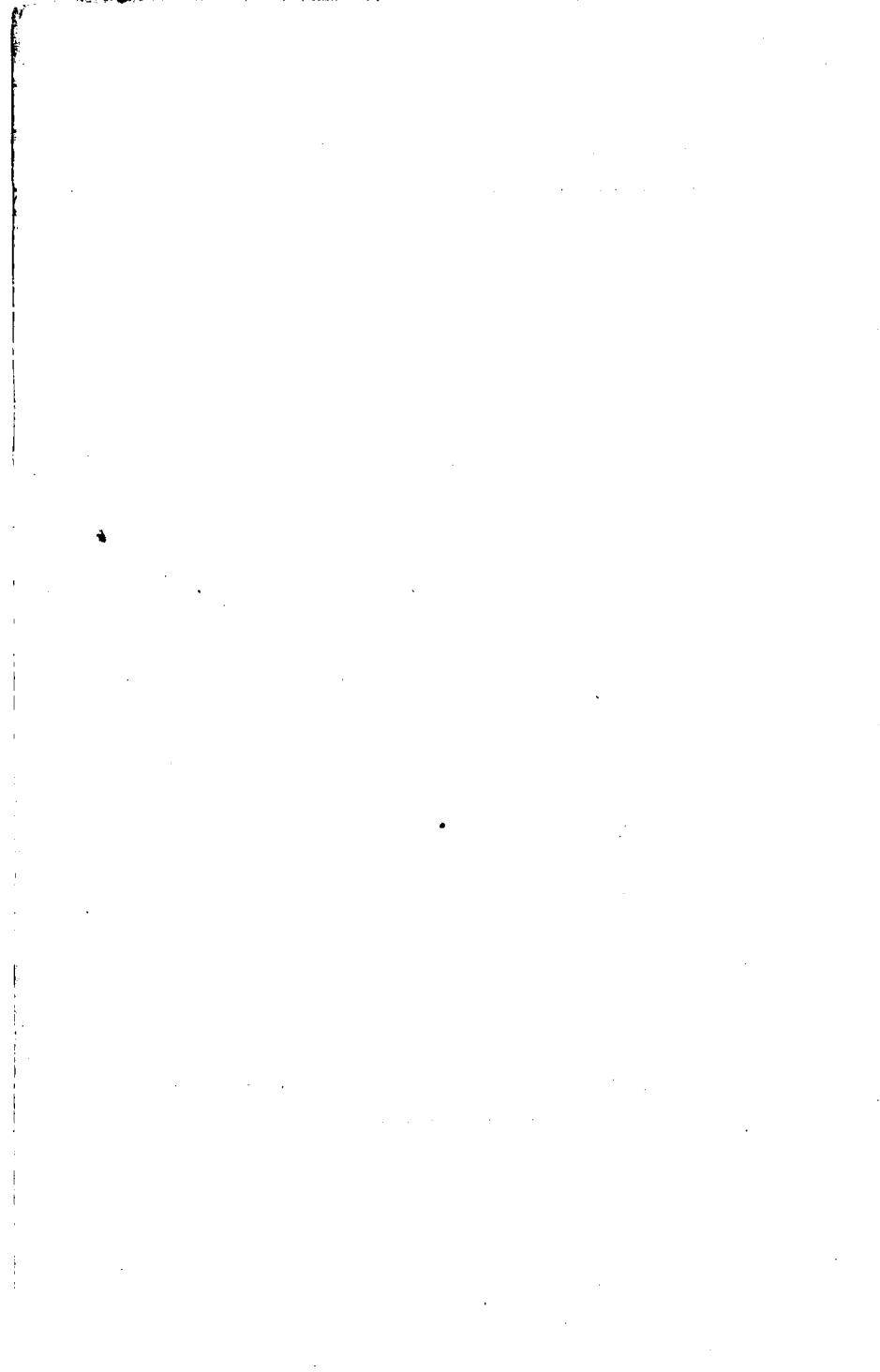


MAXIM GORKY

*Articles
and
Pamphlets*

MAXIM GORKY

*Articles
and
Pamphlets*



MAXIM GORKY

ARTICLES AND PAMPHLETS



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE

MOSCOW 1950

CONTENTS

IN AMERICA

