their work clothes—struck me as imbued with an unwavering purpose. I stood by watching until presently the river stopped in its course.

It was a long halt. Very likely other streets had opened like locks into Red Square, so that these people had to wait. They waited in a glacial cold, for it had snowed again the night before. And all of a sudden a kind of miracle happened.

The miracle was a return to the human. This unified, solid mass suddenly melted into single human beings. Accordions struck up along the street. Several male choruses with their brass instruments were in the line of march; now they grouped themselves in circles and began to play. Partly to get warm, partly for the fun of it, partly perhaps to celebrate the holiday, people started to dance. Here on the threshold of Red Square, thousands upon thousands of men and women, their faces suddenly unfrozen and smiling, danced in circles. The whole street took on a festive, familial air, like any Paris suburb on a July 14 night.

A stranger spoke to me, offered me a cigarette. Another man proffered a light. The crowd was in high good spirits. . . .

Then, up ahead, figures began to eddy about. The chorusers tucked their instruments under their arms, banners were raised, and the lines reformed. A group leader tapped one woman demonstrator lightly on the head with his stick to bring her into line. It was the last individual, personal gesture. People became grave again as they resumed their march toward Red Square. They were reabsorbed into the crowd as one ready to appear before Stalin.

2. En Route to the U.S.S.R.

MOSCOW. MAY 14.—In my first dispatch I described May Day in Moscow, which was an outright surrender on my part to headline pressures. I should have begun by telling about my trip. A trip is like a preface; it prepares one to understand a new country. One can even learn something from the atmosphere aboard an international express. The train is not merely a convoy streaking through the countryside at night, it is a tool for gaining entry into strange premises. My train cut an unswerving path across a Europe torn by anxieties and hostility; it seemed to cross borders with ease, but I thought I might nonetheless detect some obscure sign that would reveal the rents in the fabric of Europe.

It was midnight and I lay in my compartment under the dim light of the night lamp, simply letting myself be borne along through the darkness. The sound of steadily clicking wheels reached me through the wood paneling and brass fixtures of my compartment like a pulse beat. Outside something

was flowing by unseen. Sound was my only clue. A rasping noise meant a bridge or tunnel wall. A station with an expanse of wide platforms was as silent as a bed of sand. At first, this was all I knew.

Hundreds of travelers were sleeping in these cars, all carried along as easily as I. Were they feeling a prick of anxiety, too? What I was going to look for I quite realized I might not find. I do not believe in local color. I have traveled enough to know how misleading it is. The extent to which it amuses or intrigues us measures the extent by which we are still judging a country from a foreigner's point of view. We have not yet understood its essence. The essence of a custom or ceremony is the flavor each imparts, the sense of life that each generates. If it possesses this power, then it seems to us, rather than picturesque, only simple and natural.

If only in a confused way, however, everyone has a sense of the profound nature of travel. For any man a trip must be a little like a woman moving toward him. She is lost in the crowd, and it is for him to discover her. At first, she is scarcely distinguishable from all the others. As he hovers on the brink of discovery, he may accost a thousand and one women, but he will have wasted his time if he cannot recognize the only vulnerable one. To travel is like that.

I was suddenly seized by a desire to make a tour of the little country in which I was locked up for three days, cradled in that rattle that is like the sound of pebbles rolled over and

over by the waves; and I got up out of my berth. At one in the morning I went through the train in all its length. The sleeping cars were empty. The first-class carriages were empty. They put me in mind of the luxurious hotels on the Riviera that open in winter for a single guest, the last representative of an extinct fauna. A sign of bitter times.

But the third-class carriages were crowded with hundreds of Polish workmen who were being sent home from France. I made my way along those passages, stepping over sprawling bodies and peering into the carriages. In the dim glow cast by the night lamps into these barren and comfortless compartments, I saw a confused mass of people churned about by the swaying of the train, the whole thing looking and smelling like a barracks room. A whole nation returning to its native poverty seemed to sprawl there in a sea of bad dreams. Great shaven heads rolled on the cushionless benches. Men, women, and children were stirring in their sleep, tossing from left to right and back again as if they were being attacked by all the noises and jerkings that threatened them in their oblivion. They had not found the hospitality of a sweet slumber.

