Louis-Ferdinand Céline

MEA CULPA

Translated from the French by Simon Cotten

Verlaine

Vanity Bonfiolo, 1940–1945.
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Agence de presse Mundus, Louis-Ferdinand Céline en 1932.
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"I'm still afraid of a bit bombed.
But I'm certain that soon."

What is an audacious and dangerous gesture, in my major advantage, is that as I'll remind Mme Chevrier, I'm not the only one who's been bombed, been bombed, been bombed, giving up on about his ministers, his authorships, his Ambassadors, his Ministers, his Ministers, his Ministers

against the stench of the decrepid world! Boxovitch coughs up for the police that police his own sorrows. Never has there been a police force so thick on the ground, more swinish, and suspicious! He's never by himself-under a constant surveillance which has been totally perfected. No one will ever be able to steal him from you. Ah, but he does get bored! You can't help but notice. Dying to get out! He'd love to go on an "Ex-Tourist" trip-just for a change! Just for a change. Of course he'd never come back. You can throw down the gauntlet on this one, no way the Soviets will pick it up! They know that if they put it to the test, the country would be emptied out! In our neck of the woods, Boxo could have fun! There are still a few things to do, mischief to get into, secret fun! Even here where we're exploited 600 %, people know how to have fun! They rush out from work in a rented tuxedo, pretending to be millionaires! They enjoy movies! Bourgeois to the bone! He loves all false values! He's a corrupt monkey! Basically lazy, attracted by all that's expensive-or at least its imitation, if he can't do better. He's enamored of brute strength while despising the weak. He shows off, he's vain, loves conmen, and is attracted above all by anything visual! It all has to be seen for it to have any existence. Neon attracts him like flies. He's uncontrollable! Rather tawdry. With a gift for being late for anything that could make him happy, that might sweeten his life. He suffers, indulges in self-mutilation, then bleeds, then dies-having learnt nothing. He has no sense of organization, fears it, and flees it like the plague. He becomes increasingly bitter... hurries to his death, sped on by huge quantities of "matter"-matter he can never get enough of. The most cunning of them, the cruelest only arms himself to the teeth to kill himself more... and to kill others more. It's a gambling table and there are no limits, ladies and gentlemen, all bets are down! You've gambled-you've won! Over there, Man gets to eat pickles. He's been completely defeated. The "Commissar" drives past in a used Packard... while Man slaves away as if he were in the regiment... but a regiment for life. And it's better not to hang out too much on the street. We know what he'll get there-so chase him off with rifle butts! It's his future that's ahead of him! Just like here, in fact... Tomorrow it's a free lunch and everything that goes with it. Why doesn't What's-his-Face have a grin on his face? It's because he didn't have the right instincts. It simple! If you think about it, there was no need to share out the wealth-it could already have been done way back in the agricultural age... when humanity first began. Why make such a fuss over it? Ants did it and they didn't have factories-all for all-that's their motto! We want Capital! Give us Capital! Don't scream for it anymore Lunchbox, because you're it! Your ancestors sat on the rump of the good Knight Roland's horse and now you're all alone. On your own! There's nobody to grind you down-so why is all the nastiness starting again? Why? Because it's all bubbling up to the surface of your infernal nature, that's why! Spontaneously, *sponte-sua*, have no illusions, don't even worry about it... it's starting all over again.