Page

The City of the Yellow Devil	9
Realm of Boredom	26
The Mob	45

MY INTERVIEWS

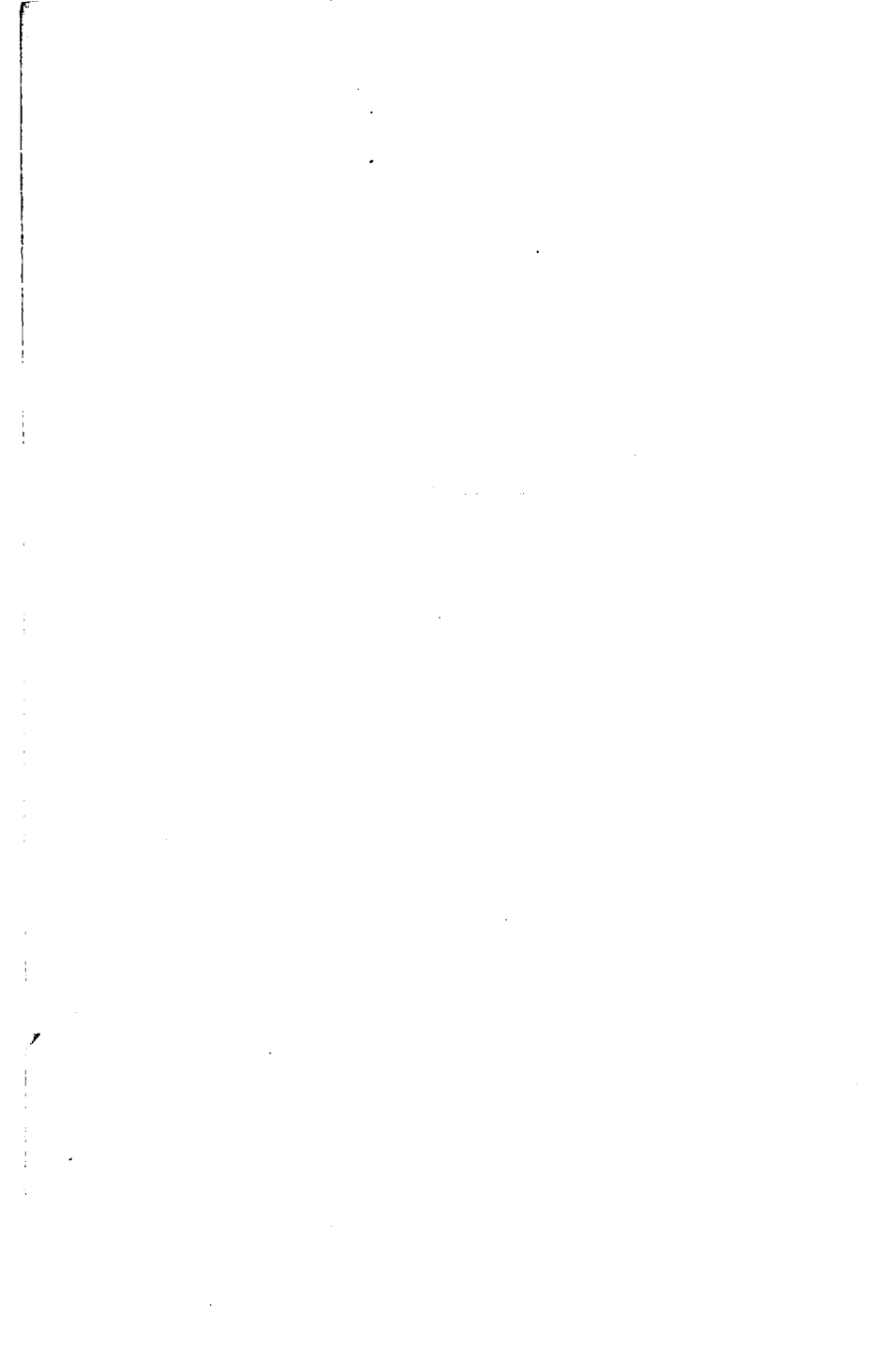
A King Who Knows His Worth	61
One of the Kings of the Republic	72
A Priest of Morality	94
The Lords of Life	108
La Belle France	129

PUBLIC WRITINGS

Open Letter to Messieurs J. Richard, Jules Claretie, René Viviani and other French Journalists	143
From the "Foreign Chronicle"	145
"The States of Western Europe Before the War" (<i>Typical Program for Pamphlets</i>)	150
Fat Men's Music	151
Protest Against the Trial of Johannes Becher	159
Inhumanity	162

Reply to a Questionnaire of an American Magazine	165
The Bourgeois Press	169
The Wiseacres	178
Old Fellows	190
Cynicism. <i>Reply to a Correspondent</i>	197
Logic of History	210
Reply to a Questionnaire of the Magazine "Vu"	214
Adult School in Smolensk	221
The Legend of "Compulsory Labour"	233
Reply to an Intellectual	246
Capitalist Terror in America Against Negro Workers	267
To the Workers of Magnitostroy and Others On Whose Side, "Masters of Culture"? <i>Reply to American Correspondents</i>	275
The Old and the New Man	285
To the Delegates of the Antiwar Congress (<i>A Speech That Was Not Delivered</i>)	316
"Soldierly Ideas"	331
Proletarian Humanism	344
The Fog	355
A Splendid Book	366
On Cultures	371
A Thousand Letters	379
To the Congress in Defence of Culture	397
	406

IN AMERICA



THE CITY OF THE YELLOW DEVIL

... OVER earth and ocean hangs a fog well mixed with smoke, and a fine slow rain is falling over the dark buildings of the city and the muddy waters of the roadstead.

The immigrants gather at the ship's side and stare silently about them with the curious eyes of hope and apprehension, fear and joy.

"Who's that?" a Polish girl asks softly, staring in wonder at the Statue of Liberty.

"The American god," someone replies.

The massive figure of the bronze woman is covered from head to foot with verdigris. The cold face stares blindly through the fog, out to the wastes of ocean, as though the bronze is waiting for the sun to bring light to its lifeless eyes. There is very little ground under Liberty's feet, she appears to rise from the ocean, her pedestal—the frozen petrified waves. Her arm, raised aloft over the ocean and the masts of the ships, gives a proud majesty and beauty to her pose. The torch so tightly gripped in her hand seems about to burst into a bright flame, that would drive away the grey smoke and bathe all around in fierce and joyous light.

And around that insignificant strip of land on which she stands, huge iron vessels like prehistoric monsters glide over the waters, and tiny launches dart like hungry

birds of prey. Sirens, resembling the voices of fabulous giants, roar, angry whistles shrill, anchor chains clang, and the ocean waves grimly lap the shore.

Everything is running, hurrying, vibrating tensely. The screws and paddles of the steamers rapidly thresh the water which is covered with a yellow foam seamed with wrinkles.

And everything—iron, stone, water and wood—seems to be protesting against a life without sunlight, without songs and happiness, in captivity to exhausting toil. Everything is groaning, howling, grating, in obedience to some mysterious force inimical to man. All over the bosom of the waters, ploughed and rent by iron, besmirched by greasy spots of oil, befouled with chips and shavings, straw and remains of food, a cold and evil force labours unseen. Grimly and monotonously it jolts this stupendous machine, in which ships and docks are only small parts, and man an insignificant screw, an invisible dot amid the unsightly, dirty tangle of iron and wood, the chaos of vessels, boats and some flat barques loaded with cars.

Overwhelmed, deafened by the noise, irritated by this dance of inanimate matter, a two-legged creature, all sooty and oily, with his hands thrust deep in his pockets, stares curiously at me. There is a layer of greasy dirt on the face, relieved not by the gleam of human eyes but by the ivory of white teeth.

* * *

Slowly the vessel makes her way among the crowd of shipping. The faces of the immigrants look strangely grey and dull, with something of a sheeplike sameness about the eyes. Gathered at the ship's side, they stare in silence at the fog.

In this fog something incomprehensibly vast, emitting a hollow murmur, is born; it grows, its heavy odorous breath is wafted to the people and its voice has a certain threatening avid note.

This is a city. This is New York. Twenty-storey houses, dark soundless skyscrapers, stand on the shore. Square, lacking in any desire to be beautiful, the stiff ponderous buildings tower gloomily and drearily. A haughty pride in its height, its ugliness is felt in each house. There are no flowers at the windows and no children to be seen. . . .

From this distance the city seems like a vast jaw, with uneven black teeth. It breathes clouds of black smoke into the sky and snuffles like a glutton suffering from his obesity.

Entering the city is like getting into a stomach of stone and iron, a stomach that has swallowed several million people and is consuming and digesting them.

The street is a slippery, greedy throat, in the depths of which float dark bits of the city's food—living people. Everywhere—overhead, underfoot, alongside, iron clangs, exulting in its victory. Awakened to life and animated by the power of Gold, it casts its web about man, strangles him, sucks his blood and brain, devours his muscles and nerves, and grows and grows, resting upon voiceless stone, and spreading the links of its chain ever more widely.

Locomotives like enormous worms wriggle along, dragging cars behind them; the klaxons of the automobiles quack like fat ducks, electricity whines drearily, the stifling air imbibes thousands of strident sounds as a sponge imbibes moisture. Crushed down upon this grimy city, soiled with the smoke of factories, it hangs motionless among the high, soot-covered walls.

* * *

In the squares and small public gardens where the dusty leaves of the trees droop lifelessly on the branches, dark monuments rise. The faces of the statues are covered with a thick layer of dirt, the eyes that once glowed with love for their country are filled with the dust of the city. These bronze people, lifeless and solitary amid the network of many-storeyed houses, look dwarfish in the dark shadow of the high walls, they have lost their way in the chaos of madness around them, pause and, half-blinded, watch mournfully, with aching hearts, the rapacious bustle of the people at their feet. Little black figures hurry fussily past the monuments, none of them ever casting a glance at the face of the hero. The ichthyosaurs of capital have effaced from the people's memory the significance of those who created freedom.

The bronze men seem engrossed by one and the same sad thought:

"Is this the life I meant to create?"

Around them the fevered life seethes like soup on a stove, and the little people scurry and whirl, vanishing in the bubbling vortex like grains of meal in broth, like matchwood in the sea. The city bellows and swallows them up one after the other in its insatiable maw.

Some of the heroes on the monuments have dropped their hands, others have raised them, stretching them out over the heads of the people in warning:

"Stop! This is not life, this is madness. . . ."

All of them are superfluous in the chaos of street life, all are out of place in the savage howl of rapacity, in the cramped duress of this gloomy fantasy made of stone, glass and iron.

One night they will all descend from their pedestals and pass, with the heavy tread of the wronged, through the streets, bearing the anguish of their loneliness away from this city, into the fields, where the moon is shining and there is fresh air and serene peace. When a man has toiled his whole life long for the good of his country, he has surely deserved this—that he should be left in peace after his death.

* * *

People hurry to and fro on the pavements, in every direction the streets take. They are sucked up by the deep pores in the stone walls. The exultant rumble of iron, the loud piercing whine of electricity, the clatter of work on some new network of metal, new walls of stone, drown out human voices as a storm at sea drowns the cries of the birds.

The people's faces wear an immobile calm; none of them, apparently, is aware of his misfortune in being the slave of life, nourishment for the city monster. In their pitiable arrogance they imagine themselves the masters of their fate, consciousness of their independence gleams occasionally in their eyes, but clearly they do not understand that this is only the independence of the axe in the carpenter's hand, the hammer in the smith's hand, the brick in the hand of that unseen bricklayer, who, with a sly chuckle, is building one vast but cramping prison for all. There are many virile faces among them, but in each face, one notices the teeth first of all. Inner freedom, the freedom of the spirit does not shine in these people's eyes. And their freedomless energy reminds one of the cold gleam of a knife that has not yet been blunted. It is the freedom of blind tools in the hands of the Yellow Devil—Gold.

This is the first time I have seen so monstrous a city, and never before have people seemed to me so insignificant, so enslaved. At the same time nowhere have I met people so tragically satisfied with themselves as are these in this voracious and filthy stomach of the glutton, who has grown imbecilic from greed and, with the wild bellowing of cattle, devours brains and nerves. . . .

* * *

It is painful and dreadful to talk of the people.

Shrieking and clattering, the car of the Elevated railway train rushes by between the houses in the narrow street, at the height of the third floor, amid the monotonous tangle of fire escapes and staircases. Windows are open and figures can be seen in nearly every one of them. Some people are working, sewing or counting, their heads bent over their desks, others are simply sitting at the windows or leaning across the sills, watching the railway cars that flash past every minute. The old, the young and the children are alike silent, monotonously unruffled. They have grown used to this effort for no purpose, grown used to thinking that this is the purpose. Their eyes hold no wrath at the domination of iron, no hatred of its triumph. The passage of the trains shakes the walls of the houses,—the women's bosoms, the men's heads, tremble; shakes the bodies of children, sprawled on the fire escapes, accustoming them to take this abominable life for granted, as inevitable. In brains that are constantly being shaken it is impossible, surely, for thoughts to weave their beautiful bold lace patterns, impossible for a living, daring dream to be born.

There is a passing glimpse of the dark face of an old woman in a dirty blouse open in front. The tortured, poisoned air, making way for the train, has rushed in terror to the windows, and the old woman's grizzled hair lifts and flaps like the wings of a grey bird. She has closed her dim, leaden eyes. And vanished.

In the obscurity of interiors glimmer iron bedsteads heaped with rags, dirty crockery and remains of food on tables. One longs to see flowers in the windows, one looks out for someone reading a book. The walls flow by as though molten, a turbid flood coming to meet one, and in its swift flow the voiceless people swarm, sadly.

A bald head gleams for an instant behind a dusty windowpane. The head rocks to and fro above a workman's bench. A slim, red-haired girl sits at a window, knitting a sock, her dark eyes intent on counting the stitches. The current of air has pressed her back from the window, but she does not raise her eyes from her work, nor smooth down the dress disarranged by the wind. Two little boys of about five are building a house of chips on a fire escape. It collapses with the shaking. The two children clutch at the frail chips with their little paws, to prevent them slipping through the bars of the fire escape into the street below, and they too do not look at the train which is the cause, the hindrance to their task. Faces, more faces, one after another, seen momentarily at the windows, as broken fragments of one whole—of something large, but smashed into the tiniest splinters, ground into gravel.

Driven by the mad race of the trains, the air flutters the hair and clothing of the people, surges in a warm stuffy wave in their faces, thrusts and pushes thousands of sound into their ears, flings fine biting dust into their eyes, blinds

them, and deafens them with a long-drawn-out, unceasing howl. . . .

To the living man, who thinks, who creates in his own mind dreams, pictures, images, who begets desires, who yearns, wants, denies and waits,—to the living man this wild howling, screeching and roaring, this trembling of the stone walls, this timorous shivering of glass in window frames—would all be a hindrance. Wrathful, he would go out of his house and smash and destroy this abomination—the Elevated; he would silence the insolent shriek of iron, he is the master of life, life is for him, and all that hinders him from living should be destroyed.

The people in the houses of the City of the Yellow Devil calmly endure all that kills man.

* * *

Below, in the dirt and dust of the pavements under the iron network of the elevated railway, children are playing, voicelessly—voicelessly, though they laugh and shout like children all over the world but their voices are drowned, like raindrops in the ocean, by the racket overhead. The children are like flowers, tossed by some rough hand out of the window into the dirt of the street. Their bodies feed on the greasy exudations of the city, they are pale and sallow, their blood is poisoned, their nerves irritated by the malevolent screech of rusty metal, the mournful wail of enslaved lightning.

Will these children grow up healthy, bold, proud?—one asks oneself. Grinding, guffawing, angry screeching is the only reply.

The trains dash past East Side, where the poor live, the cesspool of the city. Here the deep gutters of streets