

LEONID LEONOV'S VOR:
A SOVIET PARADISE LOST

by

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ABSTRACT

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There is a striking contrast in the assessments by Western critics of the two variants of Leonid Leonov's novel, Vor (The Thief): whereas the original version (1927) is frequently acclaimed as the finest and most artistically honest of all his literary endeavours, Leonov's revision of the work (1959) is generally viewed as evidence of his final capitulation to the dictates of socialist realist doctrine.

The present study was initiated as an attempt to elucidate certain obscure thematic and symbolic elements perceived during a concentrated examination of the first novel only. Gradually, however, as the significance of these elements became increasingly more evident, attention was shifted to the revision to determine whether or not they had survived the destructive influences of indoctrination and time. If they had been preserved, and the difficulties arising from the obscurity of their presentation could be overcome, then Leonov's tarnished reputation in the West was decidedly undeserved.

Surprisingly, those elements most crucial to the elusive message of the original have not merely survived, but have often been clarified and elaborated as well. The

key to their understanding lies in the recognition of a level of narration "higher" than that of the everyday reality of socially and politically oriented circumstances and events. For, in addition to his concern with topical issues, Leonov reveals a profound interest in the great metaphysical conflicts that are eternally re-enacted within the confines of the human soul. The vehicle for his depiction of these conflicts is a network of symbolism, primarily Biblical in origin, which has as its basis the epic myth of "Paradise Lost." The exegesis of this symbolic framework has been divided into five chapters: I) Introduction, II) Paradise Lost, III) Paradise Regained, IV) Paradise Rejected, or the Theory of Progress, and V) Conclusions.

Chapter I sets the stage for the analysis by placing the tragic "riddle" of human existence (the conflict of Good versus Evil) in the context of the "march of the generations," or history.

Chapter II shows how the metaphysical rebellion (or "fall") of Dmitry Vekshin (Leonov's "universal Adam") is reflected in the symbolic nucleus of the novel, the "blighted birch," and outlines the implications of this parallel for the fates of Vekshin and of Russia.

As the tragedy of the fallen Adam led to the promise of the risen Christ, so the spiritual death signified by Vekshin's own "fall" leads to the potentiality of his "rebirth." Chapter III locates Leonov's discussion of this possibility in a polyphonic schematization of characters and events that

is highly reminiscent of Dostoevsky.

Chapter IV focuses on Vekshin's rejection of salvation and on the revised novel's greatly elaborated "theory of human progress," in which Leonov describes the conflict between "happiness" and "hope," between consideration for individual human beings and the abstract idea of a "greater human good." Dmitry Vekshin's rejection of "Paradise" ultimately signifies the author's own lack of faith in the Communist ideal.

In conclusion, Chapter V discusses specific indications of Leonov's awareness of the subversive nature of his ideas, and of the dangers to which he is consequently exposed.

It is a highly ironic measure of his success that Leonov's survival in Soviet society should have won him such acclaim in the Soviet Union and such condemnation in the free world. In any case, his achievements as an artist have been attained at immense personal cost, and it is time they were recognized for their true value.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Any study of Leonid Leonov's novel The Thief (Vor) inevitably involves some degree of comparison between the original version, first published in 1927,¹ and the major additions and revisions of the second version, published in 1959. Many speculations have been offered to explain the appearance of a substantially new and different novel at a time when re-publication of the original had finally become possible. The majority of Western critics has taken the revision to be significative of the final step in the capitulation of Leonov, in what is very negatively viewed as the author's final "sellout" to the demands of socialist realism. At the more moderate end of the spectrum of criticism directed against Leonov are the views of Marc Slonim and E.J. Simmons, who express the opinion that the creative potential of the writer has failed to achieve full realization. "It is probable," writes Slonim, "that his deliberate endeavors to conform limited his freedom of self-expression and curbed his natural development."² Simmons contends that the beginning of Leonov's decline as an artistic innovator coincides with his completion of the first version of The Thief.

Leonov was never again to exercise so completely the free spirit of creative independence which artistically dignifies this novel. For in his next effort, the fellow-traveler heeded the "social command" for fiction that would further the purpose of the Communist Party. 3

At the other extreme is the position taken by such critics as Vera Alexandrova, Helen Muchnic,⁴ and David Burg. Of these three, the latter presents the most articulate and also the most scathing condemnation of the stance adopted by Leonov during the years to come. Having arrived at the conclusion that the "novel originally dealing with the problems raised by the Revolution has become an affirmation of the righteousness of its objectives,"⁵ Burg presents the following indictment of Leonov's revision and of its inclusion, and the omission of the original, in the new, updated Collected Works:

What compelled Leonov to devote so much time to an accounting with his own past, and just at this time? Previously, his past had not caused him worry. It had been forgotten; he had atoned for it. But now, it appeared, there had suddenly come to the surface in the popular consciousness an epoch once discarded. Many of the strictest tabus connected with that pre-Stalinist, post-Soviet time which provides the setting for The Thief were falling away. There was nothing to prevent the novel from appearing in print. This Leonov could not permit. Embracing the "new morality"--the morality of devotion to the state which carries out the will of history--he had long since renounced the humanism which had inspired him in the 1920's and suppressed his natural interest in the manifold variety of life. Thus, Leonov's inner evolution came full circle. His past, with its esthetic problems and the questions which he had once asked of life, had unex-

pectedly become urgent once again. Left untouched, The Thief would have provided too strong an argument against the conclusions to which the writer had come during the course of his life. 6

Official Soviet criticism has been fairly consistent in its assessment of the changes. Early reaction to the appearance of the new version contained the suggestion that the purpose of the revision was to correct the ideological errors of the original. An example of this is E.V. Starikova's introduction to the revision.⁷ Later criticism, however, has been much more cautious about assigning influence to external or official demands, and Starikova herself in a subsequent article described the two novels as being "permeated by Leonov's argument with himself, the argument of a sixty-year-old writer with a twenty-five year old one."⁸ V.A. Kovalev, by far the most prolific of Leonov's Soviet critics, maintains that the new novel does not represent merely a partial improvement of the text of the original or a deeper elaboration of the psychology of the characters, but rather that it signifies the ripening of an entirely new conception of the novel.⁹ On the whole, the emphasis of recent Soviet criticism is on the matured talent of the author, on his more refined writing technique and his evolved and clarified philosophy, which resulted in his purely personal desire to smooth and polish the roughly cut gem of his youth. Such is the claim of the writer himself, and Soviet critics are quick to justify their arguments by

falling back on direct statements of the author, many of them drawn from personal interviews granted by Leonov.

Typical is the following statement of the author cited by I.A. Demchenko:

The novel was published at home and translated abroad. But I personally was always tormented by the knowledge of the incompleteness of several places, of the fact that the novel was not completely written, perhaps, not thought through to the end. And after thirty years I still hadn't abandoned my intention of somehow cursorily going through the text of the novel with pen in hand...And for this an occasion presented itself. After the appearance of the novel The Russian Forest it was suggested that I republish The Thief, which was not included in the first Collected Works, a fact which provoked many letters from my readers. I sat down with the intention of accomplishing my aim in three weeks or a month. And it so happened that I spent on it...two and a half years of concentrated writer's work. And it is noteworthy that when I had about twenty pages left to the end of the work, I had to disassemble the novel into its component parts and, with today's hand and today's ink, write the novel still one more time. 10

Z.I. Kedrina, in an article entitled "On the High Road of Progress," openly refutes the position of critics who tend to regard the revision as a correction of old mistakes: "It seems to me that the point of departure of critics inclined to see 'the in many ways erroneous conception of the novel as a whole,' (obviously, of the first version), is not completely just."¹¹ Kedrina goes on to say:

On the contrary, it seems to me that in the new

version of the novel Leonov does not repudiate the conception of the former, but rather places the dominant problem in it of social egoism and its consequences for the training of the human character on a more solid socio-historical basis, attaining clarity of his ideas and images, eliminating the immaturity of other philosophical judgements, exchanging the temporal-conditional designation of life circumstances for their realistically motivated depiction. 12

And she in turn supports her claims with a statement drawn from a personal interview with Leonov:

I undertook a new edition of the novel because that which was set in the first edition has now manifested itself....It is like an obligation in which is contained what is in its own way a promise for the future, and afterwards it is either justified or it is not. Underneath every epoch, whether it is heroic or base, very bloody or quiet and idyllic--there always lies a thick layer of human existence. I have always tried to reach this layer, to pull it out and examine what is taking place there. When I wrote The Thief, shortly after the Civil War, I tried to master the new, but I did not yet know the "higher mathematics" of social relations and I had to feel my way.

Existence for its own sake has never interested me; what interests me is the essence of the life process, and the first time, not stopping along the road of its research, I employed temporary moulages of existence. And now the time has come to justify this obligation with the "pure gold" of realistic generalization, and to remove the rubbish. 13

Regardless of the inclination of Western students of Soviet literature to relegate the investigation of social processes and the problem, for example, of "social egoism" (referred to by Kedrina above) to the category of socialist-realist generalization and over-simplification, and whether

or not this tendency is in fact justifiable with regard to the writings of Leonov, there is nothing overtly reprehensible in the author's motivations for revision presented above or in other quotations which could be cited.¹⁴ There is no substantial indication available to Western readers that any kind of capitulation has taken place, whether to pressures from without or from any other kind of incitement. While this obviously cannot preclude such a possibility, alternative explanations for the re-working of the original novel should be allotted due consideration. Is it inconceivable that a writer might have survived, and moreover, have been successful in contemporary Soviet society without some kind of moral breakdown having taken place? Is it not possible that anti-Soviet critics have been all too willing to assign blame to those "monstrosities of totalitarianism" which have come to be taken so much as a given in any analytical point of departure? Perhaps the most important of all motivations toward revision may be clarified by a slightly different approach to the issue.

Kovalev, in his article on the "rebirth" of the novel --"Vtoroe rozhdenie romana Vor"--devotes a brief section to the misunderstandings between the author and his critics. "I don't suffer from conceit," Leonov is quoted as having stated in a newspaper article in 1930, "and it is ridiculous to say that they have not understood the author, but with The Thief precisely such a misunderstanding has occurred."¹⁵

Kovalev blames the misunderstanding on the insistence of the critics on interpreting the work primarily "as an artistic generalization of the NEP period" and as a presentation of "a 'psychological cross-section' of contemporary society," despite the author's indication of the need for further analysis of what he personally considered to be the chief merit of the novel, i.e. its treatment of the "cultural revolution."¹⁶ He quotes Leonov: "In The Thief I wanted to say that, apart from the fight for the creation of material values, it is essential that we master the huge culture of the past."¹⁷ And Leonov himself takes some of the blame for the misinterpretations: "But I expressed vaguely the fundamental striving of the hero...the very turning of Mitka towards culture."¹⁸ For this reason the novel was not understood by the readers and the critics."¹⁹

It may well be that Soviet critics today believe that the majority of the above-described difficulties have been resolved. After all, these remarks were made thirty-five years ago. It would be wiser, however, to remain sceptical on this point. If the original novel was so abysmally misunderstood, is it possible to be absolutely certain that the second version has not met with a similar fate? Moreover, might not the basic assumption that Leonov intended or desired his novel to be completely understood by everyone itself be mistaken? Concealed beneath the complex maze of surface ambiguities (so often complained about by

students and critics alike), might there not be a deeper level of meaning directed only towards those who would be sympathetic to its forbidden implications? Leonov is not considered to be easy reading even by native speakers of the Russian language,²⁰ and one critic comments that his books "are probably the most intellectual in modern Soviet literature."²¹ The predilection of the author for microscopic detail and lengthy description, for complex grammatical and plot structures, for deep philosophical thought and intricate and animated polemics, gives him a better chance of eluding official censure than most Soviet writers. The literature of Tsarist Russia, which had a long history of repression and censorship, was traditionally the field which attempted to absorb and transmit, by whatever means of expression possible, ideas and messages which would have been unmentionable in any other area of endeavour. Implausible and dangerous as it might seem, the possibility of the continuation of this tradition in contemporary Soviet society should not be ignored.

Max Hayward, in his introduction to the anthology Dissonant Voices in Soviet Literature, makes some remarks which are highly relevant in this respect:

Leonid Leonov, easily the most distinguished and subtle of the surviving Soviet novelists, and an avowed disciple of Dostoevsky, continued to write all through the worst period without unduly compromising his artistic integrity. But this was an isolated case. Leonov's rationalization of his

position was based on the same sort of mystic nationalism, and probably combined with the same religious messianism, as one finds in Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer. For Leonov bolshevism is only one episode in the eternal destinies of Russia. He may even have been intrigued by the special problems of writing within the cramped confines of socialist realism and he may well have regarded his work in these conditions as a kind of podvig (spiritual feat) in the Russian Orthodox tradition. His was the noblest type of collaboration and it was undoubtedly motivated by a feeling of duty towards his generation. Not everybody could enjoy the relative luxury of silence and he felt it necessary to convey to his readers--through all the almost insuperable barriers--something of the truth about man and Russia. In this, for all those capable of interpreting his subtle ambiguities, he succeeded well. His most impressive "feat" was the novel Russian Forest, written in the most difficult years preceding Stalin's death and published in 1953. Impeccably "socialist realist" in tone and structure, this novel yet manages to suggest by devious symbolism that human affairs and the fate of Russia are much more complex than the crude over-simplifications of official thought would ever follow. 22

In an "Interview with Leonid Leonov," printed in the December, 1961 English-language edition of the Moscow journal Soviet Literature, a reply is made by Leonov to the analysis of his work presented by Hayward. The writer does not appear to reject Hayward's interpretation. "Well, I think there's no sense in entering into polemics over details or of refuting this or that formulation or statement," says Leonov. "The important thing here is the authors' general approach, their attitude to us, to our humanism."²³ Asked how he felt about Hayward's statement that he regarded his work as a kind of podvig or spiritual feat, Leonov replied:

The Orthodox tradition...It seems to me there's some confusion or misunderstanding here. Perhaps Hayward is judging by the peculiarities of my language, by my constant search for verbal freshness in the roots of the language, in the genealogy of the word, so to speak....

I grant too that Hayward may have formed his views on my work as a result of my interest--sometimes abstract, sometimes specific--in the problem of Good and Evil, something that was always akin to the great Russian literature of the 19th century....I also think that it would be very useful for all of us in the world if we thought more about Good and Evil, particularly today when we are all threatened with a common danger. It's a great pity that in literature as a whole reflections on Good and Evil are noticeably disappearing, that they are being replaced more and more by what I called in my Russian Forest 'novels on the lives of flies.' It's high time for literature to start a more serious talk--in proportion to talent, of course--about general things (side by side with urgent topics), such as the future of culture or the deadly nature of our knowledge....

As for Max Hayward's reference to a 'kind of spiritual feat,' I hardly think he had in mind the life of St. Barbara the Martyr but I agree with the statement in so far that the work of a writer, his service to the cause of humanity, had never been easy. Concerning myself I can add that I have, indeed, always tried as honestly as possible and in the measure of my powers and understanding, to keep alight the spark of the tradition of philosophical writing, not letting it be extinguished by the rather sharp gusts of wind that have sometimes arisen.... 24

Leonov accepts his role as a writer in "service to the cause of humanity" as a great moral obligation. "The responsibility of the artist before the world, before the future humanity is today immeasurable! And it is necessary to work with the knowledge of the full measure of this responsibility."²⁵ The aim of the true artist is, in his

definition, "to help mankind to understand itself, its present and its future." "From literature we await not vulgar description of events, but penetration into the essence of things and processes."²⁶ Leonov's own character, the writer Firsov, when asked what kind of art is, in his opinion, necessary (Kakoe tebe nuzhno iskusstvo?), gives the following most revealing answer:

--You see, my Lady, the human soul is a rather strange mechanism. Unlike a sewing machine, for example, it cannot endure having a screwdriver introduced into it. It will not tolerate any chemistry in tablets for protection against evil; it needs the natural product. In other words, it wants to contemplate personally everything of which existence is composed, that is, eternity, the struggle of Light and Darkness, beginnings and endings, and everything else as well in which is required one day in life strict choice and reflection, that is--with its own wide-open eyes, and not in the transmissions of practising members of the literary guild. Human inspiration does not like it otherwise, it fades and perishes, not having the appropriate reverential exercise, as a result of which might one day turn out something quite the reverse of a higher level. In a word, I stand for art which makes man better in general, and not in some kind of administrative-economic or, let's say, sanitation and housing construction department... 27

The implications of this statement are highly significant first of all for the strikingly non-Soviet (if not outright anti-Soviet) character of its proclamation of the independent nature of the human soul, which is resistant to all attempts, from whatever sources, to impose any established code of moral values. Any restriction of the process of searching and self-contemplation directed towards

the natural evolution of moral values will result in the fading and dying away of the soul from pure lack of use, Firsov explains, with a reference that is highly suggestive of Moses' Ten Commandments ("tablets for the protection against evil"). Rather, the human soul must be free to contemplate by and for itself all the various elements of existence.

