin, apparently without either interest or belief.

"I was in Orel myself. I have visited several cities," said Azef.

"I see. We shall check and take the necessary steps. Is there anything else you wish to tell me?" Lopukhin glanced at his watch.

"There is."

"Go on, please."

"An attempt is being planned upon your life," said Azef, looking straight at Lopukhin. And, despite the director's reserve, he saw a shadow flit across his face, a momentary tremor. But the director did not reply and did not stir.

"I have reliable information," Azef mumbled nasally, "that you are under surveillance. The terrorists are watching you."

"And what is the plan?" interrupted Lopukhin, and suddenly his thin lips twisted into a grimace like a smile. "I have you now," thought Azef and lowered his voice.

"The terrorists are watching your movements from Sergievskaya through Panteleymonovskaya to Fontanka. They intend to carry out the attempt near the department."

"Near the department?" Lopukhin repeated, smiling. "But that's the height of folly!"

Azef shrugged.

"Nevertheless, it is so. They will probably make the attempt at any point that is most convenient as you drive from home to the department."

Lopukhin was pale, but continued to smile.

Azef was certain that Lopukhin was now in his hands.

Lopukhin glanced at the clock, it was a quarter past nine.

"I must go to the office now," he smiled. "Is this all, you do not need me any more?"

"I have a personal request to you, Alexey Alexandrovich," said Azef. Lopukhin was already standing. Azef also rose.

"Yes?"

"I should like you to increase my salary." Azef caught the director's mocking glance and shrank under it. "I believe the information I supply merits. . . ."

"So that's where the plot against my life was hatched," Lopukhin thought, smiling. "The scoundrel is lying to get more money; it's sheer blackmail."

"Very well, I shall see about it," he said. "But I hope this has no connection with the attempt upon my life?" Lopukhin laughed contemptuously.

"I think my services should have earned greater confidence."

"No, no, I am joking. I'll see about it, and . . ." Lopukhin paused, "I shall probably give you an increase. Your information is, of course, quite interesting. In the meantime. . . . Good-by, and thank you." And, without thinking, Lopukhin held out his well-tended hand to Azef's limp, finlike one.

The horse, kept waiting too long, impatiently pawed the ground. When Lopukhin came out, in his expensive coat and top hat, it plunged forward sharply before the director could get in, and he had to jump into the rolling carriage. The coachman shook the reins, tugged at them, and they went off at a brisk speed.

They flew along Sergievskaya, the Liteyny, Panteleymonovskaya, then swung out into Fontanka. "How simple, really—a bomb, and all is finished," thought Lopukhin, absently looking at the people passing by. "After all, they've killed Sipyagin." A nervous tremor ran through him and he had a desire to yawn. "Hell, what nonsense," he muttered alighting from the carriage, and walked through the entrance of the Police Department, ignoring the bow of the striped and liveried doorman.

22

Azef walked slowly toward Voskresensky Prospect. "If they aren't fools, they'll seize them," he thought lazily. "If they are, the carriage will be torn to splinters." Halting for a moment, he lighted a cigarette. It refused to burn. When it finally started, Azef went on heavily, humming his favorite tune: "Three heavenly creations walked the streets of Madrid." He took one of the cabs lined up at the corner and ordered to be taken to the Russia Insurance Company. He went to pay the premium on his life insurance.

23

A gay company was assembled at the Aquarium Restaurant. The tables were laden with bottles and food. A singer, in a sparkling greenish dress, kicked up her legs and flung out playful couplets at the diners.

"I'm starved as a devil; let's have a good meal," muttered Azef.

Chewing his steak with relish, he looked greedily across the table at the creamed grouse which Savinkov was dismembering with his knife and fork. The singer was followed by a man in a circus costume, with an obscene mustache. He bounced out upon the stage and, with incredible contortions, threw himself into a dance to the music of the band.

"Maxixe is an enchanting dance
Of burning passion,
Imported by a Spaniard,
A man of fashion."

"I went down to the Fontanka today, to think over the plan of action," Azef rumbled through the noise. "The Poet must be stationed on Tsepnoy Bridge. Plehve may decide to drive along Liteyny; we must be prepared for that."

The man on the stage clowned more and more repulsively:

"I was in Paris lately,
What fun and pleasure!
Sat endlessly at the café-chantant,
In carefree leisure. . . ."

"But, you know, I don't trust your Alexey. You think he is good as a thrower? It takes a man of iron, and Alexey is a hysterical old woman."

"He'll do."

"What do you mean, he'll do? And then, to set up the act just outside the department is, after all, reckless folly. The whole area swarms with spies and agents. Or do you think they are such fools they'll let you come right up to the department?"

"Fools or no fools, but none of the comrades has been shadowed until now. Everyone is clear. Only three days remain until Thursday.

Why should anything change in three days when it hasn't in three weeks?"

"Things can change in a single minute."

"You mean, if there is betrayal?"

"That, too, might happen. Don't you think we should reckon with this possibility in our work? How well do you really know all the comrades? I can think of several I might suspect," Azef said reluctantly.

"Nonsense! There are no better comrades in the party."

"As you will," muttered Azef. "I have agreed—let us try our luck. But if it were not for the comrades' insistence, I should still hesitate to start. And then, the act could also be set up differently."

"How?"

A man in evening dress and a woman in a low-cut orange gown floated out upon the stage. The music became slow and sentimental, and the pair danced.

"Well," Azef drawled lazily, "Plehve has mistresses. One of them, the Countess Kochubey, lives with her maid on Sergievskaya. It is very simple to find out when he visits her."

"And do it there?"

Azef stretched his lips and cheekbones into a smile.

"You're too simple, Pavel Ivanovich, and your organizational sense limps badly. You'd do everything head on. No, one of the comrades would have to get acquainted with the maid, play up, make love to her. She could also be tempted with money. When Plehve is in the bedroom, and the comrade is with the maid, he opens the door, and it's done."

"Do you realize what you're saying? All this would come out into the open; the press would cover us with so much filth, we'd never wash ourselves clean."

"Nonsense, what's the difference where he is killed?"

"There's a great difference."

"Well, if your plan fails, I shall certainly assign you to mine. You are elegant. Any maid would fall for you." Azef burst into a shrill, nasal laugh.

"Stop those idiotic jokes, Ivan Nikolaevich," Savinkov flared up. "In three days we may all be dead, and you are fooling around with such cheap vulgarity."

Azef's expression changed instantly. He looked at Savinkov affectionately.

"But I wasn't serious."

Savinkov watched the stage. The dance was graceful, the dancers tall and supple, bending and swaying, straightening up and flowing into the rhythm of the dance.

"Do you need money?" Azef gurgled. "I am leaving tomorrow."

"You're leaving?"

"Yes. On general party business. After the act, the comrades should disperse."

"Except those, of course, who will be in the other world?"

Azef ignored him, going on with his orders:

"Tell some of them to go to Kiev, and some to Vilno. You shall come to Dvinsk. We'll meet on Saturday in the first-class waiting room at the railway station. If the plan does not come off, everyone remains on the spot."

He handed Savinkov a thick wad of shiny pink bank notes.

24

In the shabby Australia Hotel, Kalyaev did not sleep. He was writing poems.

"Inexorable destiny
Calls us to do our part,
To pave the road to happiness
With our noble hearts."

The air in the room was fetid. The kerosene lamp smoked. Behind the thin wall there were sounds of scuffling and giggles. Kalyaev was pale, and in the pallor of his face the eyes gleamed with suffering. He bent low over the table as he wrote.

"A single moment, and life is gone
Like a mournful, weary dream.
Dissolving like distant shadows,
Like quiet evening bells."

The door of his room burst open, and an elderly bearded man with unbuttoned trousers stumbled in over the threshold. He hiccuped drunkenly.

"What the devil," he grunted. "Forgive me, colleague, the wrong room." Hiccuping and tripping, he turned and slammed the door.

Kalyaev did not reply; he did not notice the intrusion of the man with the unbuttoned trousers. He was warmed and chilled by the flow of his verse.

"What can we give the people,
Apart from clever, boring books,
To help them find their freedom?
—Only the fleeting moment of our lives."

The early morning trolley clanked down the street. Kalyaev finished his poem, rose, and stood for a long time at the window, looking out into the slowly brightening street.

25

When evening began to veil the splendor of imperial palaces, bridges, parks, and arcades, Alexey Pokotilov left the Bristol Hotel in great agitation. When he was agitated, drops of blood stood out on his forehead from the eczema. He dabbed his forehead frequently with a handkerchief, and the handkerchief was stained with blood. The assassination attempt was set for the next day, but this was not the cause of his excitement. He had just received a letter from a woman in Poltava. It was full of love and tenderness. The feelings awakened by the letter, added to the tense anticipation of the morrow, caused him inexpressible torment. But a torment so sweet that Pokotilov thought he had never known such sweetly racking pain. He knew that Dora would learn everything from the newspapers. What unspeakable happiness! For Dora was not only a beloved woman, she was also a revolutionary, a comrade who dreamed of terror. And now Alexey had started, and Dora would follow.

Pokotilov walked down the street, wearing a false blond beard. Savinkov waited for him on Millionnaya.

"Well, how are you?"

"Excellent," smiled Pokotilov.

As they walked in the direction of the Admiralty, Savinkov noticed that Pokotilov moved unsteadily, now pressing against him, now swinging away. "Perhaps Azef was right?" he wondered.

"I received a letter today," Pokotilov began, smiling, "from a woman I love, and now I am so full of extraordinary emotion, quite extraordinary," he repeated. "Ah, Pavel Ivanovich, if she only knew

what will happen tomorrow! How happy she would be, how wonderfully happy. We have decided to work in the terror together."

"Is she your wife?"

Pokotilov turned.

"What does it mean, wife? How strange you are."

"You misunderstood me. I did not mean a church wedding. You love each other?"

"Of course," Pokotilov replied quietly. "Ah, Pavel, dear Pavel, you will forgive me for calling you by the first name? But why do I say 'you'? We should say 'thou' to each other; we are brothers, Pavel, aren't we?"

"Yes, we are brothers."

"Pavel, I am absolutely sure of tomorrow. Not only that, I am sure that I will be the one to kill Plehve. You know, there is no life for us without the revolution. And the revolution, after all, is terror."

Looking at the pale face, the rumpled blond beard, the inflamed eyes, and blood-stained handkerchief, Savinkov thought: "What if he doesn't kill him, what if he can't go through with it and betrays the whole organization?"

"Pavel, have you ever loved? I keep shifting from 'you' to 'thou,' forgive me, but it's all the same. Have you ever loved?"

"I? No, I have not."

"A pity. Ah, if you had! I am certain that tomorrow all of you will stay alive. Plehve is mine. I will kill him. And you must live and carry on the terror. My only regret is that I will not see Ivan Nikolaevich again. You know, many people dislike him for his rudeness, they say he is too sharp, they say he does not treat others with comradely warmth. But these are such trifles. I love Ivan as a brother; he is our soul. I am so sad I shall not see him. . . ."

"Nothing is known, Alexey. Perhaps you will not see him, perhaps I shan't, or perhaps neither of us. I also love Ivan. The revolution needs him more than it needs us."

"How I regret that Dora is not with us," Pokotilov said. "She is a remarkable person and a revolutionary. I want you to know—her name is Dora Brilliant; she is a member of our party. She has long wanted to work in the terror, but could not gain acceptance. I shall not see her any more, but it is such happiness, Pavel! Do you understand that this is a great happiness?"

"If you say so, I believe you. But it is probably something very metaphysical."

"No, not metaphysical," Pokotilov answered earnestly. "We cannot live in any other way, and we give ourselves to our idea. This is our life; can't you understand it?"

Savinkov smiled. "Can Pokotilov be ill?"

26

That night Plehve suffered from insomnia. He got up, shuffled across the room in his blue slippers decorated with large pompons, turned on the light. He took some drops, muttering to himself. He felt a heavy pressure in his chest, around the heart. It tormented him and did not let him sleep. He did not fall asleep till dawn.

27

Pokotilov sat half-dressed in his hotel room, writing a farewell letter to Dora. Kalyaev walked the streets till morning. Borishansky woke himself by screaming in his sleep; he had a frightening nightmare, but when he jumped up he could not remember what it was.

Yegor Sazonov slept peacefully in the cabmen's quarters at the inn. Yosif Matseevsky also slept. Boris Savinkov forced himself to sleep with a bromide.

Maximilian Schweitzer was awake. Three more bombs were needed. They had to be ready by ten in the morning. With his sleeves rolled up, Schweitzer rapidly mixed the gelatin on the table, humming to himself:

"Durch die Gassen
Zu den Massen."

Near the wall lay iron boxes, retorts, flasks, soldering tubes. Schweitzer mixed, soldered, sawed. He was strong, agile, with a stubborn line on his forehead. He was a little excited, like a scientist on the eve of a great discovery.

With knitted eyebrows, he walked back and forth between the small and the large table. His steps were muffled in the locker room; he wore slippers.

At six in the morning the bombs were ready. Schweitzer wiped his face with a damp towel and lay down, putting the alarm clock on a chair beside the bed. At nine the clock rang quietly. Schweitzer

shaved and washed. On the floor stood a suitcase which could blow up half of Petersburg. Through the window he caught sight of an approaching cab. He put on his coat, picked up the suitcase, and went out.

Sazonov smiled down from the driver's seat. Placing the suitcase on his knees, Schweitzer said, "Let's go."

28

Plehve rose in a gloomy mood after the sleepless night.

The valet shaved him with an excellent Rogers razor and brought in his well-brushed clothes. Putting on his uniform, ribbon, and star, Plehve glanced into the mirror and asked curtly:

"Is the carriage ready?"

29

Schweitzer and Pokotilov rode in a carriage down the Sixteenth Line of Vasilievsky Island. Pokotilov was calm. He did not speak. At the Tuchkov Bridge they saw Borishansky. Pokotilov alighted, carrying two bombs. Borishansky climbed in. His eye twitched with a nervous tic. The cabman Sazonov pulled up near the shabby house of the First Guild merchant Syromyatnikov. Schweitzer and Borishansky got out. Schweitzer handed Sazonov a package containing a bomb. Slipping it under the carriage apron, Sazonov went on at a slow trot.

At eleven o'clock everyone was at his post. Savinkov walked down the Fontanka with the air of a Petersburg dandy. Everything was in order, and all were calm. He went to see Kalyaev on Tsepnoy Bridge.

"Yanek, do you believe?" Savinkov asked, approaching him.

"There was no bomb for me. Why Borishansky, and not I?"

"He would have said the same thing. Don't worry. Three throwers are enough."

With a strange smile, Savinkov went on toward the Summer Gardens. He was gripped by an aching excitement, like a hunter after the chase has begun and the quarry is heard crashing through the underbrush. "This makes life worth living," he muttered. In the Summer Gardens he sat down on a bench, took out his cigarette case, and lighted up with pleasure.

30

The Minister's coachman, Nikifor Filippov, came out of the coach house in his blue coat with a padded seat and dazzling white gloves. He examined the carriage, opening the door to make sure it was properly cleaned. The grooms held the trotters by the bridles.

Swinging up onto the box from the wheel, Filippov seized the reins with his strong hands and pulled up the restive black horses. At a slow, handsome trot he drove out of the gate into the street, the trotters proudly arching their gleaming black-swan necks.

The carriage stopped to wait for the Minister. The cabs with the detectives drew up behind it. The cyclists came out. Everyone awaited the appearance of the elderly man in the three-cornered hat. At a quarter of twelve, Plehve rapidly walked to the open doors of his carriage. The cyclists mounted their bicycles. The trotters started. Plehve was glum. The carriage sped toward the terrorists posted by Savinkov. Plehve did not know that Borishansky was waiting at Rybny and Pokotilov at the Stieglitz house. He was thinking about the opening phrases of his report to the Emperor on "Some Significant Facts Concerning the Police Department." The carriage flew, and soon the Winter Palace rose before it in all its magnificence. Exactly at twelve the trotters stopped before the palace entrance.

31

To save the Fighting Organization, the terrorists left Petersburg in different directions. Borishansky had unmistakably been spotted by detectives near the department building. If he had not escaped with his bombs through connecting backyards, the Fighting Organization would have been destroyed.

Schweitzer went to Libava with dynamite in his yellow suitcase. Borishansky went to Berdichev. Kalyaev, to Kiev. Pokotilov, to Dvinsk. Savinkov went to Dvinsk by another route.

CHAPTER FIVE

1

Dressed in a black silk dress, Dora Brilliant sat in an armchair in a room at Hotel de France. Savinkov had gone to see an apartment on Zhukovskaya Street, advertised in *The New Times*. Dora's entire figure expressed a grief and dejection almost morbidly intense. There was suffering in the dark, warm eyes, in the pale, inert hands.

The expensive dress lent this woman a strange air. She looked like a wounded bird, ready to offer resistance with the last remnants of its strength.

Dora walked slowly from one end of the room to the other, her long train dragging awkwardly behind her over the carpet, as if ready to break off. She went to the window, sat down, got up again. She loathed this life in the hotel and the role of mistress to the Englishman, McCulloch.

Dora had never been in Petersburg before. It was in this city that Pokotilov, the man she loved, had been torn to pieces in a frightful explosion while preparing a bomb. Now, as she looked out through the window at the unfamiliar streets, she knew why she was here. And when she thought about it, it was easy for her both to kill and to die.

McCulloch came in, noisily flinging open the door. He wore a fashionable suit and light brown British shoes. Between his teeth he held a pipe, from which he seemed inseparable.

"Well, how was it?"

"A real find, Dora Vladimirovna, a treasure! The landlady is German, a procuress, and does not live in the house. The apartment is entirely separate; we could not wish for anything better. We shall move tomorrow. I'll go to Obvodny today to get Ivanovskaya. And then, my dear, we shall begin a marvelous life together!" Savinkov approached Dora.

She drew away.

"I cannot wait to move," she said quietly. "I am sick of this hideous hotel."

"Dora Vladimirovna, you seem unhappy today. What has happened?"

"Is it necessary to be gay in our work?"

"God, how difficult you are! I assure you, the work will go splendidly. And even if you are not gay, you should at any rate be in good spirits. Ivan will be delighted with the apartment! But I don't know what to do about the car. Do you like cars, Dora?"

"You know, sometimes it seems to me you enter into your role so seriously that you begin to think I am actually your mistress."

"Now stop it, Dora. You go about with millennia of Jewish sorrow within you. It is beautiful, but tiresome. And so, tomorrow at four we move. And now let's go to dinner."

"But can't they serve us here?"

"My dear," Savinkov said severely. "As I've told you, you may have to face much more unpleasant situations in the role you're playing. Now let us go to the general dining room. We want everyone to see how rich McCulloch is and what a beautiful mistress he has."

Without waiting for him to finish, Dora rose and took an expensive crimson cloak out of the closet.

"Dora Vladimirovna, my dear, the cloak is magnificent, but you were seen too often in the black dress. The gray one would, perhaps, be more appropriate for dinner. Besides, black silk is the classic uniform of terrorist women. Please."

Dora obediently went behind the partition to change to the steel gray dress with silver trim.

2

The apartment of Amalia Richardovna Bergenshalter at 31 Zhukovskaya Street had been vacated because of the Russo-Japanese War. It had formerly been occupied by General Brailovsky, Lieutenant Nedzelsky, and Cavalry Captain Runin. It was a bachelors' apartment which had seen a good deal in its day. But the regiment had been transferred to the Far East. And now the apartment was taken by terrorists.

The new tenants arrived in a long, luxuriously upholstered car. It was June. McCulloch wore a gray English suit with thousands of

varicolored specks on it, a wide tie with a pearl stickpin, and a wide-brimmed hat of a foreign style unknown in Russia. His manner was arrogant. He had long fingers, sharp shoulders thrusting forward, and a slightly hollow chest. The eyes were unusual, slanting. But who knows what an Englishman's eyes may be like? McCulloch was a slender, faultlessly dressed gentleman.

Arm in arm with his mistress, he entered the apartment. Her crimson cloak was too vivid for a society woman. But she was a former café singer. She wore a hat with a white ostrich feather, and tiny golden shoes.

"How do you like it, Dora?" asked Savinkov, escorting her through the rooms. "Not bad?"

"It looks comfortable. And when is Praskovya Semenovna Ivanovskaya coming?"

"Tomorrow at nine."

In the yellow drawing room Savinkov smiled, lighting his pipe.

"You fret, Dora, because you have to wear all these luxurious clothes. But how do you think I feel smoking this pipe when there is nothing in the world I like better than a Russian cigarette?"

"When will Sazonov come?"

"Tomorrow evening. But our advertisement may draw a horde of servants in search of work. We shall have to be careful."

Savinkov paced the yellow drawing room, puffing at his pipe.

"Tell me, Pavel Ivanovich, is it true that you have a wife and children in Petersburg, and that you do not see them?"

"It is. How do you know?"

"Alexey told me. You never see them?"

"No."

Dora was silent.

"It must be difficult for your wife. Is she a revolutionary?"

"No. Simply a good woman," laughed Savinkov.

"Then it is doubly difficult. After all, we do not live like everyone else; we have no personal life."

Savinkov had never known a woman like Dora, with her extraordinary mixture of melancholy and determination. She was fanatical in her devotion to the revolution. He knew that the fragile, delicately beautiful Dora would undertake any terrorist act.

"I look at you, Dora Vladimirovna, and you are like a wounded bird who longs to avenge herself on someone. You are right; you are not one of those who love life. Let's dream, for example, that the

revolution is victorious and the revolutionaries come into power. I cannot imagine how you will live. I can see Leopold in such a future—he is an excellent chemist. I see Ivan as the director of a trust. I see Yegor, Matseevsky, Borishansky, everyone, but not you."

Dora listened, smiling faintly under her brows with her luminous, sad eyes.

"You may be right. I do not know what I should do in a peaceful age. Most of my life I dreamed of scientific work, but that did not come to pass. And now I neither want it nor could do it any longer. Recently I went to visit some friends in the country: woods, fields, violets—beautiful, all of it. But, you know, I could not endure it. I felt that I must escape. The air, the flowers were too enervating; they would make one incapable of action. And so I left."

"Do you come of a rich family?"

"Quite well-to-do. My father was a merchant; we lived well. But my parents were fanatically orthodox Jews. This interfered with my education. I left home and tried to make my own way. Then I was caught up in the revolutionary movement, and this is for life. . . .

"It is strange," she continued, "how deeply a meeting can affect one. Two people, Breshkovskaya and Gershuni, made an indelible impression upon me. After I met them I joined the movement and the revolution became my whole life. Before that I had never imagined that there were people so completely dedicated to an idea. Have you met Gershuni?"

"No, but I know Breshkovskaya."

"Ah, Gershuni is an extraordinary man! It is impossible not to believe in him, not to follow him."

"A non-revolutionary could not be convinced to join the revolution," said Savinkov. "We are a special breed of rootless people who have nothing else to live by. This breed is found mainly in Russia—the climate, so to speak, is right."

Savinkov glanced at his watch.

"And now," he said, getting up, "it's time for my meeting with the Poet."

"I am glad Praskovya Semenovna will come," said Dora. "Isn't she a veteran of the People's Will party?"

"Yes, yes, she will be like a nice old aunt to us," smiled Savinkov, putting on his coat.

3

Dora became very fond of the old, stern Praskovya Semenovna who puttered busily over the steaming pots and pans in the kitchen. She spent much of her free time with her.

Screwing up her eyes and averting her face from the flying drops of fat, Praskovya Semenovna rapidly turned the potatoes in the frying pan with a knife.

"You can't imagine, Praskovya Semenovna, how I detest playing this idle lady, buying all those diamond pins and knickknacks. Such a waste of money," said Dora. "And now I am worried about Sazonov. What can it mean? We've had a stream of applicants since the advertisement, but no sign of him. What could have happened?"

Ivanovskaya flattened the veal chops with a china mallet, and they leaped under its blows as if they were alive. She wore a kerchief on her head, like a true cook. Her face was flushed from the stove. Without interrupting her work, she shrugged her shoulders.

"I cannot understand it. Yesterday I barely managed to get rid of one of them. He kept insisting, promising me a 'commission.' I told him we had already hired a valet, but he would not leave. 'Get me the job,' he says, 'I worked for Prince Meshchersky, editor of *The Citizen.*' Well, I thought to myself, just the man for us." Ivanovskaya burst into peals of loud laughter, as kindly people often do.

There were steps on the stairway. Someone was coming up.

"It may be the doorman or Dunyasha; you had better leave."

Dora went out. Ivanovskaya slipped the chain on the door. The visits of the neighbors' maid, Dunyasha, were becoming too frequent and her conversation monotonous. But those were a man's steps. Someone in heavy boots. The steps halted at the door. Ivanovskaya's hand, which had been sifting bread crumbs over the chops, stopped in mid-air. There was a hesitant shuffling behind the door. Then someone knocked.

Ivanovskaya opened the door a crack and peered out over the chain. Gray, laughing eyes looked at her from a jolly, ruddy face. The slightly bent nose completed the description. Ivanovskaya quickly slipped off the chain.

Tall, with a vividly Russian, merry face, full of suppressed laughter, Sazonov stepped across the threshold. But, seeing his own ex-

pression mirrored in Ivanovskaya's eyes, he burst out laughing instead of offering the password.

"In the harbor at last! The devil take it, I'm so glad," he said after a while.

Mobile, exuding vibrant health, with a frank, open face and wide gestures, Sazonov laughed, watching Ivanovskaya at work.

"Well, how are you getting on here, comfortably?" asked Sazonov, his eyes gleaming with joy and merriment.

"Quite. But why did you take so long? We've had a veritable siege of valets here without you."

Sazonov smiled, flashing his white teeth. And Ivanovskaya felt an immediate sense of kinship and affection for this typically Russian, spirited young man. It was as if Zhelyabov and Mikhailov, the old heroes of the People's Will, had risen from their graves. There was rare strength and serenity in him. No morbid analyzing, no doubts, no wavering. A will, clearly aware of its purpose. Such was the valet Afanasy, and the old aunt Ivanovskaya felt warmly at home with him in her kitchen.

4

Life in Apartment Number 1 proceeded at full swing. Early in the morning the first to go out was the cook, Fedosya Yegorovna, with a basket on her arm. She made the rounds of food stores, the market, the butcher shop. Knowing little about cooking, she was constantly afraid of making a mistake. She knew nothing, for example, about the different cuts of meat. Therefore, she did not hurry, loitering with the crowd of cooks, gossiping and quietly trying to learn. She became especially friendly with the cook of Countess Nesselrode, who had to prepare meals for ten persons and always bought the finest delicacies.

"Good morning, Yegorovna, what are you getting today?"

"I've no idea, Matveevna, they are so fussy. The other day I got some brisket; they didn't like it. The mistress threw a screaming fit; she's a regular spitfire."

"Take some sirloin or rump. They've got very good rump here. I always get fresh, good meat. You buy here every day?"

"Yes, I do."

"Five rubles' worth or so? You tell them you buy here all the time. They'll give you a percentage, off the hundred."

On the back-stairs landing, Afanasy talked with the janitor, Silych, as he went about his chores. Dressed in a dark blue Russian blouse and trousers smartly out over his boots, his chestnut hair waving over his forehead, he nimbly brushed the master's suits and ironed Mr. McCulloch's trousers. Hanging them up on a nail, he proceeded to clean the lady's garments, carefully brushing off every speck of dust.

5

McCulloch woke at half past eight. In a bright yellow robe and camel's-hair slippers, he went to the bathroom, washed, did his morning calisthenics, and shaved. This took forty minutes. Then he came out to take his coffee.

The coffee pot steamed over the spirit burner. At the other end of the table a samovar hissed, its chimney glinting with live coals. Slicing a well-browned loaf, Savinkov planned the day's rendezvous.

Sazonov entered with the neatly brushed clothes.

"How are things, 'Master'?"

"Moving. Shall we have some coffee?"

"No, I'll take mine in the kitchen, with the old lady. By God, I feel like a real valet," laughed Sazonov. "Conspiracy is effective when it becomes part of your flesh and blood."

Sipping the brown, richly creamed coffee, Savinkov said:

"And I feel like an Englishman. I've even become interested in the debates in the British Parliament," he laughed.

"And how is the Poet? Have you seen him?"

"I'm meeting him today. He is doing a fine job; he gives me the most valuable information. It's a rare day when he doesn't see the carriage. The carriage has become his obsession: he knows exactly its height and width, its footboards, spokes, coachmen, reins, lamps, driver's seat, axles, and windows. He also knows by sight all of the Minister's guards and detectives. It's phenomenal! The cab drivers couldn't have given us all these facts. Ah, and here is our lady," Savinkov turned.

Dora entered the room, in a Japanese kimono.

"Look, Yegor, what a kimono I've bought for her? Not bad? Some general brought it back from the war; I found it by chance. Beautiful, isn't it? And look at those magnificent dragons!"

"You generally have elegant tastes, Master," said Dora.

"Pavel Ivanovich, what are your plans; when do we begin?" asked Sazonov.

"As soon as Ivan Nikolaevich arrives. I've written him. He should be here within a week."

"God grant it," said Sazonov. "Here are your suits. I've cleaned them better than a real valet." He pointed, smiling, at the clothes lying neatly folded on a chair.

"And we go shopping today, Yegor? Don't we?" asked Dora.

6

At ten o'clock Mr. McCulloch walked down the stairs, puffing at his pipe in a businesslike manner. At the sound of the brown shoes, Silych ran out, as always, to open the door. An hour later, the mistress, in a sumptuous cloak and a hat trimmed with a huge white ostrich feather, went out, accompanied by the valet. Like every other valet, he wore a blue outfit and a blue cap with a shiny peak and followed his mistress at a respectful distance.

In a shop on Nevsky the lady selected two gowns. The valet carried the purchases, walking behind his mistress with the white square boxes and round parcels in his arms. At twelve she turned from the embankment onto Fontanka. Stepping lightly with her tiny feet, she walked in the direction of the Police Department. The valet followed at a distance with the parcels.

7

Savinkov's rendezvous with Kalyaev was at Tuchkov Buyan. As usual, Savinkov went part of the way in a cab, then continued on foot. Making sure he was not followed, he walked to the designated place. The hour was early, and the streets were still deserted. He saw Kalyaev from afar. Along the pavement moved the figure of a peddler with a tray on a leather strap. He leaned back slightly to offset the weight of the tray. A white apron covered his torn, dirty, badly patched jacket. He wore a shabby cap and down-at-the-heels orange boots. The face was thin, unshaven. Only the hint of suffering in the eyes distinguished Kalyaev from a real peddler. But who would stop to look into his eyes?

When they met at the dismal Tuchkov Buyan, Savinkov saw that

Kalyaev was inimitable. The most experienced police spy would not suspect him. Kalyaev's face lit up with a joyous smile. Savinkov had known and loved that smile since childhood.

Spread fanlike on his tray were brightly colored cigarette boxes, mirrors, purses, postcards—all the goods a clever peddler would carry.

"'Neva,' 'Krasotka,' Messina oranges!" Kalyaev shouted gaily, professionally.

Savinkov beckoned him. The peddler raised his knee under the tray, and the customer examined his wares.

"Well, Yanek, dear, how are things going?" Savinkov asked, looking at Kalyaev's pale, childlike face.

"Couldn't be better. I have important news—he takes another route now. Make a note of this; it's very important: the Tsar has moved to Peterhof; now Plehve drives to the Baltic Station instead of Tsarskoselsky. Tell the cabmen. Yesterday Dulebov wasted his time standing on Zagorodny Street. The carriage is the same, black, lacquered, with white spokes, large curved footboards, and narrow mudguards. The coachman has a red beard, and there is always a footman beside him." Kalyaev glanced around to make sure the street was empty. "The carriage has two large lamps, the reins are white, the windows brightly polished. Do you know, I have even caught sight of him once. He seemed frightened and old behind the glass."

"Where was it?"

"Near the station. But the police chased me. If I had bombs instead of oranges, I could have killed him six times; I counted."

"Wait, wait a bit. Everything is going so well, he is ours anyway. There's no one on our trail?"

"Not a sign," Kalyaev shook his head. "But when, Boris? Why waste time? We must bring it to an end. All of Russia is waiting. This is the moment, with all the defeats at the front. Is Ivan Nikolaevich here?"

"He's coming soon."

"Make him hurry, Boris. This can't go on; we may lose the chance."

Savinkov smiled.

"Dear Yanek, a week more or less makes no difference. The beast is cornered and surrounded; there's no escape."

"Someone is coming; we must separate," said Kalyaev.

Three men, in hats and wide coats, were approaching from the bridge.

"Watch the Baltic now. We meet the day after tomorrow at eleven, near the Yusupov Park."

"Good. Take some oranges." Kalyaev nimbly wrapped two dozen, handed them to the customer with a quick professional movement, threw the money into a leather pouch, and walked toward the men, calling out:

"Gentlemen, buy a pack of 'Troyechka,' 'Krasotka!' Take a purse and get rich! A patriotic postcard? A muzhik flogging a Jap!"

Savinkov glanced back. The ancient Bironovsky Palace, one of his favorite buildings, rose into the sky like a dark cloud. Kalyaev stood near it, resting the tray on his knee, selling cigarettes.

8

Returning from his "inspection tour," Savinkov entered the apartment and took off his coat.

"I've brought you oranges from the Poet," he said, opening the parcel and distributing the fruit.

"The Poet could have killed him six times, Matseevsky four times, Dulebov also," he said. "This means we must not delay any longer. The observation is complete. We must finish. But it can't be done without Ivan. I sent a telegram. He wants us to let him in the back way and make sure that no one sees him coming. He will stay here without going out until the final day. But how wonderful the Poet is! What a treasure! His description of Plehve's carriage is a poem. And his disguise! He shouts like an honest-to-goodness peddler. No detective could spot him. Yanek, Yanek! But remember, Yegor, how strange you thought him at first?" Savinkov turned to Sazonov.

"Yes, in the beginning," muttered Sazonov, embarrassed. "I could not understand him. I only got to know him in Kiev. Of course the Poet is a priceless comrade, a wonderful man and revolutionary."

Recalling the past and smiling faintly, Sazonov said:

"He seemed peculiar at our first meeting, when he suddenly began to talk about poetry, about Bryusov. I stared at him, but he ran on and on. I asked him what poetry had to do with the revolution, but that sent him off into a new tirade," Sazonov laughed infectiously. "He began to shout at me. They are making the same

revolution in art, he cried, as we are in society. Well, I was surprised, of course. And I still think it's all wrong."

"There is great purity in the Poet," said Ivanovskaya. "The members of the People's Will were like that. Many of them were."

"And many weren't," said Savinkov.

"Some weren't. I speak about the best, about faith, and passion, about idealism, for which people gave their lives." Ivanovskaya's words were addressed to Savinkov.

"Yes," he said, "Kalyaev is a man of heroic stamp. Such people are rare and precious, but the masses do not understand them. They are tragic natures, more sacrificial victims than men of action."

"I don't understand you, Pavel Ivanovich," said Dora. "You say they are heroes, but at the same time incomprehensible to the masses. How can they be incomprehensible if they give up their lives for the people?"

"You reason like a woman, Dora. Remember Alexey Tolstoy's phrase, 'There is a people, and a people?' There is the people you read about in books, the people in which our schoolboys and schoolgirls believe, and which is so idealized among us. And there is also the real, the living people, deaf and stupid as a wall. Even in case of victory, it will never appreciate the self-immolation of the individuals who had given their lives for the revolution."

Savinkov spoke confidently, carelessly. Sazonov knit his brows—a sign of anger.

"Take the tragedy of the People's Will," continued Savinkov. "Its members sacrificed themselves for the revolution; they burned their lives away for the people like torches of freedom in the darkness of absolutism. And who betrayed them? Not a gendarme, not a general, but a real worker, one of those with whom they had come out into the fight. No, it is time to put behind us the days of gentlemen's penitence and pretty postcard peasants. It is stupid to make a holy icon of the people."

Sazonov jumped up in agitation.

"You may be speaking the truth, Master, but not the whole truth!" he shouted. "And if it is not the whole truth, then it is a falsehood! You see baseness and betrayal, but you refuse to see nobility and devotion. In those lowly masses of which you speak so slightingly, we have seen magnificent acts of selfless exaltation, of heroism and sacrifice. Think of all our anonymous heroes, all the nameless graves scattered throughout the country! Our history

abounds in martyrs who laid down their lives for their neighbor! Yes! And that is the truth, Master! It isn't the people that we should condemn because of individual scoundrels; it is ourselves that we should judge and watch! No, you have spoken ill now, and you are wrong in pointing to such examples from the history of the People's Will. One of its provocateurs may have been a worker, but wasn't Degayev a 'gentleman'? There may have been informers among the workers, but should we judge the people as a whole by them?" Sazonov was aflame. Ivanovskaya looked at him lovingly. "No, in our attitude toward the people we should, indeed, take a lesson from the People's Will! Its members disregarded individual failures or betrayals, fighting and suffering for the entire people, for its freedom, for socialism. And it is precisely this faith in the revolution that we must revive. Otherwise, what meaning would there be in working for it? This is the first time, Pavel Ivanovich, that I hear such talk from you about the people. And I fail to understand it. If you do not believe in the people, why should you, a gentleman, an intellectual, have joined the revolution? And the terror, at that! Prepared to kill and to die! In the name of what? No, no, you malign yourself for the sake of a pretty, decadent pose; you don't speak truly. . . ." Sazonov broke off excitedly. He was magnificent in his indignation.

Savinkov sat calmly, with his legs crossed. At times a faint smile played on his face, narrowing the eyes.

"You are saying what you think, Yegor. And I say what I think. If I wished to lie, I would speak as you do, agreeing with you. But sincerity is important above all else. We must be transparent to each other. And so, I shall repeat what I have said before. You are a populist idealist, Yegor. You and the Poet are alike—both of you look at many things like children. It is written, 'out of the mouths of babes'; I would paraphrase it, 'out of the eyes of babes.' But I do not have your love and blind faith in the people. I see that absolutism is rotten and vile. And I—you must understand me," stressed Savinkov, "*I* fight it. This is my game. Why do I fight it? For the revolution? Yes. So that a new generation may come. But can I be certain that those who come will be pure as snow and bring about the Kingdom of God? In this I don't believe, Yegor. I have no faith. I know that the present social order has outlived its day, and that the new one will not be born without anguish, struggle, and blood.

And I want to participate in this struggle. But not for Ivan, Pyotr, and Pelageya. For myself! This is where we differ. You are offering yourself as a sacrifice for the sake of the metaphysical Pyotrs and Pelageyas. I sacrifice myself—for my own sake. Because I want it. And here it is my will that is decisive. I may fight alone in the end, I don't know. But I act only while I myself want to do so, while it gives me joy to go out and strike at those whom I strike down!"

"I don't understand anything at all! Do you mean that you regard yourself, your own person as the cornerstone of all? Do I interpret you correctly?"

"Yes." And a haughty smile appeared on Savinkov's face, exposing his fine teeth.

"But, then, permit me to inquire, where in this precious little Nietzschean position is there room for the struggle for socialism?"

"There is. I fight for socialism because *I* want socialism."

"But if you don't believe in the people, in the masses, in the collectivity of mankind, if you believe only in yourself, what is to prevent you one fine morning from turning around and deciding to fight against the people?"

"This can never happen, Yegor," Savinkov answered sharply. "If I do not get down on my knees before the people as you do, it doesn't mean that I can become its enemy. I can never be an enemy of the people."

The doorbell rang loudly in the hallway. They all looked at each other, regretting the argument. What was the good of quarreling when there was work to do?

"Don't go, Yegor, you look too upset," said Praskovya Semenovna.

"Who can it be?" said Savinkov. "Praskovya Semenovna, I am going to the study."

Slipping a wide gray shawl over her shoulders, Ivanovskaya was instantly transformed into a cook. In the hallway she opened the door an inch and asked over the chain, "Who is it?"

"A telegram."

The messenger handed her a telegram from Odessa. She tipped him and he left.

"Shipment of bicycles made by Dux Company arrives Friday evening at nine. Neumayer," Savinkov read aloud.

"Comrades," he exclaimed, "the day after tomorrow, at nine, Ivan Nikolaevich will be here!"

9

Azef had done a great deal of traveling while the small band of terrorists was establishing with mathematical precision the route and schedule of the Minister's trips to the Tsar. He had gone to Vladikavkaz to visit his sick mother; there, he invited Professor Vyazminsky to treat her and left her the necessary money. He had spent several days resting with his wife and children in Lausanne. He had gone to Berne and Geneva on party business.

Savinkov's telegram announcing that everything was ready found him in Kiev. Azef took a zigzag route across Russia in order to arrive in Petersburg unnoticed. He went to Samara, to Ufa, then turned south to Odessa. There, as he heavily paced the rug one evening in his room at the London Hotel, he suddenly found it difficult to breathe. He felt himself perspiring, either from the heat or from excitement. He sat down at the table, flexed his arms, half-closed his eyes, and began to think. Then he picked up a pen:

"Dear Leonid Alexandrovich!

"During the six days I have spent here, I have gathered a good deal of interesting information. A certain lady will leave Odessa within a day or two with the aim of making an attempt upon the life of the Governor General of Irkutsk, Kutaisov. This lady is of medium height, Jewish by birth, but Orthodox Christian by religion. She was sent here from abroad to carry out the attempt. For purposes of identification, I can give you the following details: she is a former Social Democrat, was exiled to Vologda, and escaped either late last year or early this year. She is called Maria (her real name); her second name is Russian, something like Shchepotieva, but I am not quite certain. She is married to a Christian, and her husband is in exile in Siberia. Also in Odessa are Naum Leontievich Gekker and Vasily Ivanovich Sukhomlin. They play a leading role in the party, apparently in directing the work of the Fighting Organization. From them I have finally learned about the incident at the Northern Hotel. The explosion was indeed connected with the Fighting Organization. They have also told me that the revolutionary killed in the blast was Alexey Pokotilov, brother of the wife of Vice-Minister Romanov. I have further learned from them that the plan for the attempt against Plehve is being postponed for

lack of bombs, which were destroyed with Pokotilov. The new preparations will take a long time, since, as they put it, Plehve 'cannot be taken with a revolver.' However, they feel that a terrorist act is needed to re-establish the prestige of the Fighting Organization, and they chose Kutaisov. I am confident that this information will make it possible for you to prevent the attempt and apprehend the lady in question. She is to live in Irkutsk under a false passport. I believe that her name will be Natalya, but I am not certain of it. I most earnestly beg you not to disclose her presence in Odessa, since she has maintained the greatest precautions, and I have seen her. She intends to visit Kutaisov wearing deep mourning. For the time being, this is all.

"Your Ivan"

Azef sat for a while, thinking. Then he stretched himself with his whole body and yawned loudly, opening his huge fleshy mouth. With his enormous bulk he looked like a hippopotamus. After a minute or so he scribbled a hasty message on a telegraph blank:

"Shipment of bicycles made by Dux Company arrives Friday evening at nine.

"Neumayer"

Azef rang, asked for the bill, and told the servant to call a cab. While the porter carried out his luggage, Azef distributed tips to the lined-up servants—the doorman, lackeys, chambermaids, and messenger boys. He was generous, handing out rubles and half rubles. Grunting heavily, he went on, paying no attention to their low bows.

10

At eight, when twilight was falling in Petersburg, the valet, Afanasy, poured Cahors wine into a cheap glass for Silych in the cubbyhole under the stairs. The cook, Yegorovna, sat at the kitchen window, watching for the arrival of the chief of the Fighting Organization, who had been carefully described to her.

Dora and Savinkov waited in the drawing room. Savinkov leaned back in the armchair and recited one of his poems to Dora, gesticulating slightly with his right hand to emphasize its rhythm:

"When they will bring my coffin,
The dog will bark,
My wife will kiss my forehead,
I'll be buried in the dark.
The heavy clods will fall,
The yellow clay rise high,
And gone is the gentleman
Who called himself I...."

Through the window, Praskovya Semenovna caught a glimpse of the heavy figure rapidly crossing the yard. Her heart skipped. "It's he!" She half-opened the door and listened. Then she took a lamp and went out to the landing. Someone was coming up the stairs.

In the dim light she saw a huge, extremely stout man in a bowler hat and a black coat. Azef ascended, panting heavily, obviously agitated. His thick lips hung half-open. The eyes glanced sideways at Ivanovskaya, as if feeling her out.

"Dmitry is alive and doing well," he muttered.

"Come in, please, we have been expecting you for a long time."

Azef slipped past her through the door, and the door closed. Savinkov hurried into the kitchen.

"At last!" he cried. They embraced and exchanged hearty kisses.

11

Afanasy ran breathlessly up the stairs to see whether the guest had arrived. Ivanovskaya carried a samovar into the dining room. Dora set out the cups and filled a bowl with jam. From the bathroom they heard the voices of Savinkov and Azef. Azef was washing up.

"He's here?" Sazonov asked as he ran in.

"He's here," Dora nodded happily.

"Now they'll get what's coming!" the gay, pink-cheeked Sazonov said, rubbing his hands. Praskovya Semenovna looked lovingly at him. "What a darling!"

Azef and Savinkov came, talking, along the hallway from the bathroom. And suddenly the apartment resounded with Azef's nasal, rolling laughter. Praskovya Semenovna started; the laughter was oddly unpleasant.

"Hel-lo, Yegor," Azef smiled affectionately, embracing and kissing Sazonov.

"Well, and now you must feed the guest. First let us have tea, Boris; then we shall talk business." Azef rubbed his hands. Everyone rejoiced. They knew that now Plehve would be killed.

"What kind of a car did you buy?" Ivan Nikolaevich asked, sipping his tea.

"I didn't buy a car."

The smile left the heavy, thick-lipped face. Azef scowled.

"What do you mean, you didn't?"

"I didn't."

"What is the meaning of this?!" Azef raised his voice. There was a strained silence in the room. "I told you to buy a car!"

"But I didn't. It became obvious, once we were here, that it wasn't needed."

Setting aside his glass and dish of jam, Azef muttered with a frown:

"Tell me about the work."

He leaned his whole weight on the table and listened with lowered head, occasionally casting a sidelong, probing glance at the faces around him.

Savinkov reported on the observation work of the cabmen and peddlers, the number of times they had seen the carriage, and its route.

"Was anyone watched?" mumbled Azef, without raising his head.

"No. And the comrades urge an immediate conclusion. They feel that success is assured."

Azef was silent.

"I shall stay awhile," he drawled reluctantly, "and see for myself if everything is as you say. And what about the apartment? It isn't watched?"

"It's absolutely clear. Praskovya Semenovna knows all the cooks. And Yegor and the janitor are bosom pals; they drink Cahors together."

Azef glanced at Sazonov with a fond smile, as if to say, "I know you, of course." And, paying no further attention to Savinkov, he turned to Sazonov. It was strange to see this ugly man, so rude to everyone else, speak almost obsequiously to Sazonov.

12

It was the oppressive season of white nights in Petersburg. The Minister suffered from insomnia. He ordered his valet to draw the blinds tightly to shut out the tormenting light.

13

Azef was also troubled by the white Petersburg nights. He slept restlessly.

Dora stood frightened and disheveled in her nightgown at Savinkov's door. "What is it, Boris? Do you hear? Something has happened; someone is screaming!"

Savinkov jumped up and ran into the corridor. From Azef's room came muffled groans, broken by screams. Savinkov opened the door. Gnashing his teeth and tossing, Azef groaned loudly. Then suddenly, hearing the movement outside, he sat up in his bed.

"Who is it?" he cried.

"It is I, Ivan. You've frightened Dora; you were screaming."

"What happened?" Azef asked, bewildered. "I was screaming? What nonsense!"

"You were! You were just sending someone to the devil. But don't worry, the walls are solid here. Go back to sleep." And, wrapping the dressing gown tightly around himself, Savinkov left the room.

But Azef could no longer trust himself to sleep. Afraid of his own screaming, he lay back with open eyes till morning, when Savinkov came in, wearing his soft camel's-hair dressing gown.

"Get up, Ivan! You certainly frightened Dora; you shouted all night."

Azef sat up in bed, putting on his pink socks.

"Did I really?" he muttered with a forced laugh. "You must be dreaming yourselves, why should I shout?"

"Dora says you scream every night."

Azef stood up on his hairy legs.

"And what do I say?"

Azef bent from the waist, putting on his shoes. The paunch was in the way. He went to the toilet and there decided that Plehve was to be killed next Thursday. As for himself, he would leave the apartment that very day.

14

"So you think it will be better on the way to the Baltic Station?" Azef asked at breakfast.

"Yes."

Azef was glum.

"This evening I shall go to Moscow. Yegor, Kalyaev, and you, Boris, will follow me separately. I shall notify Schweitzer. We'll do it as you wish—in the street, on the way to the Baltic Station."

Sazonov's entire body, his glowing eyes and face, expressed determination and joy.

"On Tuesday we shall meet in Sokolnichy Park in Moscow," said Azef, buttering his roll. "We shall discuss the details there. The apartment must not be abandoned all at once. It must be arranged to appear that you have left Dora and dismissed the valet. Praskovya Semenovna, you and Dora will remain here until you hear from me. Everyone must be out of Petersburg, and the apartment vacated, before the attempt."

Drinking down his tea, Azef rose and, smiling, patted Savinkov on the shoulder. "And so, Master, it's time to finish!"

"The details will be decided in Moscow, Ivan Nikolaevich?" Sazonov asked in a flat, strained voice.

Azef knew what he meant.

"We shall talk about that in Moscow," he smiled. Late in the evening, with his collar turned up and the bowler low over his eyes, Azef slipped out of the apartment.

15

The evening wrapped Sokolnichy Park in twilight. The leaves of the old lime trees rustled in the wind. The park was old; it had seen much joy and grief. But these four men were here for the first time.

Along one of the dark avenues walked Azef. Kalyaev and Savinkov came out from a side path. Sazonov appeared in the dim distance, hurrying to catch up with them.

Far down the avenue, in blue-black dusk, the four walked together—Azef, Sazonov, Kalyaev, and Savinkov.

"Leopold has not arrived," said Azef. "He was delayed over the dynamite. But we can't wait. He will bring it by Thursday."

They sat down on a bench and became invisible. But their eyes, accustomed now to the darkness, seemed to discern even the expressions on their comrades' faces.

"We must decide everything now," Azef gurgled nasally. "I propose this plan: he will be killed in the street, on the way to the Baltic Station. There will be four bomb throwers. They will follow one another to meet the carriage. The first one will let it pass and so cut off retreat. The second will have the honor of making the attack. The third will throw only if the bomb fails to explode or if Plehve is merely wounded. The fourth remains in reserve and will act only if the second and third should fail." Azef spoke in an even guttural tone. "This is my plan. What do you think of it, comrades?"

"The plan is right," said Savinkov. "Plehve cannot escape. But we must also decide the method of throwing."

The pause was broken by Kalyaev's soft voice.

"There is a sure way of preventing failure: to throw oneself under the horses' feet."

"What do you mean?" Azef muttered with irritation.

"Well, here's the carriage. I throw myself with the bomb under the horses. Either the bomb explodes, or the horses are frightened and shy away. In any case, the carriage is stopped and the second man can throw."

"But you are sure to be blown to pieces?"

"Of course."

There was a silence.

"This is not necessary," Azef gurgled again. "If you can reach the horses, you can reach the carriage. Why throw yourself under the horses' feet when you can fling the bomb directly into the carriage? What do you think, Yegor?"

The bench creaked in the dark. Sazonov shifted his pose and spoke like a man whose own train of thought had been interrupted.

"You are right. The man who reaches the carriage can, of course, throw directly into it. The general plan is good. I am certain that Plehve will not get past four throwers. We must return tomorrow. It terrifies me," Sazonov said with agitation, "that after all our work the business may fail over some trifle."

"What trifle?" asked Azef.

"Who can tell? The detectives may stumble on the apartment."

"Are you afraid of provocation?" Azef asked lazily.

"Of accident."

"Provocation is always a possibility. No one can see into all men's hearts," Azef said slowly. "But you are right; we must act. If the plan is accepted, we must select four comrades for the work."

Azef fell silent. This was a sacred moment for Ivan Kalyaev and Yegor Sazonov. They had awaited it. Kalyaev's voice said:

"I want to be a thrower."

"And I," said Sazonov.

Azef was silent.

"I must transmit Dora's request," said Savinkov hesitantly. "And I shall say beforehand that I am opposed to Dora's candidacy, although I have no right to withhold her request. She wishes to go out against Plehve."

"Yegor, what is your opinion of Dora?" Azef asked indifferently.

"What can I have against her? I think, if Dora comes out. . . ."

"I am categorically against permitting Dora to carry a bomb!" Savinkov broke in.

"We know that you are categorically against," Azef laughed quietly. "But tell us your reasons? Dora is a member of the party; why shouldn't she come out with a bomb?"

"I can't help thinking of my mother, she'd never forgive it if she learned that we, a group of men, sent out a woman to make the attempt."

Azef burst out with a quiet, derisive laugh. Savinkov rose from the bench.

"In opposing Dora's candidacy, I propose myself as a thrower."

The silence was broken by Azef's indifferent voice:

"Very well, have it your way. I shall not take Dora. But, as head of the Fighting Organization, I also reject your candidacy."

"Why?" Savinkov breathed quickly.

"That is my business. I feel that you are not the man for this work. Neither I nor you can undertake to throw. Our job is to preserve the continuity of the Fighting Organization. If you insist, then I shall also be one of the four throwers," Azef said firmly.

"But that's absurd!" cried Savinkov.

"Ivan Nikolaevich is right," said Sazonov. "For the sake of the terror, neither he, nor you, Pavel Ivanovich, should be exposed to direct danger. Your lives are needed. This is not the party's final act."

"You have no objections, Boris?" asked Azef.

"This may be true theoretically. But it is hard for me to accept rejection, especially if a woman is chosen for the work."

"Stupid romanticism," Azef muttered, coughing. "A man, a woman . . . we are all party members. But, for your peace of mind, I shall reject Dora."

Azef's voice seemed sleepy and tired.

"I accept the Poet and Yegor. The other throwers will be Borishansky and a comrade whom you don't know. Borishansky vouches for him; it's a friend of his."

The park rustled its invisible leaves. Kalyaev and Sazonov walked ahead. Behind them were Savinkov and Azef. Kalyaev found Sazonov's hand in the darkness and pressed it warmly. Sazonov replied with a firm grip.

16

At the Northern Hotel, where Pokotilov had been blown to pieces, Schweitzer was finishing his preparations. By seven in the morning he had four bombs. He placed them on the chest of drawers, and the mirror reflected the four heavy, round parcels wrapped in paper.

The distribution of the bombs behind the Mariinsky Theatre went off in perfect order. Sazonov, dressed as a railway worker, received the cylindrical one, tied with a pale blue cord. It weighed twelve pounds. The round bomb, wrapped in a large handkerchief, was taken by the pale, slender hands of Kalyaev, dressed as a doorman. Two others, which looked like candy boxes, went to Borishansky and Sikorsky, who hid them under their cloaks.

17

In the little garden of the Pokrov Church on Sadovaya, the carriage of the Minister of Internal Affairs was awaited by Savinkov and the four throwers. Borishansky sat calmly on a bench. On another, Sazonov was carefully explaining to Sikorsky where to sink his bomb in case of need. Kalyaev stood near the church with bared head, crossing himself. A short distance away, Savinkov leaned against the fence, watching him.

18

At 9:30 the Minister's carriage started from the entrance of the Police Department building. As always, the coachman sent off the horses at full speed. Snorting and never losing step, they flew along Fontanka. And in the rush of the morning air each heard the sharp breath of the other.

19

The bomb throwers started down Sadovaya, forty paces apart. Their route was down Anglisky Prospect and Drovyanaya to the Obvodny Canal, then past the Baltic and Warsaw stations onto Izmailovsky Prospect—to meet Plehve's carriage.