Looking at them, I told myself that they had lost half their human quality. These people had been knocked about from one end of Europe to the other by the economic currents. And now they had been torn from their little houses in the north of France, from their tiny garden plots, their three pots of geraniums that always stood in the windows of the Polish miner's families. I saw lying beside them pots and pans, blan-

kets, curtains, bound into bundles badly tied and swollen with hernias.

Out of all that they had caressed or loved in France, out of everything they had succeeded in taming in their four or five years in my country—the cat, the dog, the geranium—they had been able to bring away with them only a few kitchen utensils, two or three blankets, a curtain or so.

A baby lay at the breast of a mother so weary that she seemed asleep. Life was being transmitted amid the shabbiness and the disorder of this journey. I looked at the father. A powerful skull as naked as a stone. A body hunched over in uncomfortable sleep, imprisoned in working clothes, all humps and hollows. The man looked like a lump of clay, like one of those sluggish and shapeless derelicts that crumple into sleep in our public markets.

And I thought: The problem does not reside in this poverty, in this filth, in this ugliness. But this same man and this same woman met one day. This man must have smiled at this woman. He may, after his work was done, have brought her flowers. Timid and awkward, perhaps he trembled lest she disdain him. And this woman, out of natural coquetry, this woman sure of her charms, perhaps took pleasure in teasing him. And this man, this man who is now no more than a machine for swinging a pick or a sledge-hammer, must have felt in his heart a delicious anguish. The mystery is that they should have become these lumps of clay. Into what terrible mold were they forced? What was it that marked them like this, as if they had been put through a monstrous stamping

machine? A deer, a gazelle, any animal grown old, preserves its grace. What is it that corrupts this wonderful clay of which man is kneaded?

I went on through these people whose slumber was as sinister as a den of evil. A vague noise floated in the air made up of raucous snores, obscure moanings, and the scraping of clogs as their wearers, broken on one side, sought comfort on the other. And always the muted accompaniment of those pebbles rolled over and over by the waves.

I sat down face to face with one couple. Between the man and the woman a child had hollowed himself out a place and fallen asleep. He turned in his slumber, and in the dim lamplight I saw his face. What an adorable face! A golden fruit had been born of these two peasants. Forth from this sluggish scum had sprung this miracle of delight and grace.

I bent over the smooth brow, over those mildly pouting lips. This is a musician's face, I told myself. This is the child Mozart. This is a life full of beautiful promise. Little princes in legends are not different from this. Protected, sheltered, cultivated, what could not this child become?

When by mutation a new rose is born in a garden, all the gardeners rejoice. They isolate the rose, tend it, foster it. But there is no gardener for men. This little Mozart will be shaped like the rest by the common stamping machine. This little Mozart will love shoddy music in the stench of night dives. This little Mozart is condemned.

I went back to my sleeping car. I said to myself: Their fate causes these people no suffering. It is not an impulse to charity

that has upset me like this. I am not weeping over an eternally open wound. Those who carry the wound do not feel it. It is the human race and not the individual that is wounded here, is outraged here. I do not believe in pity. What torments me tonight is the gardener's point of view. What torments me is not this poverty to which after all a man can accustom himself as easily as to sloth. Generations of Orientals live in filth and love it. What torments me is neither the humps nor the hollows nor the ugliness. It is the sight, a little bit in all these men, of Mozart murdered.