It is on this extremely interesting list of the components of human existence that attention will be focused: "eternity, beginnings and endings, the struggle of Light and Darkness." The association which immediately comes to mind is Leonov's above-declared abiding preoccupation with the age-old dilemma of Good versus Evil (Light = Good; Darkness = Evil) and rueful observation that "in literature as a whole reflections on Good and Evil are regrettably disappearing." Thus the question of how Leonov has himself dealt with this problem becomes crucial.

It is to be the fundamental premise of this analysis that the novel, The Thief, in both its original and final forms, is first and foremost a major philosophical dissertation on the moral concepts of Good and Evil, and on the all-surpassing significance of these concepts through all the vicissitudes of universal history. Furthermore, Leonov has entrenched his presentation of this great philosophical debate in a network of symbolism that is primarily Biblical in origin. The first part of the analysis will be

devoted to the establishment of the symbolic basis for the depiction of the most fundamental of human predicaments as it is embodied in the epic tragedy of "Paradise Lost," or the "Fall of Man." The second section will deal with the promise of salvation and the role of Christ in the attainment of "Paradise Regained." Finally, the third section of the study will deal with the author's conception of man's rather astounding reactions to the imminent attainment of "Paradise," or the object of all his strivings, and with the related theory of human progress, in which is contained the major contribution of the new novel to the original message of the old.

All three aspects of this theme, and an indication of Leonov's unique approach to them, are outlined in the rather lengthy passage, newly introduced in the second version, in which Firsov tells the fortune of his (and Leonov's) leading character, the disillusioned Red Army Commissar-turned-thief of the October Revolution, Dmitry Vekshin.

According to the conception of my novel, albeit beyond its bounds, mankind is destined soon to attain the summit of happiness with all its concomitant blessings, in proportion to the need of every individual, of course, as well as his taste and inspiration. From the treasure houses of existence, unfortunately, we can only carry away as much as the capacity of our pockets will allow...When the time comes for humanity to move out of the slums of contemporaneity into new dwellings in the Promised Land it will fly over unanimously, like the great waters when their changing shape is commanded by the earth's gravity. On the eve of the move commandants with pistols will

dispossess the old world once and for all, leaving it with only useless remnants of the past--stones ground down by tears and inclement weather, burial grounds of vain battles and enlightenments, temples of overthrown gods. However, not one hour will have passed en route to the point of destination when a strange yearning will be born in your iron organism...it won't touch anyone else, but for you it will seem as if your legs are tied. And with every step you will be drawn more fatally to cast a farewell glance at the darkening wasteland behind you, where your ancestors wandered from land to land, where they suffered so much, wept, groaned and froze in front of their cave fires while looking at the stars, where they prayed, played, and, along with progressive actions, accomplished the completely improbable. And since the time of Lot's ill-fated wife it has been forbidden to look back at the abandoned fires, so that the contagion would not be brought here...and it never occurred to anyone to look back, for in this was to consist salvation!...Of my characters you alone look back--not out of insolence, in spite of the threatening interdiction, but because of some sweet and disturbing illumination...As a matter of fact it is for this, to my great misfortune, that I have grown fond of you, Dmitry Vekshin, Russian thief and transgressor of laws. After all, I have never undertaken to depict those who didn't look back.

--Don't hide it from me...what sort of thing will appear behind me?--tersely interjected Vekshin.

--Before I answer your entirely justified question, let me draw your attention for a moment to one preliminary circumstance. Every generation imagines itself to be the full master of life, when it is really no more than a link in a long, logical chain. We aren't the only ones to create our own customs and wealth...And in this sense the Christian fable of original sin doesn't seem to me to be hopelessly inane. The past follows persistently on our heels, to escape from it is more difficult than to fly away from this planet, or to tear ourselves away from the power of the substance from which we are formed. Only beautiful edible fishes and various brightly-arrayed butterflies are saved from this tormenting awareness of the

past, and it is not necessary, it is not necessary for society to attain this ideal. 28

The central image of this passage is the progressive march of the generations from the days of the cave men up until the present. And every generation, says Firsov, failing to recognize its position as a mere link in this long historical chain, considers itself to be the sole master of life. Every generation feels itself to be on the verge of attaining the summit, or the epitome, of happiness, the "Promised Land." But, as Firsov informs Vekshin, they are mistaken in thinking that they are the only ones to create their own customs and wealth, and in this sense, the writer adds obscurely, "the Christian fable of Original Sin doesn't seem to me to be hopelessly inane."

What Firsov is trying to convey to his hero is that mankind will never reach the "Promised Land," or "Paradise Regained," because for every generation, indeed, for every individual, the act of "Original Sin," which is synonymous with "Paradise Lost," is enacted anew. And that is why Firsov feels such empathy for his character's strange reluctance to leave the contagion behind, for his undeniable urge to look back, his unwillingness to simply abandon the past, which has given everything to ensure the continuous onward march of progress. For what is expressed here is more than mere reluctance to leave the past behind. It is in fact the absolute impossibility of leaving the past be-

hind--man cannot "tear himself away from the power of the very substance of which he is made." And so the struggle goes on, because man is the very embodiment of this struggle, which is the essence and the meaning of life, from which there is only one way out, and that is death.

It is here that man comes up against the absolute irresolvability of the problem of Good and Evil, which is epitomized by Leonov in what is eloquently described in the original version of the novel as the "riddle":

...that the Light plays with the Darkness, and that the Darkness is the Light's rival, his equal in power and with him the parent of Life, their eternal child. 29

Man is born into and of the conflict, which will plague him as an individual until the day he dies, and collectively for as long as there is life on earth left to be lived.

The cosmic nature of Leonov's depiction of this conflict, which is highly Dostoevskian in its conception, is amplified and clarified by Vyacheslav Ivanov in his penetrating analysis of the tragic principle in the writings of Dostoevsky:

Not in the earthly stage of being lie the roots of that intellectual and spiritual substance, clothed in flesh, which is known as man, but in an existence beyond this world; and each individual destiny has its "Prologue in Heaven." In that transcendent sphere where God and Devil do battle over the fate of the creature--and "their battlefield is in the hearts of men"--here incipit tragoedia. 30

Ivanov's study will provide the model for the exegesis of the symbolic base of The Thief in the following chapter.

Given the universality of the conflict and its unshakeable presence on the heels of every new generation, regardless of every attempt to resolve or abandon it, Hayward's claim that "for Leonov, bolshevism is only one episode in the eternal destinies of Russia" may be regarded as entirely reasonable. The plausibility of this interpretation of Leonov's writings is suggested by the author's own explanation of the attitude toward the world of the locksmith Puchov, the Master of Blagusha:

Around him life was seething, men fought and died, religions perished and revived again, but Master Puchov in his cellar hole jealously guarded his right to labour in peace at his woodwork, and to laugh at the everlasting turmoil of the world. 31

One wonders, in fact, whether these words do not represent the sentiments of Leonov himself, his own feeling for the peace and relative seclusion from the world which is his at least during his long hours of writing. ³² And this occupation also provides him with a unique and special vantage point from which to observe and contemplate the events which are taking place around him.

It should be emphasized at this point that the purpose of this study is not to provide a detailed analysis of the alterations and additions made in the second version of The Thief purely for the sake of comparison. Nor is it

the aim of this thesis to present a complete discussion of the novel in all its philosophical implications. Rather, the focus of this analysis will be the symbolic basis for the conveyance of living ideas more complex and more deeply imbedded in the heritage of the great Russian and European humanist tradition than Soviet officialdom would ever be willing to recognize.³³ For the story told by Leonid Leonov is far more than an excerpt from the biography of a bolshevik soldier who is temporarily disillusioned by his experiences during the Russian Revolution and the subsequent lapses of the NEP; the story of Dmitry Vekshin is, in fact, a new artistic rendering of the continuing universal epic of the tragedy of man. The very name of Leonov's hero supports the truth of this interpretation, for "Vekshin" connotes "vek," which means "life," "century," "epoch."³⁴ Dmitry Vekshin is the hero of his generation because he is the personification and the embodiment of the great advances and upheavals of his epoch. But even more than this, a fact which none of the critics seem to have recognized, Dmitry Vekshin is the universal Adam; he is the man of all ages.

The task of providing a complete analysis of The Thief is formidable in its enormity, and the possibility of giving it the extensive and thorough treatment which it would otherwise warrant unrealizable within the limits prescribed for an M.A. thesis. The aim of this endeavour,

therefore, is simply to introduce as succinctly as possible those basic themes which must be recognized as crucial for the understanding of the essentially non-political nature of this novel and the symbolic structure which must ultimately carry the true meaning of the work. Hopefully, this initial effort will lead to further elaboration of the analysis at a later date, for the isolated voice of this great and profound humanist striving to break through the oppressive barriers of his own social environment cannot be ignored.

CHAPTER II

PARADISE LOST

Leonid Leonov's prime concern in writing The Thief, was shown in Chapter I of the present study to be the universal moral conflict of Good versus Evil. The immense significance of this dilemma, in Leonov's estimation, lies in its perpetuation of a state of human existence which is fundamentally tragic in nature. The scope of this tragedy is so vast, and so profound in its implications, that for its introduction into the novel the author has felt compelled to turn to the multi-valent language of myth; the specific myth which he has chosen for the presentation of the tragedy is the great Christian epic of "Paradise Lost." The analysis will begin with a discussion of the symbolic base for the presentation of the myth within the novel. Leonov's selection as well as his treatment of his theme reveal themselves as being highly Dostoevskian in nature. The particular line of Dostoevskian criticism which has proved most meaningful in approaching The Thief is Vyacheslav Ivanov's classic study of Leonov's favourite author's¹ conception of the novel-tragedy.

"If one wishes fully to understand the epic-tragedy," writes Ivanov in his Freedom and the Tragic Life,

one must discover in its hidden depths a nucleus that is epic in form, but tragic in its presentation of inner antagonism; a nucleus that contains from the beginning the full symbolic force of the whole work, its entire "higher realism": that is to say, the original intuition of a transcendental reality, and of the event as taking place within this reality, which determines the epical fabric of action in the world of the senses. To describe this nucleus of symbolic creation we use the word "myth." 2

The symbolic nucleus for the presentation of the "Paradise Lost" myth is to be found very early in The Thief. The "tragic inner antagonism" of which Ivanov speaks is stated with full epic force in the powerful image of the "blighted birch,"³ which is gradually destroyed by an inscription which has been gouged into its bark.

From those fatal words, scored deep into its pith, the old birch tree sickened. The misery and suffering of men, borne here upon the wind, found a nightly shelter in its long and drooping branches. Through the tiny window of this inscription a terrible canker had forced its way into the birch; the wound swelled, and black and curling growths festered around its lips. The ulcer ate in deeper, destroyed the wood, and, relentlessly advancing, killed the tree. It turned this way and that, piteously rustling its leaves; it struggled against death, and in the frenzy of the spring shed its bark, hoping that it might slough off the accursed scar as well. A hurricane put an end to its agony, for one morning the old birch lay on the ground, its mighty trunk stretching across the whole length of the meadow; it lay in the dust, exposing its secret to the sky, and the torment of its naked roots. In a single night the maidens had grown old and stiff, and their leaves had lost their virgin freshness. The old tree rotted, and covered the whole meadow with debris; the death-dealing words met death themselves, and fell away like a scab. Yet even in death the old tree did not surrender, for from its roots in the spring a slim and fragrant shoot sprang up. 4

The "higher realism" (or "mystical realism")⁵ to which Ivanov refers above is to be understood as an essentially conceptual reality belonging to the realm of metaphysics.⁶ The function of "realistic symbolism" in art, as Ivanov explains it, is to "lead the soul of the spectator a realibus ad realiora,...from reality on the lower plane, a reality of lesser ontological value, to the more real reality."⁷ Consequently, the symbolist realist work of art must take place simultaneously on three different levels of narration: (1) the intricacy of the story-teller's dealings with actuality and the multifold composition of the texture of the plot; (2) the even greater complexity of the psychological plane, for which the first level provides a basis; and (3) the uppermost, metaphysical plane, where the complexity of the first two levels gives way to the "great, bare simplicity of the final."⁸ It is on the third, metaphysical plane that the present analysis will be focused. That Leonov, too, is interested primarily in this level is indicated at the very beginning of his revision of The Thief, in the words of advice given to Nikolay Zavarikhin by his grandfather:

"Only that which man has not touched stands indestructible," the deceased man used to say, if the rough speech of the illiterate coachman is smoothed out. "Apart from the stars in the heavens, we almost don't see the real world; more and more we see that which has been made by human hands, and whatever they touch, greedy human hands, is doomed to insatiable and fatal rest-

lessness. Protect yourself from that which is temporary, grandson, and, in opposition to this, strive for the eternal!" 9

"Down with Authority!" (Doloy nasil'e!) are the words carved into the birch tree's tender bark, and as they were put there by an alleged activist against the Tsarist regime they are generally interpreted as a predominantly political gesture, significative, if not solely of directed political dissent, then of the rising "forces of revolutionary destruction...[directed against] the body of human Russia."¹⁰ Andrey Klokachev, the wandering photographer and pamphleteer who inscribed the fatal words on the old birch, explained to Mitka when he spent the night in the Vekshins' hayloft that "the world...was in the toils of Evil, and the soul of Man was crushed down by Authority, and was perishing," and although the young boy had no idea what this cunning insurrectionist was talking about, "all the same his young soul was never afterward able to free itself from the spell of this night's conversation. The fanatical, inexorable eyes of the man in the black hat had stamped themselves indelibly on his brain."¹¹

After some contemplation of the words quoted above the identity of the black-hatted traveller begins to become clear. Leonov's revised version of this text, however, leaves no doubt as to either his identity or his intent.

Until midnight he revealed to Mitka that the

world was entangled in Evil, and explained how, constrained by a gigantic tyranny, the human soul was perishing...and it seemed to the boy that, hiding in the darkness there were coils of serpents and huge, in the dimensions of all humanity, deafening shackles. 12

For the young Mitka Vekshin this vicious propagandist is none other than the Devil himself, and the effects of his seditious ravings are unmistakable.

It [the fanatical voice of the wandering photographer] lay deeper than a scar on his soul, so that all those miraculous copses with gayly singing birds, and the meadows full of gentle flowers, the summer sky dressed in carefree fleecy clouds, and the blue chalice of water-side sedges, he viewed as if through the brown cuts of that scar. A river doesn't dare to oppose even one of its reflections. For this reason even the pranks of his youth were marked in Mitka by an un-childish outlook on the seamy side of life. 13

The connection between Mitka's catastrophic experience and the sufferings of the symbolic birch, implied only indirectly in the first version of the novel, is incontestable in the second.

And just as the old tree never succeeded in covering over its wound with clean white bark, so was Mitka's heart unable to slough off the sad words which the wandering photographer had whispered to him on the eve of his arrest, while spending the night in the Vekshins' hayloft with the boy. 14

Thus Leonov has depicted, in all its terrible magnitude, the epic tragedy of the "Fall of Man." The young Mitka Vekshin, the author's "universal Adam," unwittingly

allows himself to be exposed to the perfidious teachings of the dark stranger, and the damage done is irrevocable. For the "call to revolt and battle" (pryzyv na bunt i boy) has goals far more ambitious than the mere destruction of the Tsarist autocracy. The Authority against which the black-hatted photographer directs his "sorcery" (volshebnoe remeslo) is nothing less than the divine authority of God. And so the tragedy begins.