At forty-five minutes past nine, the carriage appeared on Izmailovsky Prospect from the direction of Voznesensky. The horses —black, magnificent beasts like Lucifer's steeds—ran leg in leg at a wide, swinging pace. The carriage sped down the middle of the street, as far as possible from either sidewalk. Ahead of it dashed the Chief of Police, in an open coach drawn by a team of dappled horses. The Minister's chief bodyguard, Friedrich Hartmann, pedaled furiously alongside the rear wheel of the carriage, the metal spokes of his bicycle wheels glinting in the sun. Behind him flew a long line of detective-cyclists, followed by secret agents and police spies in speeding cabs.

20

The throwers moved rapidly. Abram Borishansky, stooping a little under his wide cloak, led the way. He was to cut off the retreat. Behind him walked Yegor Sazonov, his head raised high and body tense, prepared to throw himself forward at a moment's notice. He carried the twelve-pound bomb high at his shoulder. Behind Sazonov came Kalyaev, walking lightly, with an occasional smile, holding his bomb like a bundle of wash. In the rear walked the pale, young Sikorsky, hurrying and barely able to keep pace with the rest.

21

The carriage raced to meet the throwers. Each second burst inside the ears and chest with a ringing echo. Sazonov heard the sharp clatter of hoofs on the street. "Will I miss? Will it rush past? What nonsense," he muttered. At that instant he saw the carriage quite near, and over it, across the street, the blue lettering on a sign, "Hotel Warsaw."

"I must not let it pass!" The gleaming black horses came thundering toward him. One second, and they would fly past him like a speeding train, a storm, and disappear with their suite of coaches and cyclists. Suddenly a cab drove out from somewhere in front of the Minister's carriage. A young officer lolled negligently in it. To pass the cab at full speed, the carriage swerved toward the sidewalk. One could see the red-bearded coachman, Filippov, pull at the reins and the horses piling against one another in the mad curve. Without a thought, Sazonov rushed toward the carriage. In a flash he saw the old man behind the window. Plehve recoiled, raising his hands before him. And, in that instant, Plehve and Sazonov knew from each other's desperate eyes that both were dying. The cylindrical bomb crashed through the glass. . . .

22

The horses were knocked down by the blast like toys. They toppled in mid-motion. A column of smoke and dust swept upward in a grayish-yellow vortex in the street, shrouding everything from view. The first thing that passers-by were able to see were the black horses scrambling up amid the smoke and careering off down the Izmailovsky.

The smoke was quickly dispersed. Lying on the pavement, Sazonov was astonished that he was alive. He wanted to get up, but felt he had no body. Raising himself on his elbow, he saw as through a fog red pieces of coat lining and human flesh scattered in the street. He was astonished to see no horses and no carriage. He wanted to shout, "Long live freedom!"

"Long li. . . ." But everything turned black. Friedrich Hartmann jumped on him.

Kalyaev stood on the bridge, convulsively clutching his bomb.

He did not know whether Plehve was still alive. The blood-stained horses galloped past him, snorting and gasping, dragging behind them remnants of shafts and wheels. "The Minister was killed!" cried a stranger, rushing by. And Kalyaev knew that the death sentence had been carried out.

The Chief of Police snatched the Minister's undamaged briefcase from the pavement. The briefcase was locked. Far away, with awkwardly bent legs, lay the mangled corpse of the red-bearded coachman, Filippov.

Policemen and detectives were beating Sazonov. He did not see Savinkov, chalk-pale in his elegant suit, come running to the scene of the explosion. The fat police inspector waved his sword, shouting:

"Where are you rushing, sir? Get back!"

Savinkov saw that the inspector's lower lip was trembling.

Panic seized the street. Two policemen dragged the coachman's huge body. Someone brought back the captured horses, bloody and trembling with every muscle. The Chief of Police waved the Minister's briefcase. Women bandaged the officer of the guards who had barred the way. His uniform was stained with blood. The police inspector wrote down his name and address.

"Tsvetsinsky," the officer said, stifling his groans, "of the Semenovsky Life Guards Regiment. But take me away," he moaned irritably and was carried to a cab.

"He was killed himself. Look, they're dragging him, look!" cried a small dark woman.

"Who's that?"

"Who? Can't you see, the one who threw the bomb! It killed him; what a fright!"

Izmailovsky Prospect swarmed with people running from every direction.

23

With lowered head, Savinkov walked toward the Yusupov Park. He was pale and did not know whether the party's sentence had been carried out. It was impossible to remain in the crowd. It seemed to him that Plehve had been saved and Sazonov killed.

A stranger in a soiled shantung jacket, with a trembling beard, seized him by the arm.

"Please tell me, what happened?"

"I don't know." Savinkov pulled away his hand and quickened his step.

There was no one at the Yusupov Park. "What can it mean? Where are the comrades?" Savinkov felt a pain in his chest, a heavy, pressing emptiness around the heart. He walked along Stolyarny. "I must calm down," he said to himself. He collided with people who were quietly out on shopping errands. Then suddenly he stopped. Across the street he saw a crooked sign: "Kazakov Family Baths." Savinkov crossed. On the door was a handwritten message, tacked to the wood: "Patrons are requested not to bring glass dishes to the baths, to avoid accidents et cetera." Without thinking, Savinkov entered.

It was a shabby establishment. The corridors had the damp, rancid smell of cheap baths. People came here not only to bathe but for many other needs.

"Do you have any private rooms?" Savinkov asked the cashier and began to cough.

"Only at three rubles."

"Very well, a three-ruble one," he said, taking out a green note.

"So expensive, the devil take them," he thought, climbing the dirty staircase. He noticed a soap stain in the corner of the rug. "They must have dropped some wash."

An attendant with a waxed mustache hurried to meet him from the opposite end of the corridor.

"Number twelve, if you please."

"Let me have soap and a towel," Savinkov said absently as he entered the room. "And . . . whatever you call it . . . a whisk!"

"Naturally, how can a man bathe without a whisk?" the bath attendant fawned on the rich gentleman.

Savinkov locked the door. He threw the soap, towel, and whisk into the copper basin. Then he removed his coat and jacket and lay down on the sofa. He had to concentrate, to come to a decision. But making a decision turned out to be most difficult. Instead of it, irrelevant pictures rushed through his mind. His mother, his dead brother Alexander, Vera. . . . He could not banish them. "Oh God," he muttered suddenly and was astonished to hear his own voice.

"I should have told the attendant I expect a woman," he thought. "It would have looked better." At that moment there was a knock

at the door. Savinkov started and listened. The knock was repeated, more loudly.

"What now?" Savinkov called out angrily, coming to the door.

"Your time is up, sir," the attendant answered from the other side.

"I am leaving."

"What nonsense, my time is up," Savinkov muttered to himself. He filled the basin with water, wet the towel and the whisk, threw them on the torn leather sofa, and splashed water on the floor.

24

In the evening, Savinkov stood on Nevsky Prospect in a state of stunned confusion. Newsboys rushed about in the darkness, shouting, "Minister Plehve assassinated!" Savinkov could not understand it. Who had killed the Minister? It seemed to him that he had no connection with the event. He held the newspaper. The Minister's face stared from its black frame: sharp gimlet eyes, a bristling mustache. V. K. Plehve did not exist.

"This morning, at forty-nine minutes past nine, the Minister of the Interior, V. K. Plehve, was killed by a bomb thrown into the window of his carriage by a malefactor near the Warsaw Hotel on Izmailovsky Prospect. The malefactor himself, whose name we have not been able to discover, was severely wounded. In addition to the Minister of the Interior, his coachman, Filippov, was also killed. Lieutenant Tsvetsinsky, of the Semenovsky Life Guards Regiment, who was passing by in a cab, was injured. . . ."

"Sorry," said a gentleman. Savinkov felt he had bumped into someone.

"From the scene of the murder, the criminal was taken to the Alexandrovsky Hospital for laborers, where he was immediately operated on in the presence of the Minister of Justice Muraviev. Questioned directly after the operation, the malefactor refused to divulge his name. The Police Department has launched an energetic investigation, as it is presumed that the assassination of the Minister is the work of a terrorist organization."

"He's alive, alive!" repeated Savinkov, crossing Nevsky through the stream of cabs and carriages. "Yegor is a hero!" And suddenly he felt that the pavement was rising; the forms of passers-by swam and doubled; carriages and buildings threatened to fall on him.

Savinkov knew that he must quickly enter the nearest restaurant.

"What will you have, sir?"

"Give me the menu."

"Yes, sir."

"Rolled sturgeon."

"Yes, sir."

Soon the waiter came running softly with a steaming silver dish.

25

As a member of the Fighting Organization, Praskovya Semenovna Ivanovskaya obeyed the orders of her chief. In Warsaw she was no longer a cook, but a lady. She walked down the street in a fine black lace dress and a small straw hat, carrying a parasol.

As Azef approached her on Marszalkowska Street, she could see how perturbed he was. He walked rapidly, heavily, swaying his huge belly. His face was creased, sleepy, distorted. He looked crushed, she thought.

"By one o'clock we should know everything. If they get him, there will be special editions, and Savinkov will wire. But this is terrible," he said suddenly, halting and breathing with difficulty. "To be so far from the comrades, waiting. . . . It's terrible."

Ivanovskaya walked silently, with lowered head.

"Let us go into a café."

The clean, white café was almost empty. The waitress brought them coffee and cakes. Then she walked away and sat down, staring sleepily out of the window.

An hour passed. They were silent most of the time.

Ivanovskaya saw that Azef was in the grip of mounting anxiety. This ugly man had never stirred her sympathy; now he did. Azef perspired and wiped his forehead.

"It is a quarter of twelve," he said, turning his whole body toward her. "Something should have happened by now."

Azef could not breathe. He mopped his face.

"You must calm down, Ivan Nikolaevich."

"Ah," Azef grimaced as though in pain. "How can you say it? You don't love the comrades. I love them, don't you see, and they can all be killed within a moment." Azef's face twitched and he looked away from Ivanovskaya.

"Let us go," he said abruptly. "I cannot sit here any longer."

Ivanovskaya got up. The sleepy waitress took the money and returned to the window.

26

She saw the stout gentleman and the old lady she had just served pass by outside. But when they were beyond the café, she did not see the gentleman almost run toward a newsboy who was shouting extras.

"A bomb explodes! A bomb!"

Azef walked a few steps with the newspaper in his hand. His face was yellow-white.

"A bomb was thrown. . . . Nothing happened . . . a failure. . . ." he muttered distractedly.

But the newsboys rushed in every direction, shouting in Polish: *"Zamordowano Plewego!"*

Azef snatched a paper from one of them. His hands were shaking violently. He read aloud: *"Za-mor-do-wa-no Ple-we-go."* Suddenly he stopped, his face seemed to shrink, his hands dropped inertly along his body. Deathly pale, panting heavily, Azef caught at his side.

"Wait," he muttered. "I cannot walk. My side. . . ."

"What is the meaning of *'zamordowano?'* Killed, or wounded?" asked Ivanovskaya.

"Perhaps he is wounded?" Azef moaned in panic. People were running everywhere along the streets with newspapers in their hands. Placards appeared in shopwindows, *"Zamordowano Plewego."*

"I'll ask what it means."

"You're mad. No, we must wait. Or better, let me go to the *Warsaw Daily*. Wait for me."

Holding his side, Azef crossed the street. When he disappeared, Ivanovskaya could not bear it any longer. She stepped into a small shoe store.

"What can I offer you?" the Polish owner bowed politely, coming toward her on his short legs. The old lady asked, smiling:

"Would you please tell me why they are shouting in the streets? What does it mean, *'zamordowano'?*"

"They killed Minister Plehve," said the shopowner. "'*Zamordowano*' means killed."

"Thank you."

Azef returned in a cab. He was pale and still excited.

"He was killed by the bomb. It was clean work," he muttered. "I've been at the post office; Savinkov arrives tomorrow. We meet at two o'clock, Café de Paris. Buy a good dress; it is an expensive restaurant. The second rendezvous will be on Ujazdowska Avenue, at six. If I don't see Savinkov, tell him to collect the comrades in Geneva."

"You aren't leaving?"

Azef looked down at Ivanovskaya.

"I'm not going anywhere. But just to make sure, in case anything happens. You understand? You must be at the rendezvous tomorrow. And now, good-by."

27

Neither Azef nor Savinkov were at the Café de Paris, where Praskovya Semenovna arrived in an expensive brown, lace-trimmed dress. From three o'clock until six, Praskovya Semenovna strolled back and forth amid the elegant Polish crowd on Ujazdowska Avenue, in the vicinity of the Café de Paris. But there was still no sign of Azef, nor of Savinkov. She became increasingly anxious, not knowing what to do.

In the jeweler's shop the hour hand pointed to seven. It seemed useless to wait any longer. Ivanovskaya walked in the direction of Nowy Swiat. Suddenly she caught sight of a lean, familiar figure near Ujazdowski Park. The gentleman was coming toward her. He wore a light suit and a Panama hat. When he was two steps away, he looked at her intently. Praskovya Semenovna stopped: he resembled McCulloch, but not Savinkov. The gentleman approached her with a smile that was more like a strange grimace.

"Praskovya Semenovna?"

"Is it you?" Ivanovskaya whispered. "Good Lord, you look ill!"

Even now, Ivanovskaya did not recognize him. His face was bluish pale, with sharpened features and empty, narrow glinting eyes. An altogether different face.

Ivanovskaya asked weakly:

"Who did it? Please tell me, who?"

"Yegor."

"Dead?"

"Severely injured."

"Oh God, Yegor," she whispered, covering her face with her lace-gloved hands. There were tears in the old eyes.

"Let us sit down," said Savinkov.

The festive crowd flowed by. Savinkov told her about Yegor, about the assassination, about Sikorsky's arrest. When he finished, he added:

"I saw Azef; he was in a hurry. He told me he was shadowed and was obliged to leave. He has gone to Geneva."

"He asked me to tell you to call the comrades to Geneva."

"Yes, yes, for a new 'job,'" Savinkov said with a strange, new, cryptic grin. "I did not know it is difficult to kill, Praskovya Semenovna. Now I know. It is simpler to cut down a birch or kill an animal, but it is difficult to kill a man. There is something I don't understand about it. . . . Something metaphysical. . . ."

"Where will you go now?" interrupted Ivanovskaya. "Abroad?"

"Yes," said Savinkov. "They say every beginning is hard. I guess we're launched. . . ."

CHAPTER SIX

1

The windows of the Schwarzer Adler Hotel faced the Danube. People speak of the "blue Danube." It is a deep, dark blue. But Azef did not look out of the window, either at the blue water or the white ships. Locked in his room, he was writing to Rataev:

"Dear Leonid Alexandrovich!

"I am deeply shocked by what has happened. But I shall not write about it, since I expect to see you shortly. I am planning to go to Paris very soon. It is frightful, my dear friend, frightful! On July 7 I wrote to you from Vilno, asking you to send me one hundred rubles. On the ninth I wired, but I never received the money, as I had to leave for Vienna on business. I have been here since the eleventh, and I have learned a few interesting facts. Please be kind enough to have the money sent here in the usual way. I shall remain in Vienna for several days and then proceed to Paris, via Geneva. The information I have is most interesting. I shall report it in the next letter.

"Your Ivan"

Azef licked the envelope with his red tongue and sealed it.

2

Savinkov had not slept for several nights. This was unexpected. Plehve refused to leave him. Newspapers with the old Minister's photographs were piled on the table. Savinkov looked at them. The old man's face remained unchanged. "Perhaps it needs more courage to send others to their death than to die yourself? And it's the same whether you sit waiting at the Pokrov Church or fling the bomb. It was I who blew this old man to pieces. As a revolutionary, I hated him and wanted his death. Russia wanted his death. He had to fall, and he did. Yes, of course. Everything is logical and clear. But why

didn't Ivanovskaya recognize me? Why the sleeplessness? The nerves? Because I *killed*? And it really makes no difference whom—the Minister, one's wife, a comrade, the devil himself? I didn't think it would leave a mark. So the metaphysical nonsense exists, after all. They say there is an executioner in Berlin who lives there with his wife and children. His profession is to chop off heads. He puts on a top hat and frock coat and, having done his job, returns to his wife and makes more children. And then what? Nothing. It would be curious to ask this German, *'N-na, Herr Schulze, wie geht's sonst?'* Surely, his work must leave some mark on Herr Schulze? Although, perhaps, Herr Schulze quite properly feels nothing at all. But I . . . I am left, it turns out, with this metaphysical drivel. . . ."

Savinkov picked up a newspaper and looked once more at Plehve. Plehve stared back. And suddenly, by God, it seemed to Savinkov that Plehve smiled at him! What madness! Savinkov flung away the newspaper.

3

Sazonov was still unconscious. He was wounded in the eye, the side, and the left leg. Heavily bandaged, Sazonov lay in a private room at the Alexandrovsky Hospital. A doctor in a white coat sat at the white table near the bed. Sazonov was quietly delirious. From time to time he jumped up and began to scream. The doctor took stenographic notes of his disordered raving. He was a police official, the unmasked provocateur M. I. Gurovich.

"How do you feel?" he asked, picking up Sazonov's hand and feeling the pulse. He had the same chalk-white, equine face, the same shiny hair, combed smoothly back, but now the hair was no longer red. It had been dyed pitch black.

Sazonov tried to say something, but began to toss restlessly. Pulling away his hand, he muttered:

". . . Still an eternity . . . oh . . . my dear . . . Pet'ka . . . it's time . . . oh . . . but hurry, please . . . why . . . no . . . let me go. . . . I'll get well sooner. . . . God, God. . . ."

Drawing a deep breath, Sazonov fell silent. Gurovich wrote down his words. Sazonov tossed again and rambled on:

". . . I had a good patient, and I spoiled him. . . . Prince. . . . I know . . . what you want to make of me. . . . You will find much independence . . . how . . . oh, how you tired me out . . . yes,

Prince . . . do it your way, as you wish. . . . Don't be an old woman . . . ugh, ugh . . . too bad . . . oh, my Lord . . . do put me in a proper position, like a man. . . . By God, you're making a weak old woman of me. . . . God, God . . . nothing makes sense. . . ." he moaned, falling back on the pillows.

Sazonov lay still for a long time. Then he began to whisper quietly. Gurovich moved nearer, bending over him, unable to catch everything.

". . . I don't know what you ought to feel. . . .Take down the unnecessary posters. . . . Lord . . . here I am like an idiot. . . . I don't know . . . I don't remember anything. . . . Take pity, I've stood here too long. . . . Time to finish . . . it's even solemn. . . . Remove the unnecessary clothes. . . . Where will I go today? . . . You said I'll go . . . again I'm left behind . . . again this prince on my left foot . . . mine? . . . mine . . . vile . . . no, I don't understand your science . . . very strange . . . oh . . . what is it, on the left foot . . . heavy . . . like a chain . . . doctor!" Sazonov cried, starting up.

"What is it?" Gurovich asked gently, putting aside the pencil and bending over him.

"What shall I do, doctor?" Sazonov looked at Gurovich with his unbandaged eye. "I must go to the province in a few days. . . . There's work to be done . . . I have given my word . . . and now this confusion. . . . What shall I do?"

"What confusion?" Gurovich asked tenderly, sitting down on the bed and taking his hand.

"Nikolay Ilyich . . . the family. . . . I'm waiting for the sun to rise," muttered Sazonov. "Oh, stop it now . . . I won't dance. . . . Petya, Petya . . . and what . . . and if . . . pay no attention. . . . Thank you kindly. . . . I don't agree . . . you hear? . . . Don't listen . . . how can you . . . it isn't a stove . . . it's a machine. . . . Heaven have mercy . . . how else . . . oh, oh, oh . . . oh, Christ is risen . . . now they meet. . . . I am at the grave of Christ . . . but I am lying somewhere. . . . I won't be a sales clerk. . . . How gloomy everyone is. . . ."

4

The Socialist Revolutionaries were celebrating in Geneva. Gathered around Gotz's chair were members of the Central Committee—Chernov, Potapov, Minor, Rakitnikov, Selyuk, Breshkovskaya,

Natanson, Bach, Avksentiev, and Azef. The young terrorists Schweitzer, Kalyaev, Borishansky, Brilliant, and Dulebov were also there.

Around the wheelchair everyone forgot old disagreements, quarrels, and unpleasantness. The young mingled with the old. Fired by success, Kalyaev spoke in his melodious Polish accent. Standing among his comrades, flushed, excited, with his hair falling over his forehead, he looked like Rouget de Lisle singing the "Marseillaise."

Even those among the older party members who had grown weary and in their hearts somewhat skeptical of idealism, and were not listening too closely, were moved in spite of themselves. Kalyaev believed deeply in what he said. His faith was fanatical, passionate, beautifully expressed, and his hearers were spellbound when the Poet cried, nervously gesticulating with his right hand:

"We must not, we have no right to trust the frightened government, which now promises the country some measure of peace! No! We must do all in our power to send into the terror new companies of comrades dedicated to the revolution, to strike new stunning blows at the enemy. And not in order to force the government into the path of reform, but to waken the land by the explosions of our bombs, to shake it into rising in mass terror against the hated rulers! Let every member of the party go out, not with speeches, not with agitation and literature, but with bombs! For, in truth, a Socialist Revolutionary without a bomb is today no longer a Socialist Revolutionary! Ah, I know the time is not far distant when the conflagration will break out! When we, too, shall have our Macedonia! When the worker and peasant will at last take up arms! And then, then the great Russian revolution will begin!"

His speech was interrupted by applause.

Sitting with his fat arm around Azef, Chernov bent over and whispered in his ear: "Youth, Ivan, youth! But holy, of course, holy."

Azef felt unpleasantly the weight of Chernov's arm, but, hoping that Victor would support him in the Central Committee, he endured it without moving away. Chernov removed his arm himself when he asked for the floor.

"Tears choke my throat, dear comrades," he began somewhat nasally, in his central-Russian singsong, "as I listen to the speech of our young Poet! Especially because he is so full of energy and thirst for action—although he has just taken part in so great and difficult an undertaking as the assassination of Plehve! True, true!

We need 'our own Macedonia.' But we must not go too far and, yielding to the enthusiasm of youth, forget all else and begin to think of our party solely as a terrorist organization! Of course the deeper you plow, the better the harvest. And surely we need the terror! Surely, terror is one of the most essential forms of our party's struggle. But, my dear comrade, the terror is still only a temporary expedient. Besides, there are three kinds of terror—inciting, disruptive, and agitational. And therefore our sacred, dedicated youth, our Fighting Organization, must act only in accordance with the will of the Central Committee! Remember that corn bread is grandfather to the wheat cake. And God forbid—if I understood the young comrade correctly—that he should merely have fallen in love, so to speak, with a bomb. God forbid, God forbid." Victor Mikhailovich shook his red mane. "But, of course, this isn't so! We do not believe the government's promises, we shall carry on the terror, and Plehve will not be the only one to be blown to pieces." Chernov banged his fist on the table. "But it goes without saying that the Fighting Organization must follow the will of the Central Committee of the party and act only on its instructions. Don't be carried away, young comrades! We have a program, we have tasks of the utmost importance, we have the agrarian question to face. The party cannot reduce all its activities to the terror; this, I assure you, must be avoided."

Chernov turned to the terrorists who sat in a closely knit young group on the couch. "Believe me, comrades, when I urge you: don't fall in love with bombs, and listen to our voice. And then, by common effort and, perhaps, without undue excitement, we shall advance our cause. The sparrow is small, but give it time and it will move a mountain. But there must be complete obedience to the will of the Central Committee!"

No one paid much attention to Chernov's speech; they all knew the theoretician's loquacity. The invalid Gotz raised his voice over the general hum of talk.

"There, there, our dear samovar is boiling over!" Chernov roared with laughter, waving at Gotz and shaking the fiery mane flowing down to his broad shoulders.

Gotz spoke with passion. He said that Plehve's death was a great sacrifice which the terrorists among them had laid upon the altar of the revolution. Every comrade, he said, grieved for Yegor

Sazonov, dear to all of them, who had gloriously surrendered his life into the hands of the hangmen. Everyone grieved for the young Sikorsky. But the best way to avenge them was a new offensive against the servants of the tsarist regime. And the terror, he was confident, would surely raise a new and immense wave of revolution, which would sweep away the autocracy. He argued briefly against the Social Democrats and concluded with the words, "Long live the Fighting Organization!"

Everyone shouted "Hurrah!" which made the Swiss landlady stop in astonishment in her kitchen. "These Russians roar like animals," she muttered. "A completely uncivilized people."

"But tell me, Comrade Kalyaev, when will Savinkov arrive? What is keeping him?" asked Gotz.

"He will be here tonight. He was detained in Berlin."

5

In the evening, sitting alone in his chair, Gotz thought about the coming Russian revolution. He looked ill. His cheeks were gray, his arms withered to the bone. His eyes glittered more than usual today, but it was an unhealthy glitter. His wife placed her hand on his forehead:

"Misha, you feel ill, you seem tired?"

Gotz took her hand from his forehead and kissed it.

"Vera," he said, "the party is succeeding, the revolution approaches, and I am like a corpse, a useless log. . . ."

"Misha. . . ."

"No, don't protest. . . . The comrades don't notice it, don't think about it. They do not want to know I suffer. And they are right."

They heard the landlady talking to someone. There was a knock at the door.

"You will not see anyone now, Misha? It is so late!"

Savinkov stood in the shadow. Gotz did not recognize him.

"May I, Mikhail Raphailovich? Don't you know me?"

"Oh God! But do come in, come in!"

Throwing off his coat, Savinkov quickly walked to the chair. They embraced. There were tears in Gotz's eyes. He would not release Savinkov's hand, pressing it with his sick, feeble bones.

"How happy I am for you, how happy." He looked searchingly at

Savinkov. "But you know, you have changed, you seem thinner. And naturally, no wonder. But sit down, tell me everything, from the very beginning. Nobody has told the whole story properly yet. Verochka! Let us have tea and a bite of something!"

6

Savinkov told Gotz how they conducted the observation, establishing in detail all of the Minister's movements, how good Ivanovskaya had been in the role of a cook, how bravely the throwers had gone out to meet Plehve's carriage. He described the horses galloping away and Sazonov lying in the street. He told how at first he did not know whether Plehve had been killed, how he learned and left Petersburg, and how Ivanovskaya had not recognized him when they met in Warsaw.

"Were you disguised?"

"No."

"Then why? . . ."

"I don't know. Once, I remember, I asked Yegor Sazonov what he thought we would feel after Plehve's assassination. He said—'joy.' I also said joy. But now. . . ."

"Now?"

Gotz knit his brows.

"Now something else has come, besides joy. People don't recognize me in the street."

"I don't understand," Gotz said sharply. "I've heard nothing of the kind either from Kalyaev, or Dora, or Schweitzer, or Ivan Nikolaevich. But what is it you feel? The 'sin of killing'?"

"No."

"What then?"

"Just 'something,'" laughed Savinkov. "Quite vague."

"Again your decadence, your heroine who jumped out of the window?" Gotz spoke excitedly, striking the arm of his chair with his bony hand. "Then you do not want to go on working in the terror?"

Savinkov did not answer at once. Then, looking into Gotz's feverish eyes, he said slowly, still smiling:

"No, Mikhail Raphailovich, you misunderstood me. On the contrary, I want to, and will work *only in the terror.* Traveling across Germany, I was thinking about an attempt against the

Grand Duke Sergey. What do you think? Does the party need it?"

"Of course. But it is a difficult undertaking."

"The deeper into the woods, the more timber. We have experience now." Savinkov smiled with his Mongolian eyes. "I want to suggest this as the next task."

"We shall speak of it again," Gotz interrupted. "But it troubles me that the Stradivarius is still cracked. I fear for you, Pavel Ivanovich. You can do so much, if only the crack does not spread, if the violin does not snap completely."

"I shall not break it myself, Mikhail Raphailovich. But if it does get smashed one day—although I doubt it—well, then, it could not have been worth much, and there's no need to regret it."

"We grieve for those we love, Pavel Ivanovich. But let's forget it now." Gotz waved his hand. "Come back tomorrow. And now, as the saying goes, 'it's time for me to molder, and for you to bloom.'" He smiled, pointing to his paralyzed legs. "Go on to Victor's; he is giving a party tonight; amuse yourself, you need diversion."

"Is Chernov still at the same place—the Rue de Carouge?"

"Yes, the same place. All of us here are at 'the same place.'"

"I didn't mean it that way," laughed Savinkov. "I have great regard for Victor Mikhailovich as a theoretician; I respect his erudition. But, you know, it is something of a bore to live on the Rue de Carouge."

"Now, now, you are becoming too conceited!"

7

Savinkov arrived at Chernov's apartment at midnight. The native Genevans were already seeing their third dream. But here even the corridor was noisy. Clouds of blue smoke, clatter, and a medley of voices came from behind the slightly opened door. And, through it all, the sounds of a balalaika, and someone dancing and calling out gaily, "*Skygarki, motygarki, sudygarki, padygarki!*"

Savinkov saw Chernov rapidly bouncing up and down and kicking out his short legs with astonishing agility.

The Russian balalaika rang out with reckless gusto. Someone shouted in a drunken, disobedient voice:

"Long live the Socialist Revolutionary party!"

Suddenly the dancing, music, and shouts broke off. Everyone rushed toward Savinkov. The first to reach him was Chernov,

breathless from the exertion of the dance, but gasping, "Our dear, beloved friend!" Savinkov felt Chernov's strength as the delighted host hugged him with his massive arms, kissing his unshaven cheek.

"What a pleasure! Comrades! Let us honor our invaluable, fearless fighter, Pavel Ivanovich! Hurrah!"

His shout went unheeded. Savinkov was surrounded by his comrades of the Fighting Organization. Kalyaev embraced him; Schweitzer pressed his hand; Dora greeted him. Savinkov went with them to the table. Halfway through the evening's festivities the table was already sagging wearily, as if barely able to hold its load of bottles, food, and flowers. Everything was slipping to the floor. Even the blue teapot with the burnt side leaned at a desperate angle. As Savinkov was sitting down, the portly figure of Azef appeared from the next room.

"Ivan, how glad I am!"

"Thank God, thank God," repeated Azef, embracing and kissing him.

All eyes were on them. They were the heroes of the party's celebration, the guiding spirits of the victorious act. But now the balalaika struck up once again in its corner. It was played by an unknown seminary student who had recently escaped from Russia, a young man in love with Chernov's genius and intoxicated with the Geneva air, the speeches, and the proximity of the Central Committee.

"Yes, my dearest friends, it was a great deed, a noble deed, a holy deed." Chernov embraced Azef, patting him on the shoulders.

"I am sad for Yegor," Azef drawled nasally.

"Of course, we are sad, we are all sad, but the terror demands sacrifices, and I am confident Yegor will climb the scaffold with unfailing courage."

Chernov's breath smelled of brandy. Someone at the table asked:

"You do not doubt him, Victor Mikhailovich?"

"Not for a moment, I am confident. . . ."

The seminarist was playing, "In the garden, in the orchard." A heavy sadness spread over the room. Pressing around the table, members of the Central Committee argued in a cloud of blue smoke about the relationship between the committee and the Fighting Organization. The terrorists sat on the sofa, but only Kalyaev spoke with animation. Schweitzer sat quietly, sipping soda water. And Dora Brilliant was the most forlorn of all amid the smoke and noise.

No one noticed her, and everything seemed strange and foreign to her. It seemed that these people were arguing about something absurd and terrible. And the student's balalaika filled her with unbearable anguish.

"An orange has exploded
At the palace gate.
Where's the little gentleman
With the angry gait?"

"Why so melancholy, comrade?"

"I am not melancholy. Why?"

"Oh, I can see, comrade, trust my eagle eye," Chernov laughed in a shrill tenor, patting Dora on the back.

"Don't, Comrade Chernov," she said.

Chernov walked away, put his arms around two Central Committee members who were bending over the table, and broke into the conversation, speaking rapidly:

"No, my dear friends, socialization of land is incompatible. . . ."

But gray dawn was already breaking. The smoke of Russian cigarettes flowed through the open window to greet the morning, as if trying to fly away toward the snow-capped mountains. The guests rose, noisily pushing back their chairs. They went out in a crowd onto the Rue de Carouge and stood there for a long time, bidding each other endless Russian good-bys, making appointments and arrangements. Then they dispersed to the right and the left. And only the host's red head still nodded in the doorway for a while, but soon he also withdrew and locked the door.

8

Savinkov wrote to his wife.

"Dear Vera,

"During these recent days I have felt a longing for you, much stronger than the love that bound us and binds us today. This may seem strange to you, and it may pain you, but it is so. At this moment, as the Geneva mountains look into my window, as boats with strangers glide over the lake and a little white steamer blows its whistle in the distance, I want only one thing—to see you. I want you here, in the same room, near me, so that I could know that I am

not alone, that there is someone who loves me, strongly and single-heartedly, someone to whom I am dear. I am tired, Vera. This should not seem too strange. The recent events exhausted me. I do not know when we shall meet. It is so odd that I have a son and daughter whom I scarcely know. I want to try to bring you abroad, so that we might at least occasionally see each other and live together. It hurts me doubly when I recall how often I tormented you when we were together. But now I am filled with an aching, almost childish need to see you. And not even to see you, but to feel you here, in the same room. To know that you sleep here, that you move about somewhere near. There is so much that is unclear and strange. It is only recently that I have learned to know the meaning of loneliness. A few days ago I wrote several poems. I am sending you one of them:

"Give me some tenderness,
My heart is closed.
Give me some joy,
My heart is forgotten.

Give me some gentleness,
My heart's like a stone.
Give me some pity,
I am wounded and torn.

Give me some wisdom,
My soul is drained.
Give me some strength,
My soul has fled.

—Or bless my death."

"Write me *poste restante*. I warmly embrace you and the children.

"Your B. Savinkov"

9

Azef was in torment during those days in Geneva. Three letters had come from Rataev, instructing him to come immediately. Three times he sent back excuses. After Plehve's assassination, the party could not remain inactive. Azef's expectations had proved correct: a stream of money flowed into the treasury of the Fighting Organi-

zation from individuals, organizations, and even foreigners. And this money became his obsession. He insisted that the Central Committee should not touch it. Scowling, perspiring, and snorting, he agreed to small disbursements. But, in order to forestall continued demands, he proposed a plan for three assassinations, under his personal direction. The attempts he suggested were against the Grand Duke Vladimir in Petersburg, General Kleigels in Kiev, and Grand Duke Sergey in Moscow.

"The terror must be continued! The honor of Russia demands it!" Azef concluded his speech with deep, inexpressible feeling.

The party ratified the plan. Savinkov undertook the attempt against the Grand Duke Sergey. Azef was sure of his game. He could not lose. He knew that he would turn in two of the acts to the police. And by the third one he would raise his prestige still higher in the party. But Azef was not made of iron. The game strained his nerves, and he was tired.

10

The golden days of August were beginning. Returning from the meeting at which he, as chief of the Fighting Organization, had won his points in the Central Committee, Azef took off his coat, vest, and starched shirt and felt the odor of his own sweat. He dried his fat, yellow body with a towel and lay down, half-naked, on the sofa. After resting awhile, he rose and sat down at the table.

Bare to the waist, breathing heavily, he pondered on a set of bylaws for the Fighting Organization that would guarantee it against control by the Central Committee. Slowly, he pushed the inkwell nearer toward him and wrote unhurriedly, "Bylaws of the Fighting Organization of the Socialist Revolutionary Party."

Azef wrote:

"1. The objective of the Fighting Organization is to combat the autocracy by terrorist action.

"2. The Fighting Organization enjoys complete technical and organizational independence, has its own treasury, and is connected with the party through the intermediary of the Central Committee.

"3. The Fighting Organization must work in accordance with the general instructions of the Central Committee, as regards: (a) the persons against whom its actions are to be directed, and (b) the

moment when, for political reasons, terrorist activity should be suspended or discontinued.

"4. All contacts between the Central Committee and the Fighting Organization shall be through a special representative, chosen by the Committee of the Fighting Organization from among its members."

Pulling at his cigarette through a long red ivory holder, Azef wrote out twelve paragraphs, with notes. Toward the end he grew tired. Throwing aside the pen, he sat at the table, staring at one point. He was recalling the pink legs of his mistress, a singer in a Petersburg café.

11

In an apartment on the Boulevard Raspail, Lubov Grigorievna was drinking tea with her six-year-old son Misha. He was sticky with candy, and he laughed as his mother wiped his short grimy fingers and pouting lips.

"Oh, you silly, silly," said Lubov Grigorievna, a small woman with cropped hair and light freckles. She was a member of the party, but took no active part in its work. Azef did not want her to, and Lubov Grigorievna loved her husband and complied with his wishes. None of the comrades knew that Azef's paper on "The Struggle for Individuality as Taught by Mikhailovsky" had been written by his wife.

Azef arrived unexpectedly. On the threshold he caught Misha in his outstretched arms, lifted him up high, then pressed the boy against his chest, kissing his brown cheeks. Misha squealed with delight, flung his arms around his father's thick neck, and kissed him over and over.

"Papa, my sweet golden papa!"

"Why didn't you wire, Vanya?"

"Oh, I didn't know beforehand."

"You must be hungry. Oh heavens, just a moment, I'll see Madame Duisen." Lubov Grigorievna rustled out with her skirt.

Azef tickled Misha with his mustache. Misha screamed with laughter. Azef put his son on his knee and stroked his curly head. He loved his son.

"Where were you, Papa? What did you do? What countries did

you go to? Tell me, tell me all about it!" When Misha wrinkled up his eyes, he looked like Azef.

"I was far away, darling," said Azef, smiling. "So far, you couldn't see from here."

"Really? And if you climb up to the top of Nôtre Dame?"

"Ha-hah! So you already know about the Nôtre Dame?"

"Oh yes! There are such ugly dolls on it! And one looks like you; Mama said so," laughed Misha, embracing his father's neck. "But no, Papa, tell me what you did. Did you build bridges? Mama says you are an engineer."

12

The preparations for the three attempts were completed. Schweitzer had more than enough dynamite. One rainy day in November, Savinkov set out for Moscow with a passport in the name of James Halley, engineer, to assassinate the Grand Duke Sergey. Accustomed now to the tidy, well-paved European streets, he thought with distaste of the provincial Russian police officers, jogging along with dangling feet astride their shaggy, undersized horses, of the gray Russian rains, the muddy sky, the deep Moscow snowdrifts, Russia.

The coal-black Mongolian eyes had sunk deeper under his forehead, the skin over the cheekbones tightened. Savinkov's entire appearance spoke of boredom, as though he was, indeed, an English gentleman with a single passion—hunting—who had undertaken a tedious journey to the land of "vodka and bears."

"Either Savinkov gets Romanov, or Romanov gets Savinkov," thought James Halley as he approached Eydtkuhnen.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1

The innumerable Moscow churches were buried under pale blue snowdrifts. The winter was severe and snowy. Already in November the city was in the grip of unprecedented frosts. In the twisting alleys and courtyards, janitors and cab drivers tried to warm themselves over fires, clapping their mittens and stamping their felt boots.

The Governor General of Moscow was the Tsar's uncle, Grand Duke Sergey, tall and lean, with a cold face and transparent glass-like eyes.

2

The Grand Duke's carpet-lined sleigh drew up before his palace. It brought a visitor—General D. F. Trepov, the Grand Duke's right hand and chief of the Moscow police.

The Grand Duke was displeased with many things. He was irked by the Tsar's weakness and the rising influence of the latest Prime Minister, the liberal Witte, the thirty-degree frosts, and his wife's excessive piety.

They sat together in the Governor General's study at the palace. Trepov was a dark, animated, handsome man who looked like an illustration for Russian army uniforms. A cavalry man, he was rude and blunt and fond of peppering his conversation with unprintable oaths when in male company.

Sergey was sitting behind his desk, tracing uncomplicated vignettes on a sheet of paper. Now and then he raised his head and let his transparent eyes rest vacantly on General Trepov's handsome face.

"You ought to go to Petersburg at once, Your Highness, and make the Emperor listen to you. All these liberal notions of Svyatopolk*

* Prince Svyatopolk-Mirsky, Plehve's successor as Minister of Internal Affairs (1904).

and Witte must be stopped. It is high time to put them in their place! The change in domestic policy is a disaster. It plays into the hands of the revolutionaries. Since Plehve's death, that scum imagines we are frightened. They won't stop now; you have to know the dogs! They must be crushed," said Trepov. "This coddling will only drive them to new outrages. And against whom? Those who stand for a different line, of course! Not against Witte, surely? Against you, Your Highness, against me and others like us. I've had communications from the Petersburg Okhrana. They expect the terrorists to step up their activity."

"You've had reports?"

"There is a report from Rataev, the chief of the Foreign Department. Rachkovsky assures us," Trepov laughed in his full-blooded, well-fed baritone, "that he has their fighting forces well in hand, and nothing can happen now. He says he has an important provocateur at work, but, Your Highness, that scoundrel is licking Witte's boots. You can't believe him. Lopukhin had also insisted that terror was impossible. Just before Plehve's death he told me he held the terrorists right here." Trepov raised a strong, hairy fist. "No, Your Highness, you must go without delay; the Emperor will listen to you."

"Witte is trying to frighten the Tsar with revolution." The Grand Duke burst into a strange laugh. The sun's rays flooded the parquet, scattered over the floor, and lit up half of the Duke's body.

The sun stood bright and sharp in the blue sky over Moscow. Columns of smoke rose from thousands of chimneys. Savinkov rode in a sleigh from the Ryazan Station. Grown unaccustomed to the Russian winter, he felt chilled and pulled his wide Swiss muffler higher over his ears.

3

The Princely Court Hotel was dismal. The usual blue-liveried doorman. Gold-framed, fly-specked mirrors. A blackboard with the names of the guests. Savinkov followed the bellboy, oppressed by the endless boredom of Russian hotels. In his room there was a threadbare plush sofa which must have seen more than enough in its day, a tall mirror in an absurd frame, pitchers with time-yellowed water.

The bellboy scrutinized the foreigner.

"Shall I register the passport now?"

"Yes, at once," James Halley said, looking about him with distaste. He drew out his passport bearing the red seal of the King of England and the signature of Lord Lansdowne and handed it to the boy with a ruble note, graced with a portrait of Nicholas II.

The bellboy left with a grateful bow.

4

At this moment the Moscow terrorist Boris Moyseenko was trudging up the dark, narrow staircase to the bell tower of the Church of Ivan the Great, and his knees were trembling from the steep climb. The terrorists had yet to discover which of the palaces was the Governor General's residence. The old sexton wearily climbed the stairs for the hundred-thousandth time, accompanying the visitor.

From the bell tower, the view of Moscow glittered under the golden sun and vividly blue sky. For a half-ruble fee the sexton mumbled toothlessly, without looking down, about the proud glories of the Russian capital. With a trembling old hand he pointed out the Kremlin, the Sparrow Hills, Moscow River, the Sukhareva Tower, and Kalanchevskaya Square. Just as they were about to descend, Moyseenko asked:

"And where does the Grand Duke live, Grandpa?"

"The Grand Duke? On Tverskaya Square. See the Strastnoy Monastery, out there? His palace is just left of it."

"Oh yes, I see. I'll bet he lives well?" Moyseenko asked on the way down.

"I guess he does; why shouldn't he?"

Moyseenko's knees trembled from the long, steep climb.

5

A young fellow in a sheepskin coat and greased boots was buying a bay mare from a horse dealer near Dragomilov Gate. The mare was frisky. As the dealer walked her, he cracked the whip, and the mare plunged forward, kicked, and reared; the man had to crouch down to retain his grip on the halter.

Kalyaev knew nothing about horses. But he liked the mare and could see no obvious faults. He pulled a kerchief from his pocket, untied it, and counted out ninety rubles.

"What's her name?" he asked.

"She's got no Christian name," laughed the dealer, wrapping the money in a newspaper. "Call her Bay."

And Kalyaev called his mare Bay. No coachman in the yard looked after his horse as well as Ivan Kalyaev. In two weeks the shaggy, ill-fed animal turned into a handsome mare, the envy of Kalyaev's fellow cabmen. She flew over the Moscow streets, pulling her light sleigh. Boris Moyseenko's Malchik was no match for her.

Malchik was a wretched looking gelding, scrawny, flat-ribbed, with cramped, heavily veined legs. He ambled with a ridiculous, hopping gait, kicking up his left hind leg. But Moyseenko was not an elegant cabman. There was no reason for him to dash all over Moscow. Malchik stood quietly on Tverskaya Square, across the way from the palace of the Governor General.

Passers-by rarely hired Malchik; the leggy gelding looked too miserable. Only on rare occasions someone in a great hurry would call out:

"Are you free, driver?"

But the driver always answered hoarsely, without turning round:

"I'm busy."

6

The sentry stood in his brightly colored box before the palace. Sleighs and carriages came and went. Gentlemen emerged from the palace entrance in black, red-lined coats and gray cloaks flying in the wind. But the carriage of the Grand Duke Sergey was not there.

A frosty wind was blowing across Tverskaya Square. It made the horses run briskly. Malchik slowly stamped his hoofs; his torn blanket gave no warmth. Moyseenko clapped his mittens. But now a bay mare trotted lightly into the square. The driver, in a blue coat with silver buttons, a red sash, and a padded seat, reined in the mare and stopped. And Malchik moved on, stepping painfully with his frost-cramped legs.

7

The Grand Duke's carriage dashed out for the first time at night. Ivan Kalyaev saw it. What horses! They clicked by over the icy wooden pavement as if a nimble hand had run over piano keys. The acetylene lamps dazzled the eye. The carriage flew past like

a hurricane with its dark escort of Cossacks, but the smoke of its lamps trailed slowly behind.

"So the sexton at Ivan the Great was right. We must watch the palace on Tverskaya." Kalyaev left the square.

8

Savinkov was bored. He was troubled by loneliness, and by something else he could not quite define. What was it? "Rot with music," he said to himself. The rooms at the Princely Court were occupied by corpulent provincial mammas and their offspring. The children were taken to the Kremlin to see the Granovitaya Chamber, the Tsar Cannon, and the great Tsar Bell. Kostroma merchants, their hair cut in a circle, bloated themselves with endless tea, sucking it noisily from saucers. And it seemed to Savinkov that all this reeked of the general Russian torpor and fatuity, and that the Tsar Cannon itself was but a grandiose flourish of the same fatuity.

But even James Halley sometimes strolled about the Kremlin, hoping to meet the carriage of the Grand Duke Sergey. He never did. After a walk through the Moscow streets he would step into a bookshop, buy a new book of poetry, and return to the Princely Court to wait for evening.

Time went slowly. James Halley read the Apocalypse from sheer boredom and thought constantly about Sergey. "If a worker were to kill him, or a flogged peasant, or a whipped soldier, everything would be in order. But he will be killed by me, a member of the gentry, an intellectual. Why? I do not even hate him. But I desire his death. I am bound with the revolution. True, it is a cold bond, and perhaps that is the trouble. I am not burning like Yegor or Yanek. I kill calmly, perhaps simply from boredom—who knows?"

9

Bakastov's Tavern near the Sukhareva Tower was much like the Friends' Rest on Sennaya in Petersburg. Its patrons were mostly cab drivers, and it was convenient because it had "private rooms," dirty, but accessible from the courtyard. A wealthy gentleman in a beaver coat, with a silver-headed cane, could sit there freely with a man in a coarse Russian jacket.

"I saw him! I saw him last night! The carriage burst out of the

gate, right near me, with acetylene lamps. Nobody else has such lamps in Moscow. . . ."

"And the guard?"

The table was set with food, vodka, several bottles of beer; the waiter need not bother to come in.

"Cossacks. They went to the Kremlin."

"Then the sexton was right?"

"Yes, yes. I was excited as the devil."

"We'll kill him then."

Savinkov poured himself a glass of vodka and followed it with a piece of sharp, firm pickle that kept slipping from under his fork.

"Yanek, after the assassination I learned something I never knew before. Everything is so strange; I can't tell you how strange. As if the old man had left something," Savinkov began to cough. "He died, but left something in me, the devil knows where."

"Are you speaking of sin?"

"No, no, quite the contrary. Before, when I had not yet killed anyone, I felt it was a sin to kill; there was such a feeling. But now the feeling isn't there; it's gone."

Savinkov poured himself another glass.

"You see, it all happened suddenly, according to Verlaine: *'Je perds la memoire du mal et du bien.'* Gotz told me one day that his inner life is governed by Kant's categorical imperative. But my categorical imperative is the will of the Fighting Organization. And that is all. Nothing more. I told this to Gotz, and he says—moral heathenism! Before the old man was dispatched," Savinkov smiled, "there was some faith in our cause, in terror, in the revolution. But afterward. . . ." he spread his arms, "I cannot understand it; everything disappeared, blotted out. . . . That finest of lines, you see, was blotted out and I can no longer understand why killing for the revolution is right, but, let's say, for the counterrevolution is wrong. Or why one should kill for the party, but never for oneself?" Savinkov broke into a hoarse, tipsy laugh, fixing his narrow burning eyes on Kalyaev's face.

Kalyaev leaned forward with his whole body. His pale, delicate face looked frightened.

"I do not understand you," he said slowly. "You say—one should kill, one shouldn't kill. But, dear Boris, one should never kill. We kill only to make possible a civilized future, a life without this accursed terror. One never 'should' kill except when there is great love be-

hind the killing, a great love for humanity, for truth and justice, for socialism and freedom, for man as a brother. Only then is it permissible to kill. And when we come out to perform a terrorist act, we kill not only 'them,' we kill ourselves, we give our souls as a sacrifice upon the altar of the idea."

Savinkov laughed.

"Well, in that case I have already given mine."

"Don't laugh," Kalyaev cried. "It hurts."

"Forgive me, Yanek. Let me say this: you are a child, an innocent, and your sacrifice, like Yegor's and Dora's, is simply, to my mind, the biological purpose of your existence—if one may put it that way. Do you understand what I am saying? I am beginning to think, for example, that for you—the finest among the terrorists—all these words about truth and justice, ideas and ideals, socialism and all the rest of it, merely camouflage a frenzied longing for self-immolation as such. And even if we were now living under socialism instead of autocracy, in a veritable paradise on earth, you would find some idea for which to sacrifice your life."

"No, no, you're wrong!" Kalyaev broke in passionately.

"Oh yes," Savinkov went on. "I look at you—I love you, Yanek—but it seems to me that you have no other life, no other purpose than to 'give your life,' and could never have any other. You are not made for orderly work and a regular salary, even under socialism. Even then you would sacrifice yourself, perhaps in another way. But this is your biology; you were born for martyrdom. This is what I feel, Yanek. . . . You speak of the people, of socialism. Very well, but what is this people? Why, it is nothing, my dear friend, but pure myth! You do not love the waiter who just served us here? Whom do you love then? You love your sacrifice, your mad idea, and it's for this that you killed Plehve."

A thick vein stood out on Savinkov's forehead, cutting it in half; his eyes were burning.

"You are a mystic, Yanek, you are religious in your own way, and you live for the hour of your death. This is your entire vindication. But I, Yanek, am a man of different biology. I love life," Savinkov said passionately. "And everything was clear in my mind until the old man got in the way and mixed up all the cards. He gave me a push, you see, just the slightest push: 'So you love life?' he says to me. 'You killed me because you love life? Confess it now,' he says,

'that's why you did it? All right then, go on, but all the way, and no holds barred. Don't stop at me, kill anyone you want. What difference does it really make whom you kill, or in the name of what? We're all bound to croak in the end, anyway.'"

"You're lying, Boris!"

"My de-ar Ya-nek!" Savinkov sang out, bending over and kissing him. "Of course I'm lying! Of course I'm only drunk; you're right," Savinkov laughed. And when he finished laughing, he said:

"But you, Yanek, what about you? Didn't the old man leave any trace at all?"

"Whatever he left, I'll wash off with my blood, and the blood of the new executioner of our people. To me, Russia and socialism are the Holy of Holies, burning with a sacred flame. I go into the flame and give myself to it with joy. Believe me, Boris, our places will not be empty long; our deaths are the buds of future flowers."

"I know, you are 'giving yourself' like a woman, without doubt or question; it may mean suffering, but it is sweet precisely because you give yourself. There is a frenzied femininity in you, Yanek. But I don't envy you. Yet there are people I envy."

"Yegor?"

"Ivan," said Savinkov.

"Azef?"

Savinkov nodded:

"You, Yanek, think more of how you will die, not how you will kill. With him it is the opposite. He has a special kind of a soul. Not even a soul—a revolutionary machine. A homemade guillotine. It chops heads, and he clicks the abacus, keeps count. Nothing interferes with his living. Neither the old man, nor the death of comrades. I am directing one act. But he directs three! And all he thinks of is how to kill the three men as quickly and surely as possible. Nothing else. And then it's done with and forgotten. Grist to the mill of the revolution. And let the future bring what may."

"Ivan Nikolaevich is quite alien to me in spirit," said Kalyaev. "But I respect him, I even love him, because he is our great strength, the strength of the revolution. Without him we couldn't carry on the work which undermines the throne and shakes the state, rousing the revolution."

"What a child you are, Yanek, a sweet child. You 'respect' him and 'even love' him, and he will send you to your death, to be torn to

pieces, without even scratching himself, and will forget you the very next day."

"These who are marching cannot pay attention to those who fall, Boris. If he mourned each fallen comrade, as some do, he could not direct the work of the Fighting Organization. Just think of the responsibility! Think of the weight on his shoulders!"

"Yes, yes," said Savinkov, listening to the gramophone behind the wall. A soprano was singing above the laughter of many voices. They sat silently for a while.

"You told me you wrote some poems in Geneva?"

"I did," Kalyaev admitted with embarrassment.

"Read me something."

"You would not like it."

"Why? What's the title?"

Kalyaev answered with a childlike smile: "I don't know yet. Perhaps, 'Let the Battle Come.'"

"Too long. Poems should have short titles."

"I can think of something else."

Kalyaev began to recite, quietly and clearly:

"My spirit is aflame with passion,
My heart beats with the courage of the fight.
To see the purple glow of freedom,
To dissipate of age-old wrong the night!

And, tearing off the tyrant's mask of lies
To suddenly expose his mortal fear.
To strike unflinchingly at every hangman,
And put an end to sorrow and to tears!

Enough, then! Come, victorious battle!
The people calls—it's shameful to delay!
My motherland, I'm yours! You call, and I obey!"
Be strong, my hand! Ring out, my heirloom sword!

Savinkov listened, his elbows resting on the table.

"The second verse is weak," he said, "but the other two are good. And I don't care for 'heirloom sword.'"

"I couldn't find a better image," Kalyaev laughed merrily. "Let me hear something of yours."

"You will not like mine."

Savinkov recited the poem he sent to Vera:

"Give me some tenderness,
My heart is closed.
Give me some joy,
My heart is forgotten."

"But why did you think I wouldn't like it? No, no, I like it very much," Kalyaev said and, after a silence, he added: "You know, Boris, you are more talented than I."

Smoke was no longer rising from the chimneys, the lights of Moscow were out, and only the footsteps of policemen echoed on the pavements when the two friends left the dark courtyard of the tavern and embraced in parting in the gateway.

10

From his box the coachman Andrey Rudinkin saw every rut and wrinkle in the road. The acetylene lamps burst through the snowy darkness. The Grand Duke's carriage was flying home from the Nikolaevsky Station. Sergey had just returned from Petersburg, where he had urged the Emperor to take a firmer line. The carriage sped along Kalanchevskaya, Myasnitskaya, Nikolskaya. It was larger than Plehve's carriage. Antique, of German workmanship, it had bronze door handles shaped like arching serpents, yellow spokes, and a bright coat of arms. Its interior was lined with gray silk. The coachman's seat was wide, so that the driver, despite his great bulk, occupied only one side of it. Next to him always sat the Grand Duke's favorite footman, Ovrushchenko.

The horses were not black, like Plehve's, but dark gray. Rather short but powerful, broad-chested, and muscular, they ran at a low, swinging trot toward the Governor General's palace.

