Out of the Night
JAN VALTIN

[illegible] with the [illegible] was breaking [illegible] around the figure [illegible] a floor- [illegible] on the place [illegible] on the streets was [illegible] The churchbells [illegible] the sound of the dead. [illegible] I was on the road, [illegible] toward the Rhine. I [illegible] from peasant women [illegible] in barns. I crossed the [illegible] at Minden and en- [illegible] at night over the [illegible] town of Gronau. The [illegible] night curled up in a meadow, [illegible] frozen to death. But the following day, in the town of Arnhem, I saw a barge captain loading his craft with new red bricks. I asked him if I could help.

"Yes," he replied.

I helped him to load the barge, and for this he granted me a slow passage down the north arm of the Rhine to Rotterdam.

CHAPTER 7

RED VAGABONDAGE

In the Norwegian Sailors' Home in Rotterdam I wrote a letter to Erika Szymanski, asking her to inform the Party of my whereabouts. It was my plan to stay in Rotterdam until instructions arrived. The Comintern, I knew, had its organizations in every civilized country, and I felt it did not matter whether I was in Germany or not so long as I remained loyal and willing to serve the cause. Though stunned by the Hamburg horrors, my faith was intact. The movement to which I belonged was international; the doctrine that no worker has a fatherland was firmly rooted in my mind, and it was with open defiance and ill-concealed pride that I told myself: "You have not lost your fatherland. You never had a fatherland. You are an internationalist who has but a single task—to help put the capitalists and their henchmen into the grave all over the world."

From the sailors' home I went to the offices of the Communist Party to ask for aid as a refugee from Germany, and to put myself at the disposal of the local organization. The red-cheeked, sleepy-eyed Dutch Bolshevik who received me, glanced slowly around his disorderly office and said:

"Well, you'll have to wait until we inquire about you from the German Party."

Exasperated, I cried: "The Party in Germany is outlawed."

"We can do nothing for you if you have no mandate from your Party," the Dutchman said.

"Just give me an address where I can sleep and eat for a couple of days."

"We are no charitable institution," the Dutchman said.

Angry, on the verge of tears, I left him.

Later that day a detective picked me up and took me to a little jail which gave me the impression of being a detention place for assorted alien beachcombers. I had clambered into the fishtank of a discharged trawler to pick up leftovers which I intended to cook over a fire built by bums in a near-by freight car, when the detective leaned over the coaming and told me to come along.

I had no papers to prove my identity, and refused to give my name to the policeman who questioned me. I feared they would bring me to the border and surrender me to the German police.

"I got drunk and lost my ship in Antwerp," I told them. "So I came to Rotterdam to find me another ship."

They gave me a pound of excellent bread, a hunk of cheese and coffee. Before it got dark a gendarme called, and I was told to go with him. He brought me to a train. No other travelers were in the compartment. The gendarme sat in a corner by the door which he barricaded by keeping his feet on the opposite seat. Soon the train began to move.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"You are going where you came from," the gendarme said.

I almost blundered. "Germany?" I wanted to ask. I rose to open the window.

"Keep it closed," my guard advised. "It's cold." Patting his belt, he added: "Don't try to run away. If you run, I must shoot at you."

"Well, where are we going?"

"To Belgium."

I was relieved. The gendarme gave me a guilder. I was grateful. He never smiled. He had curiously tender eyes in a harsh-featured face, and he began to ask me about the life on ships. It seemed that he liked the sea, but he liked more a warm stove in the evening. At a small station he led me out of the train. The fields were frosty. The night was dark and raw. I shivered in the cold. Despite my six-foot frame, I felt weak and worn-out. The gendarme obtained for me a glass of rum and hot water from a fat girl in the waiting room.

"We are near the frontier," he said, pointing out of the window. "Yonder is Belgium."

A young border patrolman wrapped in a thick woolen shawl and a camel-hair coat, was waiting for us. The gendarme yawned and shook my hand, and the border guard grabbed my arm and led me out into the night. By-and-by the weather cleared, the stars shone, and a howling wind blew across the flat country.

We trudged over fields and waded through shallow ditches. Thrice the border guard sat down in the shelter of barns to smoke a cigarette. While he smoked, he forced me to lie face to the ground. When we neared the strip of no-man's-land, we began to crawl on our hands and knees. Behind a thin barrier of brushes we paused.

My escort pointed into the gloom ahead.

"Go straight that way," he whispered, "one hundred meters, and you will be in Belgium. There are no patrols. Belgian patrols like to make fires. Now go and keep on going, and don't ever come back to Holland."