Why does the handsome engineer earn 7 000 rubles and the charwoman just 30 per month? It's magic! magic! We're talking about Russia obviously. It's marvelous how they're as shitty over there as we are over here! With a nice pair of shoes that cost 900 francs and a dodgy re-soling (I've seen this for myself) at 80 ? And as for the hospitals, apart from the one in the Kremlin or the special "In-Tourist Wards," the others are nothing less than sordid! All of Russia runs on a tenth of a normal budget-starting with the hospitals. Of course this doesn't include the Police, the Army, or the Ministry of Propaganda. This is injustice served up, but under a new name-even more horrific than the one that preceded it. And even more anonymous: more water-proofed, more perfected, more rigid, with myriads of cops, armed with degrees in torture. Dialectics ready to explain the theft of huge quantities of riches they've stolen and fenced! When it comes to smooth-talking, and the national production of hot air, nobody surpasses Russia. But what they won't confess to, and what they're unable to make you believe, is that Man is his own worst enemy-the worst of all his enemies! Given whatever condition, he'll create the conditions for his own torture, in the same way that the pox creates its own destructive environment. That's how the system functions! That's how deep it goes! So flatterers should be shot-for they're the opium of the people. Man has as much humanity as a chicken is able to fly. When a chicken gets sent waltzing by a car, she can make it up to a roof, but then she immediately zooms back down to the mud to pick away at her own shit. It's in her character. Part of her ambitions. Just like in our society. Only total catastrophe prevents us from being complete shits! The catastrophe done, we go back to being our old selves. That's why it's always better to judge a Revolution twenty years later. "I am! You are! Despoilers, hypocrites, bastards!" Nobody will ever come out and say these things! Yet a real Revolution would be to admit all this-to purify ourselves by saying it! But the Soviets are in love with vice, with cooking the books. They know which levers to pull. But then they lose themselves in the maze of their own propaganda. They try to flavor turds, dip them in caramel. That's the disease infecting the system, Oh! We've replaced the bosses alright. We've abducted his platitudes, his aggressiveness, his wily plots, his silly advertising-we know how to rip things off alright! We didn't waste anytime! The new pimps have just walked on stage. Let's give a big hand to the new apostles! You have to admit that they've got fat bellies and fine voices. But the Great Revolt, the Great Battle! All that for such tiny bounty! They swapped Scrooge for Envy! So is that what the battle was about? In the wings of the theater, costumes have been changed... now they're dressed up as Neo-Topaz, Neo-Kremlin, Neo-Swine, Neo-Lenins, Neo-Jesuses! At the beginning they were sincere, but by now they've understood (those who fail to understand are shot). No one is ever wrong-all of them are submissive. They didn't do it, the others did. They've learned from hard experience... They've never kept their heads down so much. Now the "soul" is replaced by the red party card. And it's a lost soul! Nothing left of it! Every one of Lunchbox's habits, his vices, they're all down on file... Let's wear him down, wear him out with marches, suffering, showing off! Let's encourage him to denounce everyone... that's the nature of the beast! It's not his fault!... Lunchbox has been put away! He's told, "Read my paper! Read my rumors!... just my rumors! "... but no others, mind you! Bite on the brawn of my speeches... but above all, never look any further or I'll cut your head off! That's all he deserves... into the cage with him! Of course when the cops arrive you know just what to expect. And it's only just beginning! Anything goes to show that they're not the ones responsible! Cut off all the ways out... Become "totalitarian!" Helped by the Jews or not! It doesn't matter... The Main Thing is killing! Just how many stubborn little Christians finished up at the stake back in the Middle Ages... or between the lion's jaws... or manacled to an oar on a slave galley? Or being inquisitioned right down to the marrow... all over whether Mary's conception was immaculate or not ? Or over the interpretation of three verses from the testaments? We've lost count! And what's motivated all this? Take your choice... the reasons have no reason to exist... times haven't changed, have they? We're certainly no more choosy today... We could all kick the bucket for something that doesn't exist! Grimacing Communism! What the hell, given the point we've reached!? If that isn't dying for an ideal, then I don't know what is! We've been purified and we didn't even know it! When it comes down to it, perhaps you can call it hope. And perhaps the aesthetic future while you're at it! We'll never know why we have wars... bigger and bigger ones... that will leave no one in peace... which everyone will die in... we'll all become instant heroes... and dust as part of the deal! We'll get rid of everyone on Earth! We've never been worth anything anyhow! The great cleansing through Ideas!

(1937)

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