11

Kalyaev now had all the information. At night there were the acetylene lamps. In the daytime the carriage was easily identified by the white reins, yellow spokes, wide body, the coat of arms, and Rudinkin's black beard. Even the coach of the Grand Duchess could not be confused with it, since the well-fed, fresh-faced Andrey Rudinkin drove only for Sergey.

Dora arrived from Nizhny-Novgorod, where she had been in charge of the dynamite for the Moscow group. The terrorists were

closing in upon Sergey with a ring of dynamite. His days were numbered.

Savinkov wrote a letter and lay down on the couch. On the table near by stood his coffee. Savinkov sipped coffee with benedictine and thought about Sergey's death. Then he dressed and went out of the Princely Court. Two beggars, huddling in their rags, sat on the ground near the hotel—a decrepit old man and an old woman. Savinkov threw them a coin. Fluffing out its tail as the reins slapped its flanks, a fine gray horse dashed past the Princely Court, carrying a stout gentleman wrapped from head to toe in a silvery deerskin cloak.

The crosses of the Moscow churches flashed in the sunlight. Frost, youth, health, and snow combined into a glowing sense of well-being as Savinkov walked briskly to Tverskaya Square to meet Kalyaev.

But Savinkov paced the square for more than an hour; neither Kalyaev nor Moyseenko were in sight. Savinkov no longer enjoyed the azure, frosty day or the rushing life of the city. He was seized with anxiety for the work and the comrades. On his way back to the hotel, he turned when a cabman called:

"A cab, sir?"

Savinkov saw Moyseenko with his Malchik. He got into the cab. Neither the rider nor the cabman spoke as they rode in the direction of the Savelovsky Station. It was only when they turned into the deserted Tikhvinsky Lane and Malchik showed signs of fatigue that Moyseenko slowed him down and turned around.

"Have you seen the statement of the Moscow committee?" he asked excitedly.

"What committee? Why weren't you at the square? Where's the Poet?"

Moyseenko held out a square sheet of paper.

"The Moscow Committee of the Socialist Revolutionary Party gives warning: if the political demonstration called for December 5 and 6 encounters the same brutality at the hands of the authorities and the police as the demonstration in Petersburg several days ago, the entire responsibility will fall upon the heads of Governor General Sergey and Chief of Police Trepov. The committee will not hesitate to execute them.

"Moscow Committee of the S. R. Party"

"Damn it!" Savinkov muttered furiously, tearing up the paper.

"Do you understand," Moyseenko cried with agitation, "the committee is also preparing an attempt upon Sergey! You see how absurd this is? They'll ruin the whole thing. Since their proclamation, Sergey has left the palace, and we've been chasing all over Moscow for three days without discovering where he is."

Moyseenko turned forward in his seat. They were coming to Novoslobodskaya.

Savinkov clenched his fists with rage.

"The swine," he muttered. "Those self-appointed 'heirs of Mikhailovsky' will never kill him, but they'll wreck the job."

They turned into Novoslobodskaya. It was almost empty except for several workmen walking down the street. The cab quickly left them behind. Moyseenko turned to Savinkov again.

"Pavel Ivanovich, you must see the committee members at once, or all our work is lost. They don't know we are here."

"You say he hasn't been at the palace for three days?" Savinkov asked angrily.

"That's right, three days."

"Could you have missed him?"

"No, no, he's moved somewhere else."

"An idiotic mess! Preposterous! Who do you think may be in charge of this for the committee?"

"Zenzinov is the only one; it could be no one else. You must see him and put the cards on the table."

Savinkov did not reply, wondering how to arrange a meeting with Zenzinov, the young student with whom he had once stayed in Geneva.

"I'll tell you," said Moyseenko. "Go to Maria Lvovna Strukova, at 10 Spiridonievka Street. She is a relative of mine, and I know she sees Zenzinov. She can be trusted; ask her to arrange a meeting. She will do it."

"Very well then. Let's go there at once," said Savinkov. "We cannot delay. But suppose she refuses?"

"She won't."

Moyseenko turned the cab and cracked the whip. Malchik went hobbling up Novoslobodskaya, in the opposite direction.

"Where is the Poet?" Savinkov asked, raising himself slightly.

"I've lost sight of him. He is going mad, dashing about the city. We're both worn out."

They spoke no more. Malchik ran, hopping, to Spiridonievka.

12

Strukova was not a revolutionary. Masculine-looking, with cropped hair, she liked interesting people and found the revolutionaries interesting. And she helped them, even at some risk to herself.

"There is a gentleman, Madame, to see you. He wouldn't give his name; he wants to speak to you personally."

"Show him into the study," said Maria Lvovna in a businesslike basso. She glanced at herself in the mirror and walked in briskly, her skirt flying.

An elegant young stranger rose and kissed her hand.

"Maria Lvovna Strukova?" he asked. "We are not acquainted; I am a friend of your kinsman, Boris Nikolaevich Moyseenko."

"Ah, Borya? Is he here?"

"No, he isn't. But I've come to you at his behest, on a most important business. May I ask, though, Maria Lvovna," Savinkov smiled as a man of the world, "that my visit and our conversation remain entirely between us?"

"Certainly. Go on."

"I must at all cost see Vladimir Zenzinov not later than tomorrow. I have no other means of finding his address. I beg you to arrange the meeting; it is a matter that cannot be delayed, a matter of utmost importance."

"Vladimir Zenzinov?" Maria Lvovna repeated in a deep basso and wrinkled her forehead, thinking.

"Yes."

Maria Lvovna considered it.

"Very well," she said. "But where? At my house?"

"No, Maria Lvovna. Tomorrow at eight I shall be at the entrance to the Korsh Theatre. There's usually a crowd at that hour. Come there with Zenzinov. He probably won't recognize me; it has been a long time since we last met. But let him watch the man you greet. I shall say a few words to you and walk away. He is to follow me. That is all."

Maria Lvovna wanted to smile; she liked the mysterious plan, but she restrained herself. And though she had been invited to her uncle's silver wedding on the following evening, she said in her thick basso:

"Excellent. It shall be done. Of course I cannot vouch for Zenzinov; he may be unable to come. But if he can, we shall be there."

"I must warn you, though. Please tell Zenzinov to make absolutely sure he is not followed. If he is watched, he must not come under any circumstances. But, of course, he will understand this himself."

"Of course."

"And so, Maria Lvovna," Savinkov rose, "let us consider our meeting closed. I do hope it will remain absolutely secret."

"You may be quite sure."

Her long silk skirt rustling as she walked, Maria Lvovna saw Savinkov to the door.

13

The play at the Korsh Theatre was *Krechinsky's Wedding* by Sukhovo-Kobylin. Krechinsky was played by Kiselevsky, the idol of the Moscow theatregoers, who thronged to see him. At eight there was a milling crowd before the theatre. Ticket speculators scurried about. Police stood by to maintain order. Cabs, private sleighs, and carriages drew up. Ladies and gentlemen alighted, wrapped in furs. The ladies wore downy shawls to protect their coiffures. They fumbled in their evening bags as they hurried toward the entrance.

The thoroughbred snorted as the driver reined him in. Savinkov jumped lightly out of the sleigh and ran up the steps.

"Third-row orchestra?" a short, squat speculator in an astrakhan hat rushed up to him.

"No, no," the elegant gentleman waved him off.

Catching sight of the buxom, brunette Maria Lvovna in heavy sables, he approached her with a flattering smile and, raising his beaver hat, kissed her hand.

"I am so glad to see you, Maria Lvovna!"

"Delighted," smiled Strukova and asked, not knowing what to say next: "Are you an admirer of Sukhovo-Kobylin or Kiselevsky?"

"Sukhovo-Kobylin. An excellent playwright, but with a murderer's fate. He killed his mistress. Did you know that?"

"Really? No, I didn't. But it's almost curtain time. Good-by now."

The young man once more tipped his beaver hat and kissed the lady's hand. Then he walked away, pushing his way through the crowd.

Zenzinov, in a worn sealskin hat and a threadbare coat without a fur collar detached himself from the wall. He saw Maria Lvovna speak to this elegant man. He did not hear their conversation, but it did not matter. Who was the young man? Zenzinov could not understand it. "Is he one of ours? A Socialist Revolutionary? He can't be. I've never seen him anywhere. What does he want of me?"

The elegant young man in the beaver coat walked rapidly. Zenzinov had to quicken his pace to keep up. The young man did not turn around and walked too far ahead.

Zenzinov knew that he was watched in Moscow. But before coming to the theatre he looped and doubled so many times that he was now quite calm. No one was following him. Ahead, in the light of the yellow street lamps, he saw the young man's hat some hundred feet away.

The man made several turns. "He must be heading for Dmitrovka," thought Zenzinov, quickening his steps. "Yes, that's where he is turning now. But who is he? What the devil? . . ."

Zenzinov saw the young man slow down as he walked along Dmitrovka. "I'll have to catch up now." He came abreast of the beaver-coated stranger and they walked a few steps side by side. They did not look at one another. Suddenly the stranger made a hardly perceptible signal with his hand and, stepping off the sidewalk, hailed a speeding cab:

"Hey there!"

The driver sharply reined in the galloping black horse. The stranger did not say a word. They approached the sleigh and he stepped aside to allow Zenzinov to get in first. Jumping in after him, he shouted in the frosty air:

"Tverskaya Gate, but fast!"

The horse plunged forward, kicking up lumps of snow against the dashboard, and flew like an arrow down Dmitrovka. "The voice is familiar," thought Zenzinov, but said nothing. He had been invited to this rendezvous and he waited for his companion to speak. But the other was also silent. He did not even look at Zenzinov. Zenzinov threw a sidelong glance at the beaver-framed face of the stranger, who flung himself back against the seat as the sleigh bobbed up and down the rutted street. "No, I don't know him. A face like stone. He must be a foreigner. What can it mean?" thought Zenzinov. But the driver flew down the dark streets at breakneck

speed, shouting, "Hey! Ah-h! Look out!" and urging the galloping horse with guttural cries. The fast ride took away one's breath and made it impossible to think. At first well-lighted streets streamed past them, then dark, unlit cottages, and now there was nothing along the roadside except infrequent trees. They were at the Tverskaya Gate.

The stranger glanced back, holding down his hat in the wind. Zenzinov also looked. There was no one on the dark, straight, snowy road. They were alone, tearing down the highway at crazy speed, as if trying to win the three-verst record at the hippodrome. And the driver was still shouting, whistling, faster, faster. . . .

"Turn left, to the tavern!" cried the stranger.

Zenzinov thought again that he had heard the voice somewhere. But the horse was already stopping at the single crooked light before the tavern, and they could hear him panting and snorting after the mad race.

The stranger jumped out first and gave the driver what must have been a generous sum, for he merely doffed his hat, speechless with gratitude. Zenzinov followed his companion into the tavern. And only when they were in a private room and the stranger took off his coat and removed the beaver hat from his thinning hair, he gasped: "Why, it is Pavel Ivanovich!" But Pavel Ivanovich was still silent. Rubbing his chilled hands and smiling quickly at the stranger with his eyes, Zenzinov was also silent. Savinkov's face was stony, gray, and dead. He spoke to the waiter in a squeamish, peremptory tone:

"Two dinners. What do you have today? Fine. We'll take a decanter of vodka with it, and some wine. What wines do you have?"

"None, sir. We have no wine. Only vodka."

"Vodka and two dinners then. But make it fast!"

Zenzinov watched him and wondered. Surely this was Pavel Ivanovich! And yet, it wasn't he! This wasn't the Geneva youth who had just escaped from Vologda. It was a gentleman who had lived too hard and fast, with a weary face, an aristocratic drawl, and imperious gestures. "What marvelous make-up!" Zenzinov thought with admiration.

"Let us be brief; we may be interrupted at any moment," said Savinkov. "I am a member of the Fighting Organization. You are a member of the party's Moscow committee. Am I correct?"

"Yes."

"You are preparing an attempt upon Sergey? You are? I know it. But I must ask you to discontinue at once, to stop your observation and withdraw all persons engaged in this work. You see," Savinkov paused, "this is our job. I am directing it, and it is nearing completion. For understandable reasons, the committee did not know about it. I am now compelled to reveal it to you, since you have already frightened Sergey off with your proclamation. He has moved from Tverskaya Square."

"He has?" Zenzinov repeated quietly.

"Yes. But he will not escape us. I have information that he is now in Neskuchny. This is even better for us, and worse for him. Now, instead of the short ride from Tverskaya to the Kremlin, he has to take the long and roundabout route to Kaluzhskaya, then down to Moscow River, along Pyatnitskaya, Bolshaya Yakimanka, Polyanka, and so on. We will kill him in the street, and we will do it soon. But I must repeat—will you give me your word to call off all your watching as of tomorrow? I hope you understand that this is not a question of glory, but of success. Who is in charge of the committee's work? You?"

"Yes, I am. And, of course, I can promise you that tomorrow we shall discontinue everything. We had no inkling that the Fighting Organization was active in Moscow."

"I am glad. At any rate, I think we are a bit more skillful at conspiracy than you are."

"I hope so."

The waiter's steps were heard behind the door. He brought a tray with greasy mutton cutlets and a misted decanter of vodka.

"Is it cold?" Savinkov asked in the same squeamish tone.

"Yes, sir, how can it be warm in wintertime?"

"Very well."

The waiter went out slowly, his boots squeaking.

"Was this the only reason you wished to see me?" asked Zenzinov. "I mean, if this is all, perhaps it might be best to leave the dinner and go. You understand, if anyone should see us here, it might appear suspicious. Perhaps even the waiter. . . . And then. . . ."

"You mean to say—the gallows?" Savinkov smiled with narrowed eyes.

"No, I meant—the work will be wrecked."

"Oh! But I think we are entirely safe here. We can finish our dinner. Besides, I lead such a solitary life. I see no one but the

comrades working with me, and even that infrequently. It's a rare pleasure to break out of the ring of conspiracy and see a fresh face. The role of a wealthy Irishman is not so easy and gay, it turns out."

Zenzinov ate his cutlet, listening attentively. Of course he knew without doubt that this was Pavel Ivanovich, but Savinkov had not yet mentioned his name, and Zenzinov wondered at it. When Savinkov had downed a large glass of vodka and was eating his cutlet, Zenzinov asked:

"Tell me, did you take part in the Petersburg affair, too?"

Savinkov gave him a searching look.

"Yes," he said slowly. "Of course."

"I thought so. It was a brilliant piece of work."

"A difficult one," said Savinkov.

"All terrorist acts are difficult."

"I don't know. . . . The present one is also difficult, of course. But that is because our birds fly high."

Zenzinov finished his dinner. It would be pointless, he thought, for his companion to insist on continuing incognito.

"Tell me, didn't you stay with me in Geneva after you escaped from Vologda?"

Savinkov smiled.

"Did you recognize me at once, Vladimir Mikhailovich?"

"Oh no, your make-up is extraordinary. It was only when we came here, and even then I was doubtful at first. Your impersonation of an Englishman is remarkably convincing. But, of course, you have changed, too. I haven't seen you in almost two years."

"Yes, yes, I have changed. Of course."

Resting his arms on the table, Zenzinov listened to Savinkov's endless story. Savinkov spoke quietly, with many changes of intonation, now lowering, now raising his voice. He spoke of how hard it was to be a terrorist. The terrorist who died gave up his body, but one who lived—his soul.

"You'll never know how difficult it is. It ravages the spirit; it is terrible." Savinkov broke off. Zenzinov looked at him, thinking: "It's the same enchanting Pavel Ivanovich, the subtlest of speakers, vivid, talented. What a remarkable man! What magnificent strength there is in our party, in the revolution, with such men at the helm, in terrorist work!"

"I know that I am again offering up my soul, and perhaps, God grant it, my body, to the party and the revolution," Savinkov was

saying. "I know it isn't easy, but I give myself to the cause because I have a great love of our country and believe in its revolution."

Zenzinov took his hand and pressed it.

"We are all doomed," he said quietly.

"But I believe in our victory," answered Savinkov.

"Of course. How could our work be possible without faith? Especially yours, Pavel Ivanovich."

"Yes," said Savinkov. "Shall we go?"

They rose.

"You promise, then, that tomorrow the committee gives up Sergey to us entirely?"

"I do."

"Excellent." Savinkov rang his fork against the glass.

"One bill," the rich gentleman spoke curtly to the waiter.

Bending over the table, the waiter began to scribble the figures on a slip of paper.

"Will five cover?" Savinkov rapped out. "What's left is yours; drink to my health!"

The waiter was overwhelmed. The gentleman owed only two and a quarter. He threw himself toward the beaver coat, snatching it from the hanger with voluptuous servility. By the time he finished with Savinkov, Zenzinov had put on his shabby coat without help.

The horse was chilled outside. The cabman had driven him back and forth several times, swearing at the gentlemen who had brought him to this God-forsaken spot.

"Cold?" Savinkov cried gaily from the steps. "Wait, brother, we'll warm you up!" He called the waiter, who brought out a tumbler full of vodka. The driver only grunted in the frosty air, but so violently that the horse was startled. And when the gentlemen got in, the snow churned up around the sleigh and they flew on through snowdust, ice, ruts, hollows, and wild, hoarse shouts. . . . Not a thing to be seen, not a word to be spoken in the frenzied race until the warm lights of Moscow began to flash on either side.

14

Savinkov could not sleep either at night or in the daytime. Everything was shut out by the shadow of Sergey and the coming explosion. He met Kalyaev and Moyseenko daily. Everyone was nervous,

pale, thin. As if sensing danger, the Governor General changed his residence for the third time. From the Neskuchny Palace he moved to Nikolaevsky in the Kremlin. Both Kalyaev and Moyseenko were now left outside the Kremlin walls.

"Nerves won't help," Savinkov said to Moyseenko in Bakastov's Tavern. "I don't sleep nights myself."

"But you can see yourself how difficult it is now to go on watching. We cannot wait for him at the gate. Besides, we never know which of the Kremlin gates he'll take. Time is short, events are moving in the country, and we're at the end of our strength. Dora has been waiting with the dynamite for a week."

"Observation must be started at once inside the Kremlin."

"I tried it yesterday. I stopped at the Tsar Cannon, but they chase you; it's impossible."

"Possible or not, it must be done."

15

The next day Malchik and his shabby driver entered the Kremlin through the Spassky Gate. The driver removed his cap and crossed himself. They drove up to the Tsar Cannon and stopped.

The police paid no attention. After an hour the cabby left through the Kitaysky Gate because a bay mare had trotted gaily into the Kremlin. Its driver stopped, facing the palace.

16

Savinkov felt ill. He spent all day in Dora's room. It was almost two weeks since Dora had arrived from Nizhny with the dynamite. She waited. It seemed that none of the comrades understood her suffering. She was right. If Alexey were there, Dora would not have been ignored; she would be given the place in the ranks of the Fighting Organization that she longed for, the place without which she could not live. But Dora had been assigned to passive work. She was denied what she wanted most—to kill and to die.

"My dear Dora, I have only one desire now. Do you know," said Savinkov, "I have forgotten that I have a mother, a wife, comrades, a party. . . . I've forgotten everything, Dora, nothing exists. Day and night I see nothing but Sergey. I sit at his receptions, I walk with him in the park, I have lunch with him at the palace, I ride

with him over the city. I cannot sleep. You know, Dora, it has become an obsession; it may end in madness. But understand me, Dora. Afterward, if you and I aren't hanged in the meantime, which may happen any day, any moment—it needs only a careless step, a cheap betrayal—afterward, when, by the grace of God, we have done our work, when the Governor General is in the next world and we are in Geneva, why, nobody—neither Chernov, nor Gotz, nor even Azef—will understand the cost! The cost to us! Nobody will even care to know about it. He was killed? Hurrah! And what about us, Dora? Is it that simple?"

"We must finish quickly," said Dora.

"With God's help, we will."

"We are all working together, in the same cause, for the same idea," Dora began in a low voice. Savinkov listened intently. "But how different everyone is. No two of us are alike. In peaceful party work it always seemed to me that one man was much like the other, and like the third; everyone seemed the same."

"It's very true, Dora, and very subtly observed."

"But here. . . . Take you and Ivan, for instance."

"What about me and Ivan?" Savinkov, who was lying on the sofa, raised himself on his elbow.

"You are completely different."

"In what way?"

"Within yourselves. Ivan is totally without doubt, nothing but calculation and logic. It is easy to work with him. But you are all emotion, full of ambiguities and questions. Actually, you aren't even a man of emotion, but of some odd, sharp sensibility. Everything is overcharged with doubts, with your own special theories—always something incomprehensible. It is difficult to work with you. You do not set a goal and do not lead toward it. You are groping yourself, feeling your way with your hands, with your eyes closed. Ivan Nikolaevich sees everything and points to it clearly."

"Ho, ho, Dora!" Savinkov answered with a forced laugh. "I've never suspected you were so observant and even 'philosophical!' "

"The Poet is also different. And Schweitzer."

"And you, Dora—you are quite different, too, aren't you?"

"I suppose."

"We are all very different. That is what makes life so interesting. And that is why I hate the dull gray party herd which listens open-mouthed to Victor Mikhailovich and eats manna out of his hand."

"You are too sharp, Boris; it isn't necessary. You have no love for the comrades."

"For whom? Must one love everybody? But that means loving nobody, Dora."

17

At nine in the evening they were driving in Kalyaev's sleigh. They turned to the outskirts of Moscow. When the streets became deserted, Kalyaev turned in his seat. His thinness was emphasized by the yellow light of the infrequent street lamps. His eyes were sunken, his cheeks dark with a thin growth of beard. He looked like a monk emaciated with fasting. His profile was almost frightening.

"Yanek," said Savinkov. "We cannot go on with the observation. We are exhausted. We know his movements well. It must be finished. What do you think?"

"Yes," said Kalyaev. "The best time to do it is on the way to the theatre. He goes out often now. The newspapers announce it."

"Sell the horse and the sleigh and leave Moscow for several days; you must have a rest. We shall remain here. Change your passport and come back by February 1. We'll finish it then."

"You are right, I need a rest, I am very tired," said Kalyaev. "I feel so tired nervously that there are moments when I think I'll snap. Yes, I will go away and come back by the first. Do you believe, Borya? I am certain. And you know. . . ." Kalyaev was suddenly excited. The horse trudged wearily along. "If Leopold kills Vladimir in Petersburg, and we get Sergey here, it will be such an answer to them! Almost a revolution! A pity I may not see it." Kalyaev drooped just as suddenly. "There is only one thing I want. I want the comrades in the Schlüsselburg Fortress to hear about it. I want Yegor, Gershuni, all of them to know we are fighting and defeating the enemy. . . ."

Several carriages appeared down the street. Kalyaev straightened in his seat, tucked down his coat like a true cabman, and started at a trot.

18

Later that night, Boris, having given his bed to Dora, was settling down for the night on the sofa. They did not light the lamp. In the dark room, lit only by the reflection of the street lamps out-

side, the sheets glowed dimly like phosphorescent sails. Savinkov was making his bed on the sofa.

When he sat down to unlace his shoes, Dora was already in bed. She was not sleeping. There was too much pain and desolation in that night to sleep. She was thinking—would the comrades exclude her this time, too?

She heard the light steps of bare feet on the floor and saw the dim white figure of Boris. He poured himself some water from the pitcher. The nighttime trolleys rumbled faintly in the distance. The room was silent.

Savinkov felt he would not sleep. The damned insomnia again. He thought about Dora. How strange that Dora had never interested him as a woman. A thin, wounded bird. But that day, when they spoke about Ivan, he had caught a glimpse of a rare smile on her lips. He imagined Dora asleep and turned. The light from the windows was falling on her bed.

He rose and went to get some water, and his legs trembled as he drank. With quiet steps, almost soundlessly, he approached the bed and stood over Dora.

She raised herself on her elbow.

"What is it, Boris?" she asked in a frightened whisper.

"Nothing," he answered, and his voice broke. "I cannot sleep. I thought we'd talk awhile. You were not sleeping, Dora?"

He sat down on the bed. Dora did not understand. She had never been so near to a half-undressed man. Dora moved away slightly.

"I could not sleep either," she said. "It's the waiting."

His teeth chattered. Dora did not hear. But she saw the sharply glinting eyes above her, like the angry eyes of a stranger.

"We may die soon, Dora," he whispered, pressing her hand, and his voice was unfamiliar. "Ah, Dora, Dora," he whispered tenderly. His arms were suddenly around her and his face came down to hers. It was only then that she knew why he had come to her.

"Go away! Go away at once!"

"Dora. . . . Dora, in three days we may. . . ."

"This is vile! I am leaving immediately."

"How stupid!" Boris muttered, getting up and going to the sofa.

But Dora rose from the bed. He saw her quickly dressing in the darkness. "What nonsense," he said.

"Let me out." Dora was dressed. "I will not stay here."

"What are you thinking of?" Savinkov cried angrily. "Do you

imagine I'll let you leave in the middle of the night? You are mad! The room is locked; I shall not let you out. You can sleep safely. Your metaphysical love for Pokotilov will not be violated against your will."

Dora choked with a spasm of tears.

Boris sat with his legs crossed under the blanket.

It seemed to him that Dora was crying.

"Dora," he said softly, "forgive me; I have offended you. I did not mean to. I thought you were as free and simple in the love of the body as I am. That's all. Don't make a tragedy of it. I cannot let you out now; you must understand it. The hotel is closed for the night; we would have to call the doorman. Lie down and sleep."

Dora sat at the table, covering her face with her hands. She was crying.

Boris got up and silently crossed the room. Dora heard his approach, but she was no longer afraid.

He took her hand. It was wet with tears. Boris lifted it from her face and kissed it several times. Then he kissed her head, saying quietly:

"Forgive me for everything, Dora. In a few days we may both go mad. . . . Do you forgive me?"

Dora did not reply, but her fingers pressed his faintly. She forgave him, but she went on crying. Boris kissed her hair once more and returned to the sofa. He heard her crying for a long time. Then she went to the bed and lay down without undressing. Boris heard nothing else; he dropped suddenly into the bottomless black pit of sleep. He had no dreams. Neither did Dora as she fell asleep in a strange, cramped position.

19

Kalyaev's bay mare had long been tied by the Gypsies to a crude wide country sled with other horses and taken far from Moscow. The horses ran after the sled, drawn by a sway-backed piebald mare. When they bit or kicked the strange horses running alongside, the old Gypsy shouted something wild and they calmed down and quietly followed the sled.

But Malchik was still limping over Moscow. Instead of the usual measure of oats, he now received two. At dawn he chewed them

slowly with his worn-down teeth, dropping the wet grain mixed with saliva back into the bag and gathering it up again with his warm moist lips. He could often be seen in the Kremlin, dozing near the Tsar Cannon with closed eyes.

His master was more and more affectionate with him. Scratching his old croup with the comb, he praised him: "Good boy, Malchik, you know your business." Malchik squinted at him with a tearing eye. Then, as if to thank his master, he would break into a hopping trot as they rode out of the stable yard.

Malchik dozed on his feet in Bolshoy Cherkassky Lane. He did not know it was the second day of February. He did not know why the beaver-coated gentleman, who slipped on the icy pavement, was approaching the sleigh.

20

Savinkov had telephoned Dora at the Slavic Bazaar Hotel.

"The weather is excellent today. I think we'll take a ride."

"As you wish, James," replied Dora. Excitedly she returned to her room and locked the door. She quickly opened the closet and with an effort pulled out the heavy suitcase full of dynamite. Stopping every now and then in her agitation and repeating, "Pull yourself together, pull yourself together," she began to prepare the bombs for the Grand Duke Sergey.

At times it seemed to her that someone was knocking at the door. With a start, she would halt her work and listen. But it was only her imagination. In a large porcelain bowl decorated with blue flowers, she mixed potassium chlorate and sugar. She filled glass test tubes, with a bubble at one end, with sulphuric acid and attached small lead weights to them with thin wire; then she inserted the tubes into cylinders with mercuric fulminate and slipped cork disks over their outer ends. Dora knew that, in falling, the lead weights would smash the glass; the mixture of potassium chlorate and sugar would flare up, ignite the mercuric fulminate, explode the dynamite and . . . blow up the Governor General.

Picking up a large tube, Dora thought of Pokotilov.

"Take yourself in hand, Dora, steady, control yourself!" By four o'clock everything was tidied and the room swept up. Two ten-pound bombs lay wrapped in a plaid shawl.

Dora sat in an armchair. As usual, the dynamite smelled of bitter almonds and gave her a headache. To fight off drowsiness, she opened the window; the white frosty air poured steaming into the room. Soon she felt cold. She put on her coat and returned to the chair with a book in her hands, waiting for the knock that was to come exactly at six. The eagerly awaited sound came as expected: two short raps.

Savinkov entered, covered with snow from the ride. He was pale. Without removing his coat or hat, he asked:

"Ready?"

"Yes, everything."

"This?" he pointed.

"Yes."

"Why is it so cold here?"

"I opened the window."

"There was a smell?"

"I was afraid I'd fall asleep."

"Are you very tired?" Savinkov asked sympathetically, taking her hand. "How we torment you, Dora."

"Why torment? I don't understand."

"Will you take them, or shall I?"

"It's better if I do."

"What were you reading?"

"Poetry," said Dora with embarrassment.

"All right. Let's hurry, he is waiting."

Malchik stood outside the hotel. Hopping along, he drove them to Bogoyavlensky. On the way, Savinkov carefully untied the shawl and transferred the bombs to a briefcase. "Better this way," he said, holding the briefcase on his knees.

Going down the Ilyinka, they saw a cattle dealer detach himself from a wall and follow them. He wore a short coat, a cap, and high greased boots. He caught up with them, took off his hat, and spoke to the gentleman.

It was evening, and brownish winter twilight was filtering down over the city. The cattle dealer took a heavy bundle from the gentleman. Holding it tightly and trying not to slip on the ice, he walked to Voskresenskaya Square, which the Grand Duke Sergey was to cross at half past seven, on his way to hear Chaliapin in *Boris Godunov.*

21

Kalyaev walked back and forth near the town hall, carrying his bundle. His whole body was filled with a burning lightness. He knew that, in another half hour or, perhaps, an hour would come *that* moment after which there would be nothing at all. A glorious moment for the revolution and for Ivan Kalyaev.

It was becoming difficult to think. He thought only of not slipping, not falling in the darkness with his parcel. The pavement was icy. Kalyaev stepped cautiously. He did not feel the cold; it seemed hot to him. Suddenly—was it dream or reality?—the dazzling lights flashed for a moment from the direction of the Nikolsky Gate. Kalyaev recognized the acetylene lamps not with his eyes, but with his whole being. Forgetting the slippery pavement, he almost ran to meet them, weaving among the sleighs and carriages crossing the square.

Sergey's carriage seemed to move slowly. Some two hundred feet remained between it and Kalyaev. He stepped around the last sleigh. Now there was nothing between them. Only time. Gasping and swallowing the cold wind, Kalyaev ran across the path of the carriage. But blinding everything, it dashed by on clattering wheels.

Clutching the parcel, Kalyaev slowly staggered from the square. His body was covered with sweat; his legs trembled. At the Nikolsky Gate, Savinkov caught him by the hand.

"What is it? What happened?" he asked in a choking whisper.

"I couldn't . . . there were children. . . ." Kalyaev answered quietly.

And in that instant he realized the crime he had committed before the party. Silently they walked to Alexandrovsky Garden. Kalyaev dropped weakly on the first frozen, snow-covered bench.

"Boris," he said, "was I right or wrong?"

Savinkov did not answer.

"But it couldn't be done . . . not with children. . . ."

Savinkov pressed Kalyaev's hand.

"You were right, Yanek. The children are innocent. But you were not mistaken, there were really children there?"

"I was within two steps. A boy and a girl. But I will try when he leaves the theatre. If he is alone, I'll kill him."

They sat for a long time in Alexandrovsky Garden. Occasionally they got up, left, then returned again. At last the opera was over, and footmen began to scurry before the Bolshoy Theatre, announcing the carriages. Cabmen waved their arms and shouted, calling to prospective fares. A throng of fur coats, cloaks, boas, and muffs poured out of the theatre, flushed and excited from Mussorgsky's music. Kalyaev mingled with the crowd, never taking his eyes away from the acetylene lights of Sergey's carriage.

A boy and a girl went by hand in hand, in furred little boots. They were followed by an elderly woman. Kalyaev recognized the Grand Duchess Elizaveta. Behind them came the tall Governor General, his red-lined cloak flying as he walked.

Kalyaev followed him with his eyes, then left the Theatre Square.

22

Dora was waiting in a deserted lane in Zamoskvorechye. She recognized the hobbling Malchik from afar. Savinkov helped her into the sleigh and silently handed her the briefcase with the bombs.

"He did not meet him?"

"He did. But he couldn't. The children were there."

Dora silently straightened out the briefcase on her lap.

"Dora, do you think the Poet was right?"

"He did what he had to do."

"But now you will have to remove the fuses again, disconnect, reconnect. There may be an accident. It means new danger to your life and to the whole plan."

"We are not murderers, Boris," Dora said in a low voice. "The Poet was right. I shall do the work without mishap."

With her free hand she turned up the collar of her coat; the frost nipped the ears.

They drove down Sofiyka. Savinkov got out. He spent the rest of the night, until the blue dawn, at the Alpine Rose Restaurant.

23

On February 4, Savinkov and Dora waited for Moyseenko, looking out through the window curtain.

"He's here, Dora, get dressed," said Savinkov. He looked pale

and tired; sunken cheeks, skin tight over the cheekbones, like an invalid's, dark rings around the eyes, making them still narrower. When he took the briefcase, this time with only one bomb, Dora noticed that his hands were shaking. She hurriedly put on her coat and hat.

"He hasn't passed yet?" Savinkov asked anxiously, climbing into the sleigh.

"Not until twelve," answered Moyseenko.

"We'll be in time, then. He'll come out at three."

"Where to now?"

"Yushkov Lane, of course!" Savinkov cried irritably. "Hurry, whip him up!"

After two strokes of the whip, Malchik hopped into a gallop. From the gallop, he changed to a fast, clumsy trot. Breathing heavily, he turned into Yushkov Lane, where Moyseenko reined him in near a dark, gloomy building. Tripping over the rug, Dora climbed out.

"You'll wait at Sioux's, on Kuznetsky, Dora?"

"Yes, yes," she said without turning as she walked away.

At the next corner, Kalyaev got into the sleigh. He was dressed as a cattle merchant, in a short coarse coat, a cap, and greased boots. They approached Red Square.

"Yanek," said Savinkov. "We must decide at once. Either we do it today, or the whole thing must be postponed. I am afraid one thrower is not enough. Perhaps two ought to do it? But we have only one bomb today."

"What are you saying?" Kalyaev cried excitedly. "There is no need for a second thrower! The day before yesterday I was also alone. Well? If it hadn't been for the children, I would have finished it."

Savinkov was silent; he felt exhausted and depressed.

"You insist on doing it today, alone?"

"Yes. We cannot risk Dora's life a third time. I take everything upon myself."

"As you wish. Then we'll have to get out, I think," said Savinkov, looking around as if they were driving in an unfamiliar place.

"Is this Red Square?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," Moyseenko answered from the box.

"Yanek, for the last time, what if we fail? Then the whole plan is lost?"

Kalyaev's face expressed irritation.

"There can be no failure. If he drives out, I will kill him, you understand?"

Moyseenko stopped Malchik.

"We're here, sir," he said, unfastening the lap robe.

Kalyaev got out with the parcel. Savinkov followed with the empty briefcase, handing the driver some bright silver coins.

"I'll be going to the Kremlin," Moyseenko said quietly.

Savinkov did not reply. He walked along Red Square with Kalyaev. The old clock in the Kremlin tower struck two.

"Two o'clock," said Kalyaev.

"Yes?" said Savinkov.

Kalyaev smiled.

"Good-by, Boris," he said, embracing him. They kissed each other on the lips.

Paying no attention to anything, Savinkov watched him walk away with his light steps toward Nikolsky Gate. Kalyaev never looked back. When he lost sight of him, Savinkov muttered: "Where now?" Mechanically, he walked toward the Spassky Tower. Near the tower there was a traffic tangle; cabmen were cursing, unable to move either forward or back.

Through the Spassky Tower, Savinkov entered the Kremlin. Suddenly he stopped: the Grand Duke's carriage stood before the palace. The horses tossed their heads. "He'll kill him!" And joy flooded his heart. He rapidly walked away from the Kremlin to Kuznetsky, to Sioux's, where Dora was waiting.

24

He was almost running to Kuznetsky, without knowing why he was in such a hurry to get to Sioux's. Was it to tell Dora that the attempt would succeed? Or to return with her, to see it? He collided with people. His heart was thumping.

Before he reached the restaurant, he heard a distant thud. He stopped at the Daziaro shop, as if to look at the postcards. "Could it be Yanek? But why so muffled?"

Sioux's was filled with idle people, resting after shopping for knick-knacks on Kuznetsky Bridge. The ladies sipped coffee and ate pastries. Savinkov caught sight of Dora inside the café. She sat with a cup before her.

"Let us go from here," he said, strangely baring his teeth in an attempt to smile.

Dora got up. Through the window she saw people running down the street. Someone was waving his hands; someone tripped and fell. A stout gentleman absurdly jumped over him, running away, a horde of urchins following him.

"What is it?" Dora asked.

The customers in the café rushed to the door. Savinkov was pale.

"Let's go."

"Pardon me, Madame, you didn't pay." The waiter came running.

"For what?"

"One coffee and two cakes."

"I had no cakes," said Dora, fumbling absently in her purse.

"Who?! What?! Killed?! Who?!" people shouted in the café. Kuznetsky Bridge was overrun with people streaming toward the Kremlin.

Savinkov clutched Dora's hand and pulled her through the crowd. The square before the Nikolsky Gate swarmed with people. Everyone silently pushed forward. Savinkov was seized with anger and revulsion against this mob through which he could not make his way.

"A cab, sir?"

He saw Malchik standing a few steps away, near the sidewalk. Dora was white, her blue lips whispering something.

"Let us take a cab," said Savinkov. Dora did not resist, whispering almost inaudibly, "Yanek, Yanek."

Malchik slowly pushed his way through the solidly packed crowd. When they drove out into Strastnoy Boulevard, Moyseenko halted Malchik and turned:

"Have you heard?"

"No."

"I stood near by. The Grand Duke was killed." He turned and cracked his whip. Malchik jerked forward. Savinkov and Dora were flung back. But it was not the sudden jolt that made Dora fall on Savinkov's shoulder. She was sobbing with deep, muffled sobs.

"My God, my God," Savinkov heard as he bent over her, "it was we, we who have killed him. . . ."

"Whom?" Savinkov asked quietly.

"The Grand Duke, Sergey," Dora sobbed, her thin body shaken.

Savinkov smiled and pressed her closer to himself.

25

Four gendarmes bound Kalyaev's hands and feet and were taking him to the Yakimansky Precinct Police Station. He stried to shout, "Long live freedom!" His face was a hideous blue. Bloody, he lay back in the sleigh. What had just happened flowed dimly through his mind, like something seen and long forgotten. The smell of smoke was still in his nostrils. The black carriage with the yellow spokes was still floating before him, four steps away. On the pavement he still saw shreds of the Grand Duke's clothing and pieces of naked flesh. Then the crowd closed in. And the Grand Duchess threw herself about, screaming: "Aren't you ashamed? What are you staring at?" The mob was eager to see the pieces of her husband's flesh and pressed forward.

Near the police station, Kalyaev lost consciousness. The gendarmes dragged him in by the arms and legs.

26

In the evening Kalyaev came to. He said nothing at the interrogation, smiling weakly. Then he was taken to the Butyrskaya Prison, to the Pugachev Tower. In the meantime, an express train was pulling out of the Nikolaevsky Station. A lean gentleman sat in a first-class compartment, reading a newspaper. With a polite little bow to the old lady opposite, Savinkov asked:

"I won't disturb you if I smoke?"

"Please do."

The gentleman lighted up with pleasure.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1

After the assassination of the Grand Duke Sergey by the Moscow group of the Fighting Organization, the Petersburg group speeded up its own plans. It was preparing the action against the Grand Duke Vladimir, responsible for the shooting of workers during the demonstration of January 9, 1904.

Maximilian Schweitzer lived at the Bristol Hotel, on the corner of Morskaya and Voznesenskaya, not far from the Winter Palace. He had enough dynamite. And the will of the six comrades was like dynamite.

But some hidden hand seemed to interfere. Police spies frightened off the watchers. The terrorist Sasha Belostotsky escaped; Markov and Basov had been seized. But Schweitzer continued to work every night at the Bristol Hotel, preparing bombs.

But suddenly pedestrians at the corner of Morskaya and Voznesenskaya ran, screaming, in all directions away from the Bristol Hotel. Horses bolted. Glass, stones, and boards came flying from the four floors of the hotel. Broken furniture tumbled into the street from the collapsing walls. There was an avalanche of bricks, mixed with pink dust. Across the way, the bronze fence of the ancient Cathedral of St. Isaac was knocked down by the force of the explosion.

The body was found near the main wall. The man lay on his back. He was horrible. The head was thrown back, the face turned toward the street. The chest was torn open, the left half of it empty. The spine was white, exposed. Handless arms and parts of the shoulder were scattered near by. Pieces of flesh, muscles, and the heart were mingled with the rubble.

2

An idle crowd milled around the scene of the explosion. Vera, pale and breathless, came running from Pochtamtskaya. There was only one body. She saw immediately that it was not Savinkov.

When she returned to Sredny, Vera was broken with exhaustion. She glanced at the clock—it was twelve. She realized that she was waiting for the children. And when she heard the shuffling steps of the nurse in the hallway, and then the tapping of small feet outside the room, Vera rose and caught up Vitya in her arms, a smile brightening her wasted face. She covered his rosy cheeks with kisses, without hearing the funny story he was trying to tell.

3

In the compartment of the Geneva train, Savinkov was reading about the assassination of the Grand Duke Sergey. The English wrote in the *Daily Telegraph:* "Once more the red star of tyrannicide shines darkly in the somber Russian sky. Sergey was killed instantly by one of those fatal bombs which the Russian conspirators prepare so skillfully and aim so well. No one can drive the people to despair with impunity, or deny them the elementary rights of free citizens without provoking tyrannicide. Sergey was a tyrant in the old sense of the word, one of those whom history and tragedy paint in the darkest colors. The great words of St. Augustine are still true today: 'when justice is cast aside, the rulers are no better than brigands.'"

The Germans commented somewhat more matter-of-factly. *Die Zeit* said: "The assassination of Sergey has caused neither surprise nor horror in the world. It was foreseen and expected, and now that it has happened, it bears the stamp of inevitability. Indeed, if there were no plots in Russia, we would have to ask ourselves: how is it that the effects are lacking when the causes are so patent? The Russian autocracy preaches the inviolability of its foundations with bullets, and gets dynamite bombs in reply. Those who play so bloody a role in history as did Sergey must always be prepared for a bloody end. Tsarism should not wonder if its disasters evoke no sympathy in anyone."

The Frenchman Francis Pressancét wrote in *L'Humanité:* "It must be admitted that the secret judges pronounce their sentence over tyrants without mistake. Who would venture to defend Plehve? Who would dare to mourn Sergey? The Grand Dukes have removed themselves from the laws of humanity. They behave like beasts of prey among sheep. Surfeit has led them to seek satisfaction of their sensuality at any cost. Their personal lives are full of crimes and orgies. And Sergey was the worst among these criminals."

In a similar vein, the Swiss wrote in the *Peuple de Genève*: "At the insistent advice of his kinsmen and courtiers, the Tsar replied to the ignorant, unarmed crowd of people, who had come to plead upon their knees for their wants, with a shower of lead. By this action, the Tsar has placed himself outside all laws. He is a monster like those who advised him. The people answer the Tsar's bullets with dynamite. . . ."

Savinkov threw the newspapers out of the window of the rushing train. He was filled with a strange, but pleasant feeling: "The whole world was writing about the death of Sergey Romanov, and it was he, Boris Savinkov, who had killed him." Savinkov knew the welcome that awaited him in Geneva.

4

Gotz's apartment was crowded. It was difficult to speak; everyone was shouting. Old and young were there—Chernov, Rutenberg, Rubanovich, Rakitnikov, Avksentiev, Tyutchev, Natanson, Breshkovskaya, Bach, Shishko, Zilberberg, and many others. The quietest among them was Azef. Like a bloated carcass, he sat in the corner, smiling infrequently, as the comrades surrounded him and pressed his hand. He was the center of the celebration. When he entered, Grandmother Breshkovskaya bowed to him in the old Russian way —down to the floor. Chernov embraced and kissed him.

"Ah, Vanya, a village without an elder is like a sheaf without a tie. And that's what we are without you! No, no, comrades," his shrill tenor drowned out everyone else, "we'll have something to say to the Social Democrats! We surely will! They're all smoke, but no fire! But we? We keep quiet, but then we say our word! And what a word it is! The peasants and the workers will come out behind us! All-out behind us! And control of the revolution will be ours! And Russia will be ours—a Socialist Revolutionary Russia! The Social Democrats will be on the scrap heap, comrades! Hurrah for the Fighting Organization! Long live the Central Committee!"

"May I have some water?" Azef asked Gotz's wife in a hoarse, grating voice. Azef drank like an animal, in short gulps. He was very upset. Sergey's death was unexpected. Azef had thought that Savinkov, worn out with watching, would abandon the attempt. He asked for a second glass. His nervousness bred thirst.

"Why all this drinking, eh?" Chernov embraced him. Everyone

looked joyously at Azef. "It isn't water you should drink! Champagne! Champagne is the drink for you, Vanya! Yes!"

"All right, all right, that will do," Azef drawled nasally, smiling with his meaty lips.

5

On the Mont Blanc Quay, near the bridge, the lights of the Café Nationale gleamed as brightly as ever.

Azef and Savinkov unhurriedly strolled along the bridge. Azef held Savinkov's arm. Savinkov loved Azef. He felt that they had chosen the same path in life and understood each other. Inwardly he knew that Azef was the stronger man, but he did not like to admit it even to himself.

Savinkov walked ahead across the brightly lit café. Azef followed him among the tables, looking at no one. Savinkov was graceful and elegant.

"Let's take the corner table," said Azef when Savinkov stopped by the window. Savinkov followed him. Azef squeezed himself into a soft chair.

"I'm starved as the devil," Azef muttered. "Let's have a decent meal."

Bending their heads over the gold-engraved menu, embellished with the hotel crest, they deliberated over their choice.

"What would you say to kidneys in Madeira?"

"Not a bad idea!"

"And some Barsac?"

Azef grimaced: "I don't care for French wine. Rhenish is better. Do you like Liebfraumilch?"

Half-turning his head in the waiter's direction but not looking at him, Savinkov ordered. The waiter jotted everything down in his notebook with lightning speed, bowed, and hurried away.

"Now tell me about it," Azef said. "But everything, in detail."

Savinkov passed both hands down his face, as if washing himself.

"What's there to tell?" he drawled.

Azef's thick, yellow, waxen face smiled benignly with its fleshy, sticky lips.

"Now, Borya, don't be lazy," he gurgled softly.

The waiter came running to the table, swaying the silver tray with the chilled, misted wineglasses and steaming kidneys in Madeira.

"I'll do it." Savinkov stopped the waiter, who began to serve the food onto the plates. The waiter left, and Savinkov served.

"How was the Poet—calm?"

"Completely. You know," Savinkov's hand with the decanter halted in mid-air and he looked at Azef. "We have never had anyone like the Poet in the Fighting Organization. If there were others like him, we could wipe out the whole royal house within two weeks."

Azef grinned: "You exaggerate. And Yegor?"

"Yegor, too."

Azef was already eating the kidneys, frequently wiping the gravy off his mustache with the napkin.

"And Dora must have been excited? She wanted to come out herself? Where is she?"

"She is in Petersburg now. Of course she was excited." And, smiling faintly, Savinkov told him about Dora's hysterical outburst in the cab after the assassination. Azef roared with laughter. The guests at the other end of the room turned to look, but Azef paid them no attention.

"Women will always be women. Their guts are thin," he said.

The waiter approached and began to remove the soiled plates and glasses.

Savinkov told Azef about the work. He spoke about Petersburg, about the attempts, the information he had received from Schweitzer, about Leontieva, Barykova, Ivanovskaya, the terrorist group in Moscow. Azef scarcely seemed to listen as he ate. Once in a while he asked a question. He needed an equation, and he searched for it. As they dined, Azef calculated what he would give to the police in exchange for Sergey, whom he had given to the party. Over the transparent Liebfraumilch, which they both drank in small, cold sips, Azef's mathematically precise mind formed a clear picture of the people he could safely hand over to Rataev. When everything was decided, he relaxed in the chair, pleasantly stretched his legs under the table, smoothed out the creases in his waistcoat, and said in a nasal drawl:

"Yes, my friend, everything is in fine shape."

"It seems so."

"It is so."

But Azef was already talking of something else.

"Have you heard that you have been co-opted to the Central

Committee?" he asked with a thick-lipped smile. "It was at my insistence. Chernov opposed it."

"Oh? So the fisherman was against?" Savinkov smiled wryly, recalling the red-haired figure of the theoretician he disliked.

"It's unimportant." Azef waved his hand. "Victor has his peculiarities. But this isn't what I meant to talk about. You must come to the next meeting. An interesting question will come up. Do you remember," Azef screwed up the dark olives of his eyes and his face assumed a cunning look, "I told you in Petersburg that if we succeeded with Plehve, we would get money. And if we added Sergey, it would be a sure thing."

"Well?"

"Well, this is what happened. Large sums for terrorist work have been offered through Koni Zilliacus, a member of the Finnish party of Active Resistance. I checked it; it's true."

"Much?"

"Enough."

"By whom?"

"Either the Americans or the Japanese. At any rate, it sounds good."

"There's quite a difference between the Americans and the Japanese."

"What do you mean?" Azef frowned.

"The Japanese are at this moment killing Russians in the war. If they offer money, it certainly isn't because of sympathy for the Russian revolution, but to make it easier to beat the Russian people at the front by blows from the rear."

Azef glowered, thrusting out his moist lips.

"And what of it? What has 'sympathy' to do with it? We need money? Then we take it. What difference who gives it?"

"Still, it would be awkward to take from the Japanese. There'd be a row. We might be compromised. Society, public opinion, everybody would turn against us."

"Public opinion?" Azef turned and spat, sending a long jet of saliva into the spittoon. "Society? We need the money, and we'll take it. If we succeed, society and all the rest of that scum will come running after us. And if we do nothing, we'll be trampled down into the mud. What can be done without money? Could you have killed Sergey without it? I gave you money. How do you know where it came from? No, no, don't shrug your shoulders!" Azef

spluttered with rage. "This is important. I insisted on your being co-opted to the Central Committee. We must see this through; there may be objections. The money is being offered to the Fighting Organization, not the Central Committee, and it must be accepted at any cost," Azef gurgled, bending low over the table. "Don't you understand? The money is for the terror. That means you and I will have the Central Committee and the whole party in our hands."

Savinkov smiled, looking at Azef's bulging lips, but not because Azef was so excited that he gasped for breath; he was smiling at his own sugary theories. What, indeed, was the difference where the money came from? Why this sudden concern for the louse-ridden soldiers who were flogged like sheep by the Tsar and driven, now under Japanese shimozas, and now to quell peasant uprisings?

Azef understood his long smile.

"Well?" He drawled nasally. "Shall we, or shan't we take it?" He stretched his thick lips in a smile.

"We'll take it, Ivan, we'll take everything."

Azef laughed.

"Eh, Your Excellency, you kill people, but still insist on parading in white gloves. Gotz is right when he calls you a Stradivarius. Reflexes, questions, decadence of all sorts—'Oh, cover thy pale feet!'" Azef burst into a long, nasal laugh.

6

Azef wired Rataev about the Moscow terrorists. After Schweitzer's death, he decided to leave the Petersburg group alone for a while. In the morning, on his way to sound out Chernov concerning the American or Japanese money, Azef mailed a bulky registered letter to Rataev about various party matters:

"At last I am able to write you. I delayed writing until I could discover something of importance. I have just learned from Chernov that the Emperor is next in line. His statement that Russia would not give up fighting while there is still a single soldier alive and a single ruble in the treasury will make the Tsar highly unpopular both in Russia and in Europe, and the attempt on his life will probably elicit as much sympathy as that on Plehve. I believe that the letter from Baden had been written by Selyuk. You interpreted it correctly. As for the names we spoke about, I have learned the following: 'Eremey' is S. N. Sletov. 'Natalya' is Maria Selyuk, known

in Kiev as Natalya Ignatievna. 'Venyamin' has lived abroad for the past year; he writes occasionally for *Revolutionary Russia.* The article in Number 44 of that paper, 'Without an Address,' signed 'Former Social Democrat,' belongs to his pen. I am told that he lives in Freiburg; he is unquestionably a terrorist and visits Russia from time to time, presumably on terrorist business. At present Venyamin is not here, and I have not seen him. He is considered very talented. 'Pavel Ivanovich' is a young man with a black mustache, about twenty-eight, recently from Petersburg. I met him several times. It is difficult to estimate his role, but he is obviously important. I am trying to become more intimate with him (the description of Savinkov which you gave me does not quite fit him—please send me a photograph for identification). I am also trying to cultivate the friendship of Prince Khilkov, but his aristocratic upbringing makes him difficult to approach. He is polite, and that is all. I have succeeded in finding Kudryavtsev. He is living in Geneva, under the name of Meshkovsky. He is tall, with a small fair beard, wears glasses, dresses like Childe Harold, in a cloak with a large black bow. 'Eva' was sent to Odessa to work in the printing shop; she is unimportant and not very dangerous, though illegal. I don't know who 'Masha' is, but she is not Tumarkina, who lives with Avksentiev. I have not heard any mention of a Leopold. The money which Minor receives from 'Gav.' is from Gavronsky, who lives in Moscow and is married to Minor's sister. He sends 100 rubles a month. 'Sasha,' who writes to Vera Gotz, is 'Sasha-Angel,' a transport worker. As we agreed, you were to send me money as soon as you received my address, which I have mailed you. Postcards should be sent to the second address. At any rate, please transfer cash through the bank for the Wolde account, and send me a check at once by registered mail, *poste restante,* as I am without funds. Send 500 rubles expense money, and 500 for this month's salary.

"Your Ivan"

7

The successes of the Fighting Organization attracted dozens of courageous party members daily to terrorist work. They came prepared to die for the revolution. Azef and Savinkov had never been so busy. They were inseparable all day and were seen everywhere together. The uninitiated wondered: what did this young man have in common with the huge, dark, paunchy freak? The initiated knew

what bound Pavel Ivanovich with Ivan Nikolaevich. It was blood. In the party, they were as one—a powerful, single-minded force.

It was not easy now to join the Fighting Organization. Applicants were questioned by Savinkov. But his Mongolian eyes had no penetrating powers. Savinkov was not a judge of people. He asked with dry arrogance:

"Why do you wish to work in the Fighting Organization? I would not advise a hasty decision to join terrorist work. This is a place for those who are psychologically incapable of peaceful activities. However, if you insist, talk to Ivan Nikolaevich."

Azef did not offer his hand. Sparing of words, he spat them out curtly through his fleshy lips. But his eyes! His eyes were like X-rays. With one quick sidelong glance, Azef saw through a man.

"Good morning. You want work? What kind of work? So? And do you know that in this business you must be ready for the rope?" Azef gurgled, flicking his fat hand across his short neck.

8

During those days in Geneva, Savinkov read and thought a great deal. Life seemed to him "a creeping glacier, directed by a vacuum." He was fond of quoting Max Stirner: "Nothing—that is what I built my life's work on."

Before the Central Committee meeting, Savinkov wrote a poem. It had been pulsing somewhere within him, and that gave him pleasure. But he had to attend the meeting. Azef asked him to be prompt; the question of Zilliacus's Japanese money was important. Savinkov was somewhat late. He wrote the poem without changes or corrections.