"All right," I said.

"Remember, one year in jail if you come back."

"I remember."

I bent my body toward the ground and ran forward. The wet grass made sucking sounds under my feet. A hundred yards away I halted, and turned to yell insults at the border guard.

"Keep quiet, you smerlapp," he answered. "Keep going!"

Early in the morning I stopped at a farmhouse and asked a clean-looking woman for permission to wash under the pump.

"Poor fellow," she said. "Have they pushed you over the border?"

"Yes," I said.

"Many come that way. Pushed here, pushed there, all the time."

She gave me a piece of coarse soap and a towel. After that I had a breakfast of beans and bacon. I helped the woman to wring out a mountain of laundry until a farm helper harnessed the horse to get firewood from the nearest town. I went with him. The town was Esschen, only a few miles due north of Antwerp. I helped the farm-hand to load his cart and then I struck out on a shiny highway leading south.

The waterfront of Antwerp is the home of many outcasts. It is more international than Shanghai; it is the most international waterfront in the world. It was like a tonic to find myself in the pandemonium of harbor noises, docks and wharves cluttered with foreign freight, of seafaring sounds and smells. In the endless line of drinking places, Lascars and Norwegians guzzled away shoulder on shoulder, and a few francs and meal were to be had for the asking. In the Chrystal Palace and all its satellites around the Steen, naked women of all types pranced in tap-rooms full of noise and smoke and roistering men from the ships. And Antwerp was at that time one of the toughest places in Europe in which to find an outbound berth; 7,000 men were on the beach, and battalions of bums besieged every ship as soon as it was moored.

I spent the night in the common sleeping quarters of the Salvation Army, after obliging its dormitory boss with a prayer.

The following night I was on my way to Liverpool in the coal-bunker of a little weekly tramp. Lying on sacks spread over the coal, a packet of sandwiches as a pillow, I counted the beams overhead and the raindrops which came through a crack in the bunker hatch. Hardly out of the canal, which connects Ghent with the North Sea, I was discovered by a trimmer who entered the bunker with a smoking kerosene lamp. I gave the trimmer 10 of the 19 shillings in silver. He agreed to say nothing. For the 10 shillings he supplied me with a blanket and food — on British weekly boats seamen buy and prepare their own provisions — and kept me informed of the vessel's progress along the coasts of England and Wales. North of Bristol Channel we ran into fog; the plaintive yells of the siren continued until we reached the Mersey after a scant four-day voyage. I dug down into the coal during the customs examination, and when that was over, scrubbed myself off in the stokehold, dousing pails of hot water over my head.

After a few hours, someone hailed me from the bunker.

"All is clear—you can come out."

I crawled back into the bunker and out on deck. It was dusk. We had cleared the river, the pilot had gone, the land dropped down, and the clean horizon of the sea rose high. I went to the forecastle. The iron stove glowed red. I ate a good meal, answered questions, asked for news from Germany, and was content. Life seemed so infinitely sweet and rich.

After breakfast the following morning, I bathed and shaved, put on whatever clean clothes the comrades could spare, and went amidships to report myself to the captain.

The ship's name was Eleonore, home port Hamburg, and she had been resurrected from a boneyard by an enterprising Jewish merchant named Regendanz, whose initial was painted in white on the withered green of the funnel. It turned out that Captain Walter, a stout, mild-mannered, white-haired man, with a huge head, had known my father well. He treated me with the utmost kindness. He was too pensive and gentle a man to deal with the rabid radicalism of his crew.

"And in America," he asked me, "you intend to run away?"

"Yes," I admitted.

"I can't blame you," he said sadly. "Germany is going to the dogs."

Without turning his head, he wiped a tear from his eye.

Among the Eleonore's crew were men who had taken part in the wild voyage of the Lucy Woermann. Before leaving Hamburg, they had formed a syndicate of sailors and stokers, and laid in a contraband cargo of liquor which they hoped to sell in the United States at a great profit. They drank it themselves instead. In the Caribbean, the engine room personnel became thoroughly drunk. The blazing sun and the heat reflected by the iron decks did the rest. Quarrels broke out. Knives flashed, and a coalheaver tottering away from a pursuer who was swinging a knife, went clear over the rail.