There was a knock at the door and someone called my name. Voices on a train at night seem to speak only of secret things, but when I opened the door, the porter, standing under the dim night lamp and swaying with the roll of the train, asked me what time I wanted to be awakened. What could be less mysterious, yet I felt all the empty spaces that separate human beings yawn between me and this neutral man. City people forget what a man is; he is reduced to his function, and he is a porter or a salesman or an inopportune neighbor. The best place for discovering what a man is is the heart of the desert. Your plane has broken down, and you walk for hours, heading for the little fort at Nutchott. You wait for the mirages of thirst to gape before you. But you arrive and you find an old sergeant who has been isolated for months among the dunes, and he is so happy to be found that he weeps. And you weep, too. In the arching immensity of the night, each tells the story of his life, each offers the other the burden of

memories in which the human bond is discovered. Here two men can meet, and they bestow gifts upon each other with the dignity of ambassadors.

To reach the dining car I had to retrace my steps through the third-class cars. The night's vision of truth had vanished, and in the daylight the Poles seemed simply to be stranded there. They had pulled themselves together, blown their children's noses, put their bundles in order, and now they sat watching the countryside rush by and joking among themselves. One man was singing. Tragedy had evaporated. I understood that it is possible to live with a clear conscience by thinking of these people as they are. These gnarled hands would not know how to do more than labor with pick and ax. These people present no problem because, fashioned as they are by destiny, they seem to be their own destiny.

I should have been able to rejoice to watch them comfortably doling out their food from its greasy wrappings and taking their simple pleasure in the landscape that unrolled before them. I should have been appeased to tell myself that there was no social problem here. These faces were as closed as blocks of granite. But the magic of night had showed me, underneath the *gangue*, the child Mozart asleep. . . .

The dining car was knifing through farmland, the fields now impoverished and encircled by straggling tree clumps like mangy fur pieces; it was driving on into the heart of Germany, and today the dining car had become German. The waiters moved about with the cool politeness of great noble-

men. Why is it that the waiters, whether German, Polish, or Russian, all have this lordly air? Why is it that the moment you leave France you become aware of a slackness in France? Why do we have a slightly vulgar air of egalitarian complacency? Why are our people indifferent to their work, their function—in a word, to style? What is the root of this apathy? There is something symbolic in our small-town ceremonies. The unveiling of a monument, say. The minister arrives, he delivers a long harangue that he did not write, he eulogizes some sharp operator whom he never knew, and neither he nor the crowd believes a word he is saying. He is playing a game, but it is a game without stakes, a kind of benevolent farce.

Once beyond our borders, you feel that men live in terms of their function. The dining-car waiter, impeccably dressed, gives impeccable service. The minister deals with issues that concern his listeners. His words go to the heart of the matter. And if massive police protection surrounds the raising of the most minor statue, it is to smother subterranean fires. In this game the stakes are high.

But what, then, of that sense of fraternal ease you experience in France? What of the taxi driver whose very familiarity admits you into the circle of his intimates? What of the friendly, obliging waiters in the cafés on Rue Royale who know half of Paris and all its secrets, who will undertake to make the most personal phone calls for you or, in a pinch, lend you a few francs, who notice when the trees are in bud

and greet old customers with the cheering announcement that spring is here at last?

Everything presents contradictions and conflicts. The agonizing dilemma is to discover where life is leading and to have to make a choice. I was thinking of that as I listened to the man across the table from me, a German. "Together France and Germany would be masters of the world," he was saying. "Why are the French so afraid of Hitler? He's the buffer between them and Russia, isn't he? All he's done is to give back to people here their freedom of action. He's one of the world's builders, one of those men whose names live on in the straight, broad avenues they've created. He stands for order."

At the next table there are some Spaniards who, like me, are on their way to Russia, and they're already afire with enthusiasm. I can hear snatches of their conversation—Stalin, Five-Year Plan, this launched, that flourishing. . . . The landscape has changed indeed! Once the frontiers of France are behind you, you care very little about spring and are perhaps more concerned with the destiny of mankind.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

A SENSE OF LIFE

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY, INC.
NEW YORK

1956/1965