"He bowed low.
I turned
And saw,
Quite near—
His gray,
His wrinkles,
His toothless mouth.
Surprised,
I thought:
But he is dead!

In an oaken coffin
The stern old man
Has long been laid.
He smiled,
I fled.
Came home,
Recoiled,
He waited there!
Again the gray,
Again the wrinkles,
The toothless mouth,
Again the smile,
Again the bow.
Or was it he?
Was I beguiled?
He was so near.
Then hastily
I stepped aside,
Quite civilly
I bowed low.
Yes, he was here.
Life is a dream,
Nothing to fear."

Placing a paper weight over the poem so that it would not be blown away, Savinkov left for the Central Committee meeting.

9

The meeting was stormy. But not because news of revolutionary unrest had come from Russia, confirmed by a high official who had informed the party about the panic and confusion in the highest circles. Nor because of the money offered through Koni Zilliacus. The meeting was thrown into an uproar by the sudden realization that the party was in the hands of a provocateur.

It began when the chairman, Gotz, looking tired and drawn as he sat wrapped in a warm plaid shawl in his chair, announced in a hurried, breaking voice:

"Comrades, we have just received important news. On March 16 the members of the Fighting Organization, Boris Moyseenko, Dulebov, and Podvitsky, were arrested in Moscow. On March 17

the comrades Ivanovskaya, Barykov, Zagorodny, Nadezhdina, Leontieva, Barykova, Shneerov, Novomeysky, Shergov, Efrussi, and Katz were arrested in Petersburg. Borishansky was seized, carrying dynamite, at the Petersburg-Warsaw railroad station. Dynamite was also found at the home of Tatyana Leontieva in Petersburg. Comrades," said Gotz, and his hands shook, "inside of a few days we have lost our dearest, our most devoted comrades. The Fighting Organization in Russia is smashed! Comrades, this is terrible news. But there are things even worse than the defeat we have just suffered. There are most alarming facts, comrades, which demand immediate investigation. I am not afraid to say it, and I am sure I am not mistaken: there is a provocateur at the very heart of our party!"

A hush fell on the crowded room. Everyone looked at Gotz. Directly opposite him sat the hulking figure of Azef.

"Comrades," Gotz cried in a trembling voice, rich with intonations. "It is not only the disaster of the Fighting Organization in Petersburg and Moscow that compels us to give utmost attention to this question. There are incontrovertible facts which confirm the presence of a major provocateur in our midst. First let me tell you: comrade Nikolay Sergeevich Tyutchev, who has just arrived and is present here, has given us facts which lead to sad conclusions."

An elderly man of aristocratic appearance, dressed modestly but elegantly, with silvery-gray hair, a pointed beard, and an intelligent, energetic face, asked from the corner:

"Will you permit me, Mikhail Raphailovich?"

"Please, Nikolay Sergeevich." Gotz leaned back brokenly in his wheelchair.

"About two days before the Petersburg arrests," Tyutchev spoke calmly and distinctly, "I received a telephone call at the editorial office of *Russian Wealth*. A voice which I did not recognize said: 'Give warning—all the rooms are infected.'"

There was unbroken silence in the room. Azef clumsily shifted in his chair. Leaning on his hand, he stared at Tyutchev. His low forehead was wrinkled, the eyes frowned. Tyutchev did not look at him. His eyes were on the other comrades, and most of all on the agitated, exhausted face of Gotz.

"I asked: 'Can I speak to you personally?' Evidently, this was unexpected. There was a pause, and it even seemed to me that my informant at the other end was conferring with someone. Then he

asked hesitantly: 'But it is late. Besides, where?' I answered, 'Here.' The reply was, 'No, it is inconvenient,' and the receiver was put down."

Tyutchev finished. It seemed that heartbeats could be heard in the room. Then the silence was broken by short exclamations.

"Quiet, comrades!" Gotz rapped with his bony hands.

"A question to Nikolay Sergeevich." Azef raised his hand.

"Go on, Ivan."

Azef turned toward Tyutchev clumsily, heavily, with his whole body; he could not turn his neck.

"Nikolay Sergeevich, you could not recognize the speaker by his voice?"

"No. But I must say, I have heard it somewhere before. It reminded me by its rather unusual timbre of a voice I have not heard for ten years."

"Pardon me, Nikolay Sergeevich, was it a man's voice or a woman's?" Everyone turned to Chernov.

"Well, Victor Mikhailovich," Tyutchev said, smiling. "This does not seem so very important. After all, we do not know who telephoned, and probably never shall. Why indulge in guesswork? It was a man's voice."

Chernov gestured vaguely.

"Comrades, we are going into this incident in too much detail," said Gotz. "This is neither the time nor the place for it. You can't suck information from your thumb. Nikolay Sergeevich did not recognize the voice. I merely wanted to inform you about this call. Besides, we have still more convincing data in our hands, of a much more concrete character."

Azef stared at Gotz's distracted face with dark, calm, steady eyes.

Savinkov nudged Azef, bending over:

"Do you believe it?"

"It's possible," Azef grunted.

"We have received a letter at the address of *Revolutionary Russia.* I shall read it, and we'll comment later." Raising his vibrating, agitated voice, Gotz read:

"Esteemed comrades, the Police Department has received information concerning the following Socialist Revolutionaries: (1) Herman, has a passport in the name of Boris Dmitrievich Neradov, lived in Switzerland, at present in Russia (illegally), has

probably come on a different passport. (2) Mikhail Ivanovich Sokolov, lived in Switzerland under a passport in the name of a German subject, Ludwig Cain, will soon leave for Russia. (3) Sokolov will be followed into Russia by: (a) Grisha, who calls himself Chernov, Vasnetsov, or Bordzenko; (b) Prince Dmitry Alexandrovich Khilkov (two weeks later); and (c) the former student Mikhail Alexandrovich Vedenyapin, about two months later (will leave illegally from Switzerland). With comradely greetings. . . ."

Azef mumbled sideways to Savinkov: "No signature."

"Is there a signature?" Savinkov asked loudly.

"There is, but I shall withhold it," Gotz replied excitedly, covering the sheet of paper on the table with his hand. "Comrades! It is entirely clear that the police could have received this information only from a provocateur. I have thought about it for a long time. The situation is most serious. We must take the only possible revolutionary point of view: no name or authority can be too sacrosanct for scrutiny. The whole party is in danger. Let us start with the extreme assumption—that each of us is suspect. Let the comrades speak up. Does anyone have any suspicions? And against whom?"

There was an agonizing silence. No one dared to raise his eyes to his neighbor.

"I do not want to conceal my suspicions, comrades," Gotz spoke quietly into the silence. "I may be committing a wrong, but let the proper court judge this. I must say that I have grounds for suspecting a certain member of the party."

There was dead silence.

"I suspect . . . Tatarov. . . ."

The silence deepened. Gotz understood that his suspicions were shared.

"To begin with, according to my calculations, Tatarov has spent more than six thousand rubles on his new publishing house in six weeks. Where did he get the money? He commands neither personal nor party funds. If he received a contribution, he should have reported it to the Central Committee. I asked him where he got this money. He said he received it from the well-known editor Charnolussky. I must confess, I have begun to doubt this. I suggest that someone be sent to Petersburg to ask Charnolussky whether he had given any money, and how much. Besides, Tatarov will be

coming to Geneva in a few days. He must be placed under surveillance here. I repeat: if Tatarov spoke the truth about the source of the money, and the surveillance by the comrades reveals nothing, I shall withdraw my suspicions. But, comrades, I feel that I must share my doubts with you. . . ."

"You are right, Misha!" cried Chernov.

"It sounds likely," Azef rumbled to Savinkov.

"Who will undertake to watch Tatarov in Geneva, comrades?"

"I nominate Savinkov!" cried Azef.

"Savinkov," several voices supported him.

"There must be three."

"Sukhomlin! Alexander Gurevich!"

"And so, comrades Savinkov, Sukhomlin, and Gurevich will have to assume this unpleasant but indispensable duty. As for the journey to Petersburg, to see Charnolussky, I propose comrade Argunov."

"Yes, yes, Argunov!"

Argunov, who had recently escaped from Siberian exile, stood up to say something. But it was clear that he did not object. And Gotz called out, raising his voice:

"No one against? Then comrade Argunov will go to Petersburg."

The day's agenda was completed.

10

At night Azef walked alone, a huge, dark, bowed carcass, down the Boulevard des Philosophes. Puffing at his cigarette, he reviewed all the facts he could recall. He had decided to take his time with the Petersburg terrorists. There was no doubt—someone else was informing the police. His shoes creaked on the gravel. With unerring instinct, Azef knew: it was Tatarov.

He would not sleep that night. He turned into the English Gardens and sat down, muttering something hoarsely as he smoked. In the chilling wind from Lake Leman he decided that Tatarov must die. But the fear that Tatarov might still have time enough to denounce and expose him persisted. Azef heard his teeth chatter with the cold. At times his thick lips stretched into a semblance of a grin. He muttered to himself.

The wind grew colder. Excursion steamers, gay with lights and music, were returning across the dark lake. Azef felt cold. He rose and, swaying his dark bulk, walked down the path across the

English Gardens to his hotel. But he did not go to bed. Apart from Tatarov, there was danger from another, unknown hand, and this danger also had to be averted. Azef wrote a letter.

First he cited the document read by Gotz, signed, "With comradely greetings, V. Kosovsky." Then, breathing heavily, he went on, line after sprawling line:

"This document will show you, Leonid Alexandrovich, how deplorable things are in your Police Department, and how careful one must be in giving you information. Here in Geneva this letter has convinced everyone in the Socialist Revolutionary group of the existence of a provocateur who is very close to the center of activity. Is it impossible for the Police Department to conduct its work in such a way that its memoranda will not fall into the hands of revolutionary organizations? The result will be that Prince Khilkov, who is still in England, visiting his relatives, will not return to Russia, since he was immediately informed about the document. The same is true of Vedenyapin. I am really astonished at the department's inability to maintain adequate secrecy in its work. I have not received either money or letters. Please send the money at once. And, for God's sake, be careful. One misstep, and I am lost.

"Sincerely,
"Your Ivan"

The dawn was bright over the lake. Fishing boats sailed away into the red-blue distance. Azef, still dressed in his black suit, slept on the sofa, moaning, grinding his teeth, and crying out, as if he desperately wanted to say something and could not.

11

In the morning Savinkov was told that Tatarov had arrived. Tatarov was a tall man, typically Russian, with a square, strong, curly beard, rather short legs, and dark hair parted in the middle. Raw-boned and broad he moved noisily, spoke loudly, and looked like an unfrocked deacon.

Savinkov remembered him from childhood, when they had played stickball and skittles together. As soon as Tatarov learned that Savinkov was in Geneva, he came to see him. They would not

have recognized each other now. Savinkov was a European, and much too elegant for a revolutionary. Tatarov, though he was fond of wearing modish ties and suits, still looked like a village priest or a peasant. Thumping with his shoes and shouting loudly, Tatarov was obviously feeling fine.

"It's been a long, long time, Boris Victorovich, since we last met! Well, won't you tell me how you are doing? Where have you come from now? Moscow?"

"Kiev."

"Kiev? I was told you've been in Moscow."

"Perhaps."

"Ha-ha-ha! Secrets and secrets! Conspiracy up to the ears! You aren't talking to a provocateur, but to a comrade who has been in the party a bit longer than you!"

"Sorry, Nikolay Yurievich. The chiefs are strict."

"Chiefs! Who are the chiefs? But, of course, our lips are sealed. But I know everything myself. Abroad, it's Mishka Gotz! In Russia, you're the exalted chief of the terrorists! Trying to throw dust in my eyes! But never mind."

Tatarov paced the room noisily, his hands twisting his wide-brimmed, light-colored hat, of the kind often worn by bad artists.

Tatarov was stupid and insensitive. Jabbering on, he did not even look at Savinkov. "I will kill this big man," thought Savinkov. "I will kill him because he is rotten and stupid, because he is wearing this gaudy tie; I will kill him like an ox. But how huge he is! He'll make a lot of noise when he falls."

"I am so glad to see you," went on Tatarov. "Tyutchev is also here. We were in exile in Siberia together! Generally Geneva is full of our people, wherever you turn. But I'd like to see Baska. Do you know where she is?"

"Who is this 'Baska'?"

"Why, Yakimova!"

"Ah, I've heard of her. No, I don't know. But tell me, Nikolay Yurievich, I was told you'll be in publishing now?"

"Yes, yes, I will. Why? Do you have anything for publication? You do write?"

"I have a thing or two."

"Let me have it, with pleasure, with pleasure."

Savinkov thought, "I will kill him."

"If you'll permit me, I shall give you a manuscript in a few days."

"Memoirs?"

"Not exactly. Something along that line."

"Very interesting, very. I'll tell you what, Boris Victorovich, the comrades will have dinner with me Sunday—I'll be going on soon, you know. Why don't you come, too, and bring along the manuscript, will you?"

"*Bon,*" said Savinkov, striking his hand against Tatarov's and pressing it more firmly than usual.

12

Tatarov invited fifteen persons to dinner in a private room at the Angleterre Restaurant. Azef sent his excuses. Fourteen guests were at the table, all of them party leaders. The white-haired Tyutchev sat next to Breshkovskaya. Shaking his red mane over the new collar that seemed to bind his fat neck, Chernov was laughing. Savinkov, the old Minor, Rakitnikov, Bach, Natanson, Avksentiev, and Potapov were also there. Only three of the guests—Tyutchev, Savinkov, and Chernov—knew that the host was a provocateur. The table was bright and festive, with silver, flowers, wines, and delicacies. Tatarov recalled how he had founded the "Workers' Banner" group eight years previously. The comrades spoke of his hunger strike at the Fortress of St. Peter and Paul, when he refused food for twenty-two days. Tatarov modestly waved them off, saying:

"What is twenty-two days? Others struck longer than that."

Raising his glass, he stood up:

"Comrades, let us drink to the revolution! It is near, its footsteps can be heard approaching! Let us drink to our party, which leads the revolution, and above all to our comrades of the Fighting Organization. Hurrah!"

The slender goblets rang on many notes as the guests clinked and drank. Clinking with Chernov, Tatarov emptied his glass and felt a pleasant, heady warmth spread through his body. Someone quickly raised an answering toast, waving his glass and shouting:

"A happy journey to Nikolay Yurievich! To the success of his work in Russia—hurrah!"

After dinner, when everyone was noisy and gay, Chernov approached Tatarov with a smile and asked, twisting a large button on his coat:

"And when are you planning to leave, Nikolay Yurievich?"

Grasping Chernov by his powerful arms and drawing him nearer, Tatarov said:

"This evening, Victor Mikhailovich, at 11:30."

"Impossible."

"Why?"

"The Central Committee has some business with you."

"I must go. What business?"

Chernov spoke, smiling: "I am instructed by the Central Committee to ask you to remain a day longer."

"Very well," Tatarov shrugged, "if there is business, I'll stay. Until tomorrow?"

Chernov said simply and warmly, "Until tomorrow."

Passing near Savinkov, he breathed:

"He is staying. Keep an eye on him."

13

Tatarov entered gaily, smoothing out his beard, which had gotten rumpled in the wind.

"Good morning," he said, glowing with sanguine energy as he passed from Tyutchev to Savinkov, from Savinkov to Bach. There seemed to be a trace of chill in Tyutchev's greeting. "He is always like that," Tatarov reassured himself and joined Savinkov at the table. On the table there was a photograph of a plump brunette in a gold frame. They looked at her, but neither of them knew her.

"What is it about?"

"We are waiting for Chernov; he is the chairman."

At that moment the door opened and Victor Mikhailovich entered, smiling.

"Harmony and affection to all!" he said from the threshold. "What weather, my friends, straight out of Pushkin! Clear, transparent, a heavenly breeze. Ah, Nikolay Yurievich, good morning, I thought you might have left. Excellent, excellent! Well then, comrades, were you waiting for me? If you don't mind," and Victor Mikhailovich pulled over a comfortable armchair.

Savinkov, Tyutchev Bach, and Tatarov sat down. Minor lowered his old bones into a chair. But from the way they were sitting down, Tatarov sensed something wrong. "I should have left," he thought. Concealing his anxiety, he asked, stroking his beard:

"What's the question before us, Victor Mikhailovich?" He was pleased that his voice was steady.

"One moment, Nikolay Yurievich," said Chernov, writing something rapidly in a tiny round hand. "The question?" Chernov laid aside the pen and raised one eye at Tatarov, while the other stared off somewhere past him. "The question, you see, is quite serious. Well, not so serious, really, but the Central Committee is making an audit of party affairs, and so I have asked you in the name of the committee to remain and help us to clear up the financial and censorship aspects of your new publishing venture. Of course you will understand the desire of the Central Committee to maintain control of the publishing work?"

Tatarov looked at his hand, lying on the table. It was clear that they suspected him. "The main thing is to be absolutely calm," he said to himself as Chernov went on.

"But before we take up this matter, Nikolay Yurievich, I would like to . . . I mean, this committee would like to clarify certain details. . . ."

Tatarov strained to guess where this was leading. He knit his brows over his dark Gypsy eyes and stroked his beard. Their purpose still eluded him.

"I shall ask you to answer the first point." Chernov's squint became wider. "Who gave you the money for the publishing house? But you know the wise old folk saying, Nikolay Yurievich," Chernov said pleasantly. "'He who shuns the truth takes the longest route.' Just give us straight facts, I beg you."

"Of course, Victor Mikhailovich," laughed Tatarov. "You simply were not informed. I told Gotz: I received the sum of fifteen thousand rubles from Charnolussky and was promised further aid by Charnolussky and Zitron. He is the Odessa publisher," Tatarov added.

There was a moment's pause. Chernov's blurred eye came to rest on some point under the ceiling. Then, shaking his red mane and stroking it, Chernov drawled.

"I see, I see. Well, this is something I did not know. But tell me," he suddenly turned upon Tatarov, and his voice was sharp, "are you staying at the Hotel des Voyageurs under the name of Plevinsky?"

Tatarov should have burst out laughing. He should have banged his fist on the table and shouted: This is outrageous! But he saw

the icy stares of his comrades. "I'm lost," flashed through his mind. His heart turned over twice and seemed to drop to his soles.

"Yes, under the name of Plevinsky."

"And the room number?"

"Twenty-eight, I think."

Chernov's face swam up very near, smiling, distorted. His words came slowly, distinctly:

"This is not true. We have inquired. There is no Plevinsky either in Room 28, or anywhere in the Hotel des Voyageurs.

Someone's breath was drawn sharply. Minor's chair creaked as he crossed his legs.

"I don't remember the name of the hotel. Perhaps it isn't the Hotel des Voyageurs." Tatarov understood that he was speaking stupidly, destroying himself, but he was now rolling irresistibly into some horrible abyss. Another moment, and they would kill him as they killed Sudeykin. Savinkov was tracing a curly feminine profile on a scrap of paper.

"Try to recall it," said Chernov. "Boris Victorovich, please write down for the record: does not remember the name of the hotel, the street, or the number."

Savinkov's pen screeched on the paper.

"But we are not children," said Tatarov. "I lied about the hotel because I am living with a woman and wanted to protect her."

"Oh?"

"I'll name her, if you wish."

"No, no, Nikolay Yurievich, it isn't necessary. You should have said so at once. We'll simply drop it. Do forgive me; so that's it! I am sorry. But now let's go on to business. Tell us, Nikolay Yurievich how is your publishing house protected against the censorship?"

Tatarov wanted to interrupt him, to shout, but he saw it would be futile.

"I was promised protection by a powerful personage," and he heard his breaking voice betraying him.

"Who is he?" Chernov's voice hammered at him now, as if driving nails into something soft, so that they sank in down to their heads.

"A certain prince."

"What prince?"

"Why? I said a prince. That's enough."

"By authority of the Central Committee I suggest that you give us the name."

"Very well. It is a count," Tatarov said in a low voice.

"A count?"

"But this is unimportant—a count, a prince. Why do you need the name?"

"The Central Committee orders you to give it."

Tatarov wrinkled his face and passed his hand over his forehead.

"Count Kutaisov," he said quietly.

"Kutaisov?" Chernov stood up. "You were in contact with him? Don't you know that the party has been planning an attempt upon Count Kutaisov?"

Tatarov's head sank low; his hands convulsively gripped the edge of the table.

"You have lied," he heard Chernov's voice coming nearer, "in concealing your address. You have lied about the source of your money. Charnolussky did not give you any; we checked it. You have never met Zitron. You heard his name for the first time from Minor three days ago. Do you admit it?"

Tatarov shook himself and raised his head. With a last flare-up of energy, he thought, "Get away, escape!" He shouted:

"What do you accuse me of? What does this mean?"

"Of treachery!" Tyutchev could no longer restrain himself.

There was a long, terrible silence.

"It will be better if you confess. You will relieve us of the trouble of exposing you," said Chernov.

"Degayev was offered conditions to redeem himself. Would you like us to put conditions to you?" asked Bach.

Savinkov was drawing a daisy on the margin of his notes.

The door opened and they saw Azef on the threshold. He was scowling angrily. Those who knew him saw that he was extremely perturbed.

"Forgive me, comrades, I was delayed," he mumbled under his breath.

"We are finishing, Ivan; sit down," said Chernov.

A quick glance at Tatarov told Azef everything. He walked in and squeezed himself heavily into an armchair in the corner.

In a breaking voice, which threatened momentarily to turn into a sob, Tatarov said:

"You can kill me. You can force me to kill. I am not afraid. But I am innocent. I give you the word of a revolutionary."

Chernov leaned over to Tyutchev, who nodded his silvery close-

cropped head. Chernov wrote something, then passed the paper to Tyutchev, Savinkov, and Bach.

Tatarov looked down at his shoes; the laces seemed too tight. Chernov rose and, addressing Tatarov, read:

"In view of the fact that N. Yu. Tatarov lied to the comrades about affairs concerning the party, in view of the fact that he had personal contact with Count Kutaisov without utilizing it for revolutionary purposes, and without even informing the Central Committee about it, and in view of the fact that Tatarov failed to reveal the source of his considerable funds, the investigating committee decrees that Tatarov be removed from all party offices and committees, and that the inquiry be continued."

Tatarov did not raise his head.

"You are free for today, but the Central Committee forbids you to leave Geneva without its permission. Your departure will be regarded as flight."

Tatarov walked out with lowered head, without saying good-by. In the hallway he realized he was trembling. It was raining outside. Tatarov did not notice it, although he turned up his collar.

14

"But his guilt is proven!" exclaimed someone. There were cries in the room: "Comrades have died!" "He must be killed!" "On these grounds?" "Provocateurs were killed for less!"

Azef screamed with rage: "And you let him go!? You let him go! He should have been crushed on the spot like a viper!" Azef's face was twisted with such fury as none of them had ever seen before.

"But you must understand, we couldn't, not here, not at the home of Osip Solomonovich!" cried Chernov.

"You gaping crows! Jabbering fools! Idiots! You couldn't! But it is all right for him to send us to the gallows? Do you know how many comrades he has killed? Is that like water off a duck's back to you?!" Azef shouted, flinging out of the room and slamming the door without a good-by to anyone.

15

In the morning there was a knock on Tatarov's door. He was sitting up, unwashed, his shirt creased under his suspenders. Cher-

nov entered. Without offering his hand, he sat down in an armchair. Tatarov was seized with new anxiety.

"You don't even shake hands?"

"Nikolay Yurievich! We shall not shake your hand until you have cleared yourself of suspicion," began Chernov. "Tell me," he said more kindly, "why did you lie? Why this story about Kutaisov? And Charnolussky? And the hotel? What does it all mean?"

Tatarov's thoughts throbbed with confusion.

"Victor Mikhailovich, do you realize what I am going through? His voice shook; that was good. "After years of prison and exile, after eight years of dangerous revolutionary work, to be faced with such inhuman accusations!"

Tatarov's lips were trembling. Chernov thought he might start crying.

"I cannot face a court; it is too painful. But I have something to tell. Everyone speaks of the disasters in Petersburg and Moscow, about provocateurs. But don't I feel myself that there is a provocateur at work?" Tatarov said. "I know there is. And I see it was a mistake not to have informed the comrades. I've been investigating on my own for a long time, as best I could, and now I've succeeded. . . ."

"In discovering the provocateur?"

"Yes."

"His name?" Chernov leaned toward him excitedly.

"Victor Mikhailovich, you will not believe it, but it's a fact! It's a fact!" Tatarov struck himself on the chest. "The party is being betrayed . . . by Azef. . . ."

"Wha-at?!" Chernov jumped up. "You dare to insult Azef! The leader of our party?! Trying to hit back in this way? I've come for a frank confession! But your role is clear now. You will please report to give further evidence!"

"But it is true, I assure you, Victor Mikhailovich, it is true!" cried Tatarov, advancing on Chernov. "I shall bring you facts!"

"Swine!" Chernov clenched his fists and ran out of the room.

Tatarov hurriedly packed his suitcases. "It means death! Yes, yes, death!" He rushed back and forth in his locked room. And at the hour when he was to appear to testify, Tatarov was already near Munich, on his way to Russia.

16

The spring was warm, transparent. The air of Petersburg smelled of the Neva. The islands were in bloom. Gay people promenaded down the Nevsky. The quiet suburban orchards were white with blossoming bird cherry. At night there was singing in the streets.

The Assistant Prosecutor of the Petersburg Court, Fedorov, a nearsighted, brown-haired man in gold pince-nez, did not enjoy the spring day. He was a mild man. When he received orders to go to Schlüsselburg to attend the execution of the terrorist Kalyaev, he felt faint.

Fedorov did not even know the way to Schlüsselburg. It was explained to him that he must take the police launch at the Fortress of Peter and Paul. Fedorov spent five unhappy hours on the way. The dusk was quiet. The Neva rolled darkly, and over it swam a waning moon. In the moonlight the walls and turrets of Schlüsselburg looked bluish-white.

Shivering with cold and nervousness, Fedorov, accompanied by gendarmes, entered the gates with the black double-headed eagle and the inscription, "Imperial Grounds." It was strange to see white houses, and green gardens in the fortress. Followed by the gendarmes, he walked to the Commandant's house. On the right he saw a white church in the twilight, with a tarnished cross. The church stood quiet, as if it were in a village, not a fortress.

"I am the Assistant Prosecutor Fedorov," he said, greeting the Commandant.

"Very pleased," said the Commandant, who was obviously bored.

"I should like to see the prisoner at once."

"There is still time," the Commandant said listlessly. "However, as you please. Korneichuk!" he called. "Please take Mr. Fedorov to the prisoner's cell."

17

Kalyaev, dressed in a threadbare black coat, sat on the bed. His neck was bare, thin. In the cell there was a table, a chair, and the bed. Kalyaev seemed small and frail. He turned toward the opening door.

"Good evening," said Fedorov, coming in with the gendarme. "I am the Assistant Prosecutor."

Fedorov had imagined terrorists as giants with fiery eyes. He was astonished to see the gentle Kalyaev. His mild, warm eyes seemed strange. They were not the eyes of a terrorist.

"I knew you would come. Sit down, please," said Kalyaev.

"Excuse me," said Fedorov, and his voice shook. "I do not know, Mr. Kalyaev, whether you are aware that your death sentence would be commuted to a less severe punishment if you petitioned His Majesty?"

Kalyaev's strange eyes looked at Fedorov, apparently without understanding.

"I will make a request," said Kalyaev smiling. "Not to the Tsar, but to you, and concerning only one thing. Please make it known to the government and to society that I am facing death with complete calm. I did not ask for mercy when the Grand Duchess Elizaveta urged me to. And I shall not do so now."

Kalyaev saw that Fedorov was agitated; his lips were trembling.

"I want to speak to you," said Kalyaev and smiled gently. "How can I put it? . . . The execution will take place in several hours. . . . I want to speak to you as to the last person I shall see on earth. But do try to understand me and try to fulfill my request. I am not a criminal and not a murderer. I am a warring side, at this moment the weaker one and captured by the enemy; he can do what he wishes with me. But he cannot take from me my soul, my convictions, my idea. Do you understand?"

"Mr. Kalyaev, I am a man of different convictions," said Fedorov.

A strange, almost mocking smile appeared on Kalyaev's face.

Fedorov felt confused. He wanted to do something pleasant for this small, frail man before his death.

"Would you like to speak to me alone? Leave us," he threw to the gendarme.

The gendarme tripped as he walked out; his spurs caught and clinked against each other. But when the door had closed behind him, it seemed to Kalyaev that it was useless; there was nothing they could say. Fedorov was wiping his pince-nez with his handkerchief.

"How strange," Kalyaev said slowly, looking down at the floor. "We may have been at the same university."

"I graduated in Moscow," said Fedorov, putting on his pince-nez.

"I began there," said Kalyaev, but suddenly he jumped up nervously and began to pace the cell. "If you only knew, if you knew how anxious I am. Understand me, I want my comrades to know that I am absolutely calm and am not asking for any mercy."

After a silence, Fedorov said:

"Would you like to write it down? I shall call the captain; he will witness it, and it will be a document. I shall submit it to the court."

"Can it be done? Yes, yes, let everyone know that I am dying calmly. It is essential, you see, in the interests of the cause. A calm death is a powerful act of revolutionary propaganda. Even more so than a terrorist act."

Fedorov thought: "Great God, do they have many like him?"

He rose. "Wait a moment, I shall bring some paper," he said and threw the door open, striking the eavesdropping gendarme full in the face. "Revolting!" muttered Fedorov. "'Scuse me, sir," said the gendarme.

18

Workmen were erecting a gallows between the fortress wall and the shed. Their silhouettes moved about in the darkness. Fedorov turned away.

He was astonished to see the people assembled at the Commandant's house. There were the "class representatives"—three townsmen, evidently small shopkeepers. A priest leaned against the window sill, stroking his beard. The garrison officers formed a noisy group around the General Baron Medem, assigned by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to witness Kalyaev's execution.

On the table before the Baron lay an assortment of knives, hammers, and scissors.

"They manufacture splendid articles, Your Excellency; one wouldn't expect it," said the Commandant.

"Charming," said the Baron, holding a hammer.

The glitter of buttons and uniforms and the din of conversation made Fedorov ill with a spasm of nausea. He ran out on the steps, into the darkness, and vomited. Passing his hand over his perspiring face, he walked back to the cell.

Kalyaev said, smiling:

"I am so glad you've come. They have already announced it to me."

Fedorov leaned against the wall. Kalyaev wrote. Suddenly he turned and jumped up. "But where is my hat?" he asked. "Where is my hat? It was just here." He felt with his hand over the bed. "Oh, here it is," and snatching it up, he made a step toward Fedorov.

"I've written it. What are we waiting for? Let us go, the quicker the better." Kalyaev pressed Fedorov's elbow, but looked past him, at the flame of the lamp.

"Would you like to send a message to anyone?"

"A message?" Kalyaev repeated abstractedly. "I don't know; what can I say? I did no evil to anyone, I loved people, I am dying for them. What is there to say? The main thing, don't forget it, please, say that I did not humble myself to ask for mercy. But no, this is indelicate. Better say that I remained strong and did not ask for mercy." Kalyaev smiled with glittering eyes.

"But you have a mother? I will deliver it to her."

"You will?" muttered Kalyaev. "One moment then." He wrote something and tore it up, again and again. He covered his face with his hands and sat so for several seconds. Then he shook himself and began to write once more:

"My dearest! My beloved mother!

"And so I am dying! I am happy that I am able to face the end with complete self-possession. May your grief, my loved ones, all of you—mother, brothers, and sisters—melt away in the radiant glow of my spirit's triumph. Farewell, and give my greetings to all who knew me and remember me. My last request to you is that you preserve the purity of my father's name. Do not grieve and do not weep. Once again, farewell, I shall always be with you.

"Ivan Kalyaev"

He blotted the letter carefully several times with a dirty blotter and gave it to Fedorov.

"Now I am calm. Let us go, let us go quickly."

The door opened before them, admitting the tall, thin captain and two soldiers.

"Prepare yourself," said the captain.

Kalyaev looked at him with a strange smile. Turning, he said to Fedorov:

"Good-by, thank you."

19

The Commandant's dining room, lighted by lamps and chandeliers, was noisy.

In the dark courtyard Fedorov sat down on a bench under the lindens. Directly ahead in the distance loomed the finished gallows. Fedorov dimly remembered General Medem coming out of the house, attended by a semi-circle of officers, the priest, and the representatives of the classes. The door of the prison building opened. A little man, barcheaded, in a shabby coat came out under a strong escort of gendarmes in square formation, with naked swords. The man's neck was bare.

The dawn was rising. The smell of linden blossoms filled the air. Fedorov walked heavily toward the gallows. It seemed to him it was the overpowering fragrance that made it so difficult to walk. He heard someone read the sentence. The priest approached, but Kalyaev pushed the cross aside gently with his hand.

"Leave me, Father, my accounts with life are closed. I am dying calmly."

The hangman, Filipiev, came nearer and put a shroud over Kalyaev.

"Go up the stairs," Filipiev said hoarsely.

A calm but slightly muffled voice came from under the sack:

"How can I go up? I have a sack over my head. I cannot see anything."

Fedorov turned away, covered his face with his hands, and made three steps.

He was astonished to hear the sound of footsteps almost immediately. The General Baron Medem, the officers, the class representatives, and the priest walked past him.

At the gate Fedorov turned around. On the gallows swayed a tiny figure in a shroud.

CHAPTER NINE

1

Gotz sat in his chair, pale as usual, wrapped in a woolen blanket. Near him sat Azef, smoking a cigarette. They had obviously been talking for a long time. Chernov entered.

Gotz immediately held out to him the *Journal de Genève.*

"Read this," he said.

"Well," he asked, watching Chernov's face, "what do you say?"

"What do you mean, what?" Chernov said, going for a chair and bringing it nearer. "It is a new step, a rather big concession. They're maneuvering."

"Do you think it is a trap?"

"When there's no way out, one must turn about."

"Well, Victor, I wouldn't have expected you to say that," Azef drawled through his teeth, puffing at his cigarette. "Minor was just here. He kept shouting that we're naïve fools, that the manifesto of October 17 is nothing but a trick to lure us émigrés back to Russia. To make us come out into the open, you see, so they can round us up and put an end to us. And you also seem to think it is for our sweet sake that they are turning Russia upside down and changing the autocracy into a constitutional regime? You overestimate our importance, Victor!"

"But the hypocrisy of the manifesto strikes the eye! Of course it's a maneuver! *Divide et impera!* That's what it is! Quiet the opposition and crush the revolution!"

"You are wrong, Victor," said Gotz. "I attach no importance to the first lines of the manifesto. They are a façade, an attempt to save face, to protect the 'government's prestige.' Of course the government will have to zigzag for a long time, to make concessions to the public in order to suppress extremism. But one thing is clear: the old regime is finished. This means the end of absolutism; it means a constitution and a new era. And it is nonsense to speak of traps. Just as the end of the Crimean War inevitably brought the abolition of serfdom, so the end of the Japanese War brings a con-

stitution. Naturally this will call for a considerable change in our tactics."

Savinkov entered and greeted everyone, while Gotz went on:

"Take, for example, Ivan and Pavel Ivanovich. They will have to say their Nunc Dimittis. The terror is finished. Or do you disagree?"

"Yes, yes," Chernov spoke rapidly and almost indistinctly. "You are quite right there. We must suspend the terror for a while, that's true. Not that it is done with altogether," he hurried on, catching Savinkov's contemptuous smile, "I mean, we must remain under arms, prepared to move again if necessary."

"Salt the terror away, so to speak, pickle it?" said Savinkov.

"Well, any way you put it, with dill or without, but we shall certainly have to pickle it for a while."

Shishko, Avksentiev, Sukhomlin, Fundaminsky, Rakitnikov, Tyutchev, Natanson, and several of the terrorists came in, excited, obviously in the midst of a heated discussion. They burst out talking all at once. Savinkov retired into a corner. Shishko, who had a slight lisp, was shouting passionately, like a young man, that the party must immediately turn to the masses and lead them in an assault along the widest front.

"Wait, Leonid, and what about the terror?"

"The terror?" Shishko broke off. "What about it? Of course the terror cannot go on for the present."

"Right! We must remain armed, but wait with action."

"Permit me!" cried Savinkov.

They turned to him. With one hand behind the wide lapel of his jacket and the other in his pocket, Savinkov looked defiant and scornful. Without changing his pose, he said that the government must be attacked in the streets, in houses, on squares, and in palaces, and then the true revolution would flare up, the revolution that the executed Kalyaev had dreamed of. He was passionate and eloquent in his speech.

"We must understand what the terrorist is; we must realize that the prestige of the party has been raised by terror; we must learn not to fear the glory of terror, the glory of our comrades' deaths! Only by striking blow after blow with the knife, the revolver, and the bomb shall we gain true contact with the masses and rouse a country-wide revolution. I hear talk about keeping the Fighting Organization under arms, of 'pickling it.' As a member of the organi-

zation, I protest against such an insulting formulation. We cannot be pickled! We are not cucumbers; we are revolutionaries. To us such an attitude is psychologically impossible! We have given the party glory; we have given it funds. You cannot, blinded by some shadow of a constitution, discard us now like old rubbish the party no longer needs! We have given our lives to the terror and, if I am not mistaken, we are a terrorist party! We have no right to lower our flag at a moment when we should unfurl it like a scarlet cloud over the length and breadth of Russia, and whip up the storm of revolution! This is how we terrorists think! We will not allow ourselves to be thrown overboard at the most crucial moment, for this would mean destroying the glory of our party, made sacred by the names of Sazonov, Kalyaev, and other comrades. No, I do not believe that the banner of the terror can be furled now. Quite the contrary—we must sound a mighty crescendo in the rising hymn of the revolution! Let the party send us out to perform the boldest, the most desperate acts! We shall take this assignment. Let it command us to rush into the Winter Palace with belts loaded with dynamite! We shall do it. In the name of the revolution, for the glory of the terror! And this will bring about a greater explosion in the land than all the printed appeals to the masses! We are united with the masses by blood, not by printer's ink! I do not know what the Central Committee will decide, but I believe that I am voicing the opinion of all the terrorists and speaking in their name when I say: we will not lower the banner of terror, which is soaked in the blood of our comrades, which is holy to us! We want sacrifices and will make them in the name of the all-Russian revolution!"

Savinkov glowed with excitement. His speech was a success. He saw rapt enthusiasm in the faces of the terrorists. But he could not see Azef's face. Azef sat with his back to him.

"There is little point in all this artful plotting for the revolution, my dear young people, if you allow me to say so," the old Minor got up, shaking his sparse beard. "You cannot impose anything on the revolution from the outside, my friends. You cannot give it any orders, and it has no need for saving recipes; it moves, it is here, and the emotional speeches of Pavel Ivanovich are excellent literature, but irrelevant at this time. What have revolver shots to do with the present situation?"

Savinkov stood pale. He waited for Azef to speak. Fundaminsky rose, removed his pince-nez, and spoke evenly:

"The urgent task of the party at this moment is the solution of the agrarian question. This is our party's historical mission. The terrorist methods have had their day. They cost people and money; they weaken the party and, if continued, will interfere with the solution of the party's chief problem, the economic one."

Savinkov waited for Azef's speech. Gotz took the floor, agreeing with Fundaminsky. Sukhomlin agreed with Gotz. Natanson agreed with Sukhomlin. Avksentiev agreed with Natanson. Azef was the last to get up. Everyone listened to him attentively.

He stood with his fat body twisted, his hand still resting on the arm of the chair.

"I shall be brief," he rumbled confidently and firmly. "I feel that interference with the elemental movement of the social masses would be disastrous. We have helped the revolution to rise above the banks; it is coming into flood, and we must see to it that we are not swept aside. I have marched with the party, giving my life to it. And now it is time to take a fresh look at our programmatic and tactical baggage. I say that as soon as a constitution is achieved, I shall become a consistent legalist. As for keeping the Fighting Organization under arms, it's nothing but words. It is not possible to keep it under arms. I have heard the members of the Central Committee, and, on my own responsibility, I declare the Fighting Organization dissolved!"

Azef sat down heavily and picked up his half-smoked cigarette from the ash tray.

2

When the meeting was over, Savinkov approached Azef in extreme agitation.

"What does this mean? You have dissolved the Fighting Organization?"

"Haven't you heard all those speeches? How, then, can we go on?" Azef smiled affectionately and patted Savinkov on the back. "Don't worry, Master, we'll find work."

Chernov joined them.

"Ivan, let's go and have a bite at the Liberté."

"Come, Pavel Ivanovich, let's drink to the soul of the Fighting Organization; may it rest in peace," Azef drawled out nasally.

Chernov, Savinkov, and Azef sat in the reddish glow of the Liberté Restaurant. The glow came from the red lanterns and the

red carpet on the floor. Their table was in a far corner. The restaurant was empty, save for a man and a woman kissing in a dark booth.

"What a manifesto! Why, we've talked about it all day, with never a thought of food! Quite a manifesto, my friends!" said Chernov.

Azef ate without listening.

"Yes, it's an interesting time we live in," Chernov went on. "I'll go to Russia myself, take a look at things with my own eyes. The news seems good, but your own eye is the best spy, you know."

"If there is a genuine constitution, there won't be any work for us," Azef mumbled, spitting out the gristle into his plate.

"Why this pessimism, Vanya; who else will do the work?"

"The Constitutional Democrats. We'll be shunted aside."

"Nonsense, fat, nonsense," said Chernov. "Although, you know, one of the comrades has already called you a 'Cadet with a bomb.'"

"Wait and see."

"No, but the Central Committee is making a terrible mistake! You will realize it in six months, in a year, I assure you. But then it will be too late," Savinkov broke in, overwrought and pale.

"Oh, you're still harping on the same tune? Every tradesman to his own wares! You're exaggerating, Pavel Ivanovich, you're exaggerating, my pet. There was no mistake; the step was a correct one. Sensible, cool, but, of course . . . without aesthetics. . . ." Chernov smiled.

"This has nothing to do with aesthetics, Victor Mikhailovich. It's a question of sound policy. You are discarding terror when it is needed most. And if you talk about 'aesthetics,' I'll tell you that terrorist work must be understood. We have built a fine Fighting Organization, but a year later it may be impossible to build one. The members have lived together, worked together; they trust each other. And, finally, these people have dedicated themselves to the terror. What will you do with them now? Turn them into clerks? This is a fine way to treat the terrorists," Savinkov laughed tensely. "When they're needed, you tell them to go and fight and blast and die; but the moment the need is over—to hell with them; they don't count. And what do you care if they have flung away their souls together with the bombs!"

"Ah, souls, souls! A soul may be fine, but all in its time, my dear Boris Victorovich. You are more concerned, as I see it, with your

own personal feelings than with the interests of the party and the revolution. Well, of course, personal dramas may be of many kinds. So you've fallen in love with a bomb and hate to part with it," laughed Chernov. "But part you must, if only for a while; it can't be helped. The thing is all too clear: there's the autocracy, the struggle, the poetry, the romanticism of sacrifice, the idea of rousing the masses by heroism. All this is very well, my friend, and I admit that it's quite picturesque and gives you the halo of a 'hero'—a halo that isn't won so easily, at that. But now that new horizons are opening up, you refuse to move ahead. It's a pity to give up the bomb and it's hard to lose the halo. You must forgive me, I speak as a friend, but a halo is, after all, a most attractive thing; there's no denying it. We're all human. I suppose you've pictured yourself dying heroically, dying for Russia, like Yegor and Ivan. . . . Well, there's nothing to be done about it now. And as for breaking into the Winter Palace and blowing yourself up with a dynamite belt, forgive me, but this is such desperate romanticism, it's quite preposterous! Of course, I understand your eagerness to blast out with some such dynamite crescendo. Without it, you think, life will be nothing but an insignificant blot. But it's nonsense, really, an empty little proposition, a personal drama, purely personal. . . ."

After his solid meal, Azef poked in his teeth with a toothpick. It was difficult to judge whether he was listening or not. He stared at one spot on the seat of an empty chair.

"And what if it is personal?" cried Savinkov. "I understand that the Central Committee cannot be concerned with every personal drama. But the point is that this personal drama, as you call it, is the drama of every terrorist, and there are fifty of them—resolute people, people who do not wish to abandon the terror. Tell me, what are we to do now? Kill Durnovo? You forbid it. Kill Witte? You forbid it. Kill the Tsar? Again, you say the time is wrong. What then?" Savinkov spread his arms. "There's one thing, perhaps, that you will not forbid, after all? To walk up to some gendarme, some Tutushkin in the street, and blast him with the last bullet! This, I'm sure, would not mix up your cards? And it would still pour water on the revolutionary mill! Tutushkin is not Durnovo, not Witte, not the Tsar of all the Russias. His death would pass unnoticed, but to me, at least, it would mean that I have not betrayed my whole past."

"Well, this is something I would not presume to answer; it's

your own business." Chernov burst into peals of laughter and ordered a glass of Benedictine.

"Let's go," said Azef, yawning like a hippopotamus.

"One moment, fat, I'll drink it down and we'll go."

3

Geneva was asleep. The streets were quiet. The Rue Verdun along which Azef and Chernov were walking was gradually sinking into darkness. A black cyclist flitted down the street. At every street lamp he stopped and raised his pole. The block was blotted out and the dark man rolled on. He passed Chernov and Azef, paying them no attention. They walked now in total darkness.

"All these Tutushkins and Winter Palace actions are certainly nonsense," Azef gurgled. "We must give up the terror, that is true. But there is still one thing left. It would be the logical conclusion to our struggle and might do some good politically."

"And what is that?"

"Blowing up the Okhrana! Hm?"

The street was dark and deserted. A shutter crashed somewhere; then everything was still.

"What do you think, Victor? It's worth doing, isn't it? Who could object? The Okhrana is the living symbol of everything vile and rotten in the autocracy. And, you understand, it's very simple. We can bring two hundred pounds of dynamite into the inner courtyard in a carriage supposedly delivering prisoners. One great bang, and there is no trace of the cesspool! Everything to the devil's mother, along with all their generals!"

"We-ell," said Chernov. "Of course it's not a bad idea. But isn't it, perhaps, another bit of romanticism?" He took Azef under the arm and they walked on slowly. A watchman, oddly dressed in something that resembled a Russian short coat, sat sleeping in the doorway of a store.

"What the hell do you mean, romanticism! It's a most necessary action; think about it!"

They were standing on the corner. A bluish dawn began to glimmer in the sky. The city loomed out of the mist. The mist rose, leaving the buildings oddly naked. Hurrying people appeared in the street.

"N-no, Ivan, I don't know, I doubt it."

"But no, it is important, Victor, very important. I will return to the plan again. Think it over."

4

With the exception of Gotz, chained to his chair, all the Socialist Revolutionaries were going to Russia, which had begun to stir with revolutionary unrest. They were going with great excitement and hopes. Azef was going. Savinkov was going. At the Hotel Majestic, Azef's luggage was packed. He read once more the letter from Hedy de Hero, who sang at the Château des Fleurs. Of course Hedy was not "de Hero," but simply Hedwig Muller, from the Saxon village of Friedrichsdorf. But among the cocottes of the Petersburg cafés, Hedwig was a sensation as "La belle Hedy de Hero," the ex-mistress of the Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich, who had accompanied him to the Japanese War.

"Goot morning, Hänschen! It is seven o'clock, and you is now getting up and yowning be cause it is stil very erly. After tee you walk in butiful park. I asked your helth? I think good, better (*besser*) than last time in Petersburg. Well, now I get up. . . . Time is after dinner. I lie on table on the balcony and see small clouds, see *Eisenbahn*. Sadly because I cannot come to you. But I know will meet, and this makes me very enjoyable. I remember you don't like chocolad, but I know you like hot tee and will cook myself for you. I am very enjoyd to get your letter, that your helth is cured. I want to give you a wonderful *Kissen*. I know that I must lie away this *Kissen* for you. Please write me in German. Hedy."

Azef took out a postcard, an ordinary *carte postale* with a picture of a "vivid brunette" in deep décolleté, with a rose in her hair, her head thrown back, and teeth bared in a smile. Hedy had an ample but beautiful figure.

Just looking at the postcard excited Azef. His mouth spread with pleasant recollections. He knew the outstretched neck, the arms, the legs, the lips. They had met at the Aquarium Restaurant before Plehve was killed. They had eaten pineapple together.

Azef loved Hedy. He sat down to write an answer:

"Meine süsse Pipell

"Do you realize, do you know how I dream of you? I have your picture before me, and I kiss it. How I wish you were here with me, what a pleasant time we'd have together. I am a little short of money now, but still I have found a pretty mink coat for you, just the kind you wanted. *Meine süsse Pipel!* You must fix up a cozy little apartment for us, as we both like it. I will send you money; I shall have more soon. I'll wire you before coming. When you receive the money, take the furniture out of storage. We'll have a lovely time in Petersburg. I shall rest with you; we'll be inseparable. How I long to spend my nights with you, as we used to. I imagine you and kiss you often and often. And you? How are you behaving? You know how I dislike your old friends; I beg you not to see them. It is time to become *solide* and *anständig*. I have had bad luck here the other day. I tried to win some money for you at the casino. I staked on your luck, so that we might have an even jollier time in Petersburg. It was amazing, though; everybody else was lucky, but your *papachen*—not even once. I lost all around. You can imagine how upset I was. Well, I shall write you soon. Remember me and think about your Muschi-Puschi.

"All my *liebe* to *süsse Pipel. Papachen* tickles you all over with his rough mustache.

"Dein einziges armes Hänschen."

Smiling, Azef sealed the letter, wetting the edge of the envelope with his thick tongue and rolling his eyes.

5

Savinkov wrote:

"Dear Vera!

"I write 'dear,' and yet I do not know myself whether you are dear to me or not. But of course you are, and therefore, dear Vera! Sometimes I think that, when we meet again, you will not understand me any more. You will not find the man you knew and loved. And you may not love the new one. Life molds people. Sometimes I do not know whether you exist. But now I can see the autumn mud of Petersburg, the gloomy morning, the leaden waves of the Neva, and beyond them the misty shape, the sharp spire of the fortress. And I know: this is the city where you live. At other times I see nothing. People to whom life is like a glass wall are difficult.

"I took a journey recently. One night I was out on the seashore.

The waves sighed drowsily, crept upon the shore, and washed the sand. It was misty. The whitish, mournful haze dissolved all boundaries. The waves merged with the sky, the sand with the water. I was lost in a moist, watery world. I could not tell where the beginning was, and where the end, where the sea, and where the land. Not a star, not a glimmer of light. Impenetrable fog. Such is our life, Vera. I do not know the law that governs this fog. They say a man must love his fellow men. But what if there is no love? How can one love without love? They speak of sin. I do not know what sin is.

"My heart is often heavy. Everything in the world has become alien. There is much I cannot write to you about. These past days have been especially difficult. I remember coming north, to Norway, after I escaped from Vologda. I remember the first Norwegian fishing village. Not a tree, not a shrub, no grass. Naked rock, gray sky, a gray, dismal ocean. Fishermen in oilskins dragging their wet nets. The smell of fish and oil. And everything around—the fishermen, the fish, the ocean—alien to me. But at that time I was not frightened; I had something of *my own* somewhere. Now I know: there is nothing of my own in life. It even seems to me that life itself does not exist, although I see children, I see love. It seems to me there are only two realities—death and time. I do not know what I could do with peaceful, ordinary life. I don't need peaceful life. If I need life at all, I do not want it peaceful either for myself or for others. I often think about Yanek. I envy his *faith.* He was holy in his death; he believed like a child, and so there was truth in his suffering. I have nothing of that. It seems to me that I shall not die as he did. People differ. Holiness is not attainable. I may die on the same post, but my death will be dark. In bitter waters there is only wormwood. There are ships in this world with broken helms and no destination. I have no belief in paradise, either on earth or in heaven. But I want struggle. I *need* struggle. And so I fight, in the name of nothing. I fight for myself, in the sole name of my desire to fight. But I am bored and weary—with loneliness, with the glass walls.

"I shall probably arrive in two weeks. I want you to live near me. Do I love you? I don't know what love is. It seems to me there is no love. But I want you near. It will be easier for me so. Perhaps this is love?

"Last Tuesday I sent you 200 rubles with a comrade.

"Your Boris Savinkov"

CHAPTER TEN

1

In Petersburg, Savinkov took a cheap furnished room in the Dagmara Lodgings on Ligovka, registering under the name of Leon Rodé. Every morning he went to the editorial office of the *Son of the Fatherland.* There the archpriests of the party were deciding, in clouds of tobacco smoke, how the land was to be distributed to the peasants. They shouted about Witte, the revolution, the manifesto of October 17. The terrorists gathered in one corner, around Azef, who usually sat on a massive sofa, enveloped in the incense of cigarette smoke. What next—the Tutushkins? But Savinkov was in a deep depression. He wandered over Petersburg, paying no attention to police spies, drank, was short of money and long on despondency. He listened with dull indifference to Azef's plans for blowing up the Okhrana, arresting Witte, dynamiting telephone and electric lines.

"What is it, Pavel Ivanovich?" Azef rumbled angrily. "One day you're full of talk about Tutushkins and dynamite belts, and the next, one cannot squeeze a word out of you."

"It's all rubbish, Ivan. We must revive the Fighting Organization. All that futile talk—is that what we need now?" Savinkov said, on the way from a meeting.

"Of course not," grunted Azef.

"What do you think, will the Fighting Organization be revived?"

Bending under the onslaught of the drizzly, wet Petersburg wind, blowing in from the Neva, Azef muttered indistinctly:

"It depends on Witte, not on the Central Committee. I think the old man will turn things our way." Azef coughed violently, saliva dripping from his mouth. When he had finished, he caught up with Savinkov.

The sound of violins came from the Carmen Restaurant. The Carmen seemed inviting on this windy day. Azef went in, filling the doorway with his bulk, brushing against the doorposts. Savinkov followed him.

"What will you have?" They examined the menu, while the waiter mumbled toothlessly that there were no more lamb chops and no pork chops.

"I'll have an omelette, my dear man!" said Savinkov.

"Empty pockets and an empty belly!" Azef roared with laughter. "No wonder, all this talk of reviving the Fighting Organization!"

"That's not the point, Ivan. There is no money, but there will be."

"Where will you get it?"

"Don't be afraid, I won't turn provocateur. The point is that I believe in nothing except terror. I have given all my energies to it. And now, when we should be showing Witte an iron fist, we are forced to lay down our arms for the sake of so-called 'tactics.' It's treason!"

"Don't get so excited, Master, our time will come. Shall I give you some money?"

Azef pulled out a crumpled hundred-ruble note from his vest pocket.

"You're a gentleman, Borya, born and bred," Azef laughed slyly, with a sidelong glance. "You've gotten so enamored of impersonating Englishmen, you aren't good for anything else. Work is boring; it's 'prose.' All you want is bombs and verses." Azef's paunch rocked with laughter. "A polished gentleman; no wonder they call you the 'guardsman.'"

"I detest their democratic snot and lousy manes," muttered Savinkov, eating his omelette with relish.

"One day," he smiled suddenly, "I remember it as if it happened yesterday, a woman comrade came running to Tyutchev and burst out, right in my presence: 'Nikolay Sergeevich, imagine,' she cried, 'I've just been walking down the Nevsky [Savinkov mimicked a woman out of breath], and whom do you think I saw? Azef, in an elegant cab, with his arm around a woman of questionable virtue.'"

"And Tyutchev?" Azef rumbled.

"He shrugged his shoulders. 'If he did it, it must be necessary for the work.' Another time someone protested because he had seen you in a loge at the Alexandrinsky Theatre. He looked up, he said, and there was Azef in a loge, with a lady, in sight of everyone, in evening dress, with a huge diamond on his finger! Ha-ha-ha! Incidentally, Ivan, I could never understand why the women fall for you. Eh? Frankly speaking, your mug is not exactly angelic."

"And they don't fall for you? Women have intuition," Azef

drawled nasally, smiling. "They feel a soft bone in you, so they stay away." He broke into a quavering laugh.

The restaurant reeked of beer, vodka, and kitchen smells. But they were reluctant to go out into the cold. They sat in a corner. Through the window they could see the dense slanting rain and driving fog, shrouding the street.

Azef snorted, puffing at his cigarette.

"Tell me, Ivan, but honestly, do you have faith, or none at all?" asked Savinkov.

"What faith?"

"Well . . . in our cause, in socialism?"

"In socialism?" Azef gurgled, his dark eyes laughing as he peered at Savinkov. "Everything in the world, Master, *ist eine Messer-und Gabelfrage*. Of course, it is necessary for the young, for the workers. But you and me? Ridiculous. . . ."

"And permit me, comrade, to inquire," Savinkov said, narrowing his coal-black Mongolian eyes. "I had the impression that you were the chief of the Militant Committee which is preparing an armed uprising in the fight for socialism?"

Both of them laughed. "Let's go, Borya," said Azef, rising noisily.

2

In the street they were caught up in a sharp, circling wind. Sheet metal rattled somewhere on a roof. A wet shiny trolley went by, leaving the street in darkness when it passed.

"The Fighting Organization has a lot to do," Azef spoke through the gusts of wind, pulling down his bowler. "There is Witte, the Okhrana, and then, Dulebov."

"What about Dulebov? Savinkov asked, turning away from the wind.

"He has gone insane. The gendarmes transferred him to St. Nicholas Hospital; he is writing notes there. The notes are nonsense, gibberish, but he names people. Right now the doctor is one of ours; he relays them to us. But if the gendarmes get wind of it, there will be trouble. I'm sorry for Pyotr, but it can't be helped; he must be put out of the way," said Azef, turning up his coat collar.

"Pyotr?"

Holding his bowler, Azef turned his bulk toward Savinkov and said:

"Why, of course Pyotr. He won't live long anyway, but he can do a great deal of harm."

"You mean, kill him?"

"Yes, yes. What's all this fuss? He is insane, isn't he?"

A gust of black wet wind slapped at them. They turned around and walked a few steps backward.

"And Tatarov, have you forgotten him?" muttered Azef in the darkness. "That's another job."

On the corner, cabmen were dozing, huddled under their leather covers. Azef and Savinkov embraced, kissed, and parted until the morrow.

3

Two days before the signal for an armed uprising in Moscow, the new Governor General, Dubasov, arrived there from Kursk, and Yevno Azef, from Petersburg. The uprising was crushed. And while the Presnya was still steaming with blood, the Central Committee of the Socialist Revolutionary party fled from Moscow and Petersburg to Finland and opened a conference at the Turisten Hotel near the Imatra waterfall.

Azef sat gloomily at the meetings.

"Ivan Nikolaevich, Moscow should never have been surrendered to the Semenovsky Regiment!"

"What can you do?" Azef spread his flabby, finlike hands. "So it went."

Azef made no speeches. After the Moscow disaster he knew his strength. He waited for the others to turn to him, and they did. The new Fighting Organization included a number of women: Maria Benevskaya, Rachel Lurye, Alexandra Sevastianova, Xenia Zilberberg, Valentina Popova, and Pavla Levinson. The men who joined it were Savinkov, the Vnorovsky brothers, Moyseenko, Shillerov, Zilberberg, Dvoinikov, Gorison, Abram Gotz (Mikhail's brother), Zenzinov, Kudryavtsev, Kalashnikov, Samoilov, Nazarov, Pavlov, Piskarev, Zot Sazonov (Yegor's brother), Tregubov, Yakovlev, and the worker Semen Semenovich.

Azef decided to establish a workshop for the manufacture of

bombs in Finland. And the first terrorist acts on the program were to be attempts upon the Governor General of Moscow, Dubasov, General Min, P. I. Rachkovsky, the current Minister of Internal Affairs Durnovo, and Admiral Chukhnin.

4

When Savinkov and Maria Benevskaya came to the party's secret rendezvous apartment on Furstadtskaya, they found Azef gloomy and upset. Savinkov himself was nervous after four days of searching vainly for Ivan Nikolaevich.

"I was so worried, Ivan." Savinkov pressed Azef's hand with both of his. The frail blonde Maria Benevskaya also pressed Azef's hand shyly.

"We were so anxious, Ivan Nikolaevich," she said and blushed.

Azef scowled. He did not even glance at Benevskaya. He panted heavily.

"I was chased like a rabbit."

"You are careless, Ivan."

"Yes, Ivan Nikolaevich, and it is criminal on your part." Benevskaya was pretty and delicate, with aristocratic manners and obvious good breeding.

Azef gave her a quick glance out of the right eye.

"Criminal," he muttered, grinning. "It's lucky it ended this way."

"You depend on your unrevolutionary appearance and neglect the most elementary rules of conspiracy, Ivan. It can't be done, my friend, you must be more careful. Was it an accident, or were they after you as the head of the Fighting Organization? What do you think?"

"How would I know," Azef muttered reluctantly. "The fact is there, and whether they hang me as the head of the Fighting Organization or as a member of the Central Committee is not so important."

Why was Benevskaya looking with adoration at Ivan Nikolaevich? Before joining the Fighting Organization she had been a Tolstoyan Christian who condemned active resistance to evil. Now, without renouncing the Gospel, she had become a terrorist, and her comrades could not understand what roads had led this quiet, austere young woman to their ranks. She worshiped Ivan Nikolaevich as the leader of the terror, to which she had committed

herself fearlessly, fighting for the happiness of Russia and of all mankind.

"Stop joking, Ivan. Do you have any suspicions?"

Azef had been waiting for this question for an hour.

"What suspicions? What do you mean?"

"Betrayal."

"Betrayal?" Azef raised his dark eyes at Savinkov, and his face spread into an ironic smile. "Ha-ha-ha! Of course, I have no suspicions—the facts are clear even to a child. The party has exposed a provocateur and then allowed him to go free. Do you think a provocateur is a delicate fly, a schoolgirl who faints with fright? Do you really imagine," Azef frowned and his face twisted, "that Tatarov isn't working? That he abandoned his job, got scared, and simply threw it over? I would stake my head on it that it's his work. He will send us all to the gallows. Very well, if the Central Committee wants it, we'll go to the gallows, too." Azef puffed excitedly at his cigarette.

"Then it was proved?" Benevskaya asked with agitation.

"He is a provocateur, no question about it," Savinkov broke in. After a moment's thought, he added, "Ivan, we have obeyed the dictates of the Central Committee on many occasions. But now, when the Fighting Organization itself is threatened, we can't sit by. If you are arrested, all our plans are lost. We must protect ourselves."

"But how? What is your idea?" Azef asked with seeming reluctance.

"By killing Tatarov, that's how," said Savinkov, looking steadily into Azef's dark, protuberant eyes.

The words Azef needed had been spoken. He was silent. Breathing heavily, he finished his cigarette. Then, throwing the butt on the floor, he stamped it out with his shoe and lighted another.

"I am sure you understand, Boris, that I cannot raise the question. Tatarov accused me before Chernov to clear himself."

"Well?"

"It would place me in an awkward position. People can say I want to get rid of a man who accused me of treachery."

"What nonsense!"

Benevskaya's pale face suddenly flushed pink, her eyelids quivered, as if she wished to say something but checked herself.

"No, it isn't nonsense," Azef said slowly, lazily. "I have my scru-

ples. I cannot handle this. Besides, you understand, Tatarov is not a general or a governor, he is a comrade, a former comrade, it's true, but he has a name, a revolutionary biography; it's not so simple to kill him."

"Let's quit the psychology." Savinkov waved his hand. "All this is true. Tatarov is not a general; he was a revolutionary. Fine. But he is a traitor. If you are shadowed, the Fighting Organization is in danger. We must avert it. Hence, Tatarov must be killed. It's as clear as arithmetic. I can't see why it is easy to kill a general, but difficult to kill a provocateur? They're birds of a feather. Very well, it may be somewhat more difficult psychologically to kill a provocateur, but that's all. And it is much more important at this moment to remove Tatarov than Dubasov."

Azef did not look at Savinkov. He waited.

"If, as you say, it is awkward for you to organize Tatarov's assassination, let me do it."

Azef was silent.

"I don't know," he said. "There may be complications with the Central Committee."

"To hell with complications. The Fighting Organization is in danger of the gallows, and we'll start thinking of debits and credits!"

"If you are sure it must be done—all right." Azef shook out the still smoking cigarette butt from his holder and crushed it again underfoot.

"But what do you think? Is it necessary, or isn't it?" Savinkov asked with irritation.

"I consider it necessary," Azef said, rising heavily from the chair.

5

Savinkov, Benevskaya, Moyseenko, Kalashnikov, Dvoinikov, and Nazarov went to Warsaw to kill Tatarov. The plan was simple. It was devised by Savinkov during his walks through the yellow winter fog of the Petersburg streets.

In Warsaw, Moyseenko and Benevskaya took an apartment on Chopin Street in the name of Mr. and Mrs. Kramer. Savinkov was to invite Tatarov there, ostensibly to give testimony, and he would be killed by Nazarov, Dvoinikov, and Kalashnikov.

Dvoinikov was a Moscow factory worker, stocky, with high cheek-

bones. Nazarov, also a worker, was taller than Dvoinikov, agile, and muscular. Both were powerful men. But the first blow was to be struck by the absent-minded student, Kalashnikov. He insisted on it, and the others yielded.

6

Savinkov walked past the Jan Sobieski monument, swinging his cane. At the house marked by an iron name plate, "Dean Yury Tatarov," he stopped and pressed the button. His mind was vacant as he waited.

Mother Avdotia Kirillovna hurriedly tried to step into her slippers, the right foot missing repeatedly. She did not want her son to go to the door. "He might catch cold, God forbid," she whispered, "and he just lay down for a rest." She almost ran, her slippers pattering softly on the floor.

"Pardon me," an elegantly dressed gentleman said, standing before Avdotia Kirillovna. "May I see Nikolay Yurievich?"

Avdotia Kirillovna liked the gentleman. With a smile on her old face, she said quietly:

"My son is resting, but just the same, please come in. I'll tell him."

Wiping his feet on the mat, Savinkov entered the parlor. It was small, with geraniums, cacti, and rubber plants, photograph albums, plush tablecloths, screens, and portraits of priests.

When the door creaked and Tatarov's thickset figure appeared on the threshold, Savinkov was looking at the portrait of a cowled monk over the sofa.

"Oh, it is you?" Tatarov said hesitantly, with a note of surprise, and Savinkov saw that he turned pale.

"Hello, Nikolay Yurievich!" he said gaily, pressing his hand.

"Sit down, please," said Tatarov.

"I have some business with you."

"Please," Tatarov said, lowering his head. He looked at Savinkov's striped trousers and noticed that the shoes were muddy. "He goes about without galoshes," thought Tatarov.

"You see, Nikolay Yurievich, all the members of the committee investigating your case, with the exception of Bach, are now in Warsaw (Savinkov lied suddenly, but naturally). If you are to be rehabilitated, we must hold an interrogation. This will give you an opportunity to defend yourself and will allow us to clear up the

matter. We have new information which alters the case in your favor. The comrades have instructed me to visit you to ask whether you are willing to appear."

"There is nothing I can add to what I have said," Tatarov answered without raising his head. Savinkov looked at him again as he had in Geneva, imagining how he would topple noisily under the blows of the comrades.

"But I tell you, Nikolay Yurievich, we have new facts. For instance, you named a provocateur in the party. Now we have information which may rehabilitate you completely."

"Yes, I spoke of a provocateur. And I'll repeat it now. The provocateur is 'the fat one,' Azef."

"Where did you obtain this information?"

"The information is reliable. I have it from the police. My sister is married to Police Inspector Semenov, who is on friendly terms with Rataev. I asked him, as a personal favor, to find out about the secret agent in the party. He did. The provocateur is 'the fat one,' Azef."

"Well, you see," said Savinkov. "If you could offer documentary proof. . . . Although, frankly, I personally would hesitate to trust a police source entirely."

"I understand, Boris Victorovich, but here. . . ."

"I understand, Nikolay Yurievich," Savinkov interrupted, "but this information must be considered by the investigating commission *in corpore*. I was merely sent to invite you. Will you come?"

He saw that Tatarov was agitated, crumpling his beard and tugging at it.

"Who will be there?"

"Chernov, Tyutchev, and I."

"Who else?"

"No one else."

Tatarov was silent, thinking.

"Very well," he said. "I will come. What is the address?"

"Ten Chopin Street, the Kramer apartment. Ask for Mrs. Kramer."

"Very well. At eight?"

"At eight."

In the hallway, Avdotia Kirillovna was peeking through a crack in the door.

"Tell me," Tatarov suddenly stopped Savinkov and asked in a

low voice, "how is it you are not afraid to come to my home since you suspect me. If I am a provocateur, surely I might betray you?"

"Have I told you we suspect you? I don't believe it for a moment, Nikolay Yurievich. That is why the committee is here—to clear things up."

"Very well, good-by," said Tatarov.

"Good-by, until tomorrow. But, please, don't be late."

Savinkov walked down the staircase, where the janitress was lighting a kerosene lamp. Emerging buoyantly into the street, he had the pleasant feeling of a job well done. Tomorrow at eight Tatarov would be at the Kramer apartment.

7

Already at five there was excitement at Number 10 Chopin Street. At six, Benevskaya sat down in an armchair in the drawing room. She was pale and probably had not slept that night. Kalashnikov either paced the study, whistling some tune, or went out into the corridor.

In the last, empty room, Savinkov sat bending over a table, writing something.

Nazarov and Dvoinikov were drinking tea. They were childhood friends whose fathers had brought them from the village and apprenticed them in a factory.

"No, Shurka, there is no justice in the world," Nazarov said, biting off a piece of sugar with his strong teeth. "Think of all the people they've killed during the Moscow uprising, and all the orphans wandering homeless and hungry. They deserve a bomb, the lot of them, and no question about it. . . ."

"Eh, Fedya," Dvoinikov shook his head. "It's true enough, but you can't rush headlong into such things. One must come to the work in a clean shirt, so to speak. What if I am not yet worthy enough of serving the revolution, as, say, Kalyaev did?"

"Idle talk, Shurka," Nazarov frowned. "Shirt or no shirt. . . . Is it necessary to kill? It is. So that's it, and keep your head high!"

Nazarov finished his tea, turned his cup upside down, wiped his lips, and said:

"Well, I'll be off."

Dvoinikov also finished, uttered something that sounded like

"Ee-ehh!" and went with long slow steps to the window facing the street.

"And so, Maria Arkadievna, you will meet him and bring him to the drawing room, and then he's cut off. I'll come out of the study."

"Comrade Kalashnikov, are you sure he is a traitor?"

"Yes. Why?"

"What if it is a mistake? It would be terrible."

"How absurd you are, Maria Arkadievna. He betrayed comrades, sent them to the gallows. . . ."

"No, I know. . . . He must be killed."

There was a light tapping on the back door. Benevskaya and Kalashnikov started.

"Is it he? No, it can't be; it's early," said Kalashnikov and rushed to the hallway. Benevskaya saw his hand on his pocket. She knew—he had a Finnish knife there.

Someone entered the back way. "Ah, here's the straggler." Benevskaya heard Nazarov's voice and laughter.

"I'm late, the devil take it. I don't know the city, and the cabman was an idiot," said Moyseenko.

"Everything is all right, Comrade Moyseenko," said Kalashnikov.

Dvoinikov gave a low whistle from the window. Everyone stood ready.

Tatarov walked rapidly across the street, stooping, his head pulled deep into his collar.

For some reason, Benevskaya went to the mirror and smoothed her hair with a quick, feminine gesture. Savinkov tore himself away from his manuscript when he heard the whistle and waited for the bell. "Now he will ring." But the bell was silent.

Nazarov, glued to the window into the yard, looked like a large cat. Directly opposite, he saw Tatarov talking to the janitor. But before Nazarov could realize it, Tatarov nodded to the janitor and quickly walked back to the gate.

Everyone stood breathless, waiting for the bell. Nazarov leaped down from the chair and rushed into the drawing room.

"He's leaving!" he cried. "Don't stand around with open mouths!"

They ran after Nazarov to the windows and watched the retreating Tatarov.

"Ugh, the vermin. . . ." muttered Nazarov.

Kalashnikov stood bewildered. Benevskaya looked strangely at everyone. She was miserable. Hearing the noise, Savinkov came in.

"Gone?" he asked. "He'll turn us all in now. We must leave the apartment at once."

"What if we catch up with him?"

"You mean—in the street?"

"There are places enough in the street."

"That's nonsense, Fedya," Savinkov said with irritation. "We are leaving at once; he will denounce everybody."

8

Tatarov's door was not opened to anyone. Nikolay Yurievich came home pale and shaken. Without attempting to conceal his state, he staggered to his room and collapsed on the bed. When Avdotia Kirillovna bent over him in alarm, he burst out:

"Mama, don't open the door; they want to kill me. . . ."

"Kolya. . . ."

"Leave me," Tatarov said, warding her off with his hand.

Avdotia Kirillovna left the room sobbing, covering her face with her work-roughened, stiff old hands.

Tatarov lay with closed eyes. His beard was rumpled. His thoughts beat wildly, rushing and colliding, causing him intolerable pain. Tatarov tried not to think.

But what did the janitor say to him? That the apartment had been rented by a married couple, but the first to come was a well-dressed young man. That might have been all right. But then two men had come, "like workmen, in caps." Now everything became clear. Savinkov was trying to lure him. The elegant Savinkov, who called him Nikolay Yurievich, who shook his hand, who spoke so cleverly and amiably, was a terrifying figure. Tatarov felt the perspiration come out on his forehead, and heavy hammer blows inside his head. He heard a strange roaring noise, as though life itself were already rushing past him. To rid himself of these fancies, he tried to get up, but became dizzy and fell back on his elbow.

9

Savinkov and Nazarov walked along Ogrodovaya Street.

"But you say it's necessary?"

"It is necessary."

"Then I'll kill him!"

"How?"

"With a knife."

"At home?"

"Where else?"

"And what if you don't get away, Fedya?"

"Oh, quit it—if and if! You don't want to send me? Go yourself. But you'll never be able to do it." Nazarov laughed, showing his strong, yellowish, unbrushed teeth.

"All right," said Savinkov. "Go ahead. But it's hard with a knife; see that you don't miss."

"I'll see what tools to use. I've got them all with me. So he escaped, the vermin? How many revolutionaries did he kill; how many comrades did he sell? Don't worry. He won't get away this time!"

"Good-by now, Fedya." Savinkov stopped. He was hurrying to join the comrades on the train to Moscow.

"Good-by."

"Oh yes." Savinkov remembered and put his hand into his pocket. Nazarov turned around. "I haven't given you any money."

"What money?"

"But you'll need some money."

"I have my own money; I don't need yours." Nazarov waved him off angrily.

"Here, take it!"

"Nuts to your money," Nazarov muttered, walking away.

Savinkov stood and watched him for a while. Then he smiled and hailed a cab.

10

In Moscow, Savinkov read an item in the newspaper *Russkoye Slovo:* "On March 22, an unknown person appeared at the home of Dean Yury Tatarov in Warsaw and killed Tatarov's son. While escaping, the murderer seriously wounded the victim's mother with a knife. The murderer has not as yet been apprehended."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1

Azef had never been as cheerful as he was that spring in Petersburg. Ivan Nikolaevich had a mathematical brain. His calculations tallied and paid off. He lived with Hedy and was pleased with everything.

He had given Rachkovsky the dynamite workshops in Saperny and Svechny. True, their relations were somewhat strained. Rachkovsky was not paying him punctually and did not answer his letters. But Azef was not worried; if the left hand lost, the right won.

When Savinkov came to visit him at Hedy's apartment, Azef gurgled:

"A cozy little nest, eh, Borya? I love these vulgar middle-class comforts."

"Middle-class comforts? I detest them."

"Naturally, Borya. You are our English gentleman." Yes, Ivan Nikolaevich was very gay in those days.

2

The office of the chief of the Petersburg Okhrana, General A. V. Gerasimov, would have fascinated a historian, a psychologist, or simply anyone curious about the mysteries of the human soul. There were many interesting things in the general's office. But no one ever entered it. Even the caretaker Isayich, proudly wearing his St. George Cross and an assortment of medals, was not permitted to come in. General Gerasimov swept the room himself. The general's lunch was never brought in; it was left on the chair outside and the general came out for it.

A. V. Gerasimov was a tall, thickset man of erect, military bearing. He had a small pointed beard and a mustache with ends stiffly turned up. His eyes? His eyes were steel gray. And he had a habit—twitching his nose.

The general came to his office on the Moyka in well-cut civilian clothes. As he sat ruminating at his desk, he resembled a large, whitish, very cunning fish.

3

Azef had risen early that morning. He went out in excellent spirits, humming "Three heavenly creations." He knew that there were sixty thousand rubles in his name in the Crédit Lyonnais, and that, in the general confusion of the decaying empire, he could stage acts that would make all Europe gasp.

But suddenly there was a strangeness in the air. Azef was out on business connected with the Fighting Organization. When he reached the corner of Gorokhovaya and Gogol streets, he sensed, like an old wolf, something disturbing, menacing behind him. Azef could not turn his head; his neck was too short. He wheeled around quickly with his whole body, as if to snap back at a possible attacker: two police spies were behind him, following on his heels.

"What the devil?" Stepping across a wide puddle, Azef turned into Gogol Street. The spies followed, some twenty paces behind. Azef walked faster. He had to go to Nevsky Prospect, but he turned toward Moyka. "Nonsense, they'll quit," he muttered. But the spies persisted. Azef turned again toward Nevsky. At the Yuly Heinrich Zimmermann music shop he stopped, watching the spies reflected in the window. They stopped at a near-by butcher shop.

Azef started, and so did they. Azef could see them clearly. One was huge and red-haired, probably an ex-janitor. The other was short, very broad in the shoulders, bowlegged. "What the hell?" Azef muttered, his back suddenly wet with perspiration. He began to tire from the rapid walk and the anxiety.

Cursing Rachkovsky, he hurried on with long strides. No one would have thought that this huge clumsy merchant could move with such lightness and speed. Azef knew there were cabs around the corner. Glancing at the first in line, he judged that the old black was still capable of a good run across the city. He jumped into the carriage, mumbling, "Nikolaevsky Station."

At that moment the spies appeared. They rushed back and forth in confusion. But the big black horse, swaying his old body from side to side, had already limbered up his stiff legs and was speeding Azef down the Nevsky. "The swine," Azef muttered. He meant Rachkovsky.

4

During the next two days Azef was unable to reach State Councilor P. I. Rachkovsky by telephone. A vein bulged out on Azef's forehead—a sign of agitation. Azef liked clarity. Hedy noticed that he was nervous, preoccupied. He could not even be tender with her. He often went to the window. There was no mistake—the house was beleaguered with spies.

"*Warum bist du so traurig? Warum denn, mein Schatz?*" The ample-bodied Hedy pressed herself to Azef and kissed him on the lips, just as he liked.

"*Ach, weiss du, ich bin ein bischen erkältet, ich weiss selber nicht, was mit mir los ist, ich fühle mich nicht wohl. Weiss du, ich bleibe ein paar Tage im Bett. Das wird am besten sein und meine kleine Pipel* will look after me."

"*Mein armes Hänschen, mein Muschi-Puschi,* my poor daddy." Hedy kissed him tenderly. She put him to bed and took his letters to the post office.

The worst of it was that Azef could not understand what it was all about. When he got up, he went to the window. There was no one across the street. He went to the bathroom. It was a corner house. No spies there either. Azef understood: there had been a mistake at the department; now it was cleared up. Humming "Walked the streets of Madrid," he went to Hedy, and they spent the morning laughing, joking, and making love.

Afterward, Azef left the house, freshly shaved and perfumed, in a top hat and a black coat buttoned tightly on his monstrous bulk. There were no spies. He was about to enter the Empire Restaurant on Nevsky to telephone Savinkov when detectives and gendarmes seized him roughly by the arms from both sides.

Straining his whole fleshy body to break away, Azef cried: "What does this mean?! How dare you? I am the engineer Cherkasov!"

"Stop resisting!" barked the captain, who had a black brush of a mustache. And two gendarmes dragged Azef to a cab.

From the cab, Azef shot a quick glance at the assembled crowd. There seemed to be no acquaintances. Azef knew the way better than the gendarmes. They were taking him to Moyka, to the Okhrana, housed in the building where Pushkin died. Azef knew

this, too. But all he thought about was that his forehead dripped with perspiration under his top hat, and that he could not wipe it because his captors held his arms.

5

The top hat lay on the rough wooden table. The coat hung on a nail. Azef, dressed in a blue suit, was stretched out on the cot in the solitary cell. He was still suffocating with rage.

At four in the afternoon General Gerasimov appeared on the threshold. He was in mufti. Azef did not get up. Gerasimov sat down at the table, with a slight twitch of the nose.

"I am General Gerasimov, chief of the Okhrana. Be good enough to get up and state your name," he said. The words fell like drops of water on tin, without expression.

Azef jumped up from the cot, his face convulsed with rage. His eyes rolled so far sideways that the iris disappeared and only the yellow whites showed, flashing across his face.

"I am the engineer Cherkasov! I live on Furstadtskaya! I demand an immediate explanation of my arrest! And if you do not release me at once, I will complain to the Minister!

"I see, I see." General Gerasimov tapped his strong fingers on the table, scrutinizing Azef.

"Be kind to tell me what this means?!" Azef shouted, advancing on the general.

"What it means?" Gerasimov repeated quietly. Azef saw the steely slits of the general's eyes. "You are the engineer Yevno Azef, a member of the Socialist Revolutionary party! That's what it means!"

The rage vanished from Azef's yellow face.

"What?!" he said. "What nonsense." And the cell resounded with his laughter. "You confuse me with someone else, General. I am Cherkasov. I submitted my passport."

"I see, I see," the general said, narrowing his eyes and twitching his nose. "Nevertheless, I shall detain you until you show a bit more sense."

"You are raving! This is an outrage!"

"Now look here!" Gerasimov shouted, banging the table so hard that the cup standing on it jumped into the air. "Don't go too far! Drop this farce, and be good enough to answer my questions!"

Azef stared at Gerasimov with his dark, glittering, bulging eyes.

Gerasimov saw laughter in Azef's eyes and meaty lips. Azef was laughing at General Gerasimov—a rolling, nasal, jarring laugh.

"I certainly will not answer your questions," Azef said curtly. "You will be kind to send for State Councilor Rachkovsky."

"Pyotr Ivanovich? You will speak to him?"

"I will," muttered Azef and began to pace the cell.

"Excellent," said Gerasimov with a wry smile.

6

It was rather dark in the cell. Azef turned sharply when the door opened. Gerasimov and Rachkovsky entered.

"What is the meaning of this, Pyotr Ivanovich?! What sort of a position are you putting me into?!" Azef shouted.

"To begin with, don't shout." Rachkovsky held out his hand. "What position?"

"It's fine for you! You aren't walking in the shadow of a noose!" Azef screamed with a distorted face, saliva bubbling out over his lips.

"Unfortunately I am, too."

"It's your own fault! You didn't answer my letters! You abandoned me! Your idiotic spying put me into a hell of a position before the revolutionaries!"

"Oh, but calm down, Evgeny Filippovich, everything will be all right. We've had affairs here, a bit more important than yours or mine."

"More important," Azef snarled angrily.

"Certainly," Rachkovsky drawled calmly. "I was up to my neck in work and could not answer."

Gerasimov looked at Rachkovsky and Azef, grinning.

"And since I am still too busy, your contacts henceforth will be with Alexander Vasilievich here. He will take personal charge, so to speak," Rachkovsky said with spiteful amiability. "And so, Alexander Vasilievich, let me confirm that the prisoner is our agent. His arrest was obviously due to a misunderstanding," Rachkovsky smiled maliciously. "We must train our men to leave their own alone. And now, I need not stay here any longer. You will settle matters between yourselves, won't you? One thing I'll say: he is an extremely valuable agent." Rachkovsky laughed hoarsely.

Gerasimov was silent. Azef thought he saw an evil shadow flit across the general's fish face.

"And now, you will excuse me, my friend, and remember old acquaintance." Rachkovsky shook Azef's hand. "What a temper you have, Filippovich. How can a sober man flare up like that? It's bad, my friend; in our work, steady nerves are the prime foundation."

Azef tried to free his small soft hand from Rachkovsky's numbing grip. The other laughed again and walked out.

"To begin with, let me apologize for mistaking you for a revolutionary," Gerasimov said, sitting down at the table. "I quite understand your indignation. It's the fault of some of our people, a simple accident. Let us hope that in this best of all possible worlds everything will turn out for the best after all."

Azef watched the general. He was irritated by the wart which seemed to jump from one side of his face to the other as he spoke.

"And so I shall be working with you. Our rules are brief: few words, much action. Naturally I shall release you this very day. I shall give you my address. One evening we shall meet and talk things over. But I warn you." The general suddenly banged his hand on the table. "You have been playing a double game. Don't deny it!" he raised his voice. "I know it! From now on, that's over. You understand? I will not permit it."

"It's a lie and an intrigue," Azef answered calmly, "I have done no other work."

"You have."

"I have not."

Gerasimov looked at Azef, Azef at Gerasimov. A full minute passed.

"All right," Gerasimov broke the silence, smiling with his steely eyes. "In any case, you will either work only for me, or. . . ." And Gerasimov flicked his thumb across his throat, just as Azef had done in interviewing terrorists.

"Is that clear?" he asked, without removing his narrowed steel-gray eyes from Azef's fleshy face.

Azef strained every nerve to conceal his emotions, but his face was suddenly wet with perspiration.

"It is a lie. I have never worked for the revolutionaries."

"Evgeny Filippovich, my word remains. I know that your infor-

mation has always been valuable. I shall not stint in paying for your work. How much have you been getting lately?"

"Very little. Five hundred rubles."

"That is not little. Many agents get much less. You received bonuses for special cases, didn't you? I do not have much money at my disposal. But since I value your services, I shall increase your salary to eight hundred a month."

"Not enough," Azef said hoarsely. "I risk my head, and you say eight hundred."

Gerasimov smiled; he saw that Azef agreed.

"Ha-ha-ha! You can't bluff me! I know you are living and will continue to live at the party's expense, and its treasury is larger than ours! What you get from us goes directly into your account at the Crédit Lyonnais. In a single year, my friend, this makes ten thousand in salary alone. After three years, you can buy yourself a factory and throw all worries to the wind! You will be released tonight, after dark," said Gerasimov, rising. "The address is Panteleymonovskaya 9, Apartment 6, ask for Papasha. It is best to come in the evening. I shall keep an eye on you through other agents. For good service you will get good money. For the slightest deception—no offense, but we shall have to. . . . And now, good-by, Evgeny Filippovich!" And General Gerasimov walked out of the cell with his erect, military stride.

7

Azef stood in the cell in his black coat, with the top hat in his hands. His eyes fixed on the floor, he muttered something to himself, waiting to be released.

The cabman left the dark gates of the Okhrana at a brisk trot. It was a long way from Moyka to Stremyannaya, where Hedy lived. The hour was late. The slanting, warm snow which melted on the pavement seemed yellow against the street lamps and lighted windows. The air was damp, solid, heavy; it was difficult to breathe in the Petersburg fog. Shrinking people in bowlers and hats ran through the flying sleet and wind like strange, imagined shadows. And Azef, his head drawn deep into his upturned collar, sat in the speeding carriage like a dark, headless carcass.

The carriage flew into Stremyannaya and past Hedy's house. The

cabman reined in sharply; the horse slipped and fell near the sidewalk, hoofs scraping sharply on the stone.

"Ugh, devil!" Azef swore, jumping out of the carriage. He did not know why the horse's fall had jarred him so unpleasantly. But the horse scrambled to its feet at once, shaking its back, stretching, and coughing. Azef looked up—there was a reddish light in the window. He climbed the staircase heavily. But on the second landing he suddenly felt weak; his heart thumped, and he paused to catch his breath.

Hedy, in a warm robe and soft slippers, was curled up on the sofa, reading Hamsun's *Victoria*. At the more moving passages she could not go on reading; lowering the book, she whispered, *"Wie süss!"* Azef's three rings found her in this state. Hedy rushed to the door.

"Hänschen! Papachen! Um Gottes Willen!" she cried, embracing Azef before he had time to remove his hat and regain his breath.

"Lass doch, lass," he said with sudden roughness. He had not expected to give her such a greeting. He sat down on a chair. There was a sharp pain in his kidneys and he caught at his side.

"Um Gottes Willen! Was ist los mit dir? O, mein Gott!" Hedy cried, frightened.

Grimacing with pain, Azef tried to smile.

"Sei nicht böse, Muschi, Papachen hatte schlechte Geschäfte," Azef said, stretching his lips into a semblance of a smile. He rose and kissed Hedy.

8

The secret-police apartment on Panteleymonovskaya was elegantly furnished. The general liked antique mahogany and chose his furnishings with taste and style.

A dark man opened the door in the darkness.

"Is Papasha home?"

"He is."

By the voice and figure, Azef recognized the unmasked provocateur who had been active among the Social Democrats—Nikolay, also known as "Gold Glasses."

"Come in, please, Evgeny Filippovich," the general smiled as if they were friends of twenty years' standing. Azef replied in the same tone:

"I thought I'd never find you, Alexander Vasilievich."

Gerasimov, in gray camel slippers and a braided velvet jacket, was a picture of relaxed comfort.

"Come in, my friend," he said, leading Azef through a series of rooms. One was filled with cages—on the walls, on tables, on the floor.

"What do you have here?" muttered Azef.

"Birds," said the general. "Don't you like birds?"

"Birds?" Azef grunted.

"I've had a passion for canaries since my school days. I went to school in Kharkov. I relax with them. Unfortunately I have so little time," said General Gerasimov, escorting Azef into a spacious study with low armchairs and portraits of Emperors in heavy gilt frames.

"And photography, are you interested in that?" he asked, bringing over a chair for Azef.

"No," Azef answered shortly.

"I am fond of photography, too. I take pictures myself. Sit down, Evgeny Filippovich; make yourself comfortable here, my friend."

The armchairs, made from the general's own design, were luxurious and restful. Sinking into the black leather, Azef stretched his legs over the rug and rumbled:

"You have a beautiful apartment, Alexander Vasilievich."

"I don't complain," Gerasimov answered, looking for something on the table. "And here is more of my work—enlargements. Anyone you know?" He threw Azef a photograph, laughing.

Azef studied the life-size portrait of Savinkov.

"And this three-quarter one, have you seen it?" The general threw him a laughing Chernov, with an album in his hands. "You see, I treat you to acquaintances right off," Gerasimov laughed, sitting down in another armchair and pulling over a smoke stand. Azef lighted the cigarette offered by his host.

"I'll tell you frankly, Evgeny Filippovich, you've given me a bit of trouble! I rashly promised you mountains when we met at the Okhrana, but when I came to Their Excellencies, they jumped on me hand and foot. 'You've lost your mind,' they cried, 'this is almost a Minister's salary!' But, you know, I am not one for long discussions. I put it to them point blank: either I work with you, or not at all."

Azef watched the general from under his brows. The wart was now on the right cheek.

"Our Excellencies, if you pardon the expression, have the brains of sheep. But they know one thing: without Gerasimov it won't be long before they become 'illustrious victims of the revolution!' Ha-ha-ha! They'll take a journey to the better world by non-stop express! And so they finally agreed to your salary, though with great lamentation. It was not easy."

"Alexander Vasilievich," Azef gurgled quietly, screwing up his eyes in the blue cigarette smoke, "just what is it you expect of me?"

"To begin with, Evgeny Filippovich, let us get acquainted." The general smiled, searching Azef's face with his steel eyes. "That is first. We are alone here, we can talk freely, heart to heart. And, you know, getting to know a man is the first thing in our work. I'll tell you plainly: General Gerasimov is not an impossible fool like Rataev, and not an unregenerate scoundrel like your former chief, our most esteemed Pyotr Ivanovich Rachkovsky. Remember this, it will be useful. However, you will see for yourself; my prime principle is frankness and humanity in all relations. Was it Marcus Aurelius who said, 'There is beauty in directness?' And so! Working with me is simple. And your duties are mere trifles. But first," Gerasimov raised a warning finger, "I ca-te-goric-ally forbid you to enter into any sphere of party activity except that of the Fighting Organization! This is the cornerstone. You don't have to report about the party's non-terrorist activities, even to me. You understand?"

"Why?" Azef grunted.

"That, my friend, is covered by others. Besides, it does not interest me. Our work concerns only the terror, and nothing else. But this is better for you; why do you object?"

"As you wish," Azef said, evading Gerasimov's eyes.

"That is what I wish. The second point is this. I know the very best about you. I'll tell you straight, I consider you a man of great intelligence and enormous will power and, most important, Evgeny Filippovich, an excellent organizer! If the party had ten like you, all our necks would have been wrung a long time ago. But they're a pygmy breed, pygmy, ha-ha-ha! Mooning calves, mostly sighs and raptures and a verbal kick here and there. That's that. Of myself, I also have a pretty good opinion. I think I am not without talents; besides, I have a point of application. This, you know, is always important. If we go along hand in hand, Evgeny Filippovich—who knows—we may leave our names in Russian history."

"That's of small interest." Azef grinned wryly with his moist flabby lips.

"I wonder. Can you be entirely without vanity or ambition? No, my dear, that's a weak spot with all of us!"

Azef was tired of the probing. He asked:

"And now, concretely, what is it you want?"

"Concretely, Evgeny Filippovich, it's this: from this day on, I want to be informed about all the plans of the Fighting Organization. Absolutely all! But don't worry, there will be no muddling. I know that you already have standing in the party; with my help, you will go still higher. I will not make a single arrest without your consent. I will not lay a finger on those you need, I know you have more cliques and clans than we in the department. Your friend, Chernov, for instance, can go about and babble to his heart's content. I will not touch him. Savinkov is also safe. But those who can be taken without loss or jeopardy, I'll take and hang. In fact, with pleasure, Evgeny Filippovich. And so, together, we'll weed out the revolution, husk it, so to speak: buy some, hang others. But cleverly, not like those fools."

"On my part, there will be the following conditions," said Azef, as if he had not listened to the general. "No one at the Okhrana is to know about me, to make sure there is no leak. Secondly, I want the arrests of the terrorists I name to be made before the act, so there are fewer hangings."

"I accept the first point. The second is a mere detail. But I will tell you, I am against excessive bloodshed myself and will agree even to this. Although, of course, one cannot guarantee in every case."

"And now, Alexander Vasilievich," Azef added with an embarrassed smile, without looking at Gerasimov. "You are advancing me; all that is fine. But in doing so you advance yourself as well? Consequently, I am also making your career?"

"Of course."

"And that must be paid for. You assume a monopoly on my information. And you expose me to serious danger."

"How is that?"

"You've just spoken yourself of 'weeding out.'"

"Ah, ta-ta-ta! So that's what you are hinting at!" laughed Gerasimov. "You mean successful acts, don't you? I see you think ahead, my friend! Ha-ha-ha! I'm glad I've given you all those compliments

in advance, very glad. If I don't look out, you will turn me into a good revolutionary before I know it, eh? Ha-ha-ha-ha! Incidentally, I was told—although, of course, I don't believe it—that you had a meeting with Pyotr Ivanovich in Warsaw just about . . . oh, shortly before," Gerasimov's eyes narrowed as he turned them on Azef, "before Plehve's . . . death. . . ."

"What do you take me for?" Azef frowned. "I never laid eyes on Rachkovsky in Warsaw. I was abroad; you can check with Rataev. All that stupid gossip. . . ."

"Certainly, certainly, Evgeny Filippovich, I was only jesting. People wag their tongues. Although, of course, detection is such a delicate matter. If a man of inferior ethics conducts it, he will always cross that very fine line, you know what I mean? And, by the way, according to my information, the Fighting Organization is planning something new, isn't it? Which of 'us' is next in line with 'you people,' so to speak?"

"There is nothing concrete," Azef drawled reluctantly. "They talk of Dubasov."

"Dubasov?" Gerasimov said slowly, reflectively. "I keep wondering, Evgeny Filippovich—you have not forgotten my terms?"

Azef glanced at Gerasimov: he was drawing his finger again across his throat.

"I repeat, Alexander Vasilievich, it's a lie!" Azef muttered. "I will not work under threats. I am not a boy. If you want to quarrel, let us quarrel."

"There, there, I am joking. Don't get excited now."

"And if I agree to your terms, you cannot feed a nightingale with a song," Azef rumbled on. "You like frankness, and I'll put it frankly —I need money."

"What kind of money, Evgeny Filippovich?"

"I cannot manage on less than two thousand."

"That's a lot. For business or personal use?"

"For business."

"One thousand is the maximum."

"I am going to Finland tomorrow to set up workshops."

"What sort of workshops?"

"Dynamite."

"How many?"

"Two."

"And the cost?"

"I said—two thousand."

"No, my friend, that's a bit expensive. Make it one, and charge the other to the party." Gerasimov laughed. He rose and unlocked his desk with tempting clicks.

"I cannot do with less than fifteen hundred," Azef rumbled. "If you wish, deduct it from my salary."

"What a stubborn man! Very well, just this time, for the start. But no more pressure! And make sure you don't forget anything." The general turned to Azef, holding a sheaf of bank notes with the portrait of Peter the Great.

As he was seeing Azef out, Gerasimov said:

"Well, well, it's been a struggle! I've never gone to so much trouble with anyone, but I think it wasn't wasted. Only don't take it into your head that I am a fool, or you'll spoil the whole business, my good friend."

Azef grunted slightly with the effort of getting into his coat.

"Address telegrams to the Okhrana. Reports, here. In case of anything, just drop in without ceremony in the evening. If I am out, ask the doorman at the Medved for the private room of Ivan Vasilievich."

Shaking hands at the door, Gerasimov said:

"I saw you last Friday, playing the stocks. At the Exchange. With my own eyes. I liked you at once. I knew I could do business with you. But what a secretive man you are! I'll have to watch my step, or, who knows, you may decide to blow me to kingdom come," and Gerasimov put his arm around Azef, patting him on the rear to make sure he had no revolver.

"Send me a line from Finland."

"I will," Azef muttered, leaving.

Azef had steeled himself while facing Gerasimov. But out in the street he suddenly went limp with nervous exhaustion. He knew that all his calculations were wrecked.

9

Savinkov was organizing the attempt upon Dubasov in Moscow. The Vnorovsky brothers and Shillerov worked with him. Azef lived in Helsingfors, in a tiny yellow house surrounded by green pines. The house was cozy, the air pungent and aromatic. But Azef was

nervous. He was constantly haunted by the general's wart, the threat of a rope, the devil knows what.

Savinkov arrived in a sleigh drawn by a small Finnish horse, its shaggy hoofs pattering rapidly over the silvery crust of snow.

"I've been waiting for you, waiting," Azef gurgled, heartily embracing and kissing Savinkov.

Azef led him into a small sunny room. Behind the windows—pines, snow, the garden.

Savinkov washed his hands. Azef asked, preparing the tea:

"Who killed Tatarov, Dvoinikov?"

"Fedya," Savinkov answered, drying his hands with a towel.

"So? And I thought Dvoinikov. How are things in Moscow?"

Savinkov sat in a shaft of sunlight, flooding in through the window. Azef poured the tea, served lemon and bread.

"I live like a bachelor here; I haven't much to offer."

"Things aren't going well in Moscow. I don't know why, Ivan. We can't establish his movements; we're at the end of our wits and our strength. I've come to talk it over with you. It seems to me we can succeed only by chance."

"Nonsense," Azef frowned, drawing his head into his shoulders. "If they cannot establish his movements, they aren't watching properly. As for a chance attempt, that's rot. I cannot risk people for the sake of your impressions!"

"Impressions! You're not directing it; you don't know. His movements have become so irregular and surrounded with such secrecy that one might think he knew we're there. But a chance attempt might succeed. We must get someone from the workshop to prepare the bombs; then we'll wait for Dubasov's return from Petersburg."

Azef puffed; his chest heaved with his heavy breathing. He turned his entire bulk in the armchair and muttered:

"We'll get nowhere anyway; I'm sure of it."

"Why?"

Azef, dark, stony, wrinkled his face and waved his hand.

"I cannot work any longer, I am tired. I am convinced nothing will come of it. Cigarette peddlers, cabmen, street observation, the same old rubbish. Everybody knows about it. I have decided to retire from all that. You must understand, I have been working in the terror since Gershuni's day. I have a right to take a rest; I can't go on. You'll manage by yourself."

"Of course, if you are tired you have a right to leave, but I will not work without you."

Azef looked into his face.

"Why?"

"Because neither I nor any of the others feel capable of assuming the responsibility of directing all terrorist work. You were appointed by the Central Committee. Without you, the comrades will not work."

Azef was silent. Savinkov spoke warmly, proving to Azef that his resignation would mean the end of terror, and therefore of the party. Now and then Azef raised his bovine head on its short neck, glancing at him. When he finished, Azef sat silently, snorting.

"Very well," he said at last, lazily dropping his words. "Have it your way, but my opinion is that we won't get anywhere. If you want to discontinue regular observation and rely on a chance meeting with Dubasov, all right. Go to the workshop and take Valentina. She will return with you and prepare the bombs. But I feel it isn't wise, and it splinters the organization. In any case, wire me beforehand. I shall come and check everything myself."

10

On the same evening Savinkov left Helsingfors for Terioki. Azef had set up the dynamite workshop in a seaside villa.

At dawn, after dozing all night at the station over a cup of tea, Savinkov started for the coast. The Finnish sleigh flew lightly over the snowy road, skidding around the sharp curves. Not a soul before or behind. Woods, snow, sky, and an occasional skier in the distance. The driver knew the way. He swung out of the forest road onto a little-traveled stretch of snow and soon drew up before a villa flanked by neatly trimmed, snow-capped shrubbery.

Savinkov walked up the narrow pathway trodden in the snow by the residents of the house. The air was quiet. A woodpecker was tapping somewhere in the garden. The icy pines rang out delicately in the breeze. The stairs creaked underfoot, and Savinkov knocked briefly on the glass door. A nunlike woman opened it. Her face was yellowish, gaunt. Her dark eyes were sunken, her movements quiet. Looking at Savinkov, the terrorist Sasha Sevastianova said:

"Come in, please; everyone is home."

In the bright, spacious dining room, Savinkov found the master of the villa, Lev Zilberberg.

"What a surprise! We are living here like hermits! What a pleasure!" said the graceful, delicate Zilberberg.

Hearing their voices, Rachel Lurye, a thin, sharpen tea brunette of about twenty, and the laughing, merry Valentina Pol- ran into the room. Judging by her lips and plump figure, Savinkov thought she must be pregnant.

Surrounding Pavel Ivanovich, they all greeted him, laughing. How young they were! What voices! What bright energy! What laughter! Sasha Sevastianova, who acted as a servant, spread a cloth on the table and bustled about, preparing food and setting up a samovar for the guest just arrived from the cold.

"Well, how are we doing?" Savinkov asked, patting Zilberberg on the back.

"Working," laughed Zilberberg. "But tell us what is happening in the world! We haven't seen a newspaper here in a month. Perhaps there is no Tsar in Russia any more, has he been overthrown?" Zilberberg laughed again.

"No, he's still up on his throne. Let me see your workshop; then we'll decide how much longer he will sit." Savinkov and Zilberberg left the dining room, where Sasha Sevastianova was bustling like a silent nun.

The villa had nine rooms and a separate kitchen. Upstairs there were three summer rooms. But the ground floor was equipped for winter. It was a rich villa, with furniture of Karelian birch, paintings, and soft armchairs. It was so comfortable, in fact, that some of the terrorists felt constrained there.

"This is the master's room—mine. This room belongs to the mistress—Rachel. And here is the workshop, nothing elaborate, but good enough to work in." Zilberberg led Savinkov into a large square room, almost unfurnished, with closely drawn white blinds.

Savinkov caught the familiar smell of bitter almonds that always gave one a headache. On two tables were spirit lamps, primus stoves, copper mallets, files, metal-cutting shears, pipettes, glass tubes, sandpaper, and flasks with sulphuric acid in a neat row, as in a drugstore. In the corner was a supply of dynamite, and next to it a stack of bomb casings in the form of candy boxes and preserve cans, lined with waxed paper.

The bitter-almond smell brought memories of Dora's room at the Slavic Bazaar, Kalyaev, the cold winter day, Sergey's death, the joy and anguish of the assassination. Savinkov knew that Kalyaev had been hanged and Dora had lost her mind in the Fortress of Peter and Paul.

"Doesn't it give you a headache?" he asked, pointing at the dynamite.

"I'm used to it. But Valentina has bad headaches."

"I do, too," said Savinkov, thinking of Dora, of the night when he had come to her, and of the story of her imprisonment. It was said that she had been raped by the guards and pleaded for poison. Soon after that she went insane.

"And where is your wife?" Savinkov asked, returning to the present.

"My wife?" repeated Zilberberg. "She is abroad; I even have a baby, two months old. They write me that she smiles already. I haven't seen her yet."

"Really?" Savinkov said through his teeth. They entered what might have been a drawing room; but in addition to the yellow furniture, a bed stood in the center of it, covered with a baize blanket. They were met by Popova and Rachel Lurye. Popova called gaily:

"Pavel Ivanovich! Lunch is served! But you're accustomed to delicacies, and we have simple fare. Sasha is even embarrassed; she really is!"

"Valentina," Sasha cried angrily, then burst out laughing herself.

They noisily sat down at the table. Savinkov felt young again, almost back to his student days, when he was always running to workers' meetings at the Nevsky Gate.

Sasha brought in a fry pan with a sizzling omelette.

"Sorry, comrades, I am afraid it did not turn out so well today."

Popova moved over the wooden trivet.

"Who cares! What is important is quantity, not quality, Comrade Sevastianova. I'm hungry as a wolf. And how about some wine? You have none? You do not use it in your work? Too bad. And we have become spoiled; we've gotten used to wine with meals," Savinkov said, laughing.

Everyone laughed. They ate the omelette, the potatoes, and the meat that Sasha had burned in her excitement. After dinner, with his arm around Valentina's shoulders, looking into her laughing face with the slightly parted lips that showed her small white teeth, Savinkov asked:

"Comrade Valentina, I shall take you away. How would you like that?"

"For work?"

"Of course. What else?" Savinkov told her briefly about their plan.

"Do you agree?"

"What a question! What am I here for?"

"But I must ask you one thing. You aren't pregnant?"

Color flooded her cheeks and forehead; it even seemed to glow through her eyebrows.

"This does not concern you; it is my own affair."

"You're wrong. It does concern me. Both as a human being and as a revolutionary. To begin with, if you die, you will kill a living child. Besides, you may weaken, you may not be able to cope with it—the task is difficult."

"I vouch for myself."

"No, since you confirm it, I cannot take this upon myself. Nor can I alter the instructions; it's up to Ivan Nikolaevich. I will return tomorrow. But I'll be frank—don't be offended—I will insist on someone else."

"If Ivan Nikolaevich appointed me, I must be the one to go. You have no right," Valentina cried, flaring up. "You insult me as a member of the Fighting Organization. I tell you I am fit for the work."

"I can't, Valentina; let's not argue."

The stern, controlled Rachel Lurye was crying in her room. The assignment should have been hers; yet Pavel Ivanovich had asked Popova.

11

Azef was just leaving to see Gerasimov when Savinkov came in unexpectedly. From his head, drawn deep into his shoulders, his wrinkled forehead, and clouded eyes, Savinkov saw that Azef was in a bad temper.

"What brings you here?" Azef asked curtly. "Wait, I have a woman there. Come this way."

They went into the kitchen. Azef listened to Savinkov, leaning on the table.

"What nonsense!" he muttered. "It's none of our concern whether Valentina is pregnant or not. I cannot go into medical examinations. If she assumes responsibility, we have to trust her."

"I am responsible for the act. Every detail is important; I cannot expect success if I doubt Valentina."

"I know Valentina; she'll do her job."

"I repeat, I will not accept a pregnant woman for the work."

Azef roared with laughter. When he finished, he said:

"Take Valentina and go to Moscow at once. It is late to make changes. Save your sentiments for others."

"Don't order me around like a general, Ivan!" Savinkov flared up. "My last word: either I quit the organization or I take Rachel instead of Valentina."

Azef halted in the doorway, staring at Savinkov with derision. He looked like a huge gorilla.

"You will go to Moscow today. Understand?" He went out without saying good-by.

12

Boris Vnorovsky had gone out eight times in the pale blue uniform of a hussar, with a box of candy in his hands, to meet Dubasov's carriage. Vnorovsky's hair turned gray. But Dubasov's carriage eluded him. Savinkov, the Vnorovsky brothers, Shillerov, and Valentina Popova were exhausted. And then Azef arrived from Finland to kill Dubasov.

He set the assassination for the Empress's name day. Then, when the bands struck up in celebration, their brass trombones, cornets, and kettledrums flashing in the spring sunshine, when the infantry began its measured march, and the cavalry horses waltzed out smoothly under their riders, then—at the height of the parade—the bomb throwers would bar the roads from the Kremlin, and Dubasov would ride forth on the spring day to meet his bomb.

Boris Vnorovsky, more handsome than ever with his graying hair, donned the uniform of a naval lieutenant. Azef gave him an eight-pound bomb and assigned him to cut off Tverskaya from the Nikolsky Gate.

Shillerov, dressed as a gentleman, in a hat, with a briefcase, was given a bomb and posted at Borovitsky Gate. On the third route, along Vozdvizhenka, Vladimir Vnorovsky, dressed as a workingman, waited for Azef, who was to bring his bomb.

The sounds of military marches and the shouts of "Hurrah!" filled the Moscow air. Vnorovsky was beside himself. He could not under-

stand Azef's lateness. He clenched his perspiring hands. Circling about in the crowd, looking out for Azef, he might even have seemed suspicious. Suddenly the crowd fell back. A troop of dragoons in canary-yellow caps rode past. And Dubasov's carriage rolled smoothly by, within two feet of Vnorovsky. Dubasov raised his hand to his cap in salute. His adjutant turned, smiling to someone. But already another company of dragoons rode in, closing the cavalcade. And only then Vnorovsky noticed, in a near-by cab, a stout, ugly man in a black coat and top hat, with a cigarette in his teeth. The cab with Ivan Nikolaevich disappeared. But suddenly there was a dull, subterranean thud. . . .

Seeing Dubasov's carriage emerging from Chernyshevsky Lane into Tverskaya Square and about to disappear into the palace gates, a gray-haired lieutenant rushed across its path and flung a candy box under its wheels.

Breathing heavily, Azef thrust a handful of change into the driver's hand without counting it and hurried into the Filippov Café on Tverskaya. He sank into a chair in terrified exhaustion. Around him people were shouting, "The Governor General! Dubasov! Assassinated!"

On the wooden pavement outside the palace, near the dead horses, were scattered pieces of the body of Count Konovnitsyn, Dubasov's adjutant. A short distance away lay the bloody corpse of a young, gray-haired lieutenant, his hands flung out at a strange angle.

The wounded Dubasov was led under the arms into the palace.

13

At half past eight, General Gerasimov was waiting for Azef. The general, pacing the parquet floor, was in military uniform. His spurs clanked sharply, resounding through all the six rooms. Judging from the hands behind his back and the too rapid clanking of his spurs, the general was furious and impatient.

When the bell rang in the hallway, the general drawled angrily, "Aaaa-ah."

"I am late," Azef said hoarsely, shaking the raindrops from his top hat.

"I have waited for you half an hour."

Azef grunted as he removed his coat and grunted as he hung it

up. Rubbing his face with his hands, he followed Gerasimov. Outwardly he seemed calm. The general, on the contrary, strode ahead of him, preparing harsh words.

"Would you mind telling me where you were during the attempt, Evgeny Filippovich?" asked Gerasimov, placing the smoke stand between their chairs.

"In Moscow," said Azef, taking some matches from his pocket. "In fact, I was arrested at the Filippov Café, which isn't very clever. I came out to intercept the action."

"And you were too la-te?" Gerasimov laughed with malice. "Dubasov escaped by a miracle! Konovnitsyn was killed before the eyes of the whole guard! Do you understand what they will say to me at the Ministry, or don't you?!"

"Well, I know," Azef said lazily. "But what do you want of me? I am not God; I didn't promise you that the revolutionaries would never kill anyone; it's inevitable. . . ."

"No quibbling!" Gerasimov shouted furiously. "You're forgetting?"

The smoke veiled Azef's face. It was becoming stony.

Gerasimov was silent, trying to suppress his rage.

"Evgeny Filippovich," he said quietly. "In our work everything is built on confidence. Today at the department Rachkovsky said that the Moscow act was yours. Tell me straight: you had information that the attempt was scheduled during the parade?" The steel-gray eyes relentlessly held Azef's black ones.

"Either you believe me or you don't," Azef said lazily. "I wanted to intercept the action. It is Dubasov's own fault. I outlined the route; I told them, as a precaution, to drive to Tverskaya from Bryusovsky, and they came through Chernyshevsky."

Gerasimov cracked his fingers, staring at the floor.

"Who organized it?"

"I don't know."

"And I know it was Savinkov!" Gerasimov shouted.

"Perhaps," Azef shrugged. "I will find out within the next few days."

"I am certain. But don't you see what happens? You asked me to spare Savinkov; you said you need him. I did not touch him. And now? You and I are plotting out most complicated machinations, and Savinkov kills before the eyes of all of Moscow. In this way we won't weed out anybody except our own selves! Rachkovsky, you may be sure, will drop a hint where necessary."

"Then it will be a deliberate lie on his part. But if you believe it, arrest me." And Azef shook the ash into the nickeled ash tray.

There was a long pause.

"I learned in Moscow that they are planning an attempt against Durnovo in Petersburg. They have started observation with three cabmen."

Gerasimov went to his desk.

"One lives in Ligovka; I don't know the street. He is dark-haired, a Jew, but not too typical. He drives out to the corner of Gorokhovaya at three o'clock. There is also a newsboy, Russian, unkempt, in torn rags with a cord around his waist, almost like a beggar; he watches at the Tsarskoselsky Station. Durnovo should not use his carriage. Let him walk, and take precautions on the way, or there is bound to be trouble."

Azef sat calmly, with his legs crossed, a pink sock showing. His shoes were patent leather, pointed, with high heels.

"Anything else?"

"The day after tomorrow I will give you exact information; you'll be able to make arrests."

Gerasimov's agitation seemed gone. He knew what to say at the Ministry. He folded the notebook and inserted the pencil into it.

"You vouch that the Dubasov business won't be repeated with Durnovo?"

"Let us hope," Azef shrugged. But suddenly he saw that the general was smiling and the wart on his cheek was jumping.

"I have patience, but not as much as you think. And more brains than you suppose. In the present case my conditions are brief: all the terrorists in the Durnovo plot must be turned in. If even a single attempt is successful, and your role in it as ambiguous as it is in the Dubasov affair, expect no pity. We shall write off Dubasov to the credit sheet of the revolution. Such things will not happen again, not even once. Savinkov has gallivanted long enough. I will not permit him to gad about Russia, killing anyone he pleases. I will take him not later than this month. It is up to you to arrange it discreetly."

"Very well," said Azef. "But he must not be taken here."

"Ship him off somewhere. You said they wanted to kill Chukhnin? Send him there. Our people will follow him."

Azef felt as if the general was knocking the bench from under his feet and the noose was tightening.

"I'll think it over," he said, "but I do not understand your attitude. All this intimidation. I'm not a boy. If you don't want me to, I won't work. I promised you. . . ."

"A-ah, my friend, fools are fed with promises."

Azef took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead.

"It's impossible to work like this," he muttered. "There must be trust."

His breath came heavily. Obesity.

"I haven't received last month's salary," he said hoarsely.

"You are a bit too expensive, Evgeny Filippovich."

A wind was sweeping in from the Neva. Cold, stinging drops came flying out of the wet darkness. In the street, Azef glanced around. The dark vista of Petersburg stretched toward the Summer Gardens. He walked down Fontanka toward the French Quay. The varicolored lights of barges glittered on the Neva. Opening his umbrella, Azef turned toward Troitsky Bridge.

14

Before the convocation of the State Duma, the terrorists gathered in great excitement and clouds of smoke in Azef's little yellow house. The room was gray with smoke. Bottles of beer stood on the table. Leaning his elbows on the table, Azef sat motionless—a hulking, monstrous idol. Abram Gotz was outlining his plan for blowing up the house of the Minister of Internal Affairs, Durnovo. He resembled his brother, but was younger and stronger. His face and movements radiated intelligence and energy. Sensing opposition to the plan, he spoke heatedly.

"If we cannot kill Durnovo in the street, if our methods of observation are antiquated, and Durnovo has increased his precautions tenfold, then we must make a frontal assault. We must break in on him with dynamite belts!"

"What is your opinion, Ivan Nikolaevich?" asked Savinkov.

Azef dropped his words slowly:

"The plan is a good one, I agree. But in open attacks the commander must lead the way. I agree if I go first."

There was an outburst of excitement.

"I don't understand it, Ivan," cried Savinkov, waving his cigarette. "Whatever the plan, we cannot risk the head of the organization!"

"But that's impossible, Ivan Nikolaevich!"

"I must do it. And I will," muttered Azef.

Amid the smoke, the shouts, the smell of beer, they all understood that the will of the head of the Fighting Organization was not to be broken like a straw. And when the terrorists were leaving, exhausted by the fruitless meeting, Azef detained Savinkov.

"I must talk with you," he gurgled and went to the door to see the last comrades out.

15

Alone in the room, Savinkov opened the window. The silhouettes of trees loomed darkly. Instead of smoke, the room began to fill with the pungent smell of pine.

Azef returned, affectionate. He lay down on the sofa. Savinkov stood at the window. A minute passed.

"What a beautiful night," said Savinkov, leaning out. His voice rang out more clearly in the garden than in the room.

Azef came over, put his arm about him, and also leaned out. But after a moment he said:

"Well, now, let's drop the lyricism."

The window was closed and the curtains drawn.

"I am very tired, Boris," said Azef. "I am waiting for an opportunity to resign everything. I can't go on."

"And what about me? I'm also tired. We all are."

"You're a different matter. You don't carry such responsibility." Azef yawned, rubbing his eyes and stretching. "In any case, we must stage at least two acts before the Duma meets; otherwise we're in a poor position. Too bad the Durnovo plan is not working. I cannot understand why they've begun to trail us. Things were going so well, and now—this nonsense. I feel we should withdraw all the watchers; what do you think?"

"Judging from everything, it's senseless to continue observation."

"I think so, too. We'll call it off."

Azef seemed deep in thought. Then he spoke with sudden agitation:

"But what remains of all our work? The Dubasov act was neither here nor there. We're nowhere with Durnovo. We're nowhere with Akimov. The Riman situation is unclear. We seem to be paralyzed. The Central Committee can reproach us with it, and justly. All

that money spent, and nothing done. We've almost nothing left; we have to ask for more, and they will say: "But what have you accomplished?' "

"It isn't our fault."

"That isn't the question—whose fault it is. The work itself is what matters. I am thinking of sending someone to Min or Riman directly during reception hours. Yakovlev, for instance—he's a firebrand; he'd be suitable. But, you know, Petersburg generally seems a lost cause. What if we tried the provinces? What do you think?"

"We can do that."

"Zenzinov says they're planning to kill Chukhnin. I don't believe in it. They will not kill him. And Chukhnin should be killed; it would raise the sailors."

Savinkov was silent.

"What do you think?"

"It should be done."

"We ought to send someone. But whom?"

Savinkov sat sprawling negligently in the armchair. His face was long, thin, his chest hollow, the shoulders narrow. Azef gazed at him affectionately.

"You know what, Ivan?" Savinkov smiled. "Let me take Chukhnin. I love the Crimea, and the weather is excellent."

"You?" Azef pondered it. "But what will I do without you?"

"Really? Haven't you enough people besides me?"

"They're not the same," Azef grimaced.

"Oh, not the same!" laughed Savinkov, striking Azef affectionately on the shoulder.

"So? You'd like a trip to the Crimea?"

"Why not? I tell you, I love the Crimea. I could take along Dvoinikov and Nazarov."

"I don't know. No, Boris, without you I'll go to pieces altogether. However, if you wish. . . ."

CHAPTER TWELVE

1

Boris Savinkov stood on a stool in the solitary cell of the Sevastopol guardhouse. His hands on the high, narrow window sill, he looked up into the square of pale blue sky.

Already in Kharkov he thought they were being followed. But Nazarov and Dvoinikov reassured him. At the Wetzel Hotel in Sevastopol, where he registered as Reserve Lieutenant Subbotin, the pockmarked doorman seemed suspicious. But he attributed it to his nerves. And, really, everything that happened on Coronation Anniversary Day was incredibly stupid.

The day was hot, and Savinkov had gone down to the beach. He lay there, staring at the convex, silvery line of the horizon. The waves crept up like dark lions, their foamy manes hissing on the soft yellow sand. Sailboats skimmed past. In the distance a tiny steamer looked like a toy. Savinkov lay on the sand for a long time. Later, on the way back to the hotel, he heard a sharp thud. "A gun is firing," he thought. And he entered the hotel lobby. But someone on the staircase shouted: "Halt! Or I'll shoot you like a dog!" And the lobby swarmed with soldiers.

Savinkov was seized by the arms. He saw quite near him the face of a lieutenant with a sun-bleached mustache. The lieutenant pointed a black revolver at him. He saw a lop-eared detective with bleary eyes. But the lieutenant pushed away the detective, who stepped on his foot in the crush. "Take him in to be searched!" the lieutenant shouted. And they dragged Savinkov into a room and began to strip him.

2

The knowledge that it was he, not someone else, who would be hanged the next day swept everything out of his mind. Standing at the window, looking at the blue square, crisscrossed by the grating, Savinkov felt completely cut off from life. Everything had be-

come alien, unnecessary. The thing that mattered most now was this window.

"I'll dangle, strung out like some loathsome vermin, and this vermin will resemble Savinkov like a spoiled photograph." Savinkov climbed down from the stool and paced the cell. He noticed a movement in the spy hole. "They're watching." He stopped and wanted to laugh. "Here am I in this blue prison robe and stupid wooden shoes; what's there to watch?" And the thought cut sharply across his mind: "Nothing matters now. All that remains is to behave in court in such a way that everyone will know how Savinkov died."

"Hell," he thought, "they'll hang me." He recalled how, many years ago, at the family estate, some workmen hanged a dog. The dog had struggled while they dragged it, writhed in the noose like a snake, then stretched out rigidly, its tongue protruding. One of the workmen went over and pulled it by the feet, and something cracked. A tendon must have snapped. . . .

There were steps in the corridor, someone in spurs. Rifles clanked, the butts striking the stone floor.

"They're coming."

The steps and voices stopped outside his door. A key was turned. Savinkov saw the officer on duty at the threshold.

"Prepare for a meeting with your mother."

Between the curious soldiers, armed with rifles, there came an old woman, not in a hat, as Savinkov had imagined her, but in a kerchief, with gray temples. And suddenly the old woman, his mother, swayed. Savinkov rushed to her, his shoes clumping on the floor. Sofya Alexandrovna Savinkova fell into his arms with a strange, shrill scream.

"Don't cry, Mother; our mothers don't cry."

The soldiers at the door looked on woodenly. The huge fellow did not even smile.

"Whatever the verdict, you must know that I had no connection with this affair. But I am not afraid of death; I am ready for it."

"My God, my God, how thin he is," thought Sofya Alexandrovna.

"Borya, the trial was postponed. The defense lawyers have come. Vera will be here tomorrow; I received a telegram."

"The visit is over."

His lips touched his mother's wrinkled, tear-stained cheek, and he let her go from his arms. Sofya Alexandrovna walked out quietly, surrounded by soldiers.

3

Half an hour later, Savinkov met Dvoinikov in the lavatory. The guards were smoking, discussing the replacement of the Bielostoksky Regiment by the Litovsky. The change was important and interesting to them. And Savinkov was saying to Dvoikinov, whose face was covered with black stubble:

"Ah, Shura, it's nonsense, this postponement. So they'll hang us on the nineteenth instead of the seventeenth."

"They'll hang us?" Dvoinikov muttered in a shaken voice. "Everybody? And Fedya?"

"Fedya, too."

"And you?"

"And me."

Dropping his head as from a sudden blow, Dvoinikov said quietly:

"I'm sorry for Fedya." After a silence he added, "They took my watch during the search. They've not returned it."

"What's the use of a watch now, Shura?"

The guard spat and shouted:

"Come on, fellows, out!"

4

Everything was clear—they would be hanged. But when Vera was brought into the cell, all was thrown into confusion. Her eyes looked so frightened that Savinkov thought: she'll fall. But Vera flung her arms around his neck, whispering, "Nikolay Ivanovich is here," and kissed him, sobbing bitterly, unable to tear herself away.

It was desperate, incredible. If he could ask her to repeat it?! But looking at the loving face, the dark frightened eyes, Savinkov knew he had heard correctly: "Nikolay Ivanovich"—Lev Zilberberg, the head of the terrorist workshop, who had a daughter two months old.

"The visit is over."

But it had lasted no more than a second, and all he remembered of it was the expression of her eyes. There were tears in them, despair, and something else. "Could it be hope?" thought Savinkov,

pacing the cell. "Why Zilberberg? Perhaps she confused the names? Perhaps it was not Nikolay Ivanovich but Ivan Nikolaevich? Azef?" The longing for life and freedom pierced him with terrible force. Savinkov moaned.

5

At the clandestine apartment of the Central Committee, amid the usual smoke, Chernov was listening absently to Zilberberg's plan. Azef scowled silently. Natanson shrugged it off and was talking to a peasant from the provinces.

Zilberberg cried, "I demand in the name of the terrorists!" What was it that inspired Lev Zilberberg with the mad idea of liberating Savinkov from the fortress? He knew Savinkov less than the others. But he remembered a gala dinner during a terrorist conference in Imatra when Savinkov had written two poems on a bet, between the meat course and dessert. And when he read them, the terrorist Zilberberg was more delighted with such dazzling talent than all the rest.

"I demand," Chernov grinned to Azef. "We are all great masters at demanding. Young and green! But how will you get him out of the fortress?"

"Comrades!" Azef began. "I am the leader of the terror and a friend of Boris. But I must say, however dear he is to me, that I oppose the rescue plan. We must realize what a fortress is, and how it is guarded. Emotions are no reason for throwing away so much money. And, in addition to the money, we would lose such valuable comrades as Nikolay Ivanovich. We aren't rich enough in either. Our sole aim is the revolution. We have no right to indulge in sentiments, even in the case of Savinkov. Surely I would be the first to rush out to save him, but we don't have the means for saving him, and it is therefore useless to build castles in the air."

Nevertheless, Lev Zilberberg sewed money and secret addresses into his belt, hurrying to be in time for the train.

6

The officers of the gendarmerie behind the table were in full-dress uniform, with thick epaulettes, shoulder knots, and decorations. This assemblage of men in handsome regalia looked solemn.

The clean-shaven counsel, in frock coats, white starched shirt fronts, and glittering pince-nez, enhanced the air of solemnity.

"The Court is in session! Everyone will rise!"

The presiding judge, General Kardinalovsky, said in a deep basso: "Bring in the defendants!"

The door swung open; sabers flashed. Amid the sabers, walking lightly, with a rose in his hand, came Boris Savinkov. The guards were taller than he. Seeing Vera and his mother in the hall, Savinkov smiled and nodded to them.

Behind him, Dvoinikov and Nazarov stepped heavily. Their brows were knit, the faces drawn.

"The accused will rise! State your rank, name, and patronymic!"

"Nobleman of the province of Petersburg, Boris Victorovich Savinkov."

Vera did not hear the answers of the other defendants. She only saw them rise and speak. "God, God," she whispered.

The counsel Faleev, in frock coat and glinting pince-nez, rose from the defense table. Speaking quite differently from the military, he said: "Allow me to submit that, under the provisions of martial law, the present case could not legitimately have been assigned to the Court Martial by General Kaulbars. The only person empowered to do so is Admiral Chukhnin. From the legal point of view, this irregularity provides grounds for appeal. . . ."

The prosecutor rose in the opposite corner. He was thin, sallow, black-eyed. His pince-nez also flashed, but venomously:

"This is a mere technicality. It is entirely immaterial to us how the case was brought before the Court Martial," he said with irritation, as if his only wish was the speediest possible execution of Savinkov, Dvoinikov, Nazarov, and Makarov, an absurdly young-looking boy of sixteen who had attempted to assassinate Admiral Nepluyev. Makarov sat on the bench, smiling at something.

"The Court shall retire for deliberation."

Savinkov turned to his wife and mother. Vera sat with her face in her handkerchief.

"The Court is in session!"

General Kardinalovsky announced in his loud basso:

"The Court shall continue the hearing."

Vera saw Savinkov's slightly stooped shoulders and the back of his head, with its thinning hair. The counsel L. N. Andronnikov

rose from behind the defense table. Andronnikov's voice was sharper, his manner more curt than Faleev's.

"Permit me to draw the Court's attention to the infringement of the rights of the defendant Makarov. Under the law, the defendant was entitled to a two-week adjournment pending decision of the examining tribunal concerning his competence as a minor. He was given only four days. Therefore, I must consider the rights of the defendant Makarov violated, unless the Court rules to adjourn the hearing of the case until the expiration of the proper period."

"The Court shall retire for deliberation!"

"They'll grant the adjournment," said some people in the audience. "Not likely," said others. General Kardinalovsky returned with firm steps. The courtroom became silent. Vera heard the back of her chair creak. The general was reading: "In consideration of the point referred to, in view of the argument submitted, and also in confirmation of the above, in accordance with paragraph . . . the Court rules that the hearing be adjourned. . . ."

Ringing of sabers, shouts, noise. The guards held back the pressing crowd in frock coats. The prisoners, surrounded by glittering sabers, were led out through the white door.

7

The slender, handsome, dark-haired man who hurried out of the courtroom was the happiest of all. He almost ran on his way to Korabelnaya, where he was staying with the family of the dockworker Zvyagin in a semi-basement room.

But as soon as Zilberberg had stepped across the basement threshold, ducking a little in the low hallway, he saw the frightened faces of Zvyagin, his wife, and his nine-year-old daughter Nyushka rushing toward him. Behind them in the darkness flashed a military uniform, and a tall figure moved in his direction.

Zilberberg thrust his hand into his pocket for his revolver and recoiled. The door slammed to, and they were left in total darkness.

"Is that you, Nikolay Ivanovich?" a voice asked in the dark.

"Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I am Sulyatitsky—a member of the Simferopol committee of the party. I am here to discuss a matter of interest to you."

The voice was young, merry. In the last words Zilberberg almost detected notes of laughter.

"The devil take you," Zilberberg muttered. "I nearly shot you."

When the door was opened, Sulyatitsky saw Zilberberg putting the revolver back into his pocket.

"A jolly business," he muttered. "Where shall we go?"

"Into my 'study,'" Zilberberg said, smiling.

"What about your landlord? Are we safe?"

"Oh yes. Let's lose no time; I must leave in an hour."

"Your committee," said Zilberberg, when they sat down in the basement cubbyhole, "notified me that you were coming tomorrow."

"I wouldn't be able to come tomorrow; I'm on duty."

"In the fortress?"

"Yes."

"But, excuse me, isn't the Bielostoksky regiment doing guard duty? And you're with the Litovsky?"

"We are relieving them. Don't worry, I know you have established contacts with some Bielostoksky people. Ours will do as well."

Sulyatitsky was tall, strong, fair-haired, with a high forehead and bright, vivid eyes. He inspired complete confidence.

"I think we won't go wrong with you," said Zilberberg, looking at the merry Sulyatitsky. "You see, I have two plans. One—for an open attack on the fortress. What do you think?"

Sulyatitsky shook his head.

"It wouldn't work," he said. "We'll have to get him out by bribery and chance an escape directly from prison."

"That's the second plan. Since you reject the first, let's talk about the second."

Sitting on the stained, crumpled patch-quilt on the bed, they began to discuss the second plan.

8

Savinkov knew that the guardhouse was divided into three areas: the general section, the officers' section, and the secret section, where they were held. He had made a thorough study of the corridor, with its twenty cells, on his trips to the lavatory. At one end there was a wall with a barred window. At the other, an iron-bound door leading to the washroom. This door was always locked. The washroom had four exits: into the room of the gendarme officer on

duty, the storeroom, the officers' section, and the guardroom. And the only exit to the gates, Savinkov knew, was from the guardroom.

But in the secret corridor there were three sentries. Two others were posted at the door to the guardroom. And two more at the door to the washroom. Between the guardhouse and the outer wall of the fortress there were innumerable guardposts. And beyond the wall there was the constant tramping of patrols, with still more sentries posted at the brightly striped sentry boxes in the street.

Savinkov learned all this from one of the soldiers of the Bielostoksky Regiment, Izrael Kohn, who escorted him to the lavatory. Kohn helped him to contact a soldier who was a member of the party and was willing to help in the escape, imploring Savinkov to take him along.

Everything seemed to be going well. But when Savinkov got up in the morning and coughed three times, as prearranged, the spy hole in the door remained closed. He asked to be taken to the lavatory and saw unfamiliar soldiers in the corridor.

"What regiment?" he asked his escort.

"Litovsky," and Savinkov knew from the soldier's speech that he was from Nizhny-Novgorod.

"I'll hang," Savinkov thought, washing himself.

"Come on, you're clean enough," the escort said roughly. He was a stocky young fellow of about twenty-two.

Savinkov wished he could stick a bayonet into the fellow's stomach, kick him, and make a rush outside, to freedom, to his comrades. He walked back to his cell with the soldier from Nizhny-Novgorod.

When the lock clicked shut, his strength failed. Savinkov stretched out on the cot. He lay there several hours and did not even notice when the key turned in the lock and the door swung open.

On the threshold stood a tall soldier with laughing eyes.

"I am the corporal of the guard," he said. Savinkov thought there was something odd in his face, in the laughing eyes. But he did not get up from the cot, merely pulling his prison robe closer around him.

"I come from Nikolay Ivanovich," the corporal said, coming nearer.

"What?" asked Savinkov.

"And so that you won't take me for a provocateur," Sulyatitsky

said rapidly, smiling, "here is a note; read it and tell me, will you be ready tonight?"

"Escape?" Savinkov whispered, and the blood rushed to his head.

Zilberberg wrote: "This evening. Everything is ready. Rely on Vasily Mitrofanovich Sulyatitsky in everything."

His heart beat violently. Sitting on the cot, Savinkov said:

"I am ready. But what about the comrades? We faced the gallows together."

"I thought you'd say it. You will see them. The gendarme was bribed. Ask to be taken to the lavatory at noon. Nazarov and Dvoinikov will be there. I must go now. And so, until eleven tonight."

When Savinkov was alone, he was seized with terrible excitement. "Can it really be? Will I be free? Tonight?" Everything had happened so fast, he found it difficult to believe in Sulyatitsky's appearance, in the bribed gendarme.

But time passed. The fortress clock chimed twelve. Savinkov began to knock on the door. The soldier from Nizhny-Novgorod appeared at the spy hole.

"Lavatory."

The door opened. Savinkov walked out with his escort. At the door to the lavatory, a red-nosed gendarme hailed the soldier. They talked. In the lavatory Savinkov saw Nazarov, Dvoinikov, and Makarov.

"Comrades," he whispered quickly. "Tonight one of us can escape. We must decide who."

There was a short pause.

"Who?" Nazarov repeated somewhat gruffly. "You, of course; there is nothing to discuss."

"I cannot go without your consent."

"You," said Dvoinikov.

Makarov said quietly:

"But I don't know you."

Nazarov leaned over to Makarov and whispered something in his ear.

"Really?" Makarov said joyfully, and from his eyes Savinkov understood that Nazarov had told him about the Fighting Organization.

"Of course, of course you." Makarov's eyes were filled with childlike delight.

"Good material for the terror," thought Savinkov.

"Well, comrades, is this your decision?"

"Yes," said all three.

There was a moment's silence.

"But how will you go?" Dvoinikov asked quietly. "All those guards here! How will you get past them? They'll kill you."

"And if they hang you?" said Nazarov. "It's all the same; a bullet is easier. But run," he laughed, showing his solid, yellowish teeth. "And if you get away, give our regards to the comrades."

There were steps approaching the lavatory.

They dispersed to the separate booths.

"Enough gabbing!" shouted the red-nosed, bribed gendarme. Savinkov came out of the booth, pretending to button his trousers, and went back to his cell with the man from Nizhny-Novgorod.

9

But evening refused to come. Time moved with agonizing slowness. Savinkov lay on the cot to conserve his strength. He ate his whole week's ration of bread. At moments it seemed his heart would burst.

As soon as the sun had set beyond the sea, the cell turned dark. Lights went on in the corridor. Savinkov heard shouts. "Corporal! Corporal!" called someone, evidently the officer on duty, Lieutenant Korotkov. Then someone shouted: "Orderly! Take the post at the money box!" There were steps, the striking of rifle butts, clanking.

Whenever the spy hole opened, Savinkov saw a circle of yellow light. Evening had come. Savinkov was ready to go at any moment. Now those steps would halt at the door. Now Sulyatitsky would enter and they would walk down the corridor. How? Savinkov could not imagine—surely not in his prison robe? He'll have to change. And then, perhaps, the sentry, who was now yawning calmly as he shifted from foot to foot at the outer wall, would fire a round of bullets into his back, and he would crumple on the grass as Tatarov had crumpled on the floor of his house.

Savinkov felt his heart beating unevenly, as if the whole left side of his chest was filled with the wing of a large, fluttering bird. The chimes rang slowly, distinctly—eleven.

"Nonsense. It didn't work," Savinkov thought an hour later, sit-

ting up on the cot. He waited another hour. During this hour the chimes rang four times more—the quarter hour, the half hour, three quarters, and finally, with a heavy, booming sound—one!

"Of course. At three it's light. There's only an hour and a half of darkness left. He promised at eleven. If he doesn't come in half an hour, I'll go to bed." Savinkov rose from the cot, went to the table, stupidly picked up the tin mug, and stared at it. It looked unfamiliar. At this moment he heard strong, firm footsteps halt at his door. The key turned, too sharply perhaps. And Sulyatitsky entered, too loudly. Savinkov understood: the plan had failed.

Standing in the center of the cell, Sulyatitsky lighted a cigarette. When it was lit, he said:

"Well, do we go?"

"Why? Is it still possible?"

"Everything is ready. One moment, I'll finish the cigarette," said Sulyatitsky. He was calm. Only his eyes were dark now.

"But listen, you are risking your life," said Savinkov, approaching him.

"You are quite right. I meant to warn you, too. And therefore, take this." He held out a Browning.

"What if we're stopped?"

"By soldiers? Don't shoot at soldiers."

"Back to the cell then?"

"No, why back? If it's an officer, we shoot and run. If soldiers stop us, we shoot ourselves."

"Good."

"Now let us go," Sulyatitsky said suddenly, throwing away the cigarette stub, and Savinkov felt that he was not at all ready. But Sulyatitsky had already gone out, and Savinkov followed him into the corridor.

The corridor was dimly lit by a kerosene lamp. The sentries at the cell doors were sleepy. Savinkov saw one of them dozing as he leaned against the wall. But there was no time to look, and no need to think. He followed Sulyatitsky quickly toward the washroom.

Seeing the corporal, the sentries drew themselves up, straightening their belts.

"Sleeping, you lazy blockhead?" Sulyatitsky snapped at the man in the washroom. The soldier was too startled to remember that prisoners were taken to wash at five, not at two, and then by a gendarme.

"He's going to wash; he says he's sick," Sulyatitsky said to the other. The second sentry did not answer the corporal either, merely moving his lips. And when they came to the iron door, Sulyatitsky poked the shabby little soldier in the stomach and shouted into his ear:

"You'll sleep later, mug! Open up!" The soldier quickly opened the iron door.

Savinkov entered the washroom and began to wash, lathering the square piece of cheap soap between his hands. There were sentries on the right and the left. Through the open door he saw the bribed gendarme snoring on the yellow wooden bench, his head drooping on his chest. The small lamp in his room was almost spluttering out. Sulyatitsky went to the guardroom to see if everything was quiet. Returning, he led Savinkov out, slipped him a pair of scissors in the dim corridor, and quickly pointed to the storeroom.

In the storeroom Savinkov threw off his prison robe and rapidly slipped into a soldier's trousers, boots, and tunic. The belt buckle resisted for an eternity. But the whole change took only four seconds.

Savinkov came out. They walked faster, straight into the guardroom. Some of the soldiers off duty were sleeping on the floor. The air was fetid. Several men were gathered around the lamp, listening as the young fellow from Nizhny-Novgorod spelled out by syllables: "At the la-st meet-ing of the Sta-te Du-ma. . . ."

Someone glanced up and turned away indifferently, seeing the corporal. They crossed the guardroom and went out into the hall. From the hall Savinkov saw Lieutenant Korotkov sitting with his back to them in the office, fully armed, with straps across his shoulder, a saber, and a revolver in its holster at his side. Savinkov smelled the extraordinary freshness of the air just before dawn. His head swam and he swayed, brushing Sulyatitsky with his elbow. They walked silently and very quickly. The sentry at the front entrance moved across the path, but, seeing the shoulder straps of the Litovsky Regiment, he stopped and turned back. They heard him yawn loudly and with relish in the night.

They walked down the long, narrow, stony alley. It was still dangerous to run, the sentries might notice, but they almost ran. In the darkness they could already see their own lookout, posted by

Zilberberg—the sailor Bosenko. Bosenko's teeth were chattering from the cold and the excitement of waiting.

"Hurry up, change, take this," he muttered, holding out a basket of clothing. But Sulyatitsky said, "No, no, we must hurry; they may already be after us." And the three men turned the corner and began to run toward the city. They ran into the Sevastopol market place, already coming to life at dawn. The market women were setting out baskets of greens and fruit. Sailors in white shirts and trousers lounged about. No one paid any attention to the runners. Past the market they dashed into an alley, still dark, but now beginning to turn gray.

Zvyagin and Zilberberg heard Nyushka, asleep on the oven, mumble something in her sleep. Both had revolvers in their hands. Now one and now the other walked out to the gate. At last, Zvyagin heard the sound of running feet and, peering into the darkness, saw three rapidly approaching figures. He ran into the house:

"Nikolay Ivanych, they're here!"

Zilberberg jumped up and rushed to the door, clutching his revolver. But Savinkov, Sulyatitsky, and Bosenko were already running in, one after the other.

Zilberberg threw his arms about Savinkov, and they stood there, as they were, with the revolvers in their hands, in a long, close embrace.

"Change quickly. Bosenko will take you to his place; it is dangerous here."

"Why dangerous? Let them stay here, Nikolay Ivanych," said Zvyagin.

"No, no, Pyotr Karpych, that's nonsense; we must do things right."

In his haste, Savinkov could not get his foot into the trouser leg of the shabby civilian suit, of the kind usually worn by Sevastopol workmen.

10

A yellow light glimmered in the window of the coast-guard shack, half-hidden by the wind-tossed shrubbery. The fugitives made their way past the shack and waded out to the waiting boat. And now Bosenko was already slacking and hauling the sail with his strong, work-hardened hands. The commander of the boat, the

former Naval Lieutenant Nikitenko, shaded his eyes with his hand, peering into the dark distance at the leaping waves of the rebellious sea.

The night was dark, the wind violent, black, and menacing. Past the round, blunt hills, dropping seaward in sheer earthen slopes, the boat moved out toward the open sea.

"Ease her out!" Nikitenko cried in a deep bass. The sail fluttered in the dark wind like a black flag. Bosenko sat in the sheets. The second sail on the foredeck was attended by the student Shishmarev. Savinkov, Zilberberg, and Sulyatitsky sat on the thwarts. The sea was rough. Lights flickered on the far horizon.

"A squadron," said Nikitenko.

"Maneuvers," replied Bosenko.

But the wind had already rushed in and filled the sail, rocking and driving the boat with Savinkov, Zilberberg, and Sulyatitsky farther and farther into the open sea.

"Where are we going?"

"Constanza."

"Can we make it?"

"That I cannot guarantee," said Nikitenko.

The waves tossed the boat, striking the bottom on either side as if someone were slapping it with wet palms. Again and again—slap, splash, roll. And so, in the dark, all through the night.

When the gray dawn rose over the sea, Savinkov turned north and saw the faintly discernible outlines of Yaila.

A few hours later these also disappeared. The boat was encompassed by the open sea. The wind grew stronger. The waves swept over, tossing up salt spray and foam. Lieutenant Nikitenko was becoming increasingly anxious.

"Bosenko," he said, "do you see smoke? Or do I imagine it?" Nikitenko spoke of the business at hand only to the sailor. The civilians were his guests at sea.

"There's smoke, all right," said Bosenko, peering north.

Nikitenko lifted his binoculars.

Six men turned north with a sense of impending danger. But the binoculars revealed that the approaching destroyer suddenly veered left, traced a quick arc, and began to recede.

And again in the gusts of wind, rushing on with a mass of seething waves, Nikitenko shouted:

"Slack away the sheets!"

Bosenko eased out the sail, and it flapped in the wind. The passengers exchanged a few words from time to time.

On the second night, when the weary Zilberberg slept, leaning against Savinkov, Nikitenko muttered:

"We'll never make Constanza."

"Where then?" asked Sulyatitsky.

"We must go before the wind, to Sulin."

"But where can we go from Sulin?" said Savinkov. "They'll get us in Sulin and hand us over."

The boat pitched and rolled in all directions. The waves swept on—round, foaming hills, colliding and leaping at each other.

"I will not steer for Constanza," said Nikitenko. "That's certain disaster. A storm is coming up. And from Sulin you'll make your way somehow or other."

And the boat bobbed up and down among the waves before the wind. Toward evening of the third day they saw beacon lights. The boat steered carefully among the shallows. The nearer the black coast, the faster it flew with the wind. And now the sails dropped limply. Bosenko and Shishmarev lifted the oars in the darkness. Everyone was silent. Scraping the sand, the boat bounced to a stop. Three dark figures jumped out on the foreign, sloping shore. The boat slid back and disappeared into the night.

11

The Russian revolutionary Mikhail Gotz was dying in medieval, romantic Heidelberg. He could no longer sit up in his chair. He had been lying in bed for a long time, looking like a desiccated corpse. Only the eyes were bright, but even they were growing dimmer.

"My dear, my dear . . . how I. . . ." Gotz struggled to raise himself, but Savinkov bent over him.

"If you knew how I have suffered. . . ."

"He is dying," thought Savinkov.

". . . I was so indignant, you went . . . you had no right to go. . . . A resolution had been taken to suspend the terror. . . . Did you know it?"

"I would have gone anyway, Mikhail Raphailovich. Something had to be done. The Fighting Organization was paralyzed."

"Was," Gotz smiled with blue lips. "Today it is totally paralyzed.

Nothing succeeds. Ivan Nikolaevich is at his wits' end. Not a single action. Everything fails. . . . The Maximalists on the Aptekarsky Island, you read about the explosion? Senseless . . . terrible. Such bold, courageous people. . . . But have you seen the proclamation of our Central Committee, condemning the action? You haven't read it? . . ." Gotz was overwrought and dropped back, exhausted, closing his eyes. "They evidently consider me as good as buried," he said quietly. "I knew nothing about the proclamation. We dissociate ourselves in it in sharp, uncomradely terms from the Maximalists, after their heroic act, after their sacrifice and deaths. . . ."

"But who wrote it?"

"Unfortunately, Ivan Nikolaevich. . . ."

"Azef?!"

"I don't understand anything. . . . He must be tired, worn out by failures. I see no other explanation, so disgraceful. . . ." Gotz wrinkled his face in pain and moaned.

Savinkov looked at him, thinking sadly. In this foreign city, amid the even flow of alien life, a comrade lay dying, abandoned, no longer needed, forgotten by everyone.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1

Everything had been thrown into confusion around Azef. No one knew that the chief of the Fighting Organization did not sleep nights. Who would have thought this granite man capable of cowardice and despair? Azef fought his panic. But no matter how the clever mind arranged the cards, no matter how the game was played, the outcome appeared the same—inevitable exposure. What he feared, though, was not exposure. He feared death. He was afraid of being hanged like the provocateur priest Gapon or knifed like Tatarov. At night he imagined the comrades, led by the unexpectedly liberated Savinkov, dragging him off to be killed. Azef shut his eyes tightly as he lay in bed, sighing deeply under the weight of his enormous belly.

"Everything's gone against me," he thought. "First the Maximalist 'Mortimer' Ryss—posing as a provocateur and informing the party about me. Then those two letters to the party, most likely from department officials with a grudge against Gerasimov. In any case, suspicion is inevitable." Azef cursed Gerasimov who, thinking only of his own career, had locked him in a deadly stranglehold, without allowing a moment's respite. His fears brought on attacks of suffocation and tormenting hiccups.

2

"E-eh, Evgeny Filippovich, what rubbish! I thought you had more courage, my friend. What could develop, just tell me? There must be facts! Proof! And there is no proof. Why, even if suspicions were raised against you, Chernov and Savinkov will always pull you out. Your past is your best protection. Plehve and Sergey Alexandrovich are nothing to sneeze at, as the party goes!"

Azef sourly wrinkled his fat, yellow face.

"I have no connection with these affairs, Alexander Vasilievich. I wish you'd drop these jokes."

Gerasimov only patted him on the fat knee and guffawed. The round wart jumped up and down on his cheek.

"You exaggerate everything, my dear. Do you hear my new canary singing? That's a good omen, my friend, a good omen. A mo-st re-mark-able ca-nary!"

Azef detested the general's aviary. He had not come for this. But why was General Gerasimov so cheerful?

"Evgeny Filippovich, here's what I think. We must deal the terror a death blow, cut it down at the root. Individual arrests get us nowhere. What of it that you gave us the northern flying squad? I'll hang another dozen scoundrels, that's all! That's not the point. The organization itself must be dissolved, officially dissolved, you understand? Let us say you're tired, you can't go on. You go abroad. You've told me yourself they can do nothing without you. As for money, you shall get it, rest assured about that. And so. . . ."

Azef reclined lazily in the armchair. He was so flabby, fat, and yellow that he looked ill.

"I've come to you on business," he said, puffing out his cheeks with his breath. "There is a possibility of an important piece of work, but I tell you beforehand, it must be paid for. After that, I have indeed decided to go abroad. I need a rest."

"But I've suggested it myself."

Azef was silent. Then he raised his swollen eyelids to Gerasimov and said slowly:

"There are preparations for a central act—against the Emperor. The men involved are the former Naval Lieutenant Nikitenko and the student Sinyavsky. Nikitenko has begun talks with Ratimov, of the Cossack Guard."

"Ra-ti-mov?" echoed the general.

"Get hold of Ratimov, and you have the whole game in your hands. You'll be able to do as you please. You can reach the rest of the organization through Ratimov. With such a feather in your cap, you're set for life," Azef rumbled lazily. "Your colleagues Spiridovich and Komissarov are also on the scent, but they know nothing. Get Ratimov tomorrow, and you have it."

Strong, cunning, tough—and what a constitution! General Gerasimov will live to see a hundred. God knows what he is smiling at. Perhaps he'll soon be racing on his black horses through foggy Petersburg. It's no small matter—a personal report to the Emperor! Saving the Emperor's life!

"Who is in charge of this, Evgeny Filippovich?" the general asked, his steel-gray eyes seizing Azef's protuberant, lazy ones.

"I've told you, Nikitenko, a former lieutenant. But you don't need anyone. Get Ratimov."

The eyes did not leave Azef's. The general was planning what train he would take tomorrow for Tsarskoye, how he would handle the palace commandant, General Dedulin, so as not to reveal his game.

"You say Spiridovich and Komissarov are sniffing around? But they do not know about it?"

"No."

Oh, General Gerasimov had grit and strong nerves!

"And when do you plan to go abroad? With your wife? But forgive me, if I am not mistaken, your wife is a party member? And this is a passion. I can appreciate it, I surely can—a magnificent woman. Tremendously impressive! If I am not mistaken, she is "La Belle Hedy de Hero" of the Château des Fleurs? I know, I know, of course. Even the Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich shared your passion—ha-ha-ha!"

"I don't know anything about that," Azef mumbled reluctantly. His kidneys ached.

3

"Boris! Boris!" cried Azef, and everyone saw him sobbing, as he embraced Savinkov. Three times the fat, yellow face came close to Savinkov's as the moist, fleshy lips kissed him.

"Ivan, I want you to meet Sulyatitsky, Vladimir Mitrofanovich, my savior from the gallows."

"I am delighted, delighted." The eyes of the granite man glowed softly, caressingly; the face assumed an affectionate, almost feminine expression. "We shall never forget it; you can't know what the rescue of Boris means to us. . . ."

"I have already found a pseudonym for him, Ivan, appropriate to his height," laughed Savinkov. "We shall call him Tot."

But now the stony face darkened and the eyes disappeared under the eyebrows.

"So you want to work in the terror?"

"Yes."

"Hm. . . ."

Savinkov knew well that penetrating, probing glance.

"But why just in the terror? Why not simply in the party; we need people. . . ."

"I want to work in the terror."

"Well, we shall talk about it again, shall we?" Azef smiled softly and turned to other topics. But from time to time Sulyatitsky felt the quick, piercing glance of his eyes.

"Ha-ha-ha! You are the same as ever, Boris! You haven't changed a bit! I'll swear, the fortress has done you good, ha-ha-ha!" And the mound of yellow flesh, encased in the modish suit, quivered with shrill laughter.

4

The private room in the Content Restaurant was softly lit by orange chandeliers. From behind the wall came the lovely sobbing of violins and guitars. When they fell silent, a man began to sing in a drunken voice, full of emotion.

"Now tell me about it," said Azef, filling the glasses.

Between the food and wine, Savinkov told him, with sparkle and even with humor, about the fortress, the escape, the crossing of the sea in a boat with Nikitenko. From time to time Azef broke in impatiently.

"But that Zilberberg! What a man! I never hoped, you know, I even objected, how terrible, terrible. . . ."

Azef was tender with Savinkov. Savinkov knew this mood. But when it was Azef's turn to talk, he went limp, drew his neckless head still deeper into his shoulders, and frowned.

"I told you I'd have difficulty without you. The Central Committee scolds us for inaction. They ought to try it themselves. Is it my fault that street observation brings no results? That Stolypin is guarded so closely that nobody can even get a glimpse of him? Almost all the comrades say they're being trailed. No, Boris, we don't have any more people like Yegor and Kalyaev. They're a petty breed nowadays, and I am sure many of them are lying about being watched. They've all begun to notice it too suddenly. I don't believe it. It has worn me out completely. What do you think? What can be done to restore the prestige of the Fighting Organization?"

Azef looked at Savinkov directly, as he rarely looked at anyone. He knew Savinkov well.

From the next room came a rhythmic throbbing, the moaning of musical instruments, guttural cries. Someone was dancing; they heard the tapping of quick feet.

"A Gypsy dance," thought Savinkov.

"What can be done?" he said, toying with the filled glass. "Sulyatitsky proposes regicide. He can enter the Pavlovskoye Military Academy under false documents. The Tsar always attends commencement exercises. Sulyatitsky can kill him then."

"That isn't bad, but the cadets don't graduate every week. We'd have to wait too long. This will do nothing for the Fighting Organization now. And the Central Committee is pressing us. They've put it point blank: either they stop financing us, or we must reorganize."

Again the languid moaning of guitars and violins, then someone plucking wildly at guitar strings, crying out a refrain. Ah, those sweet violins behind the walls of Russian restaurant rooms! How Boris Savinkov loved them! For a single night with Gypsies and Rumanian fiddles he was ready to throw away his soul and money. Now, too, he was excited by the drunken gaiety.

"They threaten to stop financing us?"

"They do. And they are right. If the organization does not function, why pay it?"

"But my dear friend, we aren't contractors, filling orders."

"Oh well," Azef muttered with annoyance. "You'd better offer some suggestions on what can be done."

"It is difficult, offhand. Wait, Ivan, let me look around. What if we tackled General Min or Launitz?

Azef waved his hand, thrusting out his lips.

"We might, but it's small game. We need an act of the first magnitude, to make all Europe talk, to make a real stir, that's what we need. Then we'll have money, too."

Savinkov poured champagne into the slender gold-rimmed goblets. He nibbled at roast almonds and listened to the distant music.

"We won't think of anything here. Let me look around."

Azef raised his dark, protuberant eyes. He sat, leaning heavily on the table.

"You know, Borya, I am too tired, and so are you, I think. Let us

put it to the Central Committee: we can no longer direct the work; we need a rest. Then we can go abroad."

"Give up the work entirely?"

"Why entirely? Take a rest. It is impossible, you must understand it—year after year with the Fighting Organization! I am not a butcher; I also have nerves."

"Then someone else will take over."

"Who? Not Chernov, surely!" Azef burst into a cackling laugh.

"Sletov could do it."

"Nonsense. Would the comrades follow Sletov?" Azef's face expressed contempt. "I tell you, except for you and me, the terrorists won't follow anyone. Very well, let the terror be suspended for a while. Nothing succeeds anyway; we have one failure after another. We must search for new methods. I know an engineer in Munich—Buchalo by name—he is constructing some sort of a balloon. We might be able to use that; I have spoken to him."

Again a man's voice began a song behind the wall; the Gypsy guitars resumed their wailing.

"Properly speaking, you are right. We need a rest. We aren't made of iron; let someone else try it. Besides, our methods are certainly outdated. Look at the Maximalists; they've taken up new methods, and many of our younger people are leaving us to join them. Our terror is tired."

Azef was silent. The conversation should be ended now. He knew that Savinkov would speak at the next meeting of the Central Committee, resigning leadership. He pressed the bell, shaped like a languid, decadent woman. A waiter came in, treading softly.

"More of the same wine," said Azef.

"But why do you drink so little? I've practically finished it myself."

"I can drink every day," smiled Azef, "but I'm sure they did not treat you to champagne in the Crimea."

The door opened. On the threshold stood a swarthy Gypsy of rather insolent appearance, in a velvet suit, holding a guitar hung with bright silk ribbons, and a Gypsy woman in the vivid costume of the Gypsy camp. Approaching Azef and Savinkov, she asked melodiously:

"Will the rich gentlemen permit?"

Azef merely grinned with his moist, fleshy lips. Vivid noise, shrieks, and ululation filled the room. A wizened little old man

with a shaggy head like a chrysanthemum hammered the piano keys with tiny yellow hands. The Gypsy woman asked their names. After the opening chords, she flashed her eyes and began:

"Ah, and are you all in the best of health?"

In the orange light of many chandeliers, as at a Christmas party, the Gypsies broke into their old, familiar welcoming rite, singing to Savinkov:

". . . and the wines, they flowed like rivers,
For our own Pal Ivanych, our beloved guest!"

"E-e-eh! E-e-ah! E-e-eh!" And the fluttering and tapping of many feet in the restaurant room drowned out Savinkov's laughter. He was drinking the champagne presented to him by the Gypsy woman. The Gypsies sang; guitars moaned out traditional camp songs. Until the murky Petersburg dawn, the short, squat Gypsy, fattened in private restaurant rooms, kept up his lively, nimble-footed dance; guitars rang out like tambourines, in time to the shuddering of the bony Gypsy girl; the vivid ribbons flew and fluttered.

"Well, Boris? Life, eh?" cried Azef, becoming a little drunk.

"Short but merry, Ivan!"

Leaving the restaurant in the blue dawn, Savinkov took a deep breath of the cool, moist air. The doorman gave him a close look. When Azef followed heavily, a faint smile slid across the face of the police spy dressed as a doorman.

5

If one could only know from what direction a blow was about to fall? It would be simple, then, to ward it off and strike an answering blow. But how many chance and seemingly impossible disasters await one in the world!

Who would have imagined, on the sickly Petersburg day when Azef had been paid ten thousand rubles at General Gerasimov's secret apartment for the plan that was to make the general's career, that just on this day the little, narrow-shouldered, gray-haired revolutionary editor, Burtsev, would receive a call at the office of his magazine, *Byloye,* from a man with dark wavy hair and glasses even darker than Burtsev's own.

"What can I do for you?"

The caller was about twenty-eight. He was dressed like a wealthy Petersburg resident. Medium height. Nothing extraordinary. But something imperceptible moved in the air, some emanation that made Burtsev open his mouth, exposing the two front teeth.

"I have come on a personal matter. I know you very well, Vladimir Lvovich," said the black glasses, pulling out a wallet and extracting from it a photograph.

"Here you are, Vladimir Lvovich. I took the photograph from the Police Department files."

"Po-lice De-part-ment?" Burtsev repeated with astonishment, exposing his teeth still more.

"I am with the confidential-assignments office of the Okhrana. But by conviction I am a Socialist Revolutionary."

Burtsev's head buzzed with a swarm of suspicions. He could no longer feel the emanation.

"But permit me, why have you come?"

"I was a revolutionary. Chance brought me into the Okhrana. Now I come to make myself useful again to the revolutionary movement. You devote yourself to problems, so to speak, of a hygienic character, don't you? To unearthing provocateurs? This is a difficult task, and I understand it much better than you do. I should like to be of help in this."

Four eyes met steadily.

"There is something puzzling here," said Burtsev. "Are you becoming a revolutionary while remaining at the Okhrana? Or are you planning to leave your work, becoming a revolutionary?"

"I am remaining with the Okhrana."

Burtsev's mind stirred with a thousand possibilities, if the caller should be honest, and a thousand anxieties, if he was a provocateur. He decided to test him.

"Your name and patronymic?"

"Mikhail Efimovich."

"Very well, Mikhail Efimovich," said Burtsev, looking aside, "shall we start at once?"

"At your service."

Burtsev's chair squeaked as he pushed it nearer to the table.

"I am interested," he said, removing his glasses and rubbing his eyes with bloodless old fingers, "in the question of provocation in the Socialist Revolutionary party. It exists."

The visitor nodded his curly head.

"May I smoke?"

Burtsev struck a match.

"Thank you."

"But where is it operating, in your opinion? Since you wish to be of service to the revolutionary movement, let us begin with this. As an official of the Okhrana, you know, of course, that the Fighting Organization is paralyzed."

"I know, yes. But here. . . ." And the smoky glasses stopped thoughtfully.

"A provocateur," thought Burtsev. "He has come to trap, to lure and betray."

"You see, of course there is provocation there, as everywhere. But I am afraid, permit me, permit me, the agent is directed personally by General. . . ."

"Can you name him?"

"Certainly: Gerasimov. If you allow me, I even recall the agent's alias. I believe it is Raskin. Yes, yes, Raskin."

There was a knock at the door, and Chernov entered. He wore a light coat and a Panama hat with a bright red band.

"One moment, Victor Mikhailovich," Burtsev said with a shade of annoyance. "I am busy. Please wait in the next room."

Turning to his visitor, Burtsev said in a low voice:

"Let us finish for today. Give me your address."

"The main post office. For Mikhailovsky."

"Excellent."

And Burtsev saw the confidential-assignments official of the Police Department, Bakay, to the door.

6

For some time past, the whole life of Vladimir Lvovich Burtsev had narrowed down to a single faculty—his olfactory sense. He went about nervously, as if constantly sniffing some scent. On the day after Bakay's visit, Burtsev walked in a state of extreme agitation along the English Quay, amid the bright spring crowd. "Raskin," he repeated to himself. Someone at the very heart of the party. Raskin. Natanson? Savinkov? Tyutchev? Gotz? Rakitnikov? Chernov? Raskin. But who was he?

At the corner he saw a disorderly accumulation of carriages. Their lacquered mudguards glittered in the spring sun. People were

gay. The tall policeman, waving his arm, seemed to be gaily scolding the driver of the cart which was blocking traffic. Burtsev stood buttoning his coat.

"Who is that greeting me?" he wondered, looking at a carriage halted by the traffic jam. A gentleman in a dark coat and top hat. A lady, her shoulders higher than his, evidently somewhat short-legged. Her hat trimmed with white ostrich feathers. A pale blue suit. The gentleman raised his shiny top hat.

"Azef!" Burtsev was stunned. Speechless, he nodded briefly and moved on. The stream of carriages and cabs began to flow down the quay. Burtsev could still see the pale blue suit, the black arm around it, the black back, the black top hat.

"In broad daylight? The head of the Fighting Organization? In Petersburg? Bowing to an editor of a revolutionary journal on the run from police spies? Raskin? Azef? Azef? Raskin?" His excitement exceeded all bounds. Burtsev almost ran down the quay, muttering, "My God, my God, the head of the terror, an agent of the police, how terrible, how terrible, but also . . . w-hat a s-sen-n-sation!!"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1

After resigning leadership of the Fighting Organization, Azef and Savinkov went to France. With Vera and the children, Savinkov took an apartment on the Rue de La Fontaine, in Paris. This was their first attempt at family life, and Savinkov felt many things he had never known before. Together with Vera, he selected furniture, discussed the children's schedule, dined, and went to bed at regular hours. After years of sorrow, Vera felt happy at last.

Perhaps for the first time in her life she wanted to buy bright fabrics, to wear pretty clothes, to be liked by others, and most of all by Boris. This was because her happiness had come. It had, indeed, or the pale Vera, with eyes like frightened birds, would not have been so animated.

And Savinkov wanted to preserve this happiness. And yet, the more serene their life, the more unbearable it became to him. The Rue de La Fontaine was a quiet street. But, living quietly, Savinkov was becoming increasingly restless. Boredom possessed him and grew from day to day. And who knows where it would have led if he had not decided to express this boredom in literary form, in a novel.

It was true, he thought, that the theme of murder had been used extensively by Dostoyevsky, but Dostoyevsky never killed anyone himself, while Savinkov had. And it seemed to him that Dostoyevsky did not know many things that Savinkov knew so well. He knew the relentless anguish that was born in a man who killed other men.

And it was on the theme of this anguish, this boredom, that he wanted to write his novel. But even that was not the entire theme. Savinkov wanted to sharpen it, to set his hero in opposition to the whole world. The hero, in his novel, was to "spit into the face" of all mankind.

In the measured life on the Rue de La Fontaine, this theme took hold upon him with such force that Savinkov felt a constant shivering, as of a chill, within him. In the evenings, walking among the crowds on the darkened Champs-Elysées, he felt confident that, in

addition to his fame as a terrorist, he would win fame as a writer.

The novel, he decided, would be in the first person, in the name of the hero, a revolutionary who had begun to kill and who discovered that, essentially, killing was an interesting sport. And, in the end, becoming a tired sportsman in the field of murder, the hero would "spit in the face" of the world.

Savinkov did not stop to wonder why the poetry of Tyutchev and the Apocalypse helped him in his thinking about the work. He walked the endless rings of Paris boulevards, filled with the music of his theme and repeating Tyutchev's lines, "Why do you howl, night wind, why do you grieve insanely?"

At times, before sitting down to work, he immersed himself in the Apocalypse. Here, too, he found music strengthening his theme. He was especially moved by Chapter 6.

"And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another. . . . And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. . . . And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. . . ."

Recalling his feelings after the assassinations, Savinkov decided to call his novel *Pale Horse* and to give his hero the deliberately common name of Georges.

2

How much happiness, God, how much happiness there was in Vera's fragile hands! Sometimes it was difficult to believe. Was she really living together with him, with Boris, and with the children? This had been her constant dream. If only there were just a little more love, a little more tenderness and interest in her. If only he would admit her into his beautiful inner world.

Entering the study quietly, Vera came up to Boris from behind, put her arms about his head, kissed the thinning hair, and asked:

"What are you writing about?"

Savinkov threw aside the pen, smiled, and said, stretching:

"You will not understand it."

"If you don't tell me, I won't. Tell me."

"Very well," Savinkov said with a hard smile. "I am writing, Vera, about a man who kills for sport and out of boredom, a man

whose life is cold and lonely, who has nothing, no attachments, no love, to whom life is meaningless, even if full of genius—a glacier creeping down into a void. Do you understand?"

"Why does he talk like that? It is cruel."

"I do understand it. But you are right; this theme is alien to me. I like your poems better."

"But I write about the same thing in my poems! About a man who has lost his sense of smell and who mistakes the stench of rotten apples for exquisite perfume. A man who does not distinguish smells," Savinkov said with an ugly laugh.

"It is at me that he is laughing. He knows me. He knows what I will say now, what I am thinking."

"So? Then your novel will be autobiographical?"

"Perhaps. This is subtly remarked."

"It is very sad. And there will be no love in it for anyone?"

"In the final analysis—no. If you wish, I shall read you the only passage about my hero's true love. Listen: 'When I think of her, for some reason I recall a strange southern flower, a plant of the tropics, of blazing sun and parched cliffs. I see the hard leaf of the cactus, the broad, serrated zigzags of its stems. Amid its sharp spines, the luxuriant, scarlet bloom, as if a drop of fiery blood had spurted out and congealed to royal purple. I saw this flower in the south, in a strange, rank garden amid palms and orange groves. I stroked its leaves; I tore my hands upon its spines, I pressed my face to it; I inhaled its pungent, sharp, intoxicating fragrance. The sea was glittering; the sun blazed at its zenith; some secret sorcery was being worked. The scarlet flower bewitched me and exhausted me.'"

"Why doesn't he feel that this hurts? Why does he say he loves me? Why does he always want to give me pain? He is reading only to torment me."

Holding the manuscript sheet, looking at Vera, Savinkov saw that she was on the verge of tears.

"Sometimes it seems to me that I should not have come to you," said Vera and quietly walked out of the room.

3

"But aren't we together?" Savinkov asked in the evening, as he sat with Vera.

"We are under one roof. If this is being together, then we are together. It seems so simple: if you would tell me what you think, what you are writing. But you walk alone all evening, thinking about your work. Is it too much to want, after so many years of suffering? I want a part of your soul, of your inner world; let me in, I need some human warmth. You are locked up within yourself. Is this love? If you call our life together love, to me such love, without words, without inner feeling, is terrible."

Savinkov was angered by Vera's tone. He did not want to listen, but he was also reluctant to leave.

"Yesterday," said Vera, "you fell asleep on the sofa after work. I came in, and it seemed to me that even your closed eyes were turned inward, into yourself. There might be pain in them, but this pain was hidden from me. It seemed to me you were a complete stranger. It struck me like a physical blow; I almost cried out."

"What nonsense," muttered Savinkov, "and what a burden. It is impossible to live like this. You want something I cannot give you, something that perhaps you would not even wish to take."

Savinkov looked at Vera as he spoke, thinking, "How she has aged." He was afraid of her tears.

"But why, then, did you bring me here?" asked Vera. "Only to make me realize my loneliness again? To show me, not only that you do not love me as I want to be loved but that I am a total stranger to you? You surely must know that you are tormenting and destroying me."

"How am I destroying you, will you tell me, for God's sake?" Savinkov cried, rising with irritation.

"A husband and wife, Boris, can be happy only when there is nothing unspoken, nothing withheld between them. But we are separated by an impenetrable wall. And you destroy me by your refusal to break it down, as though this would in some way interfere with you. But to me. . . ." Vera's voice shook, but she summoned her strength and said: "Why speak of love then? There is none. Perhaps there never was. I knew that you were living an unusual, difficult life, and I accepted it. I waited. But what for? I came to you now expectantly, like a young girl, I hoped we would at last be happy. But I find that we have become strangers to one another. You haven't even any words to speak to me. When there is love, Boris, there can be no such loneliness. I feel completely alone. . . ."

Savinkov was silent. He was becoming bored. His novel, he knew, would contain just such a chapter about an unhappy love. He only wondered at the truth and subtlety of Vera's words. He had not expected it.

"But that which you consider love, Boris, is dreadful to me. I know that, beyond the threshold of my room, your contact with me ceases. You go, and I am wiped out of your mind. I am no longer needed. It's shameful, it is terrible, Boris. Between us there is none of that spiritual communication which, in a loving man, becomes transmuted into tenderness and gratitude. With you, this is impossible. You are alone, and insist on remaining alone. Your love is nothing but dry duty. But there are other women, prettier than I, who ask for nothing else?"

Savinkov sat without moving. Now he glanced at Vera, and suddenly he was convulsed with hatred for her, as for an intolerable burden.

"But this communication, this thing that's most important to a woman, does not exist between us, Boris, and never existed. You won't deny it. And now I see that this is really why I have been so unhappy—not because there was so much anxiety and pain. Even when you speak to me, when you share your thoughts with me, I know that it is in no way different from your conversation with your comrades. My thoughts will add nothing, and take away nothing. You do not see, do not notice my life. Even in small things. When we are walking in the street, here in Paris, you never take me by the arm. I would not pull away, you know. Perhaps I would even feel happy. The absence of this gesture makes me feel, more than anything else, how far you are from me. You want to walk alone, to be alone. Then why do you need me here?"

"Much of what you are saying may be true," said Savinkov coldly. "But if you mean to accuse me of something, I feel no guilt. Evidently I cannot give you what you need. Properly speaking, what you need is the petty-bourgeois bliss of quiet vegetation, the life of Gogol's Afanasy Ivanovich and Pulkheria Ivanovna."

"It isn't true!" cried Vera, trying to fight off her tears. "I want sincerity! Only sincerity! And you don't give it. . . ." And unable to control herself any longer, Vera burst into sobs.

Savinkov went out of the study, put on his coat and bowler hat, and walked lightly down the stairs. He was going to the races at Longchamp, and he disliked being late.

4

Vera sat in the corner room. It was twilight. Through the window she saw the red rim of the sun, sinking behind the church. People were going in—to vespers, probably. She looked at them and wondered: were they happy? That lady, walking arm in arm with the gentleman in a cap? He held her firmly, saying something to her. Vera tried to hide her bitter envy of the people she saw in the street, people who appeared to be happy.

From earliest girlhood it had seemed to her that she was filled with some extraordinary, unexpended feeling, and that a moment would come when she could give herself completely to it, when her own happiness and that of the beloved, the only man, would lie like something precious in her hands. This moment seemed to have arrived when Savinkov entered her home. Vera came forward to meet love, but a strange darkness crept into her love, a darkness in which the truth was not spoken, which spread and engulfed all feeling. Then came the children, fears, anxieties, sorrow, loneliness; all pride, all passion were trampled down. And in the meantime life began to slip away. And now Vera, who only yesterday, it seemed, had opened the door to the student Savinkov, was discarded and unnecessary to anyone. Life had never begun; now it was over, and there would be no other. Vera sobbed with boundless despair in the twilight.

5

Savinkov was becoming more and more silent. He did not come home nights. He spoke little. A morning came when Vera did not recognize herself. She walked quickly into the living room, still hearing the voices of Tanya and Vitya, whom their mademoiselle was taking out for a walk. Vera came in as if she had forgotten something important there. But in the room she stopped, pressed her hands together, then clasped her head, overwhelmed by the sharp, painful knowledge that she must put an end to this intolerable life.

It all seemed to have started with a trifle. He had not answered her questions yesterday. And when she burst out crying, he rose, went out, and stayed away all night.

"I must, I must," Vera moaned and felt that her collar was too

tight. She opened it. When she suddenly knew that she was really leaving, the chairs with the curved arms and lions' heads which they had chosen together, the wine-red draperies, the armchairs, mirrors, everything became unfamiliar, as if Vera had walked into a strange house.

"Oh, God, God," she repeated, feeling a heavy numbness, as though her hands, feet, all of herself were not her own. She remembered how the furniture had come, how they unpacked it, pulling off the paper, how Boris had laughed. Sobbing, Vera dropped onto the couch—"God, how I love him, how I love him, how I hate this Paris, his comrades, this revolution which destroyed my happiness."

Vera saw again, as if it had been yesterday, the student cap and coat. He had been different then, strong in his youth. All that was gone. Even the look on his face was now cruel and arrogant. And as he was now, without tenderness, he came to her; she gave him her body, while her heart sank with horror, her mind was cold, and the love she longed for was not there, not there at all. "I do not blame him," Vera whispered. "It was my own mistake. My life. . . . My whole life . . . one long mistake."

6

Vera waited for Savinkov to tell him of her departure. She visualized his face and words. Inwardly she knew how everything would happen.

He stood at the table listening, looking away. He also knew this day would come. But he had not the strength to look into her face. He was afraid of her tears. And also there was a strange, almost inexplicable feeling of shame, which he concealed even from himself. The conversation was brief, dry, and therefore agonizing.

"There is one thing," he said when Vera turned to leave. "I would not wish the children to grow up with hostile feelings toward their father."

Vera stopped.

"I will send money through the Russo-Asiatic Bank. . . ."

With a bitter smile, Vera went out quickly, afraid she might break down into tears in his presence. He waited impatiently for her to go. And listened with satisfaction to the receding rustle of her skirt down the corridor.

7

The terrible moment came when the apartment stood dismantled. Vera was silent. For no reason, she often kissed the children with tears in her eyes. The children were delighted; they wanted to travel. Their mademoiselle, come to bid them good-by, babbled and laughed with them. The four-seater landau was already waiting at the entrance. From the landau, Vera looked up for the last time. There was no one at the window. Unable to restrain herself, Vera sobbed bitterly. And the children did not know how to quiet her. They thought that their mother was weeping because it would be long before she saw their father again. She wept because she would never see him.

8

Savinkov was engrossed in his novel. He was working on the most important part, painting the hero and his background: "I am bored with life. Days, weeks, and years drag out in monotony. Today is like tomorrow, and yesterday was like today. The same milky fog, the same gray humdrum. The same love, the same death. Life is like a narrow street: old, low houses, flat roofs, factory chimneys.

"Here is a puppet show. The curtain rises; we are on the stage. The pale Pierrot is in love with Pierrette. He swears eternal devotion. Pierrette has a fiancé. A toy pistol pops; blood spurts—red cranberry juice. A hurdy-gurdy squeals backstage. Curtain. Next item: a manhunt. We are in red cloaks and masks. With us is Rinaldo di Rinaldini. He is in a hat with a rooster's feather, an admiral of the Swiss Navy. The carabinieri are after us, but we elude them. Again the pistol pops; the hurdy-gurdy bleats. Curtain. Item three: Athos, Porthos, and Aramis. Wine stains on their gold-braided camisoles. In their hands—cardboard swords. They drink, kiss, and sometimes kill. Who is bolder than Athos? Stronger than Porthos? More cunning than Aramis? Finale. The hurdy-gurdy drones a fancy march.

"Bravo. The gallery and the pit are pleased. The actors have done their stint. They are dragged off by their tricornes and rooster feathers and flung into the box. The threads are tangled. Where is the Admiral Rinaldo, the passionate Pierrot—who can tell? Good night. Until tomorrow.

"Today the actors on the stage are I, Fedor, Shura, and the Governor General. Blood flows. Tomorrow I am dragged off. The carabinieri hold the stage. A week later—again the admiral, Pierrot, Pierrette. And blood flows—red cranberry juice.

"And people seek for meaning in all this? Am I, too, seeking for the links in the chain? No, of course not; the world is much simpler. The tedious merry-go-round turns and turns. People fly like gnats into the flame. In the flame they perish. But what difference does it make?

"I am bored. Days will again fly after days. The hurdy-gurdy will bleat behind my back; Pierrot will make his escape. Come in, please. The farce is on."

For a long time there was a knocking at the door of Savinkov's apartment. The gray-haired patriarch of the party, the veteran of penal labor, Osip Minor, knocked excitedly. Several times he banged his cane on the door. And since the door remained silent, Minor also kept his hand on the bell, shaped like the open maw of a lion cub. At last he heard steps, and Savinkov appeared on the threshold.

"I thought I'd never get you to open, Boris Victorovich! A most outrageous business!" cried Minor. "The devil knows what's going on!" He hobbled across the parquet floor with his old feet, his bald head gleaming, gray hair flying as he moved. "Out-ra-geous!"

Savinkov was absorbed in his novel. Paying no attention to Minor, he led him into the study.

"Judge for yourself! It is already the talk of the whole Russian colony in Paris!"

"Calm down, Osip Solomonovich; what is it? Would you like a cigarette?"

Minor took the cigarette with his trembling, gouty fingers. "Why, just this moment I met Burtsev on Rue Lhomond, near the library, and he declares, with his first breath, 'You know,' he says, 'Osip Solomonovich, that a member of your Central Committee is a police agent?' I stare at him, but he rattles on, without a moment's hesitation: 'I've all the evidence,' he says, 'on hand; I accuse the member of the Central Committee Azef of provocation!'"

"Burtsev accuses Azef of provocation?" Savinkov said indifferently, staring off into space. He was still in the grip of his work.

"You speak as if it's none of your concern! Don't you hear what I'm saying? Burtsev is shouting it all over Paris! I ask him: permit me, but do you know Azef's role in the revolutionary movement? I

begin to tell him about it, but he only waves his hands. 'I know it better than you do,' he cries. 'Azef is a paid agent of General Gerasimov!'"

"You mean it's serious?" Savinkov said, recovering attention. "Burtsev dares to accuse him? I will demand immediate satisfaction."

"It's not a question of your personal satisfaction! Burtsev must be brought to trial at once! These rumors affect a member of the Central Committee! The leader of the Fighting Organization! Do you understand what demoralization it will cause?"

"But how contemptible!" cried Savinkov. "To accuse Azef, who has lived for ten years with a rope around his neck! The father of the terror! What vileness!"

"Oh, vileness is not the point either! Burtsev has been caught in a police trap; he is constantly in the company of one of their men, Bakay. And it is obvious that the man has been sent to discredit the party."

"But Burtsev is not a child?"

The telephone on the table began to ring.

"Hello! . . . Yes. . . . What?" Savinkov was silent for a long time. Someone shouted excitedly through the receiver, and when the shouting stopped, Savinkov said: "I have Osip Solomonovich here; he has told me the same thing. Burtsev has gone mad; he must be cured. . . . What? Yes, exactly. . . . The day after tomorrow? . . . Fine, good-by, Victor Mikhailovich!"

"Victor?"

"Yes. Natanson, Argunov, Potapov, the whole Central Committee is there. It turns out that Burtsev threatened to come out in the press if the party does not start an investigation. Damn it, Burtsev is a maniac!"

"We must write Azef at once, write him immediately. Do you have his address?" Minor cried in agitation.

"I will write him."

"Do it at once, reassure him, tell him we shall do everything."

When Minor left, Savinkov stood for a few moments at his desk, thinking. Then he laid aside the manuscript of his novel and began a letter to Azef.

9

The meeting of the Central Committee was well attended. Everyone was indignant. But no one was as furious as Chernov. He stood with darkened eyes and a resolute expression, as if prepared that very moment to be crucified for Azef's sake.

"Comrades," he said in a low voice. "We are before a matter of the utmost urgency. A comrade to whom the party owes much, all too much, if not everything, is accused of treason! Mr. Burtsev, in his shameless lying, dares to make the following statement. I read it:

"'To the Central Committee of the Socialist Revolutionary party. For over a year, in my talks with certain leaders of the party, I have pointed out that the main cause of the arrests which have taken place throughout the existence of the party was the presence on the Central Committee of the engineer Azef, whom I charge with the most vicious treachery, unequaled in the annals of the Russian movement for liberation. The latest executions in Petersburg make it impossible for me any longer to confine myself to fruitless efforts to convince you of Azef's shocking role, and I intend to carry this matter to the press and to submit it to the court of public opinion.

"'I have long requested the Central Committee to call me before a revolutionary court in the Azef case. But terrible and bloody events are taking place in Russia today, and I cannot limit myself to awaiting the investigation and judgment of such a court, which may drag on indefinitely. I therefore publicly and under my own signature take upon myself the grave responsibility of charging one of the most eminent leaders of the Socialist Revolutionary party with being an agent-provocateur.'"

Chernov paused to get his breath, then added, frowning:

"There is also a contemptible postscriptum, comrades, and I shall make it public as well. Mr. Burtsev writes: 'Of course, this statement should be kept from the knowledge of Azef and those who may inform him of it.'"

There was angry muttering in the hall. Someone jumped up with clenched fists, swearing. Chernov shouted above the noise: "Comrades, silence!" Then, in the silence that followed, he rapped out:

"I propose, in reply to Mr. Burtsev's declaration, to bring him to trial, which shall prove the falseness of his vicious slander against Comrade Ivan!" He was interrupted by thunderous applause. "And

to the postscriptum, I suggest the following reply: 'Azef and the party are synonymous. The party has no secrets from Azef, and therefore we are returning your statement, Mr. Burtsev, and you may take whatever action you wish!'"

Again there was the thunder of applause. Chernov sank into a chair, smoothing back his hair and wiping his mouth with a handkerchief.

10

When he returned from the meeting, Savinkov found Azef's reply.

"My dear!

"I thank you for your letter. It breathes of warmth and love. Thank you, my dear friend. . . . You write about a trial. I see no other way out of the situation. I do not quite understand your idea that we shall gain nothing by it. Can it be possible that Burtsev will persist even after the examination of his charges and the refutation of his 'facts'? It seems to me, my dear friend, that you overestimate the impression that may result from Burtsev's testimony.

"Victor writes that Burtsev has up his sleeve some ultra-sensational 'material,' which he keeps secret for the time being, hoping to astound the tribunal. But what I know of his charges bears no scrutiny, and every normal mind must cry out: 'Wallow in the mire yourself, but don't smear others!' I think that his secret 'information' must be of similar caliber. The court will surely be able to put an end to his odious slander. In any event, should Burtsev continue his ranting, he will remain in the world's eyes only a maniac. Of course, we demean ourselves by going to trial with Burtsev. It is unworthy of us as an organization. But things have gone so far that we must accept this humiliation. It seems to me that we cannot remain silent. You forget the extent of the publicity. However, if you find it possible to ignore and dismiss the matter, I am ready to do so as well—unless, of course, it is too late. I am certain that the comrades will do their utmost to defend the honor of a comrade, and I am therefore prepared to yield my own view of this and drop the idea of the trial.

"One thing I wish, though: to be spared attendance at the proceedings, should the trial be held. I feel that this would crush me altogether. Do all you can to relieve me of this. I embrace and kiss you warmly.

"Your Ivan"

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1

Burtsev's trial took place on a gloomy Monday. Exactly at nine in the morning a four-seater cab drew up before Savinkov's apartment on the Rue de La Fontaine. Two old men with gray beards, looking like apostles, and an austere elderly woman alighted from it. They were veterans of the Russian revolution—Prince P. A. Kropotkin and the former inmates of the Schlüsselburg Fortress, G. A. Lopatin and Vera Figner. Silently they followed one another up the staircase.

In the hallway Savinkov wanted to help Kropotkin to remove his coat. But Kropotkin waved him off, laughing:

"A man must know how to do everything himself, Boris Victorovich."

Kropotkin was of medium height, slender, and of military bearing. He held his handsome, gray-bearded head high, and his youthful eyes looked out through the glasses as if inviting everyone to look into his soul, where all was bright and pure. Lopatin threw off his coat, laughing as he spoke with Savinkov. Vera Figner was dry and silent.

Sitting down in the study, everyone spoke of other things, like doctors before entering the patient's room.

"You have a fine apartment, Boris Victorovich, beautiful, and not too high. What do you pay for it?" Lopatin rocked in the rocking chair.

Kropotkin took out his inexpensive watch and glanced at the time.

"How is your wife, Pyotr Alexeevich?" asked Figner.

"Thank you, Vera Nikolaevna; it's nothing serious. Influenza."

Chernov and Burtsev collided in the doorway. Chernov entered first, without looking at Burtsev, even, it seemed, pushing him aside. Burtsev was followed by the robust, pink-faced, white-bearded Natanson, a thick vein bulging on his stubborn bald skull.

A table was moved over to the center of the room. On it were inkwells, pens, paper, and pencils. Three chairs were drawn up for the judges: Kropotkin, the chairman, sat in the middle; on the right

of him, Lopatin; on the left, Figner. To the right of the judges was Burtsev, charged with libel. To the left—the accusers, representing the party: Chernov, Savinkov, and Natanson.

At half past nine, Kropotkin quietly cleared his throat, smoothed his gray beard, and said:

"The court, convened here to inquire into the charges of the Socialist Revolutionary party, which accuses V. L. Burtsev of slandering the party member Evgeny Filippovich Azef, is now in session. The accuser for the party, V. M. Chernov, has the floor."

Burtsev sat at a card table, arranging slips of paper, documents, notes. He seemed unaware of his surroundings. When he raised his head occasionally, deep in thought, his large teeth could be seen between the slightly parted lips. He stared at the wall, then quickly tore himself away and returned to arranging the notes, papers, and documents in orderly piles.

Savinkov felt a tightening spiral within him, cold, gnawing, unpleasant. Chernov, who had conferred with Natanson all this time, ignoring Savinkov, rose after Kropotkin's opening words.

"Comrade judges," he said loudly. "The prosecution begs permission to ask Mr. Burtsev a question which is essential for the further conduct of the trial."

"You may ask it," Kropotkin said impassively. Despite his slight figure, Kropotkin looked majestic. Glancing at the judges, Savinkov thought: "No better court could have been chosen: veterans of the revolution, and headed by the noblest anarchist, of world-wide fame."

"I want to ask Mr. Burtsev," Chernov spoke in his rapid singsong patter. He was very different from Kropotkin. "I want to ask him this question. Does he promise to discontinue his libelous campaign against Azef if the court decides against him?"

The faces of the three judges turned to Burtsev. He stood up nervously, small, narrow-shouldered, with a small gray head.

"If the court finds my charges against Azef unsubstantiated, and I retain my conviction that Azef is a provocateur, I will continue to fight against him. But if you wish, I shall mention, with every statement concerning Azef, that the court has decided against me. Moreover, I grant the Socialist Revolutionary party the right to react to my further agitation by any means, down to killing me."

The faces of the three judges turned from Burtsev to Chernov.

"Very well! Such a compromise, including the addition of 'down to killing,' is acceptable to us."

Chernov cleared his throat and launched into a speech, which was unlike his usual speeches. It was but scantily embellished with adages and proverbs; now and then the orator, in his excitement, had to fumble for the needed word. He spoke of Azef's biography, of Azef as one of the founders of the Socialist Revolutionary party and its principal leader, of Azef as the head of the Fighting Organization. He told how Azef had organized the assassinations of Plehve and Grand Duke Sergey, and how, a short time before his resignation from leadership of the Fighting Organization, Azef had planned the assassination of the Tsar on the battleship *Rurik*, which miscarried only because the sailor Avdeyev, charged with executing it, had—inexplicably to himself—failed to shoot when he faced the Tsar with a revolver in his pocket.

"How can anyone accuse Azef, comrades," cried Chernov, "even knowing but the single fact of the prepared attempt upon the Tsar, the readied blow at the very 'heart of hearts' of the autocracy, unconsummated only because of chance and through no fault of Azef's? Doesn't this alone suffice to prove the viciousness, the shocking baseness of the slander raised by Burtsev against a great revolutionary? When, tell me when, did history see provocateurs who assassinated ministers and grand dukes, who planned regicides? Doesn't this show the vileness, the whole dreadful senselessness of the charges against Azef?"

Lopatin turned his astonished gaze from Chernov to Burtsev. Vera Figner looked at Burtsev with deploring eyes. Natanson looked at the little gray old man with hatred. Savinkov, carried away by Chernov's speech, gestured excitedly with unconcealed indignation.

Kropotkin was quiet, impassive.

Burtsev sat as if there were nothing new in Chernov's shouting. And Chernov continued in his central-Russian, singsong accents, more sharply and more loudly as he went on. Now he spoke of how the Tsarist government had for a long time tried to compromise its most dangerous enemy, Azef, by letters to the party, and how, finally, the Police Department succeeded in these efforts with Burtsev's help.

"This underhand, vile campaign against our comrade and friend was begun long before you, Mister Burtsev! Already in 1903 the first suspicion was cast on Azef, and at that time the court of

inquiry, consisting of the writers Peshekhonov and Gukovsky, was compelled to apologize to Azef and declare all accusations unfounded nonsense. But you should have seen the leader of the terror; you should have seen his suffering under the vicious accusations, thrown into the face of one who was leading the party to glory! Yes, Azef wept; he wept before me like a child! And we consoled him; we assured him that every terrorist has to bear such thorns in the fight with tsarism, for it is a fight to the death! And then, again: one of the party members received a letter, obviously of police origin, which we naturally ignored. After that, the traitor Tatarov slandered the party's finest, noblest fighter on the road to the revolution! But the party settled scores with Tatarov, proving that, unfortunately, there was indeed a traitor in its ranks—but this traitor was Tatarov, not Azef. And we killed him!"

The judges turned again to Burtsev. He was listening to Chernov with a slightly opened mouth, showing the two front teeth. It was impossible to make out the expression on his face.

In the third hour of his speech, Chernov went on to describe Azef as a man, as a husband and father.

"The gentry who have fallen into the nets of the Okhrana do not even disdain to cite Azef's appearance and his manner of dealing with people in 'support' of their contention that he is a provocateur! Yes, I will admit that Ivan has often impressed people unfavorably at first glance. But he is not a schoolgirl, not a stage star to charm the sight of those who meet him! And here, with your permission, let me quote the saying, 'Don't judge a dog by his coat!' But everyone who got to know Azef more intimately came to love him with the most tender affection as a friend, as a brother. You need only to look closely into this candid face, the pure, childlike eyes, to feel his kindness. And when you see him in the circle of his family and comrades, you cannot help but love this truly good man and tender father." At this point, the judges noticed that Burtsev was writing down Chernov's words. "And now, this sensitive, kind man, the irreproachable husband and father, the dauntless fighter against absolutism, who has written some of the finest pages in the history of the Russian revolutionary struggle, is branded in the vilest, the most shameless way by gentlemen who are either simply looking for sensations, or who have become the dupes and victims of the Police Department!"

Chernov turned to Burtsev and spoke for another hour. During

the fifth hour, he wiped his face, lips, and hands with a handkerchief and sat down.

Savinkov rose.

"Comrades!" he said quietly.

"Some more stage-acting for himself," thought Chernov, glancing up at Savinkov.

"Comrades!" repeated Savinkov.

Chernov fidgeted irritably.

"I am Azef's friend, and my friendship with him is perhaps more intimate than those of all the other comrades, because it is cemented with blood. I have known Azef more than a day and more than a year. We have worked together many years. We have waded through blood, assassinating many in the name of the revolution, and losing many dear and beloved comrades along the bloody path. And now a filthy accusation is thrown at my best friend, a most courageous fighter, the leader of the terror! I regard this as an accusation against the entire Fighting Organization, and it is most painful for me to discuss it, for I oppose any attempt to investigate Azef's activity. He is above suspicion. But now I am compelled to speak about Azef as a terrorist, as his brother in blood and spirit. Permit me, then, to offer a dry enumeration of the glorious deeds performed by Azef! I begin: he knew about the attempt upon the Governor of Kharkov, Obolensky; he planned the assassination of the Governor of Ufa, Bogdanovich; he has directed the entire work of the Fighting Organization since 1903! He organized the assassination of Plehve; he organized the assassination of Sergey, the attempts upon General Trepov, the Governor General of Kiev, Kleigels, and Baron Unterberger of Nizhny-Novgorod. He directed the attempts upon the Moscow Governor General, Dubasov; the Minister of Internal Affairs Durnovo; General Min; the director of the Political Investigation Department, Rachkovsky, who was to have been assassinated together with the traitor Gapon; Gapon was killed. He staged the attempts on Admiral Chukhnin and Prime Minister Stolypin; he sanctioned the killing of the provocateur Tatarov and sent comrades to execute it; he organized the attempts on General von der Launitz, the prosecutor Pavlov, the Grand Duke Nikolay Nikolaevich, and, finally, on Tsar Nicholas II. You know yourselves how much blood was spilled, and how much sacrificed! Is it possible that we shall now throw mud at the man who was the soul and the guillotine of these glorious deeds?"

Chernov looked at Savinkov with displeasure. Savinkov was too pale. His narrow Mongolian eyes were burning. A flush came out in spots on his pale, longish face. The entire figure in the black, double-breasted, well-fitting suit was handsome and persuasive.

"I know Azef as no one knows him! I love him like a brother and will never believe any suspicions, for they are totally senseless! I know Azef as a man of tremendous will, great practical intelligence, and extraordinary organizational talent! I have witnessed his undeviating consistency in revolutionary action, his calm courage as a terrorist, and, finally, his profound tenderness toward his family. I see him as a gifted, steadfast, resolute man who has no equal among us. And I want to appeal to you, Vladimir Lvovich!" Savinkov turned to Burtsev and, gesticulating with his right hand, said with feeling:

"Instead of unfounded charges, besmirching the name of a great revolutionary and bringing terrible disorganization into the holy cause of the terror and the revolution, instead of accusations, I urge you, as the historian of the revolutionary movement, to tell us: is there in the history of the Russian movement for liberation, or the liberation movements of other countries, a name of a revolutionary more brilliant and glorious than that of Azef?!"

Burtsev stood up nervously.

"No! I know of no name in the Russian revolutionary movement more brilliant than Azef's," he said. "His name and his works are more brilliant than those of Zhelyabov, Sazonov, and Gershuni, but only if he is an honest revolutionary. And I am convinced that he is a scoundrel and an agent of the police!"

"Scum! Vermin!" cried Natanson and Chernov, rushing from their places.

The impassive P. A. Kropotkin rang the bell and declared, rising:

"The session is adjourned for two hours. After the recess, the floor will be given to Vladimir Lvovich Burtsev.

2

This time the chairman was the former Schlüsselburg prisoner German Lopatin. Chernov's face looked puffy and exhausted. Natanson was pale with the chalky pallor of a man who had not slept. Savinkov was nervous. Only the judges were calm.

"The floor is yours, Vladimir Lvovich," said Lopatin.

Burtsev stood up, adjusted his glasses, cleared his throat.

"I am convinced," he began, "that provocateurs are the principal weapon of the police system in the struggle against the revolution. If the revolutionaries succeeded in destroying this citadel of the autocracy, it is doubtful whether the autocracy itself would survive. This is my profound conviction. Believing in this truth, I have devoted my small powers to the fight against this evil—against provocateurs. But for many reasons, often psychological ones, this is an extremely difficult task which must be handled with the utmost caution. It was precisely with such caution that I set out to investigate my suspicions of Azef.

"I have long been convinced of the presence of a provocateur at the very heart of the Socialist Revolutionary party. Other party members have shared this conviction. It was supported by many facts, and most of all by the complete paralysis of terrorist activity. That this provocateur works for the Police Department under the pseudonym of Raskin was established by M. E. Bakay. From that moment on, all my energies were turned to one end: the discovery of the party member camouflaged under the pseudonym of the police agent Raskin. This was not easy and took a long time. I shall not go into an account of all the effort expended in systematizing everything related to the unknown Raskin. This work was done by me together with Bakay. All the evidence, carefully collected and thoroughly checked, pointed with absolute certainty to the fact that Raskin was Azef. But I never mentioned his name to anyone in the course of the investigation. Only at the end, when there was no longer any doubt, I decided to make a final test through Bakay. I asked him to tell me what he knew, from his work at the Okhrana, about Chernov and Savinkov. He told me. He said he had often seen their photographs, which the Okhrana distributed to its branches in the provinces. Then I asked, as if in passing: 'And what do you know about Azef?' Bakay replied that he knew no such name. 'But how can that be?' I asked. 'He is a prominent Socialist Revolutionary.' Bakay repeated that he had never even heard of Azef. 'But allow me,' I said, 'he is the head of the Fighting Organization.' 'Fantastic,' Bakay answered. 'It would be as impossible for me to be ignorant of the head of the Fighting Organization as to be ignorant of the director of the Police Department.' And it was then that I first broached the possibility that Azef might be the Raskin we were looking for. 'If such a man exists,' said Bakay, 'if he is a

friend of Chernov and Savinkov and the head of the Fighting Organization, and yet we know nothing about him, if he is not sought and his pictures are not distributed, then he is certainly an undercover man, an agent.'

"That was when I first mentioned Azef's name. The blood of revolutionaries was flowing in Russia, revolutionaries whom Azef was sending to the scaffold. Armed with all the facts, I informed the Central Committee of the party about my suspicions. But my attempt proved utterly fruitless. For a whole year I demanded that the Central Committee investigate my charges concerning Azef. The Central Committee either ignored me or refused to investigate.

"But time was passing. Azef continued to destroy people. And I vainly continued to plead with the Central Committee to look into the matter. But when I read just recently," Burtsev turned to Chernov and Savinkov, "that more terrorists were hanged in Petersburg—Zilberberg, Sulyatitsky, Nikitenko, Sinyavsky, Lebedintsev, Trauberg, and Sinegub—then, being convinced that they had been sent to the gallows by Azef. . . ."

"A vicious lie!" cried Chernov.

". . . I declared to the Central Committee that I would now come out openly in the press, for the party's disregard of the charges against Azef was tantamount to sending young, dedicated, selfless revolutionaries to the scaffold. I could no longer remain silent. And so we have come to this, to a trial—but not of Azef, of me. And now I shall raise my charges again—but this time not only against Azef. I charge the party with malicious connivance, costing the lives of scores of dedicated revolutionaries. I charge you, the Chernovs and Savinkovs! You have done your utmost to deflect all suspicions and rumors concerning Azef for many years. And it was only when I threatened publicity that you have called me, instead of Azef, to trial, at the same time hinting quite unequivocally that you can do away with me. But after I have demonstrated Azef's guilt to you before this court, I shall permit myself to ask you also: why have you so passionately and so long protected the traitor and hangman Azef?

"Because examination of all the materials concerning Azef's activity as an agent-provocateur and the attempts to unmask him reveals that I am by no means the first to call him an informer and to bring this to the knowledge of the Central Committee. And what are the reasons that made it possible for a provocateur to work

unhindered for so many years at the very center of the party? The reasons lie in the fact that the Central Committee is governed by the very darkest aspect of party morality.

"Six years ago the young propagandist Krestyaninov charged Azef with treachery. He had learned about Azef's police service from the detective Pavlov. Was the matter investigated by the party? No. Azef, head of the terror and police informer, was whitewashed by the crudest means. Soon afterward, Mikhail Gotz received a letter from Rubakin, voicing suspicions of Azef as a traitor. What did the members of the Central Committee do with the letter? They turned it over, laughing—to whom? To the head of the terror and the police informer Azef. But the party once again received a long communication, the so-called 'Petersburg letter,' with detailed information exposing Azef and Tatarov. The letter was brought by an unknown woman to the party member E. K. Rostkovsky. But first allow me to read this letter:

"'Comrades! The party is threatened with crushing blows. It is being betrayed by two dangerous spies. One of them is a former political exile, a certain T., who returned only last spring, I believe, from Irkutsk. He wormed his way into the confidence of Tyutchev, betrayed the terrorist attempts of Ivanitskaya and Barykov, and has, in addition, informed on Frelich, Nikonov, Feyt, Starynkevich, Leonovich, Sukhomlin, and many others, including the escaped Siberian exile Yakimova, who was later shadowed in Odessa, the Caucasus, Nizhny-Novgorod, Moscow, and Petersburg (she will probably be arrested soon).

"'The other spy, recently arrived from abroad, is a certain engineer Aziev, a Jew, who also calls himself Valuysky. This spy betrayed the conference in Nizhny and the attempt on the Governor of the province; he informed on Konoplyannikova in Moscow (dynamite workshop), Vedenyapin (who transported dynamite), Lomov in Samara (an army man), Cheredin, who lived in hiding from the police in Kiev, and the Grandmother, Breshkovskaya, (who lives in hiding with the Rakitnikovs in Samara). . . .

"'The traitors have marked out many new victims. You must know both of them, and this is why we write to you. As a man of honor and a revolutionary, be sure to do the following (but do it exactly as suggested: we must remember that there are spies still undiscovered, and that there is still much we do not know): destroy

this letter immediately and make no copies or extracts from it. Tell no one about it, but memorize its contents carefully and reveal the secret either to Breshkovskaya, or to Potapov (a doctor in Moscow), or Mainov (also in Moscow), or Pribylev, if he leaves Petersburg, where he is followed about by spies. Speak to one of them personally (there must be no written communications of any kind in this matter). Let the person informed act on his own, without mentioning you and without revealing that this information has come from Petersburg. It is essential, without divulging the secret, to warn all who are known to the traitors to be on guard, also those who are working in close association with them. All who are living illegally must try to shake the spies who are shadowing them and avoid appearing in places where they have been seen before. All technical work must be transferred at once and entrusted to new people.'

"To whom was this letter given? Despite the warning, despite the specific instructions as to the persons to be initiated into the matter, the letter was transmitted at once into the hands of the head of the terror and the police informer Azef. I know that he turned pale as he read it. But he said immediately to the comrades present: '"T" is Tatarov, and the "engineer Aziev" is myself. I shall take this letter to the Central Committee.' And Azef personally turned the letter over to Gotz. But the letter had not been copied. Azef therefore added to the list of Tatarov's betrayals the names of Barykov, Frelich, Feyt, and Nikonov. As for the part dealing with himself, he cut off the end of the letter, which read as follows: 'If you are unable to act exactly according to instructions, do not undertake anything. But if you do everything as outlined, let us know by a notice in the letters column in *Revolutionary Russia:* "To well-wishers. Everything accomplished." In that case, new revelations will follow.'

"This letter spoke of the betrayal by the 'engineer Aziev,' in whom Azef recognized himself, of: the congress of the terrorists in Nizhny, the attempt upon the Governor, the dynamite workshop, the transport of dynamite by Vedenyapin, and Breshkovskaya's place of refuge. Most eloquent facts, one might think, and so easily verified! But did the Central Committee trouble to verify them? No. They declared the revelations concerning the 'engineer Aziev' trivial nonsense, and the letter—a 'trick' of the Police Department. But

with Tatarov they dealt differently. Tatarov was killed! By whom? By Azef, who destroyed a rival by the hands of Socialist Revolutionaries.

"But the Central Committee was given no respite. Soon afterward the party received new information about betrayals from the Odessa Okhrana agent Sorkin. This information was also ignored by the Central Committee. Two years later came a detailed letter, several pages long, from Socialist Revolutionaries in Saratov, leaving no doubt whatever that Azef was a provocateur. But to this very day—and I stress it—to this day, the existence of this long letter is known only to several members of the Central Committee. It was hushed up, shoved into a drawer. What is it, then? Malicious connivance, or naïveté bordering on stupidity? I do not want to believe that the Central Committee of the Socialist Revolutionary party is so naïve and so stupid.

"But let us see what Azef was doing through all those years of fruitless attempts to unmask him. He stood at the helm of the party and the terror, killing ministers with his left hand and party comrades with his right. But not members of the Central Committee! He did not kill a single one of them; he killed the most wonderful young men and women who believed without reserve in terror and in their leader. Will you tell me what name can be given to this 'thoughtlessness' on the part of the Central Committee, and where are its roots?

"I am accused of slander. Yet long before I spoke, the Central Committee had at its disposal a mountain of materials proving beyond a shadow of doubt that Azef was a provocateur! But there is a Spanish proverb: the deafest man is he who will not hear. And the Central Committee suddenly turned into such a man, stone deaf in one ear! The roots of this deafness lay in the grimly unattractive picture of the party's organizational manners and morals. I am compelled to touch upon this atmosphere of Azefism, for it was this that fed with bloody sap a treachery the like of which the world has never known.

"To their monopoly of ideological leadership, the members of the Central Committee of the Socialist Revolutionary party added the monopoly of organizational leadership. The Central Committee was transformed into a large, closely knit family. Its members became infallible popes, smug narcissi who brooked no disobedience. The Central Committee became permeated with the spirit of a

bureaucratic caste. Its members set themselves beyond the reach of criticism; they became sacrosanct like Roman emperors. Even their wives and relatives were invested with the aura and full powers of Central Committee membership. The whole atmosphere festered with squabbles, nepotism, intrigues, gossip, and servility. Not a breath of fresh air was allowed to penetrate into the life of this family caste. And in the midst of this decay, Azef came into rank, luxuriant bloom.

"He was one of the family. And how could suspicion touch a member of the family? To make things even worse, there came into play the basest, the most potent and terrible temptation—the power of money. People cling to money; they crawl before it. And quite imperceptibly the task of obtaining money for the party was transformed from a means into an end.

"Azef brought money into the party. He was able to obtain it. Where? That is another question. The narcissi of the Central Committee did not trouble to look into it. The provocateur Tatarov also brought money, and therefore was co-opted to the Central Committee. This money came from the Police Department, from General Gerasimov and the spy Rachkovsky. The Central Committee was caught in their net. But not entirely. Azef, as the head of the terror, got money from the other side as well, from rich men and organizations in sympathy with the terror. And so, he held the party, that is, the Central Committee family, in both hands. How, then, could anyone begin to inquire into his treachery? For this treachery involved too many relations. And, safe behind the iron shield of 'mutual protection' within the Central Committee family, Azef killed right and left, striking at anyone he chose, but always sparing the members of the Central Committee and General Gerasimov.

"It was precisely this caste solidarity that was regarded and is still regarded as 'a feeling of comradeship' toward Azef, a feeling which the Central Committee members have expressed so eloquently here. But what appalling heartlessness these same people have shown toward courageous, young, intrepid comrades! Can it be that all the suspicions reaching the Central Committee have never given Mr. Chernov a moment's pause, that he has never had at least a fleeting impulse to warn anyone? For it was precisely you, the Chernovs, who handed over our selfless, dedicated youth to Azef, without even feeling the obligation to warn them. And yet it was your duty to warn them, to say: 'You must know about the

existence of a "Petersburg letter," a "Saratov letter," Krestyaninov's suspicions, Tatarov's testimony, the charges of "Mortimer" Ryss, and a mass of damning evidence against Azef. However, we trust Azef implicitly, we retain him in our midst, and he is informed of absolutely everything. And now it is up to you to make your own decision.' Then, if they chose to go to slaughter, it would at least be with full knowledge of the danger of the game. But the Messrs. Chernovs and Savinkovs handed over the young people to Azef without a word. And the dedicated young were hanged by General Gerasimov.

"True, Azef had other methods besides the gallows. I must mention these, too. With many of the terrorists who placed themselves at the disposal of the Fighting Organization, Azef dealt differently. Allegedly for the sake of conspiracy, he sent them to the most God-forsaken towns and hamlets in Russia, ordering them to make no move without his summons. While he was wallowing in drunken debauchery, squandering insane sums of money gotten both from the police and from the party, he did not provide those he exiled with any means of subsistence, compelling them to a life of starvation and total inaction. For this, too, he was paid by Gerasimov. And the courageous idealists, betrayed by the party into the hands of a provocateur, ended their own lives by suicide. And these are not isolated facts! Comrade Chernov knows about them! But the young revolutionaries who shot themselves were ignored because, first, Azef was too much a part of the Central Committee aristocracy, and, second, because the dictator of the terror was often autocratic beyond appeal, asserting to the comrades: 'The terror —is I!' And so we stand before hundreds of corpses, including the most recent victims hanged by Gerasimov—the selflessly devoted Zilberberg, Sulyatitsky, Sinyavsky, Nikitenko, Lebendintsev, and Trauberg! Nevertheless, even at this point the party's representatives and Azef's friends refuse to see the truth. Permit me, then, to go on to the factual side, to the details of the evidence which should convince even the blind that the party's terrorist work has been conducted by an agent of the police."

Burtsev went on to the facts uncovered by his investigation, which had brought him to the conviction that Raskin was Azef. During the fourth hour of his testimony he was already sensing the links established between him and the judges. It was clear that Lopatin believed him. Kropotkin was shaken. Even Figner, it

seemed, was beginning to waver. Fact followed fact, piling up, crushing the mind. Burtsev told about his trip to Warsaw to check with the engineer Dushevsky whether Azef had visited him five years earlier, and about his trip to Switzerland to see Rubakin. Burtsev cited hundreds of the most precise facts and dates. Then, pausing and taking a drink of water, he said:

"I have outlined the history of my efforts to expose Azef; I have given you the facts which establish his treachery; I have expressed my indignation and described the atmosphere of the Central Committee, in which Azef, aided by the irresponsible tolerance of its members, was able to carry on his activities. But I have still another fact, after which even Chernov and Savinkov would, it seems to me, have no choice but to believe me. However, I can submit it to the court only on condition that the representatives of the Socialist Revolutionaries give their word to make no use of the information without the consent of the court. As for the court, it may do with the information as it sees fit."

There was silence. It was broken by the chairman, Lopatin, who asked in a voice tired after long disuse: "Do the representatives of the accusing side agree to the proposal of Vladimir Lvovich Burtsev?" He screwed up his eyes; in twenty years of solitary confinement he had become nearsighted.

Chernov excitedly conferred with Natanson and Savinkov.

Savinkov stood up:

"We agree to make no use of the facts submitted by Burtsev without the court's permission."

"In that case," said Burtsev, "I shall give you this information. Just recently, a week before my last communication to the party, I learned that the former director of the Police Department, Lopukhin, was abroad. I knew that he is an enemy of the revolutionaries, but an honest man, who has fallen into disfavor with the government precisely because of his honesty. I was inwardly convinced that, if I enlightened Lopukhin concerning Azef's double role, he would be astounded at what he heard, since he knew Azef only as a police agent, but not as a revolutionary. And I felt that he would then admit to me the police activities of this monster, this fiend incarnate. I tried to catch Lopukhin. I learned that he was to be in Cologne on the twenty-fifth, on his way to Berlin, whence he would proceed to Russia. I went to Cologne to await him.

"I recognized him in the first-class waiting room and watched him

get into his railway car. I followed, but deliberately took a seat in another compartment, not wishing to meet him until the train was moving. I took great care to make sure I was not shadowed. When the train started, I entered his compartment, as if by chance. He was alone, reading the *Frankfurter Zeitung.*

"We greeted one another and began to talk, conversing in the most ordinary way. I did not try to take the bull by the horns. But when I said that the failures of the latest actions of the Socialist Revolutionary party resulted from the fact that its Fighting Organization was headed by a provocateur, I felt that the ground had been laid. I said to him: 'Alexey Alexandrovich, permit me to tell you everything I know about this provocateur and his activities, both in the revolutionary movement and in the service of the Okhrana.'

"He assented. I began my story. I know that I risked everything, telling the former director of the Police Department about Azef's career as a revolutionary. I also know that, should my efforts fail, the Messrs. Chernov and Savinkov won't stand on ceremony with me. But my firm belief led me to stake my life. I told Lopukhin in detail how Azef killed Plehve and Sergey, how he staged the attempt upon Dubasov, how he planned the assassination of the Tsar, while at the same time sending revolutionaries to the gallows by betraying them to Gerasimov. I watched Lopukhin's face. As I spoke, I could see more and more clearly that he was astonished, shocked, reluctant to believe that he knew this agent of the Okhrana.

"When I began to speak about regicide, Lopukhin went pale, but now he could no longer conceal his agitation or refuse to believe my facts, which he had known from the other side of the barricades. I think that he was shaken most deeply by the realization that he had taken part himself, however indirectly, in Azef's activities. And then, after speaking for six hours, I said: 'As the director of the department, you surely must have known this provocateur. He is known as Raskin, but I have discovered his true identity. Permit me to tell you the name of the man who hides behind this pseudonym.' I was ready to name Azef, when the excited Lopukhin cried out: 'I know no Raskin; I know the engineer Yevno Azef. . . .'"

Leaving his chair at the head of the table, Lopatin walked heavily toward Burtsev and placed his hands on Burtsev's shoulders:

"Vladimir Lvovich, give us your word that you heard this from Lopukhin!" Then he turned away with a hopeless wave of his hand.

"What's there to talk about; it's all too clear!" There were tears in the old revolutionary's eyes.

The accusers jumped up; the judges jumped up; there was confusion in the room.

"You gave Azef away!" shouted Chernov. "You prompted Lopukhin!"

"Azef is above Lopukhin's accusations!" gesticulated Natanson.

"German Alexandrovich," Savinkov approached Lopatin. "This is impossible; do you believe Lopukhin?"

"Of course. Traitors are killed on such evidence."

Savinkov was like a drunken man. His face and forehead ached. He muttered, "Impossible."

"Then how can you explain Lopukhin's role?"

"It is Lopukhin against Azef. I believe Azef."

"Why? Lopukhin has no motive to lie."

"I believe that Azef is innocent."

"Pyotr Alexeevich, but can't you see it is a police intrigue! Lopukhin tries to cast a shadow on Azef!" cried Chernov, advancing on Kropotkin.

"Well . . . Vera Nikolaevna Figner once believed Degayev, too," said Kropotkin, removing Chernov's hand from his shoulder.

Lopatin announced loudly:

"I declare today's court session closed."

3

In the evening Savinkov stood at the parapet of the Pont des Invalides. He was thinking in the darkness about the trial, about Azef and the hero of his novel. "What if Burtsev's slander and delusions turn out to be the truth? Can Azef be the living image of the hero who spits into the face of mankind? No, no, it is a lie." But vague and terrifying anxiety filled his mind. "Impossible. It is a lie. Burtsev will pay dearly for it. Karpovich is already on his way here, sworn to kill Burtsev."

The Seine was turbid, stirring with red and green reflected lights. Under the bridge the crowded barges creaked against each other. The scent of apples drifted up. Savinkov bent over and saw the barges, loaded with apples. After a while, he quietly started off across the bridge—to visit Burtsev.

4

In the doorway of Burtsev's house, Savinkov collided with Bela, dressed in a gaudy cloak, a relic of a terrorist plot in Petersburg.

"You're also coming here?" Bela said strangely.

"How are you, Bela? You look so pale; are you ill?"

"Are you well?"

Without greeting or farewell, Bela rustled away in her gaudy, expensive cloak, which did not suit her homely figure.

"I am very glad you've come, Boris Victorovich," said Burtsev from behind a pile of books, newspapers, and photographs. "You will forgive me, but I regard you as my only honest adversary. Sit down, please." The little narrow-chested, gray-haired Burtsev smiled with his protruding teeth.

"Do you imply, Vladimir Lvovich, that there are comrades who are conducting themselves dishonestly at the trial?"

"Who can see into deep waters, Boris Victorovich? Of course I do not think that anyone in the Central Committee knew about Azef's work for the Police Department. At the trial I gave a sufficiently clear picure of the corruption in the Central Committee to make it understandable why all the suspicions were ignored. But judge for yourself: to any unprejudiced person it must be clear after my report that Azef is a traitor. And here, if you forgive my candor, the Central Committee turns a somersault. 'Let's save our own skins! Let's save the party!' Even if Azef is a provocateur, it must be hushed up! No publicity! Else the periphery may rebel against the center, and what will happen then to all the laurels, posts, ranks, and distinctions?" Burtsev smiled. "Of course it goes without saying that the party will be seriously shaken. It may not even recover. You can imagine the reaction everywhere when all the newspapers announce that the leader of the party, Azef, is a police agent. It is a fact of world importance, Boris Victorovich, a case unprecedented in history! Every country will be full of it."

"If it is true."

"It is true, Boris Victorovich. But the party does not want the luxury of truth. It is much more advantageous to the party," Burtsev laughed, exposing his front teeth, "to punish Burtsev for this luxury."

"You mean to say kill?" asked Savinkov, who now understood the purpose of Bela's visit.

"Naturally."

Savinkov also smiled faintly.

"After all, from the point of view of the party generals, Boris Victorovich, the way out of the situation is clear: Azef betrayed many comrades, but they were hanged and cannot be recalled to life. What's gone is gone. But an Azef unmasked covers the party with disgrace. Surely it's better to cover Burtsev with a pine board than the party with disgrace. And no one's the wiser for it! As for Azef, take him gently aside by the hand and say: 'Now organize an act of first importance, something to set the whole world talking. Kill the Tsar, rehabilitate yourself, and step out; go away somewhere—say, to South America, to cultivate plantations.' Degayev was much smaller fry; yet even he was able to expiate his sins and win a dispensation by killing Colonel Sudeykin. And Azef, you know, can do a lot; he is a cunning brute; in brain and scope he beats Degayev hollow. He can dispatch our Little Father without batting an eye."

"Vladimir Lvovich," Savinkov broke in; he hadn't been able to say a word, for Burtsev ran on and on. "My mind is in a whirl as I listen to you. Can you really believe what you are saying? But you must understand it. Azef is innocent. It's all a nightmare, an obsession in your own brain. None of us has the slightest suspicion, the slightest doubt."

"What kind of doubt?" laughed Burtsev loudly. "When Bela comes here and announces directly that she will put a bullet through my head. There's nothing doubtful about that!"

"I've come to talk with you in absolute sincerity, Vladimir Lvovich. Tell me, as if you were at confession: isn't it a delusion? Are you really firmly, unshakably convinced?"

"Unshakably," said Burtsev.

"It never occurs to you that Lopukhin and Bakay may be playing a game with you?"

"A fine game! Do you know that Bakay has exposed up to thirty provocateurs? He's reached such pillars as the Polish writer Brzozowski, the master of the hearts and minds of the Polish revolutionary youth! And Lopukhin? You should have seen his face! Why should he lie? Besides, I looked for him; he did not look for me!"

"Fantastic," muttered Savinkov. "I don't understand anything, but

I don't admit the thought, you understand; I don't admit it for a moment."

"Incidentally, where is Azef?" asked Burtsev, as if he had not heard Savinkov's words.

"He will arrive in a few days. He's been in Spain."

"Spain? Not a bad little spot. But tell me, Boris Victorovich, is it true that Karpovich is also coming to Paris?"

"He wrote that he is."

"Coming to kill me?"

"He wrote that, too."

"I see," said Burtsev. "And do you know how he got away? No? I will tell you. After his escape from Siberia, he became the chief of the Petersburg unit, didn't he? Well, one day he was arrested in the street, quite by chance. But Azef knew that Karpovich believed in him as in God himself, and that he had sworn to shoot me in defense of his honor. . . . No, no, don't interrupt me. . . . Azef got together with Gerasimov and let him escape from prison. Yes, they did. Just listen to this farce, played out in broad daylight. The dangerous terrorist, the former Schlüsselburg inmate, the murderer of Minister Bogolepov and head of a terrorist unit, is taken from one prison to another in a simple cab by an ordinary policeman. But that's not all. At some drugstore the policeman (who, incidentally, is none other than Nicolay "Gold Glasses" in a policeman's uniform) gets out and tells Karpovich, 'Wait here; I'll be back in a moment.' He comes out of the store and sees Karpovich still sitting there—the prisoner didn't take the hint. They go on. The policeman stops at another store. Again, 'Wait here.' But this time Karpovich understands and runs. And where does he go? Straight to Azef's apartment."

"Do you mean to say that the police and Azef have sent a terrorist of blameless reputation to kill you?"

"Of course! Precisely, Boris Victorovich! Do you think they are all stupid in the department? Why, they've got such Machiavellis sitting there, carrying on such subtle inquisitions that Torquemada himself would have been delighted. They're artists, Boris Victorovich, artists at their trade!"

"Vladimir Lvovich, this is impossible," laughed Savinkov. "You are suffering from spy mania; you are quite ill! Manias, obsessions! And everything fits in! Supernatural and phenomenal! But, if you forgive me, I can put no credence in this complicated web."

"I am not offended. I know that, unless Karpovich and Bela kill me before the end of the trial, you will see the truth. Even Chernov will be compelled to see it, much as he hates to!"

"If the court acquits you, we will challenge the court," said Savinkov, rising. "You understand, the mind refuses to accept it. You un-der-stand?" he said, pointing to his forehead. "But, if it turns out to be the truth, then you must also know that all the provocateurs in the world could not have struck a blow at terror as deadly as the blow that is being struck by you, the terrorist Burtsev. And you are an advocate of terror yourself!"

Burtsev pretended he did not hear the last words and said, rising:

"In that case, there was no need of a trial. But please, Boris Victorovich, when you see Azef, forgive me for reminding you, don't mention Lopukhin."

"We gave our word to the court."

"Oh well, you know, friendship is a great thing," smiled Burtsev. "Good-by. I can see you are a soul in torment, Boris Victorovich! Wait till you find out in whose company you have been killing people."

"That remains to be seen," said Savinkov, leaving.

5

All sorts of people traveled in cabs that day in Paris. But none could have been more anxious and disturbed than the stout gentleman in the light, sand-colored coat and hat.

The cabman drove him in a narrow cabriolet along the Rue de La Fontaine at fair speed, reining in at the corners to make way for the rushing streams of cross traffic.

It was getting dark. A fine drizzle was falling. The gentleman in the sand-colored coat and hat was agitated, but not because he was without an umbrella and the rain might spoil his elegant hat. The gentleman was simply afraid that, in a short few minutes, in the Malmberg apartment on the Rue de La Fontaine, he might be killed.

"Argunov may have wired. Exposure may come at any moment." Azef twitched with a sharp spasm. He peered at the house numbers.

"*Ici, ici,*" he muttered, stopping the cab and climbing down.

He crossed to the side opposite Savinkov's house and slunk along

like a thief out on business, hiding in the shadows of buildings and gateways. A short distance away he stopped. He could see the windows of Savinkov's apartment. They were brightly lit and shadows moved behind them. "A meeting. Perhaps it's over?" The shadows flickered in a crowd, then disappeared. The windows were clear and bright. "They're leaving." Azef almost ran back to the next entrance.

He saw them leaving. He recognized everyone. Terrorists. His heart throbbed and sank. There was Savinkov, his head uncovered, coatless, seeing his visitors out, saying good-by to two women—Rachel and Bela. Behind them—Vnorovsky, Sletov, Zenzinov, Moyseenko. If he could only catch a single word! Savinkov waved his hand, turned, and went back into the house.

"Rubbish." Azef shook his bovine head and began to cross the street.

6

And yet his heart beat violently, and not because the staircase was steep. Azef climbed heavily, stopping on the landings.

The study was filled with greenish twilight from the desk lamp. Azef followed Savinkov with tired steps. His face seemed bloated with watery fat, and the vivid, meaty lips were even redder than usual. From his face and walk, Savinkov saw that he was agitated. Azef sat down near the desk, and his large face became green from the lamp.

"Tell me all about this vile business," he muttered. "It's broken me up completely."

"The devil is terrifying, Ivan, but God is kind. Of course it's very unpleasant, but the members of the Fighting Organization were just here. It's clear to everybody that Burtsev will have nothing left to do but put a bullet through his head when the court finds him guilty. He said so himself to Bela."

"He said so?" Azef spoke quickly.

"Yes. His main trump is the Okhrana agent Bakay, who escaped from Siberia; he was exiled for his connection with Burtsev."

"I gave him the money to escape," muttered Azef.

"Burtsev said that you had come to see Bakay instead of Chernov. The maniac accuses you in this case, too. He says that the department wired orders to arrest Bakay in Tyumen at your instigation,

and that it was only chance that made it possible for him to escape."

"What nonsense," laughed Azef. "And what else?"

Savinkov told him about the trial.

"And what is that 'sensation?'"

"What sensation? Oh yes, Burtsev calls it a 'sensation.'"

"What is it?"

"I have no right to tell you, Ivan."

"Why? You gave your word?"

"I did."

"A pity," said Azef. It seemed to Savinkov that Azef turned pale, but it was difficult to tell in the green light. "Some other Bakay?"

"A police official."

"Higher?"

"Considerably."

Azef looked intently at Savinkov.

"You really will not tell me, Boris? Is it Lopukhin?" Azef asked with a forced smile.

"Maybe. I gave my word, Ivan. I've said nothing."

Azef turned his eyes away, sighed deeply with his paunch, and, after a silence, asked in a quick, nasal rumble:

"You say that Kropotkin suspects me of playing a double game?"

"He does."

Azef was silent, grinning dryly. Suddenly he burst into a sharp, raucous laugh that filled the room.

"Of course. You are not too clever, the lot of you, it's certainly no trouble to hoodwink you. Burtsev is lying, talking of 'sensations,' and you. . . . Fine comrades. Very well, Kropotkin's in his dotage; he can believe anything. But you?"

"What about us? You speak as if we have failed you in some way. . . ."

"We should not have gone to this trial," Azef said venomously. "It was your fancy, and Victor's, that Burtsev would be beaten in two minutes, and that I would come out dry from all this filth. You didn't give a damn for my feelings." In the quick, flat, snakelike glance, Savinkov caught the malevolent hatred he had seen so many times before.

Azef sat with his hands folded on his paunch. He looked like a hideous Buddha.

"You throw reproaches at us; it's sheer ingratitude. If you think we are not defending you properly, why don't you come to the trial,

help us to deny the charges, talk for yourself? I think this would be the best line of defense."

Azef threw him a sidelong glance.

"I hoped my comrades, with whom I've gone through fire and water, would defend me."

"We're doing everything we can, Ivan."

Azef was silent. Savinkov knew this shift of mood, too, this sudden transition from violent rage to warmth, verging on tenderness. Azef smiled without moving. Then he asked, frowning:

"So you think it would be best if I came to the trial?"

"Of course."

Azef threw himself back. Savinkov saw the huge folds of his jowl and neck over the white collar and reddish tie.

"No," he said. "That's something I cannot do. I have no strength to face this vileness, to get involved in it." This change was also familiar; it happened rarely, but Savinkov had seen it before. Azef suddenly seemed broken, crushed.

"This business," he said, "will kill me altogether if you don't put an end to it. . . . Burtsev should be killed, the vermin. . . ."

Toying with a matchbox, Savinkov said:

"Unthinkable. It would mean a scandal, not rehabilitation.

Azef was silent.

7

At night, when Azef came into the room, Hedy awakened, then shut her eyes against the light. Azef was shaken by a chill. The game was lost. There was nothing before him but ruin and a dreadful end. Seeing Hedy's bare arms, her uncovered breast, and sleep-flushed cheeks, he undressed quietly, quickly, without a word. Flapping with bare feet across the floor, he slipped into bed, enormous, naked, weighing down the mattress. Hedy awaited him and burned him with her hot feet.

8

Events moved swiftly as in a headlong crime novel. The situation shifted, wavered. Then suddenly everyone learned that Azef had gone, not to Berlin, but to Petersburg, to see Lopukhin, to implore, for the sake of his children, to spare him, not to give him up to the

revolutionaries. After Azef came General Gerasimov, with ringing spurs, threatening Lopukhin with Stolypin's name, with death. After Gerasimov came the party's emissary, Argunov.

"I had visits from Azef and Gerasimov," Lopukhin told Argunov. "I was threatened with arrest and exile to Siberia for state treason. This does not frighten me in the least. But don't imagine that I am exposing Azef to the revolutionaries because of any sympathies for the revolution. I am an enemy of all revolutions. My position is on the other side of the barricades. I am doing this for moral reasons."

9

Summoning his last reserves of strength, Azef returned to Paris. General Gerasimov had given him four passports and two thousand rubles for his escape. He left a will in favor of his family with Gerasimov, begging him to help them if he should be killed in Paris.

Azef came to his wife, Lubov Grigorievna, at 245 Boulevard Raspail. Without Hedy, he was anxious and restless. His two sons were with him. And the idea that he would be killed right there, before the eyes of his wife and children, was unbearable.

"Vanya, good God, how you have changed, how they torture you! And what for? For going about with a noose around your neck for ten years? That scoundrel Burtsev. . . ."

"All right, all right, don't whine, it's bad enough without you," and Azef walked away to the children's room. Sitting down, he examined his son's drawings. Lubov Grigorievna was preparing breakfast. Azef turned page after page, until he realized that he saw nothing, that he was merely turning the pages to escape the ever-present fear.

"Vanya!" called Lubov Grigorievna. Azef started. The bell rang.

"They're here," Azef thought, jumping up. He rushed to the hallway to warn his wife, but she had already opened the door. He saw Chernov, Savinkov, and a member of the Fighting Organization, Pavlov.

"Ah, Lubov Grigorievna!" Chernov smiled in the doorway. "We're here to see Ivan! Is he home?"

Azef came slowly and silently out of the darkness to meet them.

Without looking at them, he greeted them and led them to the corner room, his study. He sat down heavily behind the desk, slightly opening the drawer which held two revolvers.

"What is it, gentlemen?" Glancing back, Azef saw them standing at the door, barring his exit.

"What is it?" Azef repeated, gathering all his strength to hide his agitation and control his quivering jaw.

Chernov drew a folded sheet of paper from his pocket.

"Read this document, Ivan. It's from Saratov."

Savinkov was standing, extremely pale; his narrow eyes were almost invisible; his lips seemed sunken; he looked ill. Pavlov stared calmly at Azef.

Savinkov saw Azef turn pale as he rose with his back to the window and began to read the incriminating document. But Azef was not reading; he was merely steeling himself to look up from the paper.

Regaining control, he asked roughly:

"Well, what is it all about?"

"We know," said Chernov, "that on November 11 you went to Petersburg to see Lopukhin."

Azef answered calmly:

"I never went to see Lopukhin in my life."

"In that case, where were you?"

"In Berlin."

"At what hotel?"

"First at the Fürstenhof, then at the Kerch Furnished Rooms.

"We know that you were not at the Kerch."

Azef burst into a resonant laugh, so well known to Chernov and Savinkov.

"Ridiculous, I was there. . . ."

"You were not."

"I was!" Azef shouted in fury. "What kind of talk is this?" Azef drew himself up and raised his head. "My past is my witness! I will not permit this!"

Savinkov approached him, his hand in his pocket. He was bluish pale. Azef looked him straight in the eyes.

"Since you speak of the past," Savinkov said in a hollow voice, "then tell us why Vladimir Vnorovsky had no bomb when Dubasov's carriage went past him?"

"It's a lie!" Azef said, turning pale. His nostrils and his lips were trembling. "All the throwers had bombs. Shillerov allowed Dubasov's carriage to pass. I don't know why."

"We have questioned Vnorovsky. Dubasov drove past him. But he had no bomb. You never gave him one."

"A lie!" shouted Azef. "It was as I tell you!"

"Then Vnorovsky is lying?"

"No, Vnorovsky could not lie."

"Then you are lying?" Savinkov stared hard at Azef, his face quivering. Azef was white, but stony. He was gathering his last reserves of strength.

"No, I am telling the truth."

"Wait, Pavel Ivanovich, we must first straighten out the question of Berlin," Chernov broke in.

"Ivan, why did you go to Berlin?"

"I wanted to be alone, Victor. I am tired. I wanted a rest. I think this is understandable."

"Why did you move from the Fürstenhof to Kerch?"

"It was cheaper there."

"So you moved because it was cheaper? Since when have you become so economical? You've lived all your life on blank allocations, and I don't remember any penny-pinching."

"I had other reasons, too."

"Such as?"

"They have no bearing on the case."

"You refuse to answer?"

"I moved because it was cheaper. The rest is not relevant here."

"Tell me, how did you interpret my words," asked Savinkov, stammering, "when I told you that someone, whose name I could not mention, had told Burtsev that you were working for the police and gave him permission to inform me about it?"

"I understood that this person gave Burtsev permission to tell you about it."

"This person is Lopukhin," said Chernov. "And he never named Savinkov. But you concluded from the words of Pavel Ivanovich that Lopukhin named him."

"Well?"

"And therefore you came to Lopukhin and said: 'You told Savinkov that I am a police agent. Tell him you were mistaken.'"

Now Azef winced and turned green. And at the same moment he began to pace the room, cutting across the space between his visitors.

"What nonsense! I don't understand anything! There must be an investigation!"

"There is nothing to understand." Chernov turned. "Ivan, we'll offer you conditions: tell us frankly about your relations with the police. We have no need to destroy you and your family."

Azef heard the door open. The boys came home from school. Hushing them down, Lubov Grigorievna led them on tiptoe along the hallway to their room.

"Ivan, tell us everything without concealment. Couldn't you do what Degayev did? You could do more, Ivan."

Azef paced the room in silence, with lowered head.

"It is in your interest to accept the offer."

Azef made no reply.

"We are waiting for an answer."

Azef stopped before Chernov and looked at him steadily.

"Victor! Is it possible that you really think this about me? Victor!" he said in a trembling voice. "We have lived in close friendship for ten years. You know me as well as I know you. How could you come to me with such vile offers?"

"If I came, that means I had to come," replied Chernov, drawing away from him.

"Boris!" said Azef, turning to Savinkov. "Can you, my closest friend, believe this filthy police invention? God, but this is terrible!"

"We shall leave now, Ivan. You do not wish to add anything to what you have said? You refuse to answer the question of Victor Mikhailovich?"

"We give you until noon tomorrow," said Chernov.

"After twelve we will consider ourselves free of any obligations," said Savinkov, stressing every word.

10

That night in Azef's apartment was harrowing. The children slept peacefully. But Azef's study, lit by the burning fireplace, presented a picture of disorder: the chairs were pushed aside, the screens were toppled, the floor was littered with papers and things, the door was open. Disheveled, in shirt sleeves and suspenders, Azef hurriedly went through piles of papers; some he squeezed into suitcases, others he threw into the flame. Lubov Grigorievna stood, trembling, at the dark bedroom window.

Tearing himself away from the packing, Azef straightened out from time to time, and with a face full of dread asked:

"Luba? Are they still there?"

"They are. Walking," Lubov Grigorievna answered from the darkness.

"O-o-o-h. . . ." Azef groaned, pressing his head with his fists. "They'll kill me."

Lubov Grigorievna peered from behind the corner into the dark Boulevard Raspail and saw two men in dark coats, walking quietly up and down across the street. She knew they were the party patrol—Zenzinov and Sletov.

At one o'clock two suitcases were packed. But it was impossible to leave the house.

"Luba," said Azef. "Turn out the lights everywhere; let them think I have gone to bed. . . ." Soon after that, Azef went to the window in his underwear and stood there for a while to make sure he was seen. Then the electric lights went out; the apartment was dark. Azef dressed in the dark. Lubov Grigorievna was helping him.

"My God, my God," whispered Azef. "You understand, Luba, if I wait till dawn I'll never get away from them. I must try everything. . . . I'll change into your clothes. . . ."

"But Vanya, nothing will fit," Lubov Grigorievna whispered, trembling. "God, God, how terrible, how vile . . . and these are comrades. . . ."

"Wait, I'll take a look from the bedroom."

Azef went to the curtain and peered into the street. Some people walked along the street, hiding Sletov and Zenzinov from sight. Now they passed. Azef saw two gentlemen standing across the street, some distance away. "They." Azef stared as he had never stared at anyone. "But what is this?" Azef did not believe his eyes. One of the figures, Zenzinov, who was taller than Sletov, made a strange gesture. Sletov repeated it, and both began to walk away down the boulevard.

"Luba," Azef said, trembling. "They have changed shifts. Now they must be on this side. I'm sure Savinkov is here. On this side we won't be able to see them. You must run down; take a look from the yard."

Lubov Grigorievna was already dressing. She threw a shawl over her head and went out the back way.

Azef remained at the curtained window. His heart was hammer-

ing fast. He pressed his hand against the left side of his chest. There were steps on the back stairs, almost running. Pulling a revolver from his pocket, Azef rushed behind the door.

Lubov Grigorievna ran in.

"Vanya, Vanya, there's no one. Run, Vanya, run. . . ."

Azef took her hands.

"You are sure? You looked carefully? Perhaps they're in some doorway?"

"There's no one; I looked everywhere. . . . I stopped a cab two houses away. It's waiting, run, run!"

Azef dressed quickly. Bending under the weight of the suitcases, Lubov Grigorievna ran down the stairs with him. She wanted to embrace him for the last time in the gateway, but Azef broke away, glanced round, and rushed to the cab.

Lubov Grigorievna never said good-by.

11

This was at five in the morning. At seven the indignant Burtsev ran down the Boulevard Garibaldi. Rushing into Lopatin's apartment, he shouted in the doorway, raising both arms:

"German Alexandrovich! Something terrible has happened!"

"What is it?"

"They let him slip. He escaped last night," Burtsev said, sinking into a chair.

The old Schlüsselburg prisoner quietly shook his gray leonine head:

"No, Lvovich, they did not let him slip; they let him go," he said and laughed bitterly.

"But think of it! The day before yesterday a group of party members volunteered to finish the whole business on their own, without any risk to the Central Committee. But the Chernovs rejected the offer. 'For heaven's sake,' they said, 'don't interfere; you'll spoil everything.'"

"Oh well," Lopatin shrugged wearily. "When the head is cut off, you don't cry for the hair. Let's have some coffee, Vladimir Lvovich."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

1

The Azef story was in all the newspapers throughout the world. The history of his betrayals and exposure was embellished by fantastic fictions, crime-novel details, and absurd psychological conjectures. Azef was called "a demonic Dostoyevsky character," and Burtsev—"the Sherlock Holmes of the revolution."

The Russian press and public opinion felt that the truth was more complex. Some people said that the Central Committee had known a great deal about Azef, but concealed it because he was useful to the party. Unmerited aspersions were flung at the Central Committee. And after the suicide of terrorist Bela, who shot herself because Burtsev had carelessly confused her with the provocateur Zhuchenko, and Chernov had subjected her to excessive questioning, the hatred of the terrorists for the Central Committee flared up with new force. The younger revolutionaries were also incensed by a phrase thrown out by Savinkov in the heat of debate. He had said that "every revolutionary is a potential provocateur." He had said a thing he did not mean to say. It may have flashed through his mind and slipped out unawares. Savinkov was like a man demented; the nights before the gallows had been easier than the nights that followed Azef's flight.

Savinkov paced his study all night; he smoked, sat down, got up, drank, and paced again, back and forth, like a caged beast. He did not think about the horror of his comrades' deaths upon the gallows, about the deadly blow to the work, or the mud being flung from all sides at the Central Committee. He was obsessed by a single thought: that he, the revolutionary Savinkov, had been a plaything in the hands of Azef the provocateur for five long years.

From time to time he stopped his pacing, clenched his fists, and muttered to himself. Everything was clear now! His mind returned to all the ambiguous conversations, to the questions, cautious and careless, the probing and the sounding. Savinkov found it difficult to breathe. He knew now why his group had been abandoned

during the first attempt on Plehve, why the Kleigels assassination plan had been dropped and the Dubasov act frustrated; he knew why Azef had given orders from his yellow cottage in Finland to block the wrong exits from the Kremlin, and why the Fighting Organization had been disbanded. He recalled how Azef had kissed him with his meaty lips, sending him off to the gallows, and how he had spoken to the Central Committee for both himself and Azef, pleading fatigue and resigning terrorist leadership.

"A speech in the name of the Police Department!" Savinkov said aloud and burst out laughing.

2

The night was silent. There was no sound in the apartment except the sound of his steps. Savinkov felt broken, drained of all strength. "A game on a national scale, perhaps on a world scale? But that's a game of genius!" Along with hate and shame, there came the terrifying feeling of admiration, which had to be suppressed. But yes, this was the hero of his novel, the hero of a life ruled only by wind and void! Sazonov and Kalyaev kissed by Azef! The hands flinging the bomb—directed by the will of a State Councilor with a grievance against his superior! Savinkov laughed inwardly—at himself, the party, the creeping glacier!

Sitting in his house jacket and warm slippers, he reread a chapter of his novel, which concluded with Georges' reflections: "And since this is so, what need is there of justification? I will this, and I do it. Or is there some hidden cowardice, a fear of the opinion of others? A fear that people will say 'murderer,' where they are now saying 'hero?' But of what use to me are the opinions of other men?"

Savinkov wanted to develop this chapter into an apologia for the self-containment, the unique selfness of Georges. But he felt some interference, as if something had lodged within his mind, dragging and impeding him. A poem about Azef had begun to pulse within him:

"He plucked me by the sleeve,
'Do you believe?'
Silent, I walked away.
But he, the shaggy one behind me,
'Hypocrite!'

And he, the horned one,
'You know how to lie!'
And he, the tailed one,
'You dare to pray!'
And he, the foul one,
'You aim at sainthood!'
And he, the rattling one,
'You'll answer me!'
Late lights were kindled in the street,
The gray roofs slanted down.
I slowed my steps.
And suddenly I heard:
'Die!'"

3

"Comrades," said Chernov, presiding at a Central Committee meeting. "We have a communication from Pavel Ivanovich, proposing the revival of the Fighting Organization under his leadership. To rehabilitate the terror, he proposes to start with a central act. The question, comrades, is quite clear. Of course terror must be rehabilitated, and a central act would be most useful to the party. However, there is a 'but,' comrades, and it is this: can we designate Pavel Ivanovich as chief of the Fighting Organization? I beg the comrades to express their opinion of Pavel Ivanovich. As for myself, I wish to say the following: I remember as though it were yesterday how Azef himself once told me about Pavel Ivanovich: 'He is too much of an impressionist, too unstable for such a delicate job as direction of terrorist work.' And, whatever you say, comrades, Azef knew his business. Then there was also Gershuni who said to me one day, after meeting Pavel Ivanovich several times, 'Well, you know,' said he, 'this dandy may be a hero, but not in my book.' I told him about Plehve and Sergey, but he persisted, 'No, no, I don't know what he was, but I see what he is today. We may as well consider him non-existent.' These, comrades, were the words of such a shrewd and subtle master of terrorist work as Gershuni. And now, after the Azef scandal, what can come of putting forward Savinkov as the head of the Fighting Organization? Nothing at all, comrades, precisely nothing. I beg the comrades now to voice their opinions."

"I shall be brief, comrades." Minor rose, supporting himself on a chair. "I feel that the candidacy of Pavel Ivanovich as head of the Fighting Organization is scarcely possible at this extremely crucial moment. He is too compromised by his friendship with Azef; I even doubt whether the terrorists would follow him. Pavel Ivanovich has too many enemies. I oppose his candidacy."

"What is all this talk about Savinkov?" the black-bearded Karpovich spoke sharply. "It's out of the question; he is not the man to lead the Fighting Organization. Without Azef he is nothing. He cuts a dashing figure, yes. But there's no gut; he is an empty shell!"

"In my opinion, comrades," said Sletov, "Pavel Ivanovich will not even go to Russia himself for terrorist work. He isn't the same man any more. Something has snapped in him, it seems. He keeps writing a novel about the 'right to kill.' He is evidently obsessed with doubts about his own past actions as a terrorist. How, then, can he assume leadership of the Fighting Organization? I wonder, comrades."

"It seems to me," Chernov's wife took the floor, "that Pavel Ivanovich was never suited for so responsible a post as chief of the Fighting Organization. Pavel Ivanovich is a party aristocrat, a revolutionary guards officer, who looks down upon the mass of rank-and-filers. I doubt whether our terrorist comrades would follow such a man today."

"I have spoken to Pavel Ivanovich recently, comrades," said Lebedev, a member of the party's army unit. "We discussed the rehabilitation of the terror, and he outlined to me his plan for a central act and for a new Fighting Organization. I must confess I did not like his ideas. Pavel Ivanovich spoke about new organizational principles. When I asked him to define them, he said that the work must be laid out along military lines—on the basis of discipline and hierarchy. In other words, the Fighting Organization is to consist of rank-and-file terrorists and commanding officers. I asked, 'And a general?' And he said, 'Yes, we need generals, too.' It seems to me, comrades, that after the disaster with the last general, this can lead to nothing good. We've seen what the principle of hierarchy means."

"Yes, comrades, yes," Chernov spoke again. "All this is very true. Under the corrupting influence of Azef and his generalship, Pavel Ivanovich himself has even ceased to be a revolutionary. He has turned, as it were, simply into a 'man of action,'" laughed Chernov.

"Khe, khe, khe," someone coughed long and painfully.

Before the final vote, Potapov took the floor.

"Comrades," he said. "All this is very well, and what has been said here is undoubtedly true. But there is no one except Savinkov who is ready to undertake the work? And yet it is essential to rehabilitate the terror. As for Savinkov, whatever else you say, you can't deny that he has knowledge, experience, and many actions behind him. If we reject the candidacy of Pavel Ivanovich, who will undertake the task of building a new Fighting Organization?"

4

Savinkov spent his nights in the dives of Montmartre. He needed solitude and drank with the lowest dregs. But he scarcely saw the riffraff around him. Behind the fumes of the apéritifs and wines, he was possessed by an unrelenting dream. He was resolved at any cost to become the chief of the new Fighting Organization. He saw in his mind's eye the carriage of the Tsar of all the Russias, blasted by the terrorist Boris Savinkov. But jogging in cheap cabs at night from the Montmartre dives, he knew it was a lie, a drunken fantasy. He alone, he thought, knew what Azef had made of him. . . .

5

He arrived at the Central Committee meeting in a smocking with a scarlet carnation in his buttonhole. Without apologizing for his dress, he threw out that he was on the way from a party for an *artiste* of the opera. Casually, arrogantly, even insolently, it seemed to Chernov, Savinkov began to discuss the conditions of his work.

"Do you have the first act in mind, Pavel Ivanovich?"

"Yes, a central act."

"Excellent. At this moment, after Azef, regicide is just the thing to save the party's prestige. Well then? The comrades have confidence in you; your experience is well known; the Central Committee has faith in you. With luck, then! Shall we sign?"

Without troubling to read it, Savinkov signed his agreement with the Central Committee.

The agreement read:

"1. The Fighting Organization of the Socialist Revolutionary

Party is hereby declared disbanded. 2. In the event of the organization of a terrorist group, consisting of members of the Socialist Revolutionary Party and headed by Savinkov, the Central Committee: (a) recognizes this group as entirely independent as regards organizational and technical problems; (b) selects the targets of its actions; (c) provides it with funds and other assistance; (d) gives it permission, once it fulfills its task, to assume the name of Fighting Organization of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. 3. The present document remains in force until the completion of the work undertaken by the Fighting Organization, whatever its outcome, and, in any event, not longer than one year."

Slipping the agreement into a side pocket, Savinkov left Chernov's apartment, his patent-leather shoes gleaming as he walked. He drove away in a open car, leaning back negligently in the rushing wind. He loved fast driving.

6

Afraid of provocateurs, Savinkov made up the terrorist group of old comrades and began to prepare the assassination of the Tsar from his Paris base. The first results of the work were already at hand. Three terrorists had begun to watch the Tsar's movements from Tsarskoye. Savinkov issued orders for the preparation of dynamite in an isolated villa in Neuilly. This uncontrolled power over men and money, combined with responsibility, gave him great satisfaction.

Savinkov loved the terrorists. He knew that he could send any man to his death, and that the man would go without hesitation. But more than any other, he was fond of Jan Berdo, a Pole of military-aristocratic appearance who knew how to conduct himself, how to drink and eat. He nicknamed him the Captain.

The Captain loved life. He had refined tastes. Together they attended the races at Longchamp. And the shady little characters around the totalizer never failed to recognize their bowler hats.

Cold with acquaintances, arrogant with enemies, a man of contemptuous wit, Savinkov was warm with his comrades. But most of the time he retired into the solitude of work on his novel. In the novel he was taking an accounting of his own soul.

7

The days were fractured. He was often torn from his work; people telephoned, asked to see him. When Savinkov remained alone, he found deep satisfaction in the sense of solitude known to those who are extremely tired.

Savinkov sat in semi-darkness. Neither friend nor enemy knew his thoughts. He was thinking that the hero of his novel, Georges, was "Savinkov brought to the ultimate." His hero crossed every boundary. Georges was a strong animal. He would kill generals merely because he disliked the red lining of their coats. He would kill anyone who blocked his path. He would repulse everyone who loved him. Savinkov recalled Vera. He felt neither regret nor lack of regret. "The sum of life. The balance does not tally? Discard it. Everything is covered by the absurdity of death. All limits, all bounds are ridiculous, since everything must die."

At night Savinkov worked on the novel. After that, he sat bent over in the green light of the desk lamp, studying the reports from the terrorists in Russia. The communication received a week ago informed him that the observation work was proceeding and that the Tsar's carriage had been seen twice. The watchers had even been able to follow it a short distance. If the entire organization and the bombs were there, it might be possible to kill him. But the next report was disquieting. One of the watchers noticed that he was shadowed. He was compelled to go into hiding, and the others had to be more cautious. The comrades were impatient and urged Savinkov to hasten his coming to Russia, to deliver the central blow and rehabilitate the terror.

Savinkov was thinking. His face, green as the face of a corpse, bore a faint smile. No one knew this—he did not have the strength to go. He knew that now, when he was no longer needed by Azef, when he was only a terrorist who had cheated the gallows, he would be seized and hanged as soon as he appeared in Russia. Well? Hadn't he faced the gallows all his life? How far off had it been in Sevastopol, when Azef knocked the chair from under him? Was he a coward? No, the gallows did not frighten him; he was no coward. But at this moment he hated Azef bitterly. The freak had killed him, destroyed him, leaving him alive. Savinkov felt with sharp revulsion: he had deceived the Central Committee; he would not go

to Russia, he had no strength. He knew this was the weariness of a spirit broken in two.

"Weariness. . . . Am I deceiving the Central Committee? Chernov? I hate them, the petty scum. I've done my share of playing with the noose. Let others play now." But at the same time there was the vision of the mounted bodyguard, dashing down the Nevsky on white horses, the carriages and coaches, the cordon of police and spies along the streets, the speeding carriage of Nicholas II, and—a blast of dynamite! The carriage blown into the air. Who killed the Emperor of all the Russias? Nicholas Romanov was killed by Boris Savinkov!

"Should I go, after all?" Savinkov was green in the lamplight, like a corpse.

8

He called off the observation and summoned the watchers abroad. There were alarming suspicions of Jan Berdo and Misha Sadovnik. While the terrorists—Sletov, Vnorovsky, Zenzinov, Berdo, Prokofieva, Moyseenko, Chernavsky, and Misha Sadovnik—were on their way, Savinkov gave his days to Paris and to solitude. During the day he was seen at Longchamp; in the evenings, in expensive bars.

Sometimes he wrote poems. They were morbid and bloody. He knew he would not kill the Tsar. He knew it was for nothing that the terrorists had driven cabs in Petersburg in coachmen's coats and trudged the streets with trays of cigarettes. He knew that they could have been hanged. It couldn't be helped. If there were anyone who would understand, he'd have confessed. He would have told how his soul had burned till it was burnt out, barren and scorched.

9

The detective Henri Bint, in charge of the surveillance section of the Russian political police in Paris, was old and experienced. He carried out the most delicate assignments. By orders of the Tsar, for instance, he had watched the Tsar's brother Mikhail who married the commoner Natalya Wulfert. Bint's cunning achieved the possible and the impossible. He even wormed his way into the

church of St. Savva during the wedding of the Grand Duke Mikhail and Natalya Wulfert. It was not his fault that General Gerasimov, sent by the Tsar to prevent the marriage, had come too late.

Oh, Henri Bint was an old fox! He had sent the Tsar a photograph of Natalya Wulfert's child. And it was he who was now entrusted, through a special emissary who came from General Gerasimov with secret documents concerning the terrorists, with the careful and unremitting surveillance over Savinkov.

Bint was satisfied with the results of his surveillance. Gentlemen who engaged Savinkov in conversation at the races in Longchamp, Moulin Rouge cocottes and prostitutes in the lowest Paris dives were all in Bint's pay. Henri Bint recorded the daily life of Boris Savinkov down to the last comma.

But at first, knowing his partner, Bint was astonished: the partner offered no defense. He never even glanced around when he walked along the street.

10

Coming by ship from Hamburg and Marseilles, the terrorists converged in London. Posing as tourists, they held a meeting in a hotel near Charing Cross. Savinkov was extremely tired. Before the meeting, he had lunched at the hotel. Jan Berdo, who was with him, remarked that he was drinking more than usual.

When the comrades assembled, the first thing that Savinkov felt was the impossibility of directing the wills of the men he was to lead. He was spent; there was only emptiness within. He was affected by their gloomy silence, born of the failure of the work, of suspicions that provocateurs had once again attached themselves to the group. He delayed opening the meeting, talking now with the sailor Avdeev, now with Berdo, asking about Zenzinov's impressions of Russia, discussing Bela's suicide with Vnorovsky. And because they had to wait, because the meeting was not started, because Jan Berdo was suspected of treachery, the terrorists were in a tense and sullen mood. Savinkov suffered from wounded pride: they had no faith in him. Most frightening of all—he was losing his own grip on himself.

Jan Berdo laughed and spoke too freely. He knew that it was he who was suspected of betrayal and that the question would be raised. He laughed because there was no proof, and because his

friendship with Savinkov, born in bars, at the totalizer, and in witty Nietzschean conversations, would protect him.

"The meeting is open," said Savinkov, taking his place at the table. The late Sazonov's fiancée, the quiet Prokofieva, was the secretary. The assistant chairman was Sletov.

"Comrades," said Savinkov. His love of oratory and the return to customary surroundings revived him. "We know that after Azef's unmasking the terror must be rehabilitated. The central act which we have undertaken is as essential to us as the air we breathe. But again we are hounded by some baffling threat of failure. Were it a failure of the act itself, it would not be too terrible. We have known many failures in our work. It was from failures that we learned to go on to success. But in the present failure there is too much that is unclear. Why were the comrades watched? The evidence points again to the basest possibility—betrayal. It seems that treachery is once more weaving its web among us, calling back the shade of Azef. But if Azef is, through a blunder, still alive, another provocateur should not rely on this."

Savinkov paused. He saw their expressions. He felt with his wounded pride—they had no faith in him.

"Comrades! We are brothers, welded with the bond of blood. We must and we can be openhearted with each other, for we are all facing death. I propose the only method, which may be painful, but I see no other. Let every man speak his suspicions, if he has any. Let every man's biography and life be open to full and close examination. If there should be a single doubtful spot in the biography of any man, he has no place in the terrorist organization. I shall begin with myself. If anyone has anything against me, if there is any question, any doubt, please speak up."

There was silence.

"We trust you absolutely, Pavel Ivanovich," said Jan Berdo. "I believe, comrades, that I am expressing the general opinion?"

The silence became more tense and oppressive. Savinkov broke it:

"In that case, I suggest that we examine the life and biography of the Captain."

Someone shifted in his chair. Someone coughed. The silence was broken. Sletov said:

"I would like to know where the Captain was two weeks ago, on the seventeenth."

"Where I was?" repeated Jan Berdo, changing his right leg over the left. All eyes were fixed on him. "Wait, it is a bit difficult to recollect." He raised his hand to his forehead. "On the seventeenth I was in Munich, yes, yes . . . in Munich. . . ."

The Captain knew that on the seventeenth he had gone by express train from Munich through Berlin to Petersburg to see General Gerasimov. But he repeated with complete self-possession:

"Yes, yes, on the seventeenth I was in Munich. Why do you ask, Stepan Nikolaevich?"

"And you did not go anywhere on the evening of the seventeenth?"

"The evening of the seventeenth? I went to Paris, to see Pavel Ivanovich."

Sletov was silent.

"But why do you ask?"

"Pavel Ivanovich, did the Captain visit you in Paris on the nineteenth?"

"The nineteenth? Yes, I think he did. Any other questions to the Captain?"

"No, if you saw him on the nineteenth, there are none. I wanted to verify some information. But it was evidently wrong."

The Captain turned his handsome face to Sletov with a childlike smile.

"It seems to me that the life the Captain leads in Paris does not fit into our conception of a revolutionary's life. The Captain will not deny that drinking sprees, races, and all the rest of it are scarcely the customary activities of a revolutionary. I should like to express myself once for all against such a life on the part of comrades," Prokofieva said quietly. "I would also ask the Captain to explain where the money for all this comes from."

The Captain laughed. Everyone saw his white teeth, which went so well with the healthy color of his cheeks.

"If I visit restaurants, comrades, it is only in the company of Pavel Ivanovich. My whole life in Paris passes before his eyes. If I have done any drinking, I assure you it was not at my own expense."

The question raised was painfully humiliating to Savinkov. He knew that the comrades condemned him for his fast living at the expense of terrorist funds. To put an end to the discussion, he said, frowning:

"It is time we understood, comrade Prokofieva, that terrorist work

sometimes demands that we visit places and establishments which afford no particular pleasure." He was overwhelmed with fatigue and momentary contempt for those around him. He broke off the interrogation of the Captain.

11

"What is this, Vladimir?" Sletov said to Vnorovsky as they left the hotel. "What does it look like? Is that the way to work? What have we accomplished? Such interrogations are fairy tales for children!" Sletov was excited. "You know, it's just as I said. Without Azef, Pavel Ivanovich is a cipher, a hollow shell, a nonentity. Instead of action—a phrase, a pose, nothing else. And, believe me, he will never go to Russia for terrorist work himself."

"Why do you think so?"

"Don't you see, he is all played out, broken down—not by revolutionary work, but by his own philosophizing and scribbling. Five cents' worth of Dostoyevsky. How can such a man head the terror? And then, the life he leads! He throws money right and left in Paris—races, roulette, drink; there's talk of scandalous orgies."

"Yes, you are right," Vnorovsky said quietly. "Gotz called him 'a cracked Stradivarius,' and now, it seems, the violin has snapped. And how my brother loved him and believed in him!"

"It's bad enough he has gone to pieces himself, but he is trampling comrades into filth and blood. It was only by the sheerest luck that the cabmen were not arrested in Petersburg; they barely got away. The Captain is definitely suspect. Are we to send our people to the gallows again just because Pavel Ivanovich doesn't give a damn for anything? And this wild debauchery! The same old Azef outrage, from another angle!"

"The Central Committee has an agreement with him for a year. If he accomplishes nothing within the year, he is divested of authority."

"A year? And in the meantime the party must sit waiting in the mire where Azef tumbled it with the assistance of Chernov and Savinkov?"

Vnorovsky did not answer.

"I never thought that Savinkov could break like this."

"A drone!" Sletov said angrily. "Penny philosopher! 'Everything's permitted,' and this and that—while people are dying!"

12

There was no need for Henri Bint to watch Savinkov in London. The London conference took place under the eyes of two agents of General Gerasimov. Henri Bint waited for Savinkov in Paris, and when the lights went on in the apartment at Number 10, Rue Lalo, Bint knew that Savinkov returned.

But there was no need to watch him at home, either. This was done by Mademoiselle Fouché, who received fifty francs a month for her gossip about Monsieur Lezhnev.

Two days later Bint wrote a summary of his own observations and those of the detective Duruy:

"Today, November 3, 1909, I can state that Savinkov, alias Malmberg, alias Lezhnev, slept alone. He left his house at 1:35 in the afternoon, dressed in a coat of black cloth with a velvet collar and a black bowler; carried a briefcase with an open clasp in his left hand. His face is long and lean, with a mustache, clipped in the American fashion. General appearance: elegant, but considerably aged. Leaving his apartment, he walked along the Rue Pergolèse, then the Avenue du Trocadéro; bought stamps in a tobacco shop on the corner of Avenue de la Grande-Armée, afterward dropped a letter in the mailbox. After standing for a while on the Avenue de la Grande-Armée, he turned and went back to the Rue Pergolèse, where he entered the ground floor apartment at Number 7, occupied by his friend, M. Gerrier, twenty-five years old, a poet. I had followed him at a distance of some thirty paces. I waited approximately one hour outside M. Gerrier's house. Savinkov left the house alone. He stopped in the street, and I thought that he had noticed me. I stepped over to a store window. Savinkov started in the direction of Avenue de Malakoff. Here he took a cab and drove to the Bois de Boulogne. I followed him in a cab to the Route d'Etoile. Here Savinkov got out, paid the driver, and wandered about for several hours, quite aimlessly and senselessly. . . ."

13

Moyseenko walked unexpectedly into Savinkov's apartment on the Rue Lalo.

"What's wrong?" asked Savinkov, realizing that something must

have happened. He covered his manuscript with a sheet of paper.

"The Captain shot himself."

"The Captain?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Last night."

"Where?"

"In his apartment in Meudon."

"Was there a note?"

"No."

"The comrades suspected him of informing."

"They did."

"Perhaps he felt insulted?"

"Or perhaps, as a provocateur, he was afraid of vengeance?"

"And hastened to kill himself?"

"It's easier to kill oneself."

Savinkov thought for a moment, then said, with a strangely unnatural smile:

"So. Another man run over. Well. . . . Peace be to the Captain's soul. One more cross along the road."

"But what road?"

"Ours."

"You do not pity him?"

"I don't know how to pity. It's a stupid feeling, for peasant women. The more comrades fall, the easier it is for one to move. Did the Captain leave any money?"

"Only a few francs."

"I will provide the money. He will be buried by the Fighting Organization."

Savinkov was silent. Moyseenko also sat silently. After he left, Savinkov read what he had written and continued: "I refuse to be a slave, even a free slave. My whole life is a fight. This is the only way for me. But in the name of what I am fighting, I do not know. I will it so; that is all. And the wine I drink is whole wine."

14

"Well! And what is he doing? Preparing a central act? What does it amount to? That three comrades drove around Petersburg for a while as cabbies and were recalled? But it's an outrage! It's

impossible! Even Azef did not spend so much money! And he, at least, produced results. No, Savinkov must be told point blank: if you work for the terror, you get money; if you choose to hang about the races in Longchamp, that's your own affair, but don't count on us."

"The strangest thing," said Natanson, "is that his headquarters is always traveling all over Europe. Now it is in Paris, now Nice, now Munich, now Berlin. But this takes staggering amounts of money."

"I asked him about it," Zenzinov interrupted sadly. "He said he is compelled to do it; he has been shadowed."

"I was always against entrusting the terrorist work to Pavel Ivanovich," said Karpovich. "Now you can see for yourselves. He's a gramophone record of Azef. Nothing more."

"Oh, now you're exaggerating! What about the Plehve act, what about Sergey, Tatarov?"

"Tatarov! Such affairs require no organizational talent. He handed Nazarov a knife and went away. As for the Grand Duke, the work was done by Kalyaev and Moyseenko. And the Plehve act was staged by Azef."

"No, comrades, we must straighten all this out somehow. Either he goes to work, or he gets no money." Chernov waved his hands, blinking his round squinting eye. "Last week, you understand, he got a blank allotment of twenty thousand for killing the Tsar!"

15

Even had he known that the concierge, Madame Gâteau, and his fidgety servant were in the pay of the police, he might have been indifferent. His mind was dazed with alcoholic fumes. When he came to the door at night, Vera's voice called, "Bo-rya!"

He stopped still, then ran up quickly. For a moment he thought that Vera had returned with the children. And that moment was bright with happiness. But the apartment was dark and silent. The bedroom was in disorder; the floor was littered with empty bottles and preserve cans. The crumpled bed and musty air completed the story of the night before.

"Hallucinations!" muttered Savinkov. "I heard it quite distinctly." He sank into a chair, and for a moment it seemed that he would cry over his mangled, bloody life that flashed before him.

His letters were lying differently on the desk. "What the devil, am I going mad?"

"Jeannette!" he cried. "This is intolerable; did you take the letters from my desk?"

"How can you say that, Monsieur?"

"Get out!"

"I will complain."

The copies of the letters were already on the way to the Police Department in Petersburg. Henri Bint knew that the quarry was giving up without a fight.

16

"Ah, *mon cher!*" he patted his friend, the Titular Councilor Melnikov, on the shoulder. "I think our beast will soon be altogether tame!"

The Titular Councilor, who had a mortal fear of terrorists, shook his head dubiously. But Bint laughed, poking him in the stomach.

"The Emperor and his ministers can sleep quite peacefully, *mon cher!* Monsieur Savinkov is all played out! If you only knew what a spree there was the day before yesterday at the Moulin Rouge, and later in a third-rate bistro behind the old market, where this terrorist goes almost nightly. He has fallen in love there with the cook's daughter, who gives us the most piquant information about him! You understand; here in Paris he is finished. *Il faisait la bombe, au lieu de faire les bombes.* Yes, yes, *mon cher,* believe me, I've had experience. I am sending a report to Petersburg suggesting that all surveillance may be lifted.

Bint read to the Titular Councilor Melnikov:

"Report from the Director of Surveillance, Henri Bint, to the Chief of the Foreign Secret Service of the Police Department.

"Your Excellency!

"My observation for the past six months of the leader of the terrorist group of the Socialist Revolutionary party, Boris Savinkov, alias Malmberg, alias Lezhnev, leads me to venture to suggest, Your Excellency, that further surveillance over this former terrorist is, in my opinion, quite superfluous. If this gentleman was at any time a menace to your government and a threat to the Sovereign's life, this danger may, by the grace of God, be considered past. You

wrote that you regard him as one of the most dangerous and daring terrorists. Trusting Your Excellency's judgment, I assume that you have based it on this gentleman's past activities. As director of the Office of Surveillance, I have, at your request, maintained uninterrupted observation of his activities for six months. This surveillance has been more than thorough, since you instructed me never to let him out of sight, lest he should make a sudden appearance and execute a terrorist act in Russia. M. Savinkov was surrounded here in Paris by our people. In all the apartments he has occupied the concierges were paid by us, if they were not already in our service. Through them, we bribed M. Savinkov's servants, from whom we obtained the carbon copies of the letters from his friends (Burtsev, Bunakov, Plekhanov, Moyseenko, Somov, and others), which were submitted to you.

"After the passage of so considerable a period, I can in all conscience report to Your Excellency the full results of my observation. M. Savinkov impresses me as being quite finished as a terrorist and revolutionary. He is an incredible debauchee, Your Excellency, a terrible *noceur*. You cannot possibly imagine his way of life and his orgies in Paris. They usually begin in the best restaurants of our beautiful city and end in the lowest quarters, where this terrorist continues to drink with the worst dregs of society and humanity. I assure you, Your Excellency, that M. Savinkov is no longer a terrorist. You may trust my thirty years of experience; I know revolutionaries, and I will say that the dangerous ones among them do not lead such a life. *Il faisait la bombe, au lieu de faire le bombes.* Women and women without end! If I may take the liberty, Your Excellency, I shall relate to you a characteristic incident, which will suggest to you both M. Savinkov's way of life and the thoroughness of our observation work. His latest servant at Number 10 Rue Lalo made it possible for me the night before last to watch through the transom window the orgy which took place at M. Savinkov's apartment. M. Savinkov was in the company of three women. All were in the costumes of Adam and Eve. Modesty forbids me, Your Excellency, to describe what followed, which I witnessed with my own eyes. But I shall venture to suggest once more that it is quite safe to discontinue the surveillance over this former terrorist and present debauchee. As you may see from the preceding reports and the accounts submitted, the surveillance is extremely expensive. He is continually moving from place to place,

traveling to Nice, San Remo, Monte Carlo, Munich, and so on. When he does not travel, he goes on drinking sprees in Paris restaurants, cabarets, and bars for months at a time. In addition to myself, three agents are engaged on his case. And all the information points only to bars and women. Even his comrades, as I have learned, are shunning and avoiding him. There is increasing dissatisfaction with him in the party. Trusting, Your Excellency, that you will agree with me fully, I await your instructions.

"Devotedly yours,
"Henri Bint,
"Director of Surveillance"

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The Central Committee was shaken with indignation. Chernov's apartment resounded with the shouting of Rubanovich, Natanson, Chernov, Sletov, and Zenzinov.

"This is disgraceful!" Zenzinov shook both arms for emphasis. "We are in a blind alley! Pavel Ivanovich was to bring the party back onto the highroad of terror, to restore its prestige, and instead . . . even when. . . . It's scandalous! We had agreed that he would wait for us in Nice. He was to leave immediately with three comrades for Russia; at least, so he wrote to us. But yesterday I received a telegram that he was coming back to Paris. I met him, thinking—now we shall make the arrangements. But Pavel Ivanovich looks at his watch instead and declares that he must be off. I ask—where to? And he says: to the races at Longchamp; today's the Derby. I protested that this was uncomradely; he had no right to treat the organization like that; we had come all the way from Russia; after all, he had agreed to meet; and finally I pointed out that he is known in Paris and is watched at every step; he would, of course, be watched at the races. I've been told that the police spies never let him out of their sight. But he says, nonsense, we'll talk about everything tomorrow. No, no, I insist this question must be taken up at once. . . ."

Clutching his hands behind his back, Chernov paced from corner to corner in violent rage.

"I'll make no bones about it, comrades!" he shouted suddenly. "Pavel Ivanovich gambled away the money of the Fighting Organization at the roulette in Monte Carlo!"

"What?!!" cried several voices.

"He lost three quarters of the treasury!"

"The Stradivarius has broken. . . ."

"If it was ever a Stradivarius, and not some third-rate fiddle!"

"But nothing can be done! The Central Committee has an agreement with him! We must insist on his going to Russia."

"In his state, he can only bring about a fiasco in Russia."

"But what else?" "What's to be done?" "What do you propose?"

"Immediate dissolution of the agreement with Pavel Ivanovich and the disbanding of his terrorist group."

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The night was heavy and foggy. The spring rain sifted down in a fine, warm mesh. The streets gleamed with yellow splotches of light. A smoky mist rose from the muddy Seine. Reflected lights quivered like serpents. Savinkov walked, striking his cane against the paving blocks. He wore a bowler hat and a black coat, with the collar turned up. Alcohol gave his will and body a false sense of strength. As he walked, he laughed shortly, thinking that it would not be a bad idea to hang all humankind, if a noose could be found large enough to hold it.

The night was dark, steamy, airless. Savinkov did not know how long he stood on the quay, staring down at the river. The heavy, murky dawn was still a long time off. Strange, twisted figures swayed in the darkness. A drunken sergeant bawled a barrack song. Savinkov walked along the narrow, littered, dark street, where the infrequent lights were going out, until it seemed that he was moving down some black corridor. His head was dazed, his feet heavy. The more he walked, the heavier his tread. As if his feet had to drag the weight of the paving stones. And the stones were unbelievably heavy.

Savinkov was thinking of what he always thought whenever he remained alone—of Azef. He knew how hopelessly he was destroyed by Azef. . . .

AUTHOR'S POSTSCRIPT

In my novel, *Azef*, there are no fictional characters. All the actors in it—both revolutionaries and officials of the secret police—were actual persons. Some of them played an important part in Russian life in the twentieth century. The reader may be interested in their subsequent fate.

AZEF (1869–1918) went to Germany under a false passport after his exposure at the end of 1908. He settled in Berlin with Hedy, opened a corset shop, and engaged in petty speculation on the stock market. During World War I he was arrested as an alien by the German police, who, however, remained ignorant of his true identity. He was released after the Russian revolution of 1917. At that time he was already suffering from nephritis, and Hedy placed him in the Krankenhaus Westend, where he died on April 24, 1918. On April 26, Hedy interred him at the Wilmersdorf cemetery, in a second-grade plot, which she bought for 51 mark and 50 pfennig. The funeral was also second grade. The bill for the funeral was 767 mark, 50 pfennig (an oak coffin with copper fittings —500 mark; coverlet and pillows—18 mark; shroud—8 mark; hearse —45 mark; eight pallbearers—32 mark; and so on). In 1931 I visited Azef's grave in Wilmersdorf. A red rose bush, planted by Hedy, was blooming on the grave. There was no monument, no stone to mark the place where Azef lay, nothing but a marker, bearing the number 446. This was Hedy's wish. She lived in Berlin at the time, and there she told Russian journalists about Azef's end. She had loved Azef, she told them, all her life. She sold his letters for publication. The bundle of letters included the bill for the funeral.

Azef's wife, Lubov Grigorievna, who had never suspected that her husband was an agent provocateur, left Europe for the United States after his exposure. She remarried, and lived in New York until her death in 1958.

SAVINKOV (1879–1925) returned from Paris to Russia at the beginning of the revolution of 1917. He held prominent positions

under Prime Minister Kerensky. At one time he was the chief of the War Ministry in the Kerensky government. Later he broke with the Socialist Revolutionary Party. After the Bolsheviks seized power, Savinkov fought against them on his own. But the "Union for the Defense of the Homeland and Freedom," which he organized, was destroyed with the help of Bolshevik provocateurs. Savinkov fled abroad. Living at first in Warsaw and later in Paris, he tried to fight the Bolsheviks from abroad. In August 1924, several provocateurs who had managed to win his confidence (they included a woman who was his mistress) lured him to Soviet Russia, supposedly in connection with the work of his underground organization. He was seized as soon as he crossed the frontier. Shortly afterwards he was tried in Moscow by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Tribunal. At the trial, Savinkov delivered a very effective speech, recalling his revolutionary past. Nevertheless, he declared himself guilty and condemned his anti-Bolshevik activities, spoke of his "errors" and "misconceptions," and expressed the hope that the Soviet regime would treat him leniently, as a lifelong revolutionary. He was sentenced to the extreme penalty—death by shooting, with "confiscation of all property." However, the death sentence was commuted to imprisonment, which Savinkov served in Moscow, in the Inner Prison on Lubyanka Square. As a prisoner he was given unusual privileges. He was permitted to have visitors, and was sometimes driven in an automobile through the Moscow streets. Nevertheless, he was closely guarded, and there could be no hope of escape or liberation. In 1925, according to the official report, Savinkov killed himself by jumping out of the prison window into the courtyard. No one knows whether he had really jumped, or had been thrown from the window on Stalin's orders.

Savinkov's first wife, Vera Glebovna, the daughter of the well-known writer Gleb Uspensky, died in the USSR.

CHERNOV (1873–1952) returned to Russia immeditely after the outbreak of the revolution of 1917 and served for a time as Minister of Agriculture in the Kerensky government. During the revolution he was the leader of the largest Russian political party—the Socialist Revolutionaries. In 1918 Chernov was elected chairman of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, which the Bolsheviks dispersed by force of arms on the very first day when it convened. In

1920 Chernov once more became an émigré. He lived in Prague and later in Paris, published magazines, and wrote several books. In the early days of World War II he came to the United States, where he lived until his death in New York in 1952.

ZENZINOV (1880–1953) also returned to Russia in 1917. During the period of the Provisional Government, he was very close to Kerensky but held no official posts. After the Bolshevik seizure of power, Zenzinov emigrated again, settling in France and later, after the outbreak of World War II, moving to the United States. He published several books. He died in New York in 1953.

BRESHKO-BRESHKOVSKAYA (1844–1934) was freed from Siberian exile by the revolution of 1917. During the early days of the revolution she played a prominent role in the Socialist Revolutionary Party and was very close to Kerensky. After the Bolshevik coup she left Russia for Czechoslovakia, where she remained until her death in 1934.

SAZONOV (1880–1912) did not live to see the revolution of 1917. He committed suicide in a Siberian prison in 1912 as a protest against the brutal treatment of a fellow prisoner.

BURTSEV (1862–1942) returned to Russia after the revolution of 1917. He joined no party. In 1917 Burtsev was the first to expose the relations between the Bolsheviks and the government of Kaiser Wilhelm II, who gave them large sums of money during the early days of the revolution for defeatist propaganda at the front and behind the lines. (This has now been confirmed by the publication of documents of the German Foreign Ministry.) When the Bolsheviks seized power, Burtsev was arrested and sent to prison. On his release he went abroad. After 1920 he lived in Paris, devoting all his time to exposing the provocateurs who were now working among the Russian émigrés in the service of the Bolshevik regime. Burtsev died in poverty in Paris in 1942.

GENERAL GERASIMOV lost his position after the revolution of 1917. After the Bolshevik coup, he became an émigré, settling in Germany. He published his memoirs in French and German. He died in Berlin in the nineteen forties.