Tragedy, to continue with the Dostoevskian model of analysis as outlined by Ivanov, is born of the attempt to break away from the power of the Creator, this "because everything must suffer that breaks away from the primary source of Being." "The tragic struggle must be fought out between the actual and the effective realities," "between the divine principle in the Creature and the power of 'the Prince of this world,'" ¹⁵ i.e. between the spiritual and the material elements of man and human nature.

"Man is broad, even too broad. I'd have him narrower,..." writes Dostoevsky in The Brothers Karamazov. "God and the devil are fighting there and the battlefield is the hearts of men." ¹⁶ That Leonov has also chosen to deal with the eternal re-enactment of this battle is indicated with particular clarity not only in his formulation of the "riddle," cited above, but also in the revised novel's version of Firsov's lost notebook. Firsov writes:

Nowadays in the world Lucifer and Beelzebub are

fighting amongst themselves, just as if a third didn't exist. Whenever one defeats the other, the victor immediately breaks in two, and the halves begin to do battle. "Will it always be that way?" I ask him [Puchov]. "No," he answers, "only until the bitter realization..." 17

Firsov's (and Leonov's) choice of contestants, however, indicates a highly significant variation in his presentation of the eternal battle, for each of the rivals listed bears a name for the Devil. The implications of this strange presentation are of great importance for the understanding of the novel. The name of Beelzebub, who is referred to in Matthew 12:24 as the "prince of devils," carries no meaning other than that of evil. Lucifer, on the other hand, was originally known as the bright "morning star" who became a fallen angel, and only later did his name come to be synonymous with that of the Devil.¹⁸ According to this additional categorization, there are two forms which the rebellion can take: the first is a rebellion so unequivocal as to deny the very existence of God; the second contains within it the possibility of opting either for or against God. The first contestant is material man; the second is the spiritually-oriented metaphysical rebel.

Both of these alternatives are represented in The Thief: they are portrayed respectively by Nikolka Zavarikhin and Mitka Vekshin. That this is so is indicated by yet another entry in Firsov's notebook in which the writer conjures up an imaginary struggle which strangely recalls the

battle between Lucifer and Beelzebub.

At the end of the chapter about the return from the Kudema, instead of the old woman, Mitka meets Zavarikhin on the train. They ride and are silent, swaying in different ends of the empty car. Hatred and the night. And when it becomes unbearable--"Come on, let's finish, or we'll die unsatisfied...Shall we get off, my friend, eh?" At the nearest half-station they get off and go into the night field beyond the embankment. The last knife-battle of decisive meaning. The blood is not visible because of the darkness. In the meantime the train leaves. 19

The novel provides further information as to the nature of the rivalry between the two men. From the moment he first lays eyes on Mitka, Zavarikhin understands that "with such a person there is either eternal friendship or mortal strife."²⁰ "One isn't offended by one's fiercest enemies, one kills them," Mitka remarks to his sister Tanya, referring to Zavarikhin. And he continues:

It's crowded for us with him on earth...Even if we were both left in a universal wasteland and it happened that the two of us met at night, like wolves, to heat a common pot over the fire, on the very last little fire! all the same we'd be at each other with knives. It has already accumulated for a painfully long time, and the matter will emerge on a huge scale: he wins--for me it's an eternal yoke; whereas if only I am spared... 21

Firsov makes the following observations in a very early entry in his notebook:

Mitka's brow is honest, pale, rebellious. The earth, indifferent to their differences, passionless in its creative violence, gives birth to

Mitka and to Zavarikhin in one and the same hour. The first descends, the second ascends: at the intersection of their paths there is unavoidable personal conflict and hatred. Both are heralds of the awakened millions--does this mean that life and the struggle are beginning again? Any epoch is only a running start to the next one after it... 22

It is evident from the preceding quotations that the fight in which Leonov's characters are locked is far more than a personal conflict between two men; rather, Mitka and Zavarikhin are types, representative of a conflict of ideas. Both are rebels against the "power of the Creator," or the divine authority of God, but, like Lucifer and Beelzebub, they fight amongst themselves as if there were no third power. Of the two only the former experiences the internal conflict of the kind recognized by Dostoevsky--i.e. the fight between God and the devil--and thus it is around Mitka Vekshin that the action of the novel centres. Before Vekshin's internal dilemma can be resolved, however, his battle with Zavarikhin must be won. But what exactly is the object of this struggle?

Along with his complaint that The Thief had not been understood by readers and critics alike, Leonov is quoted in the Introduction as having stated that the most important aspect of his novel was its treatment of the cultural revolution, and that the basic striving of his hero was towards the mastery of culture.²³ The writer Firsov repeats this statement within the context of the revised novel:

In your fate is included for me the very acute and burning issue of the mastery of culture, without which a great deal could turn for us in a direction the reverse of towards a higher level. 24

Just exactly what the author and his character have in mind when they speak of the "mastery of culture" is not immediately clear. Further investigation of this question, however, indicates that Leonov has centred his discussion of the issue around two basic symbols, each representative of a vehicle for the transmission of culture. The first, which is the only one relevant for the portrayal of Mitka's duel with Zavarikhin, is the image of the Russian troika. The second, the meaning of which is far more difficult to determine, is the enigmatic gleam--blestinka v zrachke--in the eye of a dying man.

The symbol of the troika, the control of which is related in the novel to both Vekshin and Zavarikhin, is used by Leonov in its Gogolian sense of the personification of Russia and intuition of her divine destiny:

And art thou not, my Russia, soaring along even like a spirited, never-to-be-outdistanced troika? ...and the troika tears along, all-inspired by God!...Whither art thou soaring away to then, Russia? 25

This last question is precisely the one asked by Leonov. The answer to this question is what each of his rival characters seeks power to determine. Zavarikhin's powerful hands long to "possess, subdue, and bridle, and to chase through

the night the rebellious troika with Russia itself in the traces,"²⁶ while Vekshin muses that "affairs would go badly for Russia if every two centuries there failed to appear in the coachman's seat a new driver who, setting off in chase, lashed everything out of the famous Russian troika."²⁷

Thus, both Vekshin and Zavarikhin are vying for the power to control the very destiny of Russia; the nature of the control which each seeks to acquire, however, is entirely different. Zavarikhin, the single-minded and contriving master of the art of the rapid accumulation of wealth, fears and distrusts anything that might obstruct his path of ever greater and greedier material gain, including the city, women, and his own soul. Vekshin, on the other hand, entangled in his own spiritual ailments, is unable even to set a direction for himself and his aspirations.

The apparent cause of all his misfortunes, an event which occurs prior to the descriptions of his disillusionment with the NEP, is the episode of Mitka's night attack on the officer who had killed his beloved horse, Sulim. And it is precisely at the time of the occurrence of this event that the symbol of the blestinka is introduced. The pupils of his captive's eyes glint mockingly as Mitka prepares to kill him. Agey Stolyarov, whose war-time biography is strikingly similar to Mitka's, describes much the same experience in the account related to Firsov of how he learned to kill.

Then I lifted up the butt of my rifle, and he looked at me as you are doing now, in a pleading kind of way. I saw his eyes growing dull. They winked at me and seemed to be wanting something. What did they want, Fyodor Fyodorych? And it's true if a chap hits you with the butt of a rifle, it isn't in the butt that death is, but in the eyes. When he winked at me I thought... 'You're cheating,' thought I. 'You want to get into me through your eyes.'...And I screwed up my eyes, too. 28

Indications as to both the nature of Mitka's (and Agey's) crime and the motivation behind it are provided by the novel. First of all, much emphasis is placed in both versions of the novel on the question as to whether or not it is permissible to kill. And secondly, as is indicated by the words of Agey, quoted above, some kind of threat is seen as existing in the eyes of a man who is himself threatened by death for as long as he is still alive. Mitka's immediate successor, Artashez (Atashez, in the original), suggests both possibilities in his conversation with Mitka after the murder has taken place:

...why? Either you think that now even you are permitted everything,....?

Or you saw some kind of distant threat in his eyes? 29

While both of these suggested reasons for Mitka's crime are important for the understanding of Leonov's novel, it is the second which is most directly related to the notion of the transmission of culture and which will therefore be discussed first.

Continuing his reproachful questioning of Mitka, Artashez sheds further light on the nature of the rationale behind the deed:

I know, speaking secretly, how one can occasionally be seized by a strange anxiety. Here we fight, shed our blood, and burn so much that everything around becomes charred...but some day we'll get tired and go to sleep. Then a third who is young and furious, like you and I, will burst out...He won't come tomorrow, and he won't come directly to us, without a knife even. Look at history, Dmitry!..Our temples have begun to turn grey, and he may not even have been born yet, so that it is not given to us to reach him with a sword, not even to give him candy in advance. Or maybe he already goes to prep school and is learning the multiplication tables, eh? Such a thin, industrious boy with a dreamy expression...That's the way we were once. And he smiles, but I don't know why. And then involuntarily I want to stop up all the cracks from which might appear this juvenile, this descendant who smiles for reasons unknown to us... 30

Atashez' comments supply the first clue as to the nature of the connection between the apparently unrelated symbols of the blestinka and the troika by placing Mitka's deed in the context of history. The man who longs for power enough to control the very destiny of Russia is also unwilling to grow old and die, and to pass on the "reins of the troika" to the representative of the younger generation who is to succeed him. The "jealousy" referred to by Leonov thus begins to make itself apparent.³¹ Further clues as to the nature of this jealousy, however, give much greater depth of meaning to the symbol. Firsov describes the blestinka

and its immense significance in the following excerpt from Mitka's "fortune":

Behind your back will appear, all in smoke and ruins, overthrown and rendered completely harmless, the old world. You will see behind you the most barren wilderness, already looking as though nothing had ever happened in it...nothing was lived through, nothing loved, nothing cried over! Leaning against a decapitated tree, against the background of the guilty farewell dawn, yesterday's world-soul, the has-been, will look you in the eye. The most economical commandant's eye will not discover in it anything worthy of subjection to the nationalization of property...apart from, perhaps, the irritatingly clever and bewitching gleam in its fading pupil. No one will even pay attention to such a trifle, but you will notice it without fail, Dmitry Egorych!..And here you will be singled by a burning conjecture--isn't it a petty trick, this spark that is almost like a dot, so that there's nowhere to put the seal of an inventory tag--and it is the most important value of existence because it is smelted out of everything that has gone before us, the experience of human history. 32

Contained in Firsov's comments is the link which forms the final connection between the concepts and symbols which have been introduced into the analysis. The tiny glimmer, first discovered in the eye of the officer whom Mitka was about to kill, is now seen "leaning against a decapitated tree" amidst the ruins of the "old world." (The image recalls the scarred birch tree which was singled out at the beginning of the chapter as the symbolic nucleus for the tragedy.) This tiny dot of light is identified here as the soul of the old world and as the most important value of existence, this because it is the product of the entire

experience of human history. In other words, it represents the culture amassed by generation after generation of human civilization.

Leonov's conception of culture thus acquires spiritual overtones which, when correlated with the image of the troika, suggest the profound influence on the author, not only of Dostoevsky, but also of Gogol, who, as Zenkovsky writes,

introduced into Russian life the theme which to the present time has been one of the central themes of Russian searchings: that of the return of culture to the church and the construction of a new ecclesiastical world-view--the theme of an 'Orthodox culture.' 33

The "mastery of culture," therefore, would appear to signify for Leonov the establishment of a religion or a spiritually-oriented world-view which would serve as the major factor in determining, as had Orthodoxy before its rejection by the Revolution, the direction and the goal of all the future aspirations of Russians and of humanity in general. The association of the ideas of Leonov with the ecclesiastical world-view of Gogol, if valid, provides very substantial support of Hayward's contention that Leonov's writings represent a continuation of the Russian Orthodox tradition within and despite the present Soviet state.³⁴

In addition to being a response to the "threat" of the blestinka, however, Mitka's crime was thought to have

had yet another motivation. "[Did]...you think that now even you are permitted everything?" was Artashez' question of Mitka during their private conversation after the murder, and the issue which he raises here is identical to its original formulation by Dostoevsky in The Brothers Karamazov: if God does not exist, everything is permitted, whereas if God does exist it is still possible to commit a crime against God and against one's fellow men.³⁵ Far from being at peace with himself concerning his actions, Mitka is constantly tormented by the knowledge of his crime and by feelings of guilt which he himself does not understand. Consulting Firsov about these feelings, he asks:

"If it's all a matter of conscience,...then after all, conscience exists while you're cutting off his arm, but once the swine is in the ditch what is the nature of my guilt before him if he is no longer alive? It can't be that my guilt is before that which no longer exists! In which case who can call upon me?"--"Then you will call upon yourself," answers Firsov, "because in killing you kill yourself in him, your living reflection in his eyes!" 36

Firsov's explanation of Mitka's position is extremely important, for it is about his own character, indeed, his own creation, that he is speaking. "To kill a man means to kill oneself in him,"³⁷ is the writer's verdict, and when correlated with the information that Firsov "evidently considered Mitka's crime as the last convulsions of a new spiritual rebirth,"³⁸ this statement provides a profound new insight into the inner workings of the novel.

More than one of Leonov's critics likes to repeat the story, originally told by Maxim Gorky, which Leonov relates in a discussion of the problem of returning to an early work and re-writing it many years after its original publication. According to this story, a writer who is wandering around the streets of Moscow one cold autumn evening suddenly meets his favourite character. Together, the two of them head for a bar where they can sit and talk. But times have changed and everything is now seen differently, in the light of new experiences, so that in the end the writer kills his character by striking him on the temple with a beer mug. Leonov concludes the anecdote with the following comments about his own experience with his favourite character:

This work was perhaps the most difficult of all the forty years of my literary activity. And when there remained only a few pages to the end I suddenly realized that in the new edition I had killed my hero, Mitka Vekshin. 39

The critics who repeat this story regard the "death" spoken of by Leonov to be the consequence of the author's distance from the events described in the original novel and of his changed attitude towards these events and towards his overromanticized hero. However, although Mitka does change slightly as a result of the author's more abstract philosophical approach to the writing of the second novel, the above-described "death," in actual fact, occurs in both

versions.

The death which Mitka Vekshin undergoes is a spiritual death, for this death, which is followed by his eventual rebirth, is the only way that he can free himself from the consequences of his "fall." The experience is pre-ordained in its entirety by the myth and by the symbolic depiction of this myth in the image of the tree. "Yet even in death the old tree did not surrender, for from its roots in the spring a slim and fragrant shoot sprang up," the original version was quoted as stating, and the revision is even more explicit in describing the purifying effect of the trauma of death and rebirth:

Even when the next storm felled the birch, until its complete disappearance nothing--neither death, nor worms, nor the passage of time--was powerful enough to save it from Klokachev's markings. "But already fragrant and virginal young shoots were rising all around, and they had nothing to do with the old tree's biography, with the dust-covered writing on the mouldering log, or with the secret torments of its exposed and naked roots. So are we, people,..." Firsov lyrically concluded the corresponding section of Dmitry Vekshin's biography. 40

The symbolism employed here by Leonov is identical to that used by Ivanov to explain the epilogue of Crime and Punishment, with which the final scene of The Thief has long been compared:

Dostoevsky depicts for us, in the epilogue to Crime and Punishment, the spiritual revival of a man who is inherently good, but has gone

darkly astray--a revival like that of a young shoot sprouting vigorously from healthy roots when the withered old trunk has been burnt to ashes by the thunderbolt of wrath. 41

Tha "Fall," however, has taken place as a direct consequence of the free will with which man has been endowed. In order to ensure his full spiritual regeneration man must make the fundamental decision whether "to be or not to be,"⁴² i.e. whether to be for or against God. Ivanov continues:

Only a hallowed spiritual death, followed by rebirth--the death of the "old man" within the personality--might still save this soul, giving it salvation by the offered boon of chastisement. But this death and rebirth, which we have compared to the putting-forth of a new shoot from healthy roots, can take place only if the roots are, in fact, healthy--that is to say, if the defection from God has not been the result of a final decision by the metaphysical Ego, but has signified only an antithetical impulse in the supra-conscious drama--the impulse of wilful self-alienation from God which comes of arrogance and a desire for unbridled exercise of self. 43

Although the basic conflict within the novel is between Zavarikhin--material man, and Vekshin--the epitome of spiritual man, Leonov introduces yet a third character into the symbolic mainstream of events. The function of this character is to portray the depths to which a man whose final metaphysical decision has been negative, or against God, may fall. The representative of this decision within the Novel is Mitka's fellow thief and rival in love, Agey Stolyarov. Through the example of Agey, according to Leonov,

Firsov endeavours to depict "the limits of degradation at which a successful and unpunished criminal might arrive."⁴⁴ Agey's war-time experiences, as was stated previously, were much the same as Mitka's, but there is one crucial difference between the two murderers. Mitka is never able to free himself from the guilt which is the result of his deed, whereas Agey, once he recovered from an initial feeling of revulsion, actually developed a taste for killing, and eventually reached the stage where he "longed for each attack as though it were Easter Sunday."⁴⁵ Agey has chosen to live "without God and in freedom,"⁴⁶ and the result is a state of degradation and decay from which there is no retreat.

"There isn't a bone in my body that isn't accursed," Agey informs Masha a year after their elopement; "I'm rotten from head to foot."⁴⁷ And in the second version's depiction of this scene, for which Firsov is also present, he adds:

I have become black through and through, everything has become parched inside me...I drink water, and it blazes within like kerosene. I would cry out, but grief holds me by the throat. I want it to become as dark everywhere as it is inside me. 48

The imagery used to describe Agey's condition is suggestive of hell itself. Masha is described as trying to "drive the devil out of his bones,"⁴⁹ and for her Agey has, in fact, become the Devil. Arriving suddenly one night "with the other harbingers of evil,"⁵⁰ Agey appears in her native town of Rogovo (the name of which recalls the horned stereotype

for the Devil), and soon afterwards brutally rapes Masha on the banks of the Kudema.

Afterwards, Masha bitterly curses Mitka for allowing her to "fall" to Agey (k Ageyu na roga),⁵¹ implying that he is somehow responsible for this occurrence. Only towards the end of the revision does the explanation for this become clear. Masha's fall is the direct result of Mitka's failure to meet her at a previously arranged secret rendezvous. The results are catastrophic, but as Leonov is careful to point out, Firsov's (or his own) novel could not possibly have been written if not for the occurrence of this crucial event.

Firsov saw the source of his troubles in the fact that it was specifically Agey, and not someone else, who came upon Masha on the banks of the Kudema, although in the opposite case Firsov's novel simply could not exist. 52

For Masha's fall, although this is not readily apparent, is strangely connected with Mitka's. Depicted as the direct result of Mitka's negligent failure to keep an appointment which he himself had arranged, it is in fact significative of his own fall, the consequence of his failure to protect and honour the purity of his own soul. Viewed in their symbolic aspect, neither Masha nor Agey are characters existing apart from Mitka. Rather, they are extensions of Mitka's personality who enact separately within the novel the consecutive stages of Mitka's metaphysical rebellion and who carry the consequences of his actions to their con-

ceptual extremes.

The employment of this device by the author allows him to leave open the fate of his central character. Thus, while Agey's fall is irreversible, Mitka's is not. Vekshin --Man, the universal Adam--fell because of a rebellion caused by pride and by lack of faith. Yet it is precisely the spiritual death which is the result of this fall that gives rise to the potentiality of rebirth. Out of the tragedy of the fallen Adam emerges the promise of Christ. It is this promise, along with its accompanying conception of "Paradise Regained," that will provide the focus for the third chapter of the analysis.

CHAPTER III

PARADISE REGAINED

In the portrayal of the myth of "Paradise Lost" and the epic of the "Fall of Man," the role played by Maria Dolomanova is none other than that of Eve--Adam's companion in the Garden and the supposed initiator of his fall. Seductress, witch, Muse--"Manka the Snowstorm" is condemned forever to lonely suffering. Firsov and her own pride will not permit that her fate be otherwise. "There is no illness more terrible than the one from Agey which you have invented for me,"¹ she complains to Firsov in the closing scene of the revision, as she is about to be abandoned by the author in favour of a new Muse. Firsov, however, remains adamant on his former stand: "No, I will not give you Mitka Vekshin!"² The decision is not presented as having been reached by Firsov alone. Replying to Tanya's fierce defence of her brother, Masha indicates that her position, as required by the tragic formula, is the consequence of her own free choice.

I am almost agreed that in this lifeless boiling broth, as you aptly expressed yourself recently, ascending and, conversely, subverting currents act elementally...I don't hide the fact that this is confirmed by some events from my personal life. Fortunately, however, above and beyond fate we are also endowed with will...And if I have not had sufficient will to withdraw independently from this

wicked game, then for this I bear full responsibility. 3

Masha is inextricably linked with Mitka's fall, and is also in some intangible way indispensable for his recovery, but the dominant part of the portrayal of Mitka's struggle towards salvation has been allotted to yet another symbolically significant character, to his innocent and idealistic sister, Tanya. As the connection here is more than obscure, considerable attention will be devoted to the elaboration of the role played by Tanya in the depiction of the gradual process of Mitka's spiritual regeneration.

The close connection between the two most influential women in Mitka Vekshin's life is indicated very early in the novel, significantly, in the experiences of Zavarikhin. Robbed by the first upon his arrival at the Moscow train station in the morning, and deterred from a major confrontation with his rival in a pub the next evening by the second, Nikolka muses over the two women in his state of drunken stupor.

Two women stood in his memory: the one of the morning struggled with this, the evening one. She of the morning was close because she cried, She of the evening because of her smile; at times they merged into one, like the halves of a sliced apple. Their captivity was pleasing and inviolable. 4

Contained in this lyrical flight of fancy is the information that Tanya and Masha, the two "halves of a sliced

apple," are representative of the constituent elements of one and the same concept or entity. The apple (which is associated in the novel primarily with Masha), is significative of the temptation offered to Adam by Eve; the as yet unbitten fruit, however, hanging whole and perfect on the branches of the "Tree of Life," signifies only purity and innocence. If Masha is representative of the already fallen seductress, then Tanya must stand for the pure, untainted Eve of God's original Creation. The facts of Mitka's early biography clearly confirm this interpretation. Tanya, as Mitka's sister, shares his childhood home in Demyatino,⁵ but when she leaves, driven away by need and by their common step-mother, her place is immediately taken over by Masha, the "dark Masha"⁶ of Mitka's youth. Soon afterwards, Mitka himself is expelled from home, and with the calm glow of the last crimson sunset on the fateful day of his departure, he leaves behind forever his happy Garden home.

The serenely beautiful Kudema of Leonov's novel is easily identifiable as the author's equivalent of the symbolic paradise of the "Garden of Eden." The dispossessed and downtrodden representative of the "old world," the barin Manyukin, writes nostalgically in his diary about the "corner of Paradise on the Kudema"⁷ where he, too, spent his childhood, and then goes on to describe one particularly glorious Sunday morning spent there as "the sinless morning of my life."⁸ Also included in Manyukin's ramblings is the image of the

"Tree of Life," as he writes nostalgically that the time has come for him "to leave, to fall from the Tree of Life like a ripe fruit in autumn."⁹ It is Mitka's personal destiny, indeed, that of his entire generation, to take over the struggle where Manyukin has left off.

Mitka and Tanya, their pasts thus linked in this common experience of the idyllic perfection of the Garden, are dependent upon each other for the reattainment of their original state. Tanya's romance with Zavarikhin, as well as her personal fate, is tightly intertwined with the deadly rivalry between Mitka and Nikolka, and with Mitka's own secret spiritual ailments. The focus for the conflict between the two men is provided by Tanya's announcement of her engagement to Nikolka and by her brother's inevitable disapproval. Convinced of the impossibility of the match and of the destructive influence which Nikolka's ambitious and grasping nature will have on his sister, Mitka does everything within his power to discourage the marriage, even to the point of trying to "buy off" his future brother-in-law. This struggle is magnified and intensified by the second version's emphasis on the sequence of events leading up to Tanya's death. The evening of the accident Nikolka is forced by Mitka to make a choice between accompanying his fiancée to the circus or meeting with her brother in order to negotiate a very profitable business deal. The alternatives are love and greed, and

each is, by necessity, mutually exclusive of the other. Mitka's "test" of his rival is, at least from his point of view, successful. Nikolka chooses money over love, and when he does finally arrive at the circus, it is only just barely in time to witness Tanya's entrance for her last, fatal, performance.

Mitka's victory, won at the cost of his sister's life, would appear to be, at best, empty. Paradoxically, this is not so: the explanation of this paradox, however, is highly complex, and must be traced through a series of apparently unrelated events. Nikolka's first involuntary reaction to Tanya's breath-taking circus act, the disturbing fantasy which haunts Firsov throughout the writing of his novel, and the spectacular foreign tour proposed for Tanya by the German impresario Mangold, are all curiously interconnected in providing the explication of the positive significance of Tanya's death.

"Fall!"¹⁰ is the imperious response evoked from Nikolka by Hella Velton's (to use Tanya's circus name) performance. It is a command which would be considerably less perplexing if it could be related directly to the story of the loss of the garden paradise. Leonov, however, has been far more shrewd than to permit his characters to re-enact the myth on a purely graphic level. Having interpreted the myth itself as containing a symbolic configuration of personages--Adam and Eve--to represent an

event or conflict which is relevant to the experience of every human being, Leonov has reassessed the fundamental components of the conflict and re-allocated the roles used to dramatize its occurrence. The result is a schematization that is akin to the polyphony of Dostoevsky's novels as analyzed by Bakhtin.¹¹ The four major characters (excluding Firsov) of Leonov's novel--Mitka, Nikolka, Masha, Tanya--therefore represent the polarities of materialism and spiritualism in their masculine and feminine aspects.¹²

Nikolka's spontaneous cry--"Fall!"--is not merely the sudden whim of a drunken entrepreneur; rather, it is an expression of the negative impulse which may be experienced by any human individual in response to his intuitive perception of a "higher" realm of spiritual values and his recognition of the unwavering faith required for the upholding of such values. Dmitry Vekshin is faced by precisely the same conflict, with the crucial difference that the direction of all his strivings, in direct opposition to Nikolka's, must ultimately be towards the realization, or attainment, of this spiritual realm. Fighting the consequence of his own rebellion and fall--thus his contest of wills with Masha--Mitka's goal is the reattainment of his original unsullied state. Mitka's perpetual battle with Zavarikhin must therefore be recognized as his struggle against the baser elements within himself, and Nikolka's response as an attempt to fell the brave and

shining spirit (represented by Tanya) which is beyond his reach in his own spiritual counterpart, Mitka.

The culmination of this struggle is foreshadowed by Firsov's bizarre vision:

In his fancy he imagined a square in which a thief, Mitka Vekshin, was to be drawn and quartered, as in the old days. The crowd that surrounded the place of execution looked on in grave silence while the earthly body of Mitka was dismembered. Firsov was present in the crowd, and another more significant spectator, as well, who attracted all his attention. Nikolka Zavarikhin had appeared soundlessly; he had come silently out of the darkness of the countryside, and attached himself to reality. It was not until he was quite close that Firsov remarked his broad smile. 13

The importance of this remarkable passage cannot be underestimated. For in the observance of the above-described "ancient custom"¹⁴ is symbolized no less significant an event than the crucifixion of Christ, with the rite of drawing and quartering substituted for the equivalent image of the four corners of the cross. It is all as foretold by the myth: Man's "Original Sin," or "Fall," is recorded in the story of Adam; his repentance and spiritual regeneration are promised by the prophesy of Christ, the second Adam; the Passion of Christ consists of Christ's death on the cross and the triumph over death signified by his subsequent resurrection.

To claim that Dmitry Vekshin, Leonov's universal Adam, actually becomes Christ, would be an extreme and

exaggerated over-simplification of the author's intent in employing imagery of such deeply-rooted emotional value. Even the designation of "Christ figure" must be applied with utmost caution and in full recognition of the partial, or temporary, applicability of the term. The experience of Vekshin might be said to contain, rather, the "postulate of Christ,"¹⁵ i.e. the potentiality of a renewal of faith which would cause a transfiguration equivalent to that of Adam into the "Second Adam" or Christ. Just why this is so will become apparent in the following chapter. In the meantime, the existing network of resurrection symbolism must be carefully elucidated.

The complex symbolism of resurrection is centred by Leonov in the vicissitudes of Tanya's circus career. Tanya's routine performance of the treacherous "shtrabat," described as her "daily contest with death,"¹⁶ is far more than a daring trapeze act. For, as Firsov writes, "life is a continuous 'shtrabat.'"¹⁷ In other words, life itself is a constant struggle with death, a death which, it must be emphasized, cannot be defined in purely physical terms. It is significant that the strange "illness" which undermines Tanya's self-confidence and eventually causes her death is identified by the performer herself as identical to that suffered by Mitka. "Here I am, knocking about the entire city like a pendulum, 'I'm running away from myself,'" she remarks. "But it's strange that precisely the same

[illness] has befallen my brother. He runs and runs, and is overtaken by himself."¹⁸ Mitka, who is also aware of this fact, has already suggested to Tanya that she accompany him on his return journey to the Kudema "to be cured by childhood,"¹⁹ but such a cure has not been prescribed by Tanya's destiny.

Tanya's approaching death has been given an extensive build-up in the revised novel, removing any element of surprise which might have been present in the original, but also assigning to the event far greater significance. In face of such ominous portents, Herr Mangold's proposed foreign tour appears from the start to be somewhat preposterous. The improbability of the realization of his proposal, however, should not be permitted to detract from the recognition of the profound intent of Mangold's scheme. Billed as her "Swansong,"²⁰ this triumphant tour is to be Hella Velton's farewell to the circus, the glorious climax of her long and brilliant career. By all appearances, the glorious finale of Tanya's career is cruelly arrested by her premature death. The occurrence of this event, however, must not be taken at face value if its true significance within the context of the novel is to be fully understood.

It is a major contention of this chapter that Tanya's is a symbolic death which does not in any way signify her defeat. Rather, her death is her triumph, her victory over the petty, temporal conflicts of life and

her entry into the timeless realm of the eternal. Furthermore, this is what was intended all along by the designation of "foreign" tour, for it is in this immortal, alien realm that Tanya has at last succeeded in transcending the transient illusions of life on earth.

During the sequence of events which follow the catastrophe, the nature of the relationship between Tanya and her brother begins to make itself apparent. Standing beside her grave after the funeral, their animosity momentarily stilled by their shared respect for the "fallen star," Mitka and Zavarikhin engage in a strange discussion of the possibility of resurrecting the dead performer. Zavarikhin tells the story of a saint who planted an aspen post and then prayed until it blossomed, claiming that with sufficient faith, Tanya could be brought to life again. Vekshin disagrees, arguing that will is what is needed.²¹ The precise point of this differentiation is not clear, but the implication would seem to be that for Vekshin the problem is perhaps not so much one of lack of faith as of the strength of will required to direct that faith. In any case, he is well aware that his sister's death, and the consequences for himself which are signified by this death, are not in any way final or permanent. This is indicated by the memorial dinner which, in the revised novel, follows almost immediately after the funeral. Leonov has rearranged the chronology of the original version in an attempt to clarify for his

readers the crucial relationship between these events. The "memorial pancakes" (pominal'nye bliny)²² served on this occasion should be immediately recognizable to anyone familiar with Orthodox customs as a traditional Easter dish, served in honour of the resurrection of Christ. The memorial feast, therefore, must also signify some kind of resurrection, and since Tanya does not reappear before the completion of the novel this "resurrection" must be understood as being symbolic of the spiritual regeneration of Vekshin himself.

The depiction of Vekshin's "rebirth" through the experiences undergone by his "sister" represents the ultimate expression of Leonov's polyphonic schematization of his character's and of Man's eternal conflict. The symbolism of Christ, however, is not limited to the sequence of events enacted by Tanya. Of equal importance in this respect are Mitka's letter to his father and visit home, his relationship with his war-time orderly, Sanka Babkin, and the peculiar thieves' court which takes place close to the novel's end.

Very great emphasis is placed in both the original and the revised versions on Mitka's letter to his father and eventual return home. His first anxious misgivings as he searches for his father at his brother Leonty's wedding are an indication of the crucial role played by these events in the depiction of Mitka's recovery:

With mounting anxiety he looked everywhere for Egor Vekshin, for whose sake he was here, and to ask was terrifying--not, however, because he loved his father, but because without this logical repentant link he did not for the time being see the road to his recovery. 23

In Ivanov's analysis, the return home of the "Prodigal Son" is equivalent to the return to God, the possibility of which remains ever open to the individual whose "defection from God has not been the result of a final decision by the metaphysical Ego."²⁴

After the bitter experiences and disappointments that such an impulse produces, after all the errors and crimes to which it leads, there is always the possibility of return to the Father's House, still always the Domine memento mei of the repentant evil-doer. 25

Upon hearing the news of his father's death, Mitka's aims are frustrated, his hopes shattered. This section of the first novel closes with the finality of Mitka's feeling that "now...he could never return."²⁶ In the revised presentation of this episode events are altered and rearranged. The reunion of father and son seems to take place despite the death of the father. At the scene of the grave,

everything seemed to retreat, to turn away, so as not to disturb the meeting of the Prodigal Son with his father... 27

And the little girl who sends Mitka off into the wilds with an apple immediately following the wedding now appears at the scene of his final departure. The hard-boiled egg

included in her farewell gift of food recalls and is symbolically parallel to the description in the original novel of Mitka's awakening after spending his second night in the countryside outside Demyatino.

He did not get to sleep till dawn broke, and he woke when the sun stood on the horizon, peeled from its clouds like an egg from its shell. 28

Symbolic of rebirth and of the transcendence of Time,²⁹ both the sun and the egg reinforce the promise of spiritual regeneration for the novel's fallen hero.³⁰

Several aspects of Mitka's relationship with Sanka (the "Bicycle") Babkin are also highly suggestive of the symbolic parallel to the story of Christ. "Master!" is Sanka's reverential form of address for Vekshin even after all his efforts to leave behind the thieves' gang and after the death of his wife, Ksenya. "Don't call me, Master, I won't come. I'll die of grief, but I won't come," Sanka pleads when Vekshin visits him after his release from prison. And he continues:

And even if you are about to die, and they lead you past with a noose around your neck...all the same, don't come knocking at my door, have pity. I will always carry you in my heart, I will kiss your hand and your foot, only don't come...Leave me now in--what do you call it? --in my mire. 31

Sanka understands perfectly the nature of Vekshin's symbolic identity and of his own corresponding role, which

is that of disciple. He even seems to be aware of his Master's imminent crucifixion, vowing to kiss his (wounded?) hands and feet, although substituting a noose for a cross. Far from destroying the crucifixion imagery, however, this substitution foreshadows Tanya's accident and strengthens the analysis presented above of Tanya's role in the depiction of her brother's spiritual death and rebirth.

Despite his recognition and affirmation of his Master's position--he delays fulfilling Mitka's subsequent request for the loan of his life's savings in the hopes that his Master will "see the god within himself"³²--Sanka is destined to play for Mitka the same role that Judas played for Christ. The symbolic betrayal, to which Firsov has previously alluded in Mitka's presence in an attempt to forewarn him, finally takes place in the scene where, after waiting hours for Mitka in the cold outside Masha's house the night of his wife's death, Sanka asks Mitka to kiss him. It is only after Sanka repeats his strange request that Mitka recognizes the note of mockery in his voice. Still, he has already vowed to save his disciple:

And don't you fear for me: when the time comes
I will emerge from the pit and I will pull you
out with me. 33

The actual event of the crucifixion is represented in the thieves' court with which Vekshin's dealings with the Moscow underground end. Firsov's depiction of this event

is vague and confused. In the second version this is ostensibly because of the writer's "over-confident substitution of the inventions of his tired imagination for direct observation."³⁴ In the original novel he was, despite his wishes, unable to be present for this scene and was therefore forced to base his account on secondary sources. Either way, the results of the trial are the same, with only a few minor variations in its presentation. In both versions, although it is Donka who is led away by Anatoly Mashlykin (Tolya) to be shot, it is Tolya who actually gets killed. And it is after the confusion caused by this shooting that Mitka's final confrontation with Sanka takes place and the latter makes his admission of guilt. Immediately before saying his last farewells to Mitka in the original version of the novel, Sanka makes the following highly obscure remark: "I've loved you and I've killed you--and now nothing matters!"³⁵ In the revised presentation of this scene he speaks much more logically and credibly of his inability, despite repeated efforts, to kill his master and tormentor. In actual fact, however, the true explanation of the preceding events includes both of these statements. For, just as the crucifixion was ultimately unsuccessful--Christ rose again after three days--so must be Sanka's attempt to kill Mitka. The most important difference between the original Biblical story and Leonov's version of it is the way in which the author has broken up his depiction of the momentous event of the

crucifixion. Mitka's death has in fact taken place, on a spiritual level, long ago, with his murder of the White officer. Moreover, his resurrection does not take place at the scene of the trial. Significantly, it is the exact point of occurrence of this event which is most difficult to determine.

The complex sequence of events which succeed the trial in the first novel has largely been omitted by the second; the meaning of these events, however, has been retained. In the first version of The Thief, after the trial Mitka, very ill, heads directly for Masha Dolomanova's small apartment. His period of convalescence, however, is spent under the care of the singer Zina Balueva, although his recovery is complete only after a visit from Masha. Then Mitka simply disappears for all the characters in the novel, with only one brief visit to the locksmith Puchov along the way. Except for the visit to Puchov, this has all been deleted from the second novel. Mitka's convalescence, which carries the significance of the three days between Good Friday and Easter, has not, however, been forgotten. By virtue of the privilege of the re-ordering of time and chronology accorded to the writer, this recovery has been depicted in advance. Desperate for a place to stay after his return from his visit to the country, Mitka has already turned to Masha. Having appeared on her doorstep in the midst of a raging blizzard, he has been offered the use of

a cot in Donka's little closet for three nights only, beginning the next night when Donka himself has returned. Contemplating this invitation the next evening as he waits for Zavarikhin at Batashikha's mill (this is also the evening of Mitka's test of his future brother-in-law and of Tanya's death), Mitka wonders whether he actually dare turn up at Masha's as arranged:

Did he dare today to announce himself under Masha's roof as intended, to disregard the risk of immediate expulsion from Paradise. If, in spite of all interdictions, he was not expelled, it would mean that Paradise was already attained, and then it would be all the more necessary for him to be at Masha's, in order to save the woman from the lover who had forgotten his place. 36

Upon leaving the "universally accessible paradise"³⁷ of Batashikha's mill--in other words, Hell--Mitka heads for Masha's with the knowledge that his arrival in Paradise is imminent and that soon all his spiritual sufferings and confusion are to be left behind.³⁸ En route he discovers Sanka following furtively behind him. It is to be only a few hours later that evening, after waiting patiently in the cold while Mitka supposedly searches for a promised package of cigarettes, that Sanka will bestow upon his Master his "kiss of death," thus setting in motion the chain of events which culminate in the symbolic crucifixion. Having promptly forgotten the purpose of his search--Sanka's cigarettes--Mitka becomes absorbed in the contents of Donka's trunk. Amidst all the papers covered with poetry, Mitka

comes across a hard metal object which turns out to be an icon--"copper, of antique moulding, with enamel, an image of Saint Nikolay Mirlikiyskiy, the protector of those who have lost their way, who have gone astray and who have shed blood."³⁹ Mitka is vaguely disturbed by the icon, which he does not discover purely by coincidence. Having himself become lost, gone astray, and shed blood, he is somehow absolved of these errors simply through having touched the sacred image. Masha herself does not overtly take part in the cure, but the treasure with which Mitka has been rewarded while within the shelter of her "sanctuary" is sufficient to reverse his tragic fate. Mitka's return to the ranks of the living is set and now all that remains for him is to follow the prescribed path. "Beyond the mountain pass the sun shines, but terrible is the journey through the pass!"⁴⁰ is the line quoted by Mitka in the original novel and by Firsov in the revision. All that remains for Mitka now is to conclude his treacherous journey--from spiritual death to rebirth--through the pass.

CHAPTER IV

PARADISE REJECTED, OR THE THEORY OF PROGRESS

Absolutely crucial for the understanding of the philosophical dialogue which constitutes the very heart of Leonov's novel are the insights provided by the parable related by the wise old Master of Blagusha, the locksmith Puchov. Contained in this parable are all the most important aspects of Leonov's theme--the Biblical myth of Paradise Lost, its derivative notion of metaphysical rebellion, and the concept of human progress. Because of its length, only parts of the parable and the commentary which accompanies it will be cited here.

"By the way, it was you who mentioned to me recently, Fyodor Fyodorych,...that the enemies of life will imprison us if we don't keep in step with progress. I keep expecting your characters to revolt sometime: enough, they will say, the cage which civilization is building for itself is getting more and more crowded for us. Your truth, science, permits us to glance into the abyss, and may even throw us in...and into what an abyss! Here, I'll tell you a parable. It'll be worthwhile for you to listen, too, Mitka!....
...When that same slip with the apple happened to Adam and Eve, they were chased with a broom out of the garden Paradise....

Then their Temptor approached them, except that he had already changed out of his serpent's

skin into dress clothes, you understand,....

'Don't grieve, citizens, there's another road into the Garden. Get up, please, time is money, I'll take you there myself!'...And he led them. And from that time on he's been leading us. Onward Adam strikes with his wife, and behind them all of us, their innumerable posterity, black with soot....The wind tears our skin off in shreds, but already there is nothing that will satiate our greed. It's turned out to be a long one, that road around, and those promised gates are still nowhere to be seen!...."

"And rightly so!" Vekshin sullenly intervened. "Because of this, once they get there they'll be the masters of all. Man is such a prophetic word, Puchov, that it is higher than all other titles on earth. He cannot be otherwise: he must head onward and upward, always onward and upward..."

"...To the black angel, when he erred in the earliest of days, it also seemed that he was flying onward and upward, too, but he was falling head over heels, Mitya." 1

The concept of progress outlined here is, by all appearances, an extremely negative one. Man is depicted as being engaged in a futile chase which will last through all eternity, convinced that the direction in which he is moving is ever "onward and upward," when in fact he is only plunging deeper and deeper into the depths. Puchov's remark concerning the erroneous conception entertained by the "black angel," made in response to Mitka's reaction to the parable, clearly supports the analysis of the "Fall" in terms of a rebellion against the divine authority of God as presented in Chapter II. What is even more significant here, however, is Vekshin's clearly declared stand in favour of the position of the rebel. How is this position to be reconciled

with the network of Christ symbolism surrounding his person as described in the preceding chapter? Part of the answer to this question is to be derived from the fact that it is still early in the novel and Vekshin has not yet begun his transition from "Adam" to "Christ," the "Second Adam." Other aspects of the question will hopefully be resolved in the pages to follow.

Dmitry Vekshin's argument, it should be noted, commands considerable support in the discussion which ensues for the duration of the novel. Of the contributors to the debate, only Manyukin and Puchov make any kind of statement against "progress." Employing the rather obvious analogy of a train, Russia's "last barin" makes the following comments in his diary:

You will say, perhaps, that the train is still racing through the darkness of the tunnel and has not reached yet the light at the other side of the mountain--but isn't the tunnel rather long, Nikolasha? Has it any exit at all? Look out, in case the darkness crushes you! 2

Manyukin's comments might well be easily dismissed as being merely representative of the bitter attitude of disillusionment which accompanies old age. Puchov's outlook on the world, however, is entirely different, and must consequently be accorded further study.

The stand taken by the master craftsman of Blagusha is unequivocally opposed to that of the rebel who denies

God and then seeks his ideals, or "Paradise," in the form of material progress brought about by technological advancements. Mitka's wise "spiritual father" through all his endeavours in Moscow, Puchov represents the impetus toward the decision to return to "the Father's house," or God. Perhaps, since both he and Mitka are referred to as "Master" in the novel, and since the "polyphonic" approach has been shown to be valid in other sections of the analysis, he is the living personification of the existence of this impulse within Vekshin himself. The locksmith's own life, in any case, is quiet and serene.

In his soul he was tranquil, as men are tranquil who see far. From his youth up, Master Puchov had felt this urge toward composure and tranquility, and had given his heart to the joiner's trade...In secret, though, he believed in the existence of a country where there grow golden trees, and birds trill all day long from silver throats. Perhaps it was only to realize the mighty meaning of Peace that he had sentenced himself to the locksmith's craft and the companionship of violent men. 3

In the small shop in the backstreets of Blagusha where he practices his trade, Puchov's "sun was his stove, which he had made in his own image."⁴

Around him life was seething, men fought and died, religions perished and revived again, but Master Puchov in his cellar hole jealously guarded his right to labor in peace at his woodwork and to laugh at the everlasting turmoil of the world. 5

The position held by Puchov, however, has been won

at a cost; the personal serenity and peace of the wise craftsman have been attained at the price of his remoteness from the turmoil of the world. Puchov has extricated himself completely from the ambitious striving which constitutes life itself, substituting in its place an existence equivalent to that of a holy man sequestered in his quiet monastic cell. In the second parable which Puchov relates to Mitka, the old man speaks of the times in his own youth when the priest with whom he used to share his monastery cell used to awaken his young student with the request that he read aloud the "song of praise to gentle Jesus" (akafist sladchayshemu Isusu).⁶ And at the very end of the novel, in what is perhaps intended to be a direct parallel to this story, the following exchange takes place between Puchov and his protege:

"What is your cure, Old Primus, cauterization or what?"

"It's the same cure that He used..." Puchov sustained a deathly pause. "Go to Communion for a start, Mitya!"

And again they were silent for a long time.

"That's out of character for me, Puchov... And if it tears?"

"It won't, it's sweet. And what makes you so special that you are so proud? A horned beast [rogatyy skot] might in the same way be proud that it is not buried in the damp earth like other lowly humanity, but exclusively in the bellies of the sovereigns of the world in the form of beef! 7

The humilifying cure prescribed by Puchov is the cure of Christ, and the ritual of Communion which he recommends to Vekshin exactly duplicates the complex symbolism of death and resurrection traced in the previous chapter. Puchov's reply to Mitka's protest that this prescription does not suit him echoes his earlier response to Mitka's comment on his first parable. The disdainful rejection of this profoundly meaningful sacrament signifies the same unbending pride which condemned Satan himself to eternal damnation.⁸

Mitka appears to react negatively to Puchov's suggestions, but his final decision--whether to accept or reject the counsel of his friend--remains ambiguous. "I will try to move onward and upward, Puchov,"⁹ is his immediate response after the discussion cited above, but the tone of the comments which follow is subtly altered.

"Your medicine, Old Primus, is old and antiquated, but thanks all the same. You have always regaled me with the best of what you have come up with during your life."

"I felt sorry for you, Mitya."

"It has always seemed to me that every man, even in his features and his skills, is similar to his god. And yours, I'm sure, is a terribly conscientious, hard-working god. Last fall I happened to spend a night in a haystack and to look for a long time into the night sky. Every now and then a star would break loose and fall... a troublesome business! And I'm sure that, like you, your god must crawl around the heavens with a soldering iron, and then bury himself in the clouds and sleep for awhile. You ought to take a rest, too, Old Primus!" 10

Puchov's god, whom Mitka envisions his spiritual counsellor as resembling, is colourfully depicted as crawling around the heavens with a soldering iron, industriously restoring all the fallen stars to their rightful positions. Mitka, who has himself been referred to as a falling star, or meteor,¹¹ concludes his remarks with the observation that Puchov, like his hard-working god, should also stop for a well-deserved rest. The implication is that the metal craftsman's old-fashioned medicine may well have been more effective than a cursory evaluation of the scene might indicate, particularly when there is mention of the as yet "untried action of this medicine" in a succeeding paragraph.¹² How, then, is this apparent ambiguity to be interpreted?

This question may to some extent be explained by the temporary benefits of the act of taking Communion, of the need for constant reaffirmation of faith in God and of the recognition of one's indebtedness to Christ which are symbolized in this ceremony. Perhaps Leonov's "Adam-turned-Christ" has turned in penitence to his "Father's house," only to fall from grace once more.

The notion of a second fall is entirely consistent with the projected life-plan for his character of the novelist within the novel, the writer Firsov. "Go out among the people, search, suffer, resurrect, and fall again,"¹³ are the final words of Firsov's prophecy for Vekshin. At

the end of Leonov's novel this prophecy appears to have been realized, with one major qualification added, however, to the understanding of this predicted outcome. Mitka's second fall must be understood as being intentional, a voluntary rejection of the blissful state ("Paradise") brought about by the experience of spiritual regeneration, or resurrection.

The basis for this interpretation is provided by an early story of Firsov's, about which the writer is earnestly questioned by Sanka's wife, Ksenya. According to Ksenya's paraphrase of the tale, a lost and wandering sailor is taken in by a beautiful fairy who gives him shelter from earthly storms and misery and provides him with everything he could possibly need to make his happiness complete. Despite all this, however, the sailor becomes tired of his idyllic existence, and "one fine day when the fairy was expecting him on her downy cloud (on earth called a 'feather bed') the sailor pulled on his faithful top boots, his sailor's jacket, and his oilskins, put his fairy clothes in the corner, and went away again to wander over the hungry, homeless earth."¹⁴ The sailor's explanation of his actions, as presented in the original version of the novel, is as follows:

Human happiness isn't decent, you can see through it...you can see through to all the shame. 15

Ksenya asks Firsov why he "spits on human happiness," and

then proceeds to answer her own question.

Happiness is always petit bourgeois. Happiness begins at the moment when there's nowhere farther to go, when you have achieved everything, everything! 16

The corresponding version of this statement is made in the revised novel by Sanka:

The sailor, he was mighty conscientious!... If half a year were to be spent in complete happiness, nothing desired and nothing striven for, then all production on earth would come to a standstill, the soul would stiffen and become cold forever. 17

Ksenya, who identifies strongly with Firsov's tale, concludes her own remarks with the question which provides the key to the entire philosophical debate presented by the novel:

I admit that my feelings are ambiguous, Fyodor Fyodorich. In my heart I understand your sailor...Only...is hope really better than happiness? 18

Rephrased, and put in the mouths of different characters, this question is posed time and again throughout the novel. Firsov states the issue in his notebook:

But once every dream depends on its realization, when everything earthly is attained, what will happen to man? And when he gets to know everything through and through, won't he wish that he knew just a little bit less? 19

The old barin, Manyukin, poses the question from the depths of his own personal degradation:

I stood and all the time I wondered, where is the truth: does the striving for joy or the experience of suffering move man forward? 20

Zina Balueva, the nightclub singer who is also Mitka's rejected mistress, makes the following remarks to her brother, Matvey:

I think that the further away happiness is, the more people drink...as if dreams were made closer by wine. And here Firsov says that dreams are more important than happiness: happiness passes, but hope, never. 21

Finally, Firsov explains his conception to Tanya the evening when the paths of their solitary evening wanderings intersect:

Truth has always been dearer to people than happiness...Unfortunately, for the last two thousand years they have not yet explained in detail just what this truth consists of.... And I can't decide myself what it is--heroism, the striving for uniqueness, intolerance of the zoological aspect, or something beyond the bounds of our present knowledge? 22

Of immense significance is the difference between the conceptions of and attitudes toward happiness of Vekshin and Zavarikhin. To the latter, happiness is a mere commodity, something to be acquired through a simple business transaction. "Afterwards we'll buy the most marvellous happiness, as great as the sun, from a gypsy on the black

market, alright?"²³ Nikolka promises his troubled fiancée. Mitka, on the other hand, while also formulating his conception in terms of price, expresses views quite the opposite to those of Nikolka:

You keep wanting to palm off blindly onto me happiness itself, just like a cat in a bag. But don't you be in such a hurry, show me its advantages. Is it worth the price that you are asking? 24

Is happiness--i.e. "Paradise"--worth the price, Mitka asks, and, strangely enough, his personal opinion would appear to be that it is not. Furthermore, the fates of all the other characters in Firsov's novel are in some way dependent upon Mitka's decision. Tanya, Masha, and Sanka all complain bitterly about Vekshin's imperious designation of their individual destinies.

I am offended this time...by the unpardonable contempt with which you designate the fates of us, living people. 25

Thus Tanya protests Mitka's planned "test" of Zavarikhin on the eve of her death. Masha, speaking against Tanya's insistent claim that her brother's unknown crime could not have been serious, makes the following comments:

I would like myself to think that I am mistaken, but I wear constantly on my own body the consequences of Mitka's deed...however, it is better not to delve deeper into the matter, because if you are going to insist on proof or become angry, as you did recently, then I will be forced to reveal myself and at

the same time to ask everyone whether they have not by any chance suffered from this very...let's call it conditionally "iron-ness," of Mitka's. 26

Important here is Masha's indication that each individual present (the gathering is in honour of Zinka's birthday) has had occasion to suffer as a consequence of Mitka's iron-like nature.

Sanka, too, complains about the total domination of his life by his Master.

Evidently, you have decided that everything in me is yours....You have taken everything from me, Master, you have torn out my soul, 27

he remarks bitterly after telling of his unsuccessful attempts to kill Mitka. Vekshin's sufferings, profound as they are, have at least been of his own choosing, while Sanka's have all been externally imposed. "You have grown your own stone, while mine has been cast upon me,"²⁸ he despairs after his wife's death.

Mitka's apparently thoughtless treatment of each of these individual characters is linked to the next major issue in the philosophical debate. Tanya, repeating Firsov's arguments, provides a very precise summary of the conflict.

Someone convinced me the other day, wasn't it Firsov, that it is still not known what exactly is higher and more sacred--people or the abstract idea of human good. Because if one simply loves people, without idea or plan, then nothing will come of it, and one is immediately weakened by

dumb pity and becomes entangled in it, just like in a mire. After all, truth lies in seeing beyond need, even through the blood of one's contemporaries, one's guiding star...isn't that true? 29

The choice between the two alternatives--"people" and the "abstract idea of human good"--is extremely difficult, and ideally should never have to be made. Yet, according to Leonov's novel, a definite decision has to be made. The crux of the matter lies in the notion of the need for some kind of plan, for it is due precisely to the introduction of this concept that the revised novel's theory of progress differs markedly from the unique philosophy of the original.

Tanya's words, quoted above, are part of a distraught plea for help for her brother. Masha's reply to this plea and subsequent disclosure of the nature of the crime committed against her by Mitka reveal the specific choice which Vekshin has made between the two alternative ideals and the disastrous consequences which have been the result of this selection.

And I suppose that he really does love them... not actual people, but humanity, which is rather impersonal because it is so terribly distant, pleasantly silent, even foggy, at the distance of centuries...and in this it is infinitely comfortable for love! After all, these are varying things, perhaps even contradictory! 30

Mitka's guilt before Masha derives from his failure to keep an appointment which he himself had arranged, the result of which was Masha's rape and subsequent elopement

with Agey. Asked the reason for Mitka's failure to appear as promised, Masha's reply contains a distinct note of sarcasm:

"I didn't ask, my dear,...somehow I wasn't interested in what they were discussing there," Masha smiled with her lips only. "It was probably something to do with universal happiness." 31

Masha's fall and subsequent sufferings have endowed her with a wisdom that is unknown to the naive and innocent Tanya. It is with penetrating insight that she ascribes much of the blame for human sufferings to the passivity of abstract ideals. If a little more attention was paid to individual people, she says, rather than to that vague entity known as "humanity," "there would be a little less grief on earth."³² Firsov's description of Vekshin fighting at the front during the civil war which followed the revolution expresses a similar attitude toward such abstractions.

In those years they fought for the great good of mankind, thinking little in the confusion about actual people. This great love, divided equally among all, at times gave off no more warmth than a wax candle. Loving the whole earth with the love of a plough, Vekshin endowed only Sulim with a love that was tender, almost womanly. When, during one hand-to-hand fight, a bullet struck the horse between the eyes, Vekshin carried himself that evening as if they had killed half of himself. 33

Much ado is made by the critics of Mitka's senseless act of revenge for the death of his beloved horse and of the

overwhelming feelings of guilt with which he is burdened after his murder of the White Officer who killed the horse. The issue would be greatly clarified if the dispute over possession of the horse was recognized for its true symbolic value. The name "Sulim" is very probably derived from the verb "sulit'," "to promise." The horse, Sulim, is therefore significative of the promise of the future and of the hope which is the vehicle of Vekshin's fearless ride to meet the future. (It is interesting to note that the horse driven by Vekshin's rival, Zavarikhin, is named "Fortunka," or "Fortune.") His hopes and aspirations thus destroyed, Mitka himself becomes like one dead. His iron will, hitherto undaunted by any obstacle, however great, has finally become undermined. As Sanka perceptively observes, "rust" has set in.³⁴

The occurrence of this disillusionment, this total breakdown of drive and ambition, in a figure who supposedly represents Christ, is highly paradoxical. For Christ, despite his prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane that he be released from his burden, never once faltered on his way to the cross. It must be remembered, however, that Dmitry Vekshin is only a partial Christ-figure, i.e. that he assumes the role only temporarily. And it is here that the above-mentioned concept of a plan becomes relevant.

After the death of Sulim, or Hope, much of Mitka's apparent stagnation and inertia derives from his

indecision with regard to the direction which his future strivings should take. Himself fully aware of the fact, Mitka discusses this problem with Puchov.

And now I can't take a step until I reach a precise decision...Because from here my major plan will flow onward for a thousand years, in which direction are we, Vekshins, to move? What are we to strive for? And through obedience and the corresponding enthusiasm it is possible to pick such a plan that in a hundred centuries you won't have exhausted it...even if one were to take those very Christian Middle Ages. 35

With this formulation of his dilemma, the entire issue with which Mitka is confronted begins to make itself clear. The immense task which lies before him is nothing less than the designation of the goals to be striven for by the whole of mankind. For "we Vekshins" are mankind. Relating his second parable to illustrate the crippling effect of following someone else's will rather than determining for oneself what is right, Puchov refuses to give his friend straightforward advice, but he does provide some fairly broad hints as to the direction which he believes to be necessary. Asks Puchov:

Can you, Vekshin, construct a bridge over the abyss that would sustain burdens passing over it? Or describe your dream in such a way that your grandchildren would not alter it? Can you comprehend the Father and Master of all earthly life? Or die from grief, having one day perpetrated a lie? Don't you fear your illness; not every case leads to harm! 36

The parable which precedes this series of questions also provides the basis for their interpretation. "Read the Song of Praise to Sweetest Jesus!" (akafist sladchayshemu Isusu)³⁷ is Father Agafador's request of his somewhat less than zealous pupil. The akathist is a hymn of praise to the resurrected Christ, and to the meaning which Christ's personal victory over death carries for all men. What Puchov is trying to convey is that for Mitka, and indeed, for all mankind, the way of Christ is the "bridge" that will carry him across the abyss of hell and damnation to salvation. His challenge to Mitka is that he create a dream, or a set of teachings, that will have as powerful and as lasting an effect as the doctrine of Christianity, or else that he reaffirm the original faith by allowing the "Father and Master of all earthly life" to give meaning to his existence. Puchov's final challenge is the most demanding of all. "Could you die of grief, having committed an untruth (sovershiv nepravdu)?" The "bridge" towards salvation must ultimately consist of a spiritual death and subsequent rebirth, and this is most certainly the way of Christ.

The original version of Leonov's novel does not contain the specific statement of paralyzing indecision made by Mitka as stated above. It does, however, depict the dilemma in a peculiar scene which, when understood for its true value, carries some additional overtones which are of utmost significance. The scene in question is that of Mitka's first

visit to the psychiatrist, where he is unable to make a decision as to which of two chairs he should sit in, apparently creating a major issue out of a trifle.

"I can sit down either on this one or on that one," said Mitka reflectively. "When I think back, it seems to me that I've already sat on one of them....Therefore I must sit down on that one again....I can't afford to make a mistake. On which of them am I to sit?" "On whichever you like," the analyst said smiling, and went up a little closer to Mitka. "The one on the left has a nail sticking out, but the one on the right is quite safe, please note that." "No, it isn't a question of that," said Mitka crossly. "It's a question of law...one of two things: either I remain alive or I don't...." 38

The meaning of this otherwise incomprehensible dilemma concerning the choice of chair is suggested by the final position predestined for Christ. After having spent the allotted time amongst men on earth, and having fulfilled the prophecy of death and resurrection, Christ is to assume his rightful place of honour--on the throne to the right-hand side of God. For Mitka to sit on the wrong chair would be tantamount to Christ's failure to resurrect.

Mitka's spiritual regeneration, temporary as it may be, does not appear to alter the fate of Russia or of universal history, but this does not make his sufferings and his strivings any less monumental. For, as his formidable rival in love states near the end of the first novel,

Mitka is everlasting. He is the best in mankind.
He is the disaster that announces great storms.

Men will never love him, but how dark the world would be without him! But no, he'll always be there as the wave is always in the sea even when it's calm." 39

With all his shortcomings and doubts, Mitka Vekshin's spiritual strivings, according to Leonov, still represent the most noble impulses motivating mankind.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Firsov's highly critical review of his own novel, printed in the Epilogue of Leonov's novel, is ostensibly an admission of failure, an apology to his readers for his mistakes. It is also, if one refuses to take the negative aspects of his critique at face value, a very concise and revealing summarization of the central themes and issues discussed by the novel. Thus, even ideas severely condemned by Firsov-the-critic are indicated as being of great importance to Firsov-the-writer, simply by virtue of the fact of their inclusion in the article. According to the reverse logic of this interpretive approach, the analysis of the novel as a presentation of the Biblical myth of Paradise Lost and a philosophical discussion of the Christian era is undoubtedly confirmed.

Anticipating the words of his future critics, Firsov writes:

It never occurred to Fyodor Fyodorych that the disgraceful world war had wrenched out roots and all the branching Biblical tree under the protection of which had been written the masterpieces of yesterday's civilization. The new era was born of fire, above all, in flaming anger, on the ruins of the so-called Christian brotherhood with which...indeed my friends, it is absolutely sinful to deceive for so long and on such a scale an honest people. 1

Scathing as these remarks appear to be, they represent a statement of content far more specific than their author ever dared to include in the original novel. And although Soviet critics are very careful in their treatment of such potentially dangerous issues, it is not likely that their implications have gone entirely unnoticed.

Leonov, however, leaves a very wide margin for his critics, providing them with enough material to make circumvention of dangerous topics not only possible, but even probable for any critic working within the socialist-realist framework. The entire issue is discussed by Leonov himself within the pages of his novel as part of his treatment of the theoretical and technical problems encountered by Firsov. The range of possible interpretations of his own novel is pointed out by Firsov during his highly significant philosophical discussion with Tanya.

But you need only raise the magnifying glass of the thorough investigator to any point, and you will be struck by the harmony of the composite parts, the depth of motivation, the filigree quality of the finishing touches, and finally, the greatest diversity, artfully compressed into the utmost simplicity, where any observer will seek out for himself a subject in keeping with his own measure and taste.... Even for a nocturnal stroller like me, wandering in late under the family roof, there will also be found some comic food to correspond with his jovial frame of mind. 2

Leonov himself may well be laughing at the series of complex and subtle deceptions which he has perpetrated upon his readers, for the existence of the network of "devious

symbolism" ascribed to his works by Hayward (See Introduction) is confirmed within the novel. Once again employing the device of anticipated criticism, Leonov writes:

Most of the critics' stings Firsov suffered because of Mitka, in whose figure was perceived a wicked symbolism (zlostnaya simvolika). 3

The explanation for the use of this symbolism is provided very soon afterwards, in Leonov's explanation of the reasoning behind Firsov's introduction of a "fictitious double" into the narrative of his novel.

In an attempt to defend himself from the attacks of the critics, as well as from the official inquisitiveness of his superiors, Firsov resorted to a constant torturing of the plot, as a result of which the narrative seemed to double, creating a sort of dazzling effect upon reading. This device involved, simultaneously with Firsov's own invasion of the underground life of the capital, the arrival in Blagusha of a second such writer, with his same surname and with the exact same goal of writing a novel about criminal life.... Understandably, this infinitely complicated the depictive tasks of the primary Firsov; in return, however, it permitted reproduction with mirror-like exactness the most complicated and forbidden circumstances, thus shifting the responsibility for his dangerous theme and for his own literary ineptness onto the unsteady band of accomplices which he headed. 4

This apparent flaunting of the socialist-realist status quo is not an isolated occurrence within the novel.

Consequently, criticism justifiably charged him with far-fetchedness in the idea of Vekshin and of his guilt, but the whole trouble was contained more in the illegality of the philosophical

posing of the question than in the imperfect thinking of the author with regard to his hero. 5

One wonders how Leonov has managed to get away with making such overtly subversive statements. But perhaps the answer to this question is also included within the novel. In reply to a claim by Vekshin that he is lying, Firsov states:

"Obviously he is lying," Firsov maintained staunchly, "but after all, the most important thing in art is not about what, but who [*italics Leonov's*] is lying. True art lies in the selection of material, that is, in the substitution of the general by the particular, or the other way around! What I want to say is that, to a certain extent, art is a deception perpetrated with the unwritten consent of the parties concerned... And by the way, that is why--don't you think, Dmitry Egorych--the personality of the artist is always more important than his theme?" 6

The implications of this statement are rather astounding. Depending, of course, on whom the author has in mind when he speaks of the "unwritten consent of the parties concerned," this comment could be interpreted as an innocent reference to the generally recognized and accepted device of literary artifice. However, the statement that the personality of the artist is more important than his theme encourages additional speculation. Could it be that Leonov's status as an esteemed Soviet writer and publicist who has always spoken out (officially, at least) in favour of the Revolution and its resulting political developments has granted him some measure of protection from the penetrating eyes of censors and critics? Or that the obscurity of his

presentation has made his subject matter seem less dangerous? The existence of a "conspiracy" in support of such subversive elements would appear to be highly unlikely, not to mention dangerous, but the possibility should not be ruled out entirely.

Leonov's views regarding the high calling of the artist have already been documented in the Introduction to the present study.⁷ In the novel itself, this "calling" assumes the proportions of an almost sacred mission. "I have already said, Fyodor Fyodorych, that in your own temple you are to some extent an acknowledged priest, while I am only an ordinary inhabitant,"⁸ is Mitka's reply to Firsov's above-cited question. Masha Dolomanova, in her role as simultaneously cruel and enchanting Muse, makes the following comments:

Upon verification, your most self-evident heroes turn out not to be heroes at all, but are rather eccentrics of some sort, maniacs, and even literal horned devils exist in your early stories. Oh, how wrong it is to inculcate upon the masses belief in an unclean power!...What are you, an authentic mystic, or of spiritual calling?⁹

Firsov's answer to this question is most revealing:

Marya Fyodorovna,¹⁰ my wise and clever one... Masha, it's so good that from time to time, unknown to the world, I can come to you and be silent about that which is most sacred on earth! 11

In subsequent passages, such as the tirade which

follows the above-quoted exchange between Firsov and Masha, the writer's conception of his literary calling takes on messianic proportions:

I have nothing with which to deceive you, because in truth my wealth is immeasurable, and on earth I alone know to what extent my kingdom is of this world.... 12

The corresponding passage from the original, which is curiously absent from Hubert Butler's English translation, is as follows:

Yes, my wealth is not of this world....That beggar from Nazareth knew how to express himself. All is within me and more than all. 13

At the conclusion of the Interview with Leonid Leonov published in Soviet Literature, the author, speaking against the "very damaging and dangerous assumption [held by Americans] that nothing that is written 'legally' in our country can be any good," makes another significant reference to Christ:

Well, in the days of Jesus Christ there was a saying in Judea. 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' And look what a silly mistake they made! 14

Whether or not Leonov may be declared a direct heir to the tradition of Russian messianism of Dostoevsky and Gogol remains a point for further discussion; however, his leanings in this direction are unmistakable. That Leonov conceives of his vocation in Soviet Russia to be

in some way equivalent to the task of Jesus of Nazareth is not totally inconceivable. For the author's concern with the growth and sustenance of the spiritual elements of human nature finds expression in his critical articles¹⁵ as well as in his artistic works.¹⁶ The term "spiritual" has become acceptable in the vocabulary of Marxist-Leninist literary criticism, and such eminent Soviet analysts of Leonov's works as Kovalev, Starikova, Fink, and Boguslavskaya all refer to Leonov's depiction of the "spiritual development" of Russia in their articles. That this is so may even be a direct result of the efforts of Leonov and of others who share a similar cause.

Generally speaking, however, Leonov's ideas have a long way to go before they can attain official status in Soviet society, and Firsov's self-critical review contains ominous allusions to the dangers of Leonov's present position. Addressing himself to Firsov, the imaginary critic rages: "You are only an ignoramus and an impostor, an apostate who deserves to be burned."¹⁷ The prospect is not at all encouraging.

Yet "every truth begins with a heresy,"¹⁸ as Firsov is criticized for having stated, and Leonov obviously believes in the power of an initial isolated inspiration to take hold and eventually to acquire such proportions as to alter the course of history. Returning one last time to Mitka's "fortune," Firsov presents the following discussion

of mankind's plans and human progress:

"And you suppose that I [Mitka] am going to drink your devilish potion?"

"You'll swallow it, my friend. I wouldn't have written about you if it weren't so... First you'll just try it, and then you won't be able to tear your lips away from it. It's more intoxicating than opium. After a couple of sips you'll begin to see into the distance of progress, by some irrational indirect vision, a strange upheaval of major plans. And suddenly on the flat canvas of reality, above the real, there will appear in the most threatening combinations, bordering on general madness, flowing signs and numbers, flickering landscapes and events, as luck would have it, out of reach of the majority and justifiably rejected by other philosophers because *it* [*italics* Leonov's] always hindered...how can I put it more exactly?"

"Who hindered whom?" Vekshin sullenly took advantage of his hesitation.

"Well...it hindered men by means of a reasonable simplification, that is to say, through a levelling of the structural distinctions between the heel and the capricious fabric of the brain, in obtaining the highest good for mankind--deliverance from the most dangerous of all dividing evils, from intellectual inequality. And if my mixture doesn't set you on fire from within, then sometime we will return again to the present topic...not I, but that ultimate Firsov, who after a hundred years will begin to obtain results. He, then, will seal in forever me and you, Dmitry Vekshin, on writing paper for history." 19

The image of the potion which Firsov has prepared for his hero to drink is reminiscent of the sufferings preordained for Christ by God. "Let this cup pass from me,"²⁰ are the words of Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. The seemingly insignificant crucifixion of Christ which was the "drinking" of the "cup" provided the

basis for a new religion which eventually assumed world-wide proportions and affected significantly not only the lives of individual men but gave historical direction to entire nations as well.

The "major plans" with which Mitka's spiritual strivings are destined to interfere are those for a socialist-materialist utopia, the aspiration toward which is represented in the novel by such characters as Zinka's brother Matvey, Chikelyov, and to a lesser extent, because of his rare appearances, Atashez.

By far the most vociferous of these three characters is the financial inspector and chairman of the House Committee, Pyotr Gorbidonych Chikelyov. Representative of the bourgeois petty bureaucracy (meshchanstvo) at its worst, this spiteful and crafty little man is the mouthpiece within the novel of the philosophy of utopian socialism in its most simplistic and terrible form. Chikelyov, too, claims to uphold the ideal of "striving for the highest good,"²¹ but his personal vision of the future "ideal" society is horrifying.

If they appointed me, let's say, director of the terrestrial globe, I would in general not permit anyone to have private secrets. I would have it so that anyone could go up to anyone else at any hour of the day or night and read his moods by means of a machine with magnetic antennae, that's how! With today's achievements of technological thought--the death ray and sneezing gas!--it is possible in one instant to completely terminate life....No sir, man must never be left alone with

his thinking without supervision through a magnifying glass! Thought--there is the major source of suffering and of every inequality, personal and social. Thus, in all simplicity, I suppose that he who destroys it, the accursed thing, mankind will raise above the heavens in its grateful memory! 22

In Chikelyov's view, human suffering is caused by the differences between individual human beings as created by their own unique capacities for thought. Ironically, his conception of the ideal society is one in which all thought would be brought down to his own narrow and uninspired level rather than raised to a level higher than his own.²³ "For example," states Chikelyov, "every genius is an extremely anti-social phenomenon, directed toward the moral depreciation of the working majority..."²⁴

I, characteristically, do not wish evil on anyone, not in the least. I am only striving to simplify universal life by means of the application of a burning truth! After all, that's what happiness is..." 25

It is not surprising, therefore, that Chikelyov's relationship with Firsov, whose interests lie in the most complex aspects of human existence, is somewhat less than cordial. In the original version of the novel Chikelyov is recorded as having made the following remark about writers:

If I were in authority I should order all authors to describe life from its cheerful side, for everyone ought to laugh.- 26

The revised edition of the novel contains a much more ominous allusion to the silent threat to Firsov and to writers in general posed by those members of Soviet officialdom who are of the same mentality as Chikelyov. The following remarks ostensibly summarize Zinka's attempts to calm Chikelyov down following his humiliating run-in with Firsov after his public reading of Manyukin's diary.

Chikelyov was well enough aware that the Russian writer was a hopelessly rotten race which had had the luck to escape the noose and the executioner's block, its own pistol and that of its rivals, but yet which strove for certain death from heavy drinking, with a case of consumption as well. And if Pyotr Gorbidonych hadn't as yet drafted a bill that would opportunely distribute these people among the mental hospitals, it was purely out of the consideration that, after a very short interval, there would then remain in Russia only readers. 27

From this powerful statement, the threat of which remains alarmingly real in the Soviet Union today, may be deduced Leonov's continued awareness of the danger of his own position. His fear for himself, however, is greatly surpassed by his fear of the damage which may be done by narrow-minded and short-sighted planners (of whom Chikelyov is a parody²⁸), by his contempt for the efforts of mediocrity to surpass genius and of atheism to deny faith.

In The Thief, Leonov (who has defined the function of art as a "reconnaissance service into the future"²⁹) proclaims the necessity for a "plan" or a "dream" for the future, but condemns the formulation of this plan in purely

material terms. Like his master and predecessor, Dostoevsky, Leonov views with deep distrust the propounders of the goals of atheistic humanism and the "ideal" Communist state. The rich and complex religious symbolism woven into the larger philosophical debate provides the basis for Leonov's presentation of his arguments in favour of spiritual enlightenment and the need for a clearly stated moral code. Such a code had been upheld for centuries in Russia by Orthodox Christianity, but with the advent of Bolshevism it was roughly cast aside. The result of this denial of the validity of the guiding religious principles of the past was the state of spiritual trauma and moral lack of direction that have been depicted in Dmitry Vekshin. Leonov does not support the return of Soviet society specifically to Christianity, however, but rather states the need for every individual (Russian and non-Russian) to come to his own understanding of the great moral truths (such as the Biblical commandment "Thou shalt not kill"). His object is not to reinstate Christianity as official doctrine, but to reaffirm its principles through present-day experience on a level that is personally meaningful to every individual. As Firsov explains to Mitka:

I am afraid of being incomprehensible to you, Dmitry Egorych, but several recent artistic failures have led me to the conclusion that it is more convenient to observe the heroes of our day, not through the magnifying glass of generally-known moral truths, of which the

majority are buried under layers of catastrophic social upheaval anyway!...not even in the light of lyrical tragedy, because even the most heroic personality with all his ecstasies of love will be drawn at least strangely against the fiery sky of our reality!...but only through the working process, in which are united his mind, his capacity for life, and his will! 30

This statement (which explains Leonov's apparent change of subject material in subsequent works) is further supported by Firsov's designation of the type of art required, previously cited in the Introduction. "I stand for art which makes man better in general,"³¹ Firsov was quoted as saying, the implication being that mere material improvements in his standard of living are insufficient to provide the spiritual sustenance required by every man. But, Firsov warns at the same time, external controls (even in the form of novels such as his own) are insufferable. The human soul must "contemplate by itself everything of which its existence is composed."³²

The freedom of the individual, and his freedom to choose his own destiny, cannot be denied.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

¹The novel was first published in serial form in the journal Krasnaya nov', 1927, No. 1-7. It was first published in book form in 1928.

²Marc Slonim, Soviet Russian Literature: Writers and Problems (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 207.

³E. J. Simmons, Russian Fiction and Soviet Ideology: Introduction to Fedin, Leonov, and Sholokhov (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 102.

⁴Vera Alexandrova expresses the opinion that "to the present-day Leonov, the entire 1927 version is a gross political error, and he spares neither effort nor his heroes in order to 'correct' the novel." See Vera Alexandrova, A History of Soviet Literature, trans. Mirra Ginsburg (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963), p. 184. See also Vera Alexandrova, Literatura i zhizn': Ocherki sovetskogo obshchestvennogo razvitiya (Munich: I. Baschirzew Buchdruckerei, 1969), p. 23.

Helen Muchnic devotes several pages to the argument that conformity came naturally to Leonov, who never had any great artistic vision or originality to give up in the first place. See Helen Muchnic, From Gorky to Pasternak: Six Writers in Soviet Russia (New York: Random House, 1961), pp. 296-303.

⁵David Burg, "Leonid Leonov's Search," Studies on the Soviet Union, I (1962), No. 3, p. 135.

⁶Ibid., p. 136.

⁷Starikova's comments are cited on page 4 (footnote 11) of this chapter. See also V. A. Kovalev, "Tvorcheskii put' Leonida Leonova," in Leonid Leonov, Sobranie sochineniy v shesti tomakh, Vol. I (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoy literatury, 1953), pp. 8-10, for a discussion of the "mistakes" of the original novel.

⁸E. V. Starikova, "O romane L. Leonova Vor," in her Poeziya prozy. Stat'i (Moscow: Sovetskiy pisatel', 1962), p. 30.

⁹V. A. Kovalev, "Vtoroe rozhdenie romana Vor," in his Tvorchestvo Leonida Leonova. K kharakteristike tvorcheskoy individual'nosti pisatelya (Moscow-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1962), pp. 242-43.

¹⁰I. A. Demchenko, "Tema kul'tury v kontsepsii Vora," in Tvorchestvo Leonida Leonova. Issledovaniya i soobshcheniya. Vstrechi s Leonovym. Bibliografiya, ed. V. A. Kovalev (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," Leningradskoe otделение, 1969), pp. 201-2. Demchenko quotes from Leninskoe znamy, Moscow, 18 September 1961.

¹¹Z. S. Kedrina, "Na stolbovoy doroge progressa," in Tvorchestvo Leonida Leonova, 1969, p. 65. Kedrina's quotation is from Starikova's introductory article to the first publication of the revision in 1959 (Leonid Leonov, Vor, Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1959, p. 13).

¹²Ibid., p. 65.

¹³Ibid., pp. 65-66. Leonov's words are cited from a personal interview of the critic with the author.

¹⁴See, for example, the "Interview with Leonid Leonov," in its complete form in Soviet Literature, XII (December, 1961), pp. 134-35, and Karl Shnura, "Dva varianty romana Vor L. M. Leonova," (M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1965), p. 28. Shnura received much the same statement from the author in a personal letter written by the author on 21 September 1964. Leonov writes: "Despite the definite success of the novel in its own time, certain under-developed areas of the plot and the corresponding inexactness of the personalities of my characters troubled me for the next thirty years."

¹⁵Kovalev, Tvorchestvo Leonida Leonova, 1962, p. 236. The article quoted was printed in Literaturnaya gazeta, 24 September 1930.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 235.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 236. This and the following quotation are taken from the same article in Literaturnaya gazeta, 24 September 1930.

¹⁸The special connotation inherent for Leonov in the term "culture" will be discussed in Chapter II.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 236-37.

²⁰See V. A. Kovalev, "L. M. Leonov," in Istoriya russkoy sovetskoy literatury, Vol. IV (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1971), p. 250.

²¹K. Zelinsky, "Leonov," in Soviet Literature. Problems and People, trans. Olga Shartse (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), p. 185.

²²Max Hayward, "Soviet Literature, 1917-1962," Introduction to Dissonant Voices in Soviet Literature, ed. Patricia Blake and Max Hayward (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962), pp. xxiv-xxv.

²³Leonid Leonov and Valeria Isakovich, "Interview with Leonid Leonov," Partisan Review, XXIX (Spring, 1962), pp. 300-301.

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 301-2.

²⁵Kedrina, "Na stolbovoy doroge progressa," in Tvorchestvo Leonida Leonova, 1969, p. 59. Leonov's statement is quoted from an article in Pravda, 26 February 1967.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 43. Also quoted from Pravda, 26 February 1967.

²⁷Leonid Leonov, Sobranie sochineniy v desyati tomakh, Vol. III: Vor (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Khudozhestvennaya literatura," 1970), pp. 486-87. This edition will henceforth be referred to as Vor II, in order to distinguish it from the Russian original of the first version. This study bases its comparison on the 1970 edition as the final form of the revised novel, as some additional changes were made in the revision in 1965.

²⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 135-36.

²⁹Leonid Leonov, The Thief, trans. Hubert Butler (New York: Dial Press, 1931; reprint ed., with an Introduction by Rufus W. Mathewson, Jr., New York: Vintage Books, 1961), p. 61. This translation of the Russian original will subsequently be referred to as The Thief in footnotes for quotations cited directly from the English.

³⁰ Vyacheslav Ivanov, Freedom and the Tragic Life: A Study in Dostoevsky, ed. S. Konovalev, trans. Norman Cameron with a Foreword by Sir Maurice Bowra (New York: The Noonday Press, 1966), p. 15.

³¹ The Thief, p. 110.

³² Leonov has more than a passing technical interest in his character's profession, for in 1921, after he was released from the Red Army to continue his studies in Moscow, the young writer lived for a time with his uncle, who was a metal craftsman like Puchov, and himself took up the craft in order to help pay for his room and board. See "Leonov, Leonid Maksimovich," in Sovetskie pisateli. Avtobiografii, Vol. I (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoy literatury, 1959), p. 665.

³³ Leonov's own definition of "classical literature" is cited in Zoya Boguslavskaya, Leonid Leonov (Moscow: Sovetskiy pisatel', 1960), pp. 104-5. The quote is taken from Na literaturnom postu, 1927, No. 5-6, p. 54. "Classical literature is that which has given the best, that which is unforgettable about man, his beliefs, his searchings, his errors, his joys and his disenchantments. Classical literature is, first of all, literature about every man, without attachment to transient conditions: the conditions of time, place, nationality, and so on. All these conditions are only the material for the creation of the eternal image of man on earth."

³⁴ D. H. Ushakov, ed., Tolkovyy slovar' russkogo yazyka (4 vols.; Moscow: Gosudarstvennyy institut "Sovetskaya entsiklopediya," 1935), p. 242.

CHAPTER II

¹ Zoya Boguslavskaya, Leonid Leonov, p. 105. "In answer to the question as to which of the classic writers he liked best, Leonov answered: 'I like F. M. Dostoevsky, with all the ensuing consequences.' And to the question as to the artistic method of which of the classic writers was most suited to the depiction of our contemporaneity, he replied: 'F. M. Dostoevsky, if one has sufficient strength and understanding.'" The quotation is taken from an interview with the author published in Na literaturnom postu, 1927, No. 5-6, p. 57.

²Ivanov, Freedom and the Tragic Life, p. 50.

³See Rufus Mathewson's discussion of the symbol, The Thief, pp. vii-viii.

⁴The Thief, p. 60.

⁵Ivanov, Freedom, p. 45.

⁶V. V. Zenkovsky, A History of Russian Philosophy, Vol. I, trans. George L. Kline (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), p. 27. Zenkovsky provides the following definition of "mystical realism": "All material things serve as means for expressing a higher truth, a higher beauty. In philosophic terms, this is a mystical realism, which recognizes empirical reality, but sees behind it another reality; both spheres of being are real, but they are of hierarchically different value; empirical being is sustained only through 'participation' in a mystical reality. The theocratic idea of Christianity amounts to asserting the need to illuminate all that is visible, all that is empirical, by relating it to a mystical sphere; the whole of history, the whole life of the individual, must be sanctified through the transforming activity of divine power in the empirical sphere."

⁷Ivanov, Freedom, p. 49.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁹Vor II, p. 17. Unless otherwise indicated (and with the exception of Ivanov's Latin), the italics are mine.

¹⁰Rufus Mathewson, Introduction to The Thief, p. viii.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹²Vor II, p. 76.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

¹⁵Ivanov, Freedom, p. 40.

¹⁶Ellis Sandoz, Political Apocalypse: A Study of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), p. vii. The same quotation occurs in Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, trans. with an Introduction by David Magarshack (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1958), p. 124. Sandoz' translation was preferred.

¹⁷Vor II, p. 516.

¹⁸Philip Babcock Gove, ed., Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Company, Publishers, 1961), pp. 197, 1343.

It should be noted that Mitka refers to himself as a "fallen archangel" in the original version of the novel. See The Thief, p. 393.

¹⁹Vor II, pp. 522-23.

²⁰Ibid., p. 27.

²¹Ibid., pp. 392-93.

²²Ibid., p. 53.

²³See Chapter I, p. 7, footnotes 16-19.

²⁴Vor II, p. 52.

²⁵Nikolai Gogol, Dead Souls, trans. Bernard Guilbert Guerney with an Introduction by Rene Wellek (New York: Rinehart & Co., Inc., 1948), p. 304.

²⁶Vor II, p. 28.

²⁷Ibid., p. 444.

²⁸The Thief, p. 118.

²⁹Vor II, p. 57. It should be noted that in the original Mitka's superior is not identified as Atashez, who appears later in the novel as a former comrade-in-arms.

³⁰Ibid., p. 57. Italics Leonov's.

³¹See Kovalev, Tvorchestvo Leonida Leonova, 1962, pp. 236-37. The following quotation is taken by Kovalev from Literaturnaya gazeta, 24 September 1930: "But I expressed vaguely the fundamental striving of the hero (his envy of those who control culture--envy completely distinct from that of the limited Chikelyov, who would like to lower the culture of humanity to his level), the very turning of Mitka towards culture."

³²Vor II, p. 137.

³³Zenkovsky, A History of Russian Philosophy, Vol. I, p. 175.

³⁴See Chapter I, pp. 8-9, for Hayward's comments about Leonov and the Orthodox tradition, and pp. 9-10 for Leonov's reply to these comments.

³⁵See Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, pp. 92, 309, 371, 691, to list only a few of the author's references to this issue.

³⁶Vor II, p. 367. Firsov's reply echoes Dostoevsky's belief that "every one of us is responsible for everyone else in every way." Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, p. 339.

³⁷The Thief, pp. 264-65. In the original novel the psychiatrist also expresses this view: "I am a man, you're a man too. In so far as I kill you, I kill myself." The Thief, p. 443.

³⁸Ibid., p. 397.

³⁹Demchenko, "Tema kul'tury v kontseptsii Vora," in Tvorchestvo Leonida Leonova, 1969, pp. 201-2. The same anecdote is related in Kovalev, Tvorchestvo Leonida Leonova, 1962, pp. 248-49.

⁴⁰Vor II, p. 76.

⁴¹Ivanov, Freedom, pp. 13-14.

⁴²Ibid., p. 32. This is the significance of Manyukin's designation of Mitka as "Prince of Denmark."

⁴³Ibid., pp. 18-19. The "death of the 'old man' within the personality" may contain the key to the obscure connection of Mitka to Manyukin as the latter's illegitimate son, for Mitka's rebirth coincides with the death of the old barin and his subsequent reappearance (or resurrection) for the occasion of Tanya's memorial dinner.

⁴⁴Vor II, p. 108.

⁴⁵The Thief, p. 118.

⁴⁶Vor II, p. 151.

⁴⁷The Thief, p. 90.

⁴⁸Vor II, p. 110.

⁴⁹The Thief, p. 90.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 77.

⁵¹Vor II, p. 499.

⁵²Ibid., p. 107.

CHAPTER III

¹Vor II, p. 626.

²Ibid., p. 198.

³Ibid., p. 312.

⁴Ibid., p. 41. The equivalent passage in the original novel reads as follows:

Two women rose before his mind: she who had set her seal upon the previous morning struggled in his fancy with the woman of the evening. She of the morning had endeared herself because she cried, she of the evening because she smiled, and alternately they held sway over him. To the end of his life he was to love them both without betraying either of

them. They fused together into one whole, like two halves of a sliced apple; they held him fast with strong, unbreakable bonds.

(The Thief, p. 29.)

The contrast between the two quotations is significant. Having greatly strengthened his portrayal of the animosity between Mitka and his double, Nikolka--who is representative of material man--Leonov has deemed it not only inappropriate but also impossible for the latter to remain true to either of these two personifications of the human soul.

⁵It is possible that Leonov has derived the name "Demyatino" from the word "myatezh," which means "mutiny," or "revolt." This interpretation is entirely in keeping with the analysis of the "Fall" as a revolt against the divine authority of God.

⁶The Thief, p. 60. In the revision Mitka's playmate (podruga)--translated by Butler as "dark Masha"--becomes "zlaya Masha Dolomanova." Vor II, p. 85.

⁷Vor II, p. 207.

⁸Ibid., p. 210.

⁹The Thief, p. 167. Vor II, p. 210.

¹⁰Vor II, p. 240. The Thief, p. 197.

¹¹M. Bakhtin, Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo (Moscow: Sovetskiy pisatel', 1963), pp. 5-61. E. Starikova's article "O romane L. Leonova Vor" in her Poeziya prozy (Moscow: Sovetskiy pisatel', 1962), also notes the relevance of Bakhtin's theory to Leonov's novel. See pp. 37-38.

¹²Vyacheslav Ivanov would analyze these masculine and feminine aspects as representative of spirit and soul respectively. See Ivanov, Freedom, p. 57.

¹³The Thief, p. 190. Vor II, p. 232.

¹⁴Vor II, p. 232 ("ryad deystviy po obychayu starodavnego vremeni").

¹⁵Ivanov, Freedom, p. 29.

¹⁶Vor II, p. 68.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 275.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 492.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 394.

²⁰Ibid., p. 512.

²¹Ibid., p. 596.

²²Ibid., p. 598.

²³Ibid., p. 436.

²⁴Ivanov, Freedom, p. 18.

²⁵Ibid., p. 19.

²⁶The Thief, p. 331.

²⁷Vor II, p. 450.

²⁸The Thief, p. 328.

²⁹For a discussion of the symbolic meanings of the sun and the egg, albeit in terms of Indian religious philosophy, see Mircea Eliade, Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1969), pp. 77-79.

³⁰Leonov has built this promise into the structure of the novel as well, ending each of its sections with the word "sun."

³¹Vor II, p. 356.

³²Ibid., p. 358.

³³Ibid., p. 405.

³⁴Ibid., p. 610.

³⁵The Thief, p. 508.

³⁶Vor II, p. 574.

³⁷Ibid., p. 559.

³⁸Mitka's very stay at the mill, named by Firsov the "garbage heap of souls" (Vor II, p. 573), is reminiscent of Christ's descent into hell immediately preceding his resurrection.

³⁹Vor II, p. 581.

⁴⁰Vor II, p. 521. The Thief, p. 394.

CHAPTER IV

¹Vor II, pp. 160-62.

²The Thief, p. 162.

³The Thief, p. 12. Vor II, p. 23.

⁴The Thief, p. 109. Vor II, p. 140.

⁵The Thief, p. 110.

⁶The Thief, p. 265. Vor II, p. 371.

⁷Vor II, p. 614.

⁸In light of this interpretation the "horned beast" referred to by Puchov acquires dual significance; in addition to its literal meaning it also contains an allusion to the Devil.

⁹Vor II, p. 615.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 615.

- ¹¹Ibid., p. 529.
- ¹²Ibid., p. 615.
- ¹³Ibid., p. 139.
- ¹⁴The Thief, p. 374. Vor II, pp. 527-28.
- ¹⁵The Thief, p. 375.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 375.
- ¹⁷Vor II, p. 528.
- ¹⁸Ibid., p. 528.
- ¹⁹Ibid., p. 516.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 398.
- ²¹Ibid., p. 225.
- ²²Ibid., p. 286.
- ²³Ibid., p. 281.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 519.
- ²⁵Ibid., p. 566.
- ²⁶Ibid., p. 314.
- ²⁷Ibid., p. 611.
- ²⁸Ibid., p. 587.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 497.
- ³⁰Ibid., pp. 497-98.
- ³¹Ibid., pp. 499-500.

³²Ibid., p. 500.

³³Vor II, p. 55. The Thief, pp. 41-42.

³⁴Vor II, p. 359.

³⁵Ibid., p. 370.

³⁶Vor II, p. 372. The Thief, p. 266.

³⁷Vor II, p. 371. The Thief, p. 265.

³⁸The Thief, p. 400.

³⁹Ibid., p. 492.

CHAPTER V

¹Vor II, p. 622.

²Ibid., p. 286.

³Ibid., p. 107.

⁴Ibid., pp. 109-10.

⁵Ibid., p. 374.

⁶Ibid., p. 409.

⁷See Chapter I, pp. 10-11. See also Leonov's article "Talant i trud," in his Literatura i vremya. Izbrannaya publitsistika (2d ed., enlarged; Moscow: Izdatel'stvo TsK VLKSM "Molodaya gvardiya," 1967), pp. 212-30.

⁸Vor II, p. 409.

⁹Ibid., p. 409.

¹⁰It is interesting to note that Masha's patronymic is the same as Firsov's, an indication, perhaps, of her

symbolic representation of the source of artistic inspiration contained within the mind of the writer himself.

¹¹Vor II, p. 298.

¹²Ibid., p. 299.

¹³Vor I, p. 240.

¹⁴Leonov and Isakovich, "Interview with Leonid Leonov," Soviet Literature, XII (December, 1961), p. 135. This part of the Interview is not duplicated by Partisan Review.

¹⁵See, for example, some of Leonov's articles as published in Literatura i vremya: "Zhivaya svyaz' pokoleniy," pp. 246-48; "Beskorystnyy i svedushchiy drug," pp. 252-54; "Slovo o Tolstom," pp. 273-99.

¹⁶In the revised version of the novel under analysis, Leonov refers to a "discussion of the place of ideas in the works of an artist, of some of the dangers of disregarding the phenomena of spiritual life..." Vor II, p. 485.

¹⁷Vor II, p. 621.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 621.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 138-39.

²⁰Matthew 26:30.

²¹Vor II, p. 384.

²²Ibid., p. 341.

²³Kovalev, Tvorchestvo Leonida Leonova, 1962, pp. 236-37.

²⁴Vor II, p. 383.

²⁵Ibid., p. 384.

²⁶The Thief, p. 246.

²⁷Vor II, p. 344.

²⁸Chikelyov's very name is strikingly similar to "chelovek," suggesting that he is a parody of man in general.

²⁹Vor II, p. 519.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 410-11.

³¹Ibid., p. 487. See also Chapter I, footnote 27, p. 11.

³²Ibid., p. 487.

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