The ship was stopped and the drunken comrades of the coalheaver fought some more in the attempt to lower a boat. When they were stopped, they became raving mad. The watch on deck, aided by volunteers from the watches below and led by the chief mate, a former submarine commander, overpowered the drunken stokers. It was an ugly job. Each man, and most of them were naked in the grim sunlight, had to be stunned by blows and then tied to ringbolts on the hatch-coamings and drenched with cold water. Meanwhile, a sailor whose name was Ronaikal, swam out to the man who had fallen overboard. He dragged him to the ship's side and both were hauled aboard with bowlines. The coalheaver was dead.

For me this was a lucky break. I signed the ship's articles and became a regular crew member in the drowned man's place. I became a coalheaver, carting coal in a wheelbarrow from the reserve bunkers to the fires on the watch from twelve to four. So, when the Eleonore steamed into San Pedro harbor two weeks later, the immigration officers had no reason to detain me as a stowaway.

I was jubilant to be back in America. Here a man could roam over a whole continent without being accosted by a border guard. I deserted ship the first night in San Pedro, slept in a Mexican colony of shacks known as "Happy Valley," and in the morning I walked into the nearest lumber yard and asked the foreman for a job. He hired me on the spot $5 a day.

One evening in the large dormitory of the York Hotel, where I lived, I met Virchow, one of my comrades from Hamburg. He had deserted from the Westphalia in New York and had come to the West Coast on one of the Luckenbach ships. He showed me letters received from Party members in Germany. The German courts were grinding out wholesale sentences against Communists for treason, insurrection, rioting, conspiracy murder. Many had been sentenced to death, but all such sentences had been commuted to life imprisonment. Among those who were condemned for life was one of my friends who had helped to storm the Elmsbuettel police station, Wilhelm Willendorf, a big-boned, sad-looking, fearless militant.

The effect which this news had on me was overwhelming. The hatred I felt for a system which destroys in cold blood the best sons of the working class was so great that I was speechless for several minutes. Inside I boiled with helpless rage, and with shame! Over there in Germany comrades went into dungeons for life, and here was I—well on my way to enjoy the Hollywood humbug. Virchow pulled a soiled sheet of printed paper from his kit-bag and handed it to me. I stared at it. It bore the title, "Sturm"—Tempest—and a subtitle, "By Seamen—For Seamen." It was an underground newspaper printed by the marine section of the Communist Party of Germany. Its contents were inflammatory. They gripped me and shook me through and through.

"I'm going back to fight," I said.

Virchow drew back. "Germany is the lousiest, toughest country in the world," he mumbled. "I'll never go back."

"Then you're a deserter."

"And what are you?"

"I'm going back."

I threw away a fair chance for a peaceful life. I journeyed to San Pedro and pestered the skippers and mates of every ship bound for Europe. The captain of the United American Lines freighter Montpelier signed me on as an able-bodied seaman. Thirty days later, under a gloomy North Sea sky, the Montpelier maneuvered through the locks and moored in Antwerp's Siberia Dock.

(To Be Continued.)

Boone Co-Op Area Closed to Fishing

RALEIGH — In keeping with the policy on State and National Forest Co-operative Wildlife Areas of permitting fishing only in waters where good catches can be expected, the State Department of Conservation is closing the Daniel Boone Co-operative Area to fishing beginning today due to the extremely clear water and adverse fishing conditions. Upper North, South Harper, and Steele Creeks will be open again July 4, 5, and 6, after which the area will be closed for the season.

In spite of the successful planting of 4,500 legal size brook, rainbow, and brown trout in Steele and Upper North Harper Creeks, the fishermen have found it extremely difficult to get the trout to rise to flies. The adverse fishing conditions have been due to a combination of factors including the drought, higher temperatures, clear water, and an abundance of cover caused by last year's flood.

Mosquitoes were unknown in Hawaii until sailing ships from the United States carried them there in water barrels.

WISHING WELL

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7 B	8 W	3 R	6 T	2 C	7 E	4 E	8 I	3 L	6 C	5 P	2 T	4 S
7 A	3 E	6 L	4 S	3 Y	8 T	2 D	8 E	5 Y	7 S	4 I	3 J	2 H
6 R	4 A	4 N	7 U	8 O	2 E	6 M	8 P	4 L	2 R	3 U	7 R	5 E
7 I	5 B	2 R	8 L	4 I	6 R	7 E	3 N	2 T	6 T	5 A	4 Y	2 A
7 S	2 G	8 M	5 I	6 S	3 E	2 E	4 E	5 N	8 S	2 Y	6 D	5 G

Here is a pleasant little game that will give you a message every day. It is a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is six or more, subtract four. If the number is less than six, add three. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner of the rectangle and check